



## SPRING-TIME DAILY ENCOURAGEMENTS

Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

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Photo: Our Daily Bread

## RENT-A-FRIEND?

*"For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"*

Ecclesiastes 4:8

### READ Ecclesiastes 4:7–12

For many around the world, life is getting lonelier. The number of Americans who have no friends has quadrupled since 1990. Certain European countries have up to 20 percent of their population feeling lonely, while in Japan, some elderly folks have resorted to crime so they can have the companionship of inmates in jail.

Entrepreneurs have come up with a “solution” to this loneliness epidemic—rent-a-friend. Hired by the hour, these people will meet you in a café to talk or accompany you to a party. One such “friend” was asked who her clientele was. “Lonely, 30- to 40-year-old professionals,” she said, “who work long hours and don’t have time to make many friends.”

Ecclesiastes 4 describes a person who is all alone, without “son nor brother.” There’s “no end” to this worker’s toil, yet his success isn’t fulfilling (v. 8). “For whom am I toiling . . . ?” he asks, waking up to his plight. Far better to invest in relationships, which will make his workload lighter and provide help in trouble (vv. 9–12). Because, ultimately, success without friendship is “meaningless” (v. 8).

Ecclesiastes tells us that a cord of three strands isn’t quickly broken (v. 12). But neither is it quickly woven. Since true friends can’t be rented, let’s invest the time needed to form them, with God as our third strand, weaving us tightly together.

By **Sheridan Voysey**

### PRAY & REFLECT

**Father, help me to be a good and loyal friend to others. Amen.**

How are you investing time and effort into your friendships? Who could you welcome into your friendship group now?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Most Bible scholars attribute the book of Ecclesiastes to King Solomon. The book begins: “The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1). Those scholars who support Solomon as author date the book to his final years as king (around 940 bc), during what the Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible says was the “golden era of Israelite wisdom.” The book demonstrates the meaninglessness or vanity of a worldview that doesn’t include God. The author concludes his book: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil” (12:13–14). Loving and obeying God is the goal and purpose of life. And as today’s passage demonstrates, when we have Him as our third strand in the cord that binds all our friendships and relationships, we can stand strong (4:12). – By **Alyson Kieda**

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