

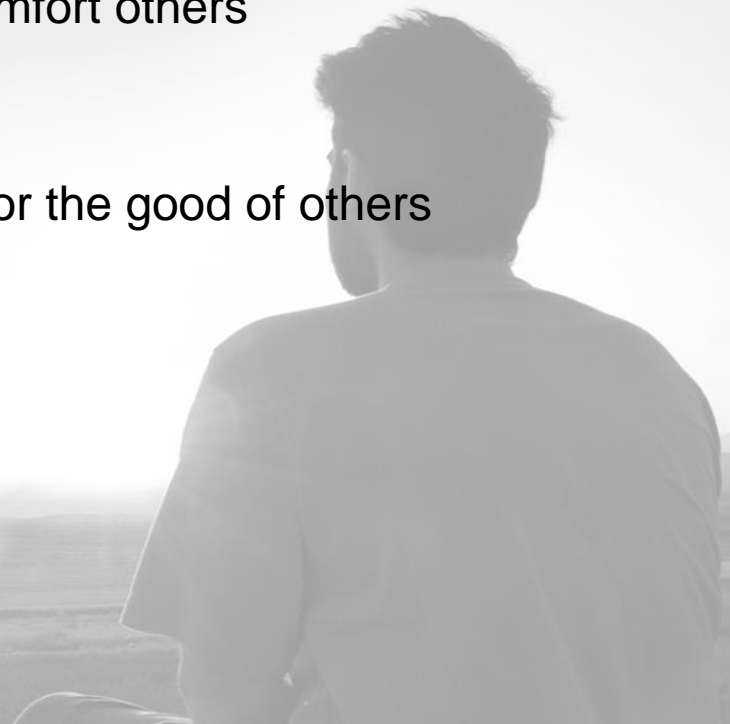
Made for Community

Ecclesiastes 4:1-12



Lesson Goals

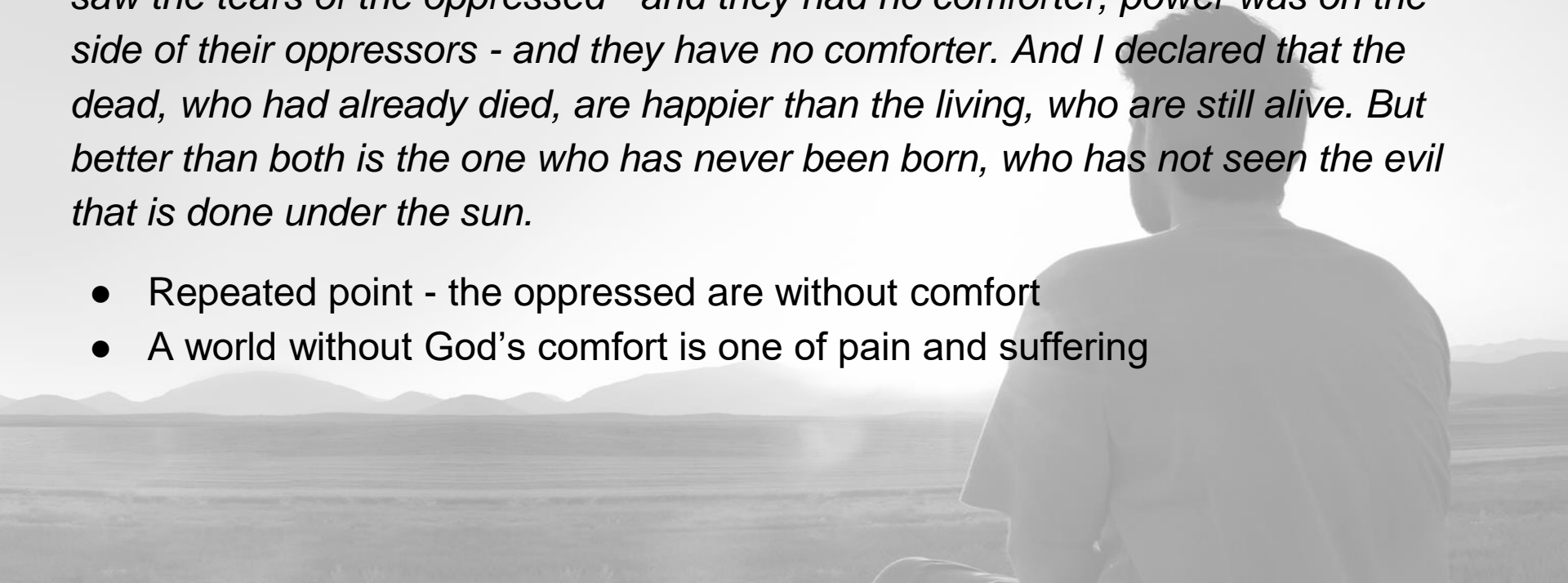
- As the Holy Spirit comforts me, I must comfort others
- As God works for my good, I must work for the good of others
- As Jesus lifts me up, I must lift up others



Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 The comfort of community

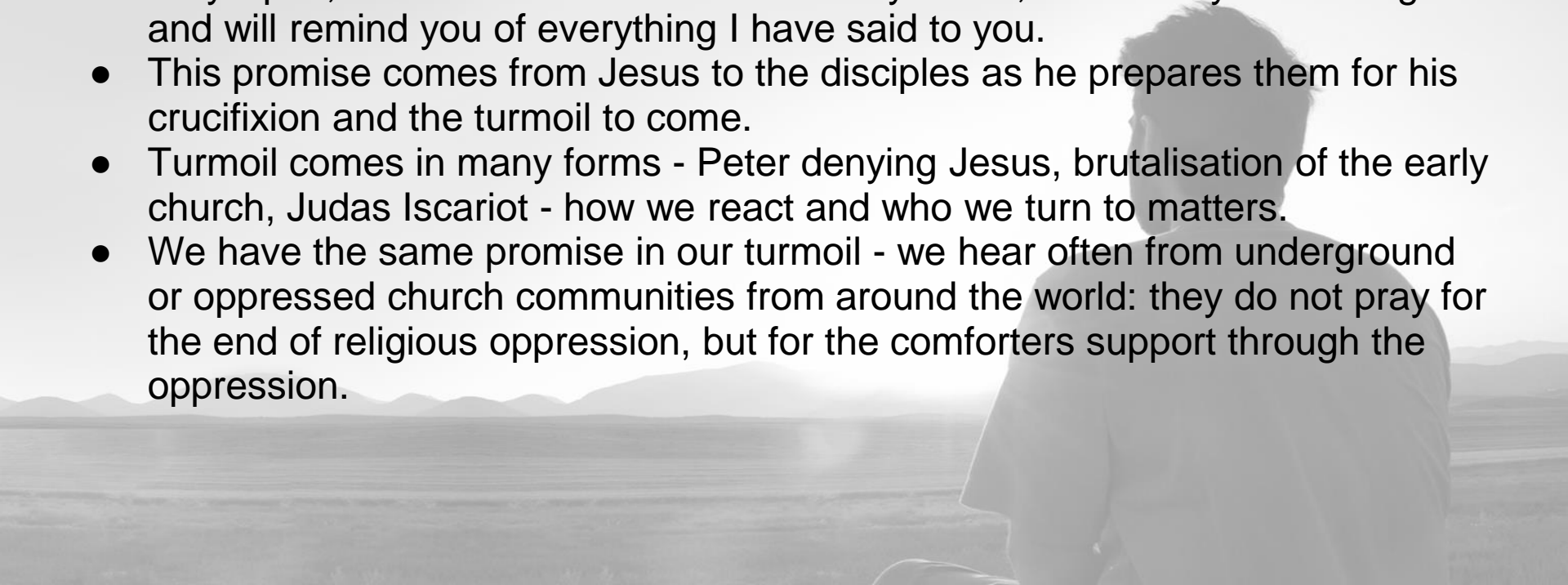
Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed - and they had no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors - and they have no comforter. And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is the one who has never been born, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.

- Repeated point - the oppressed are without comfort
- A world without God's comfort is one of pain and suffering



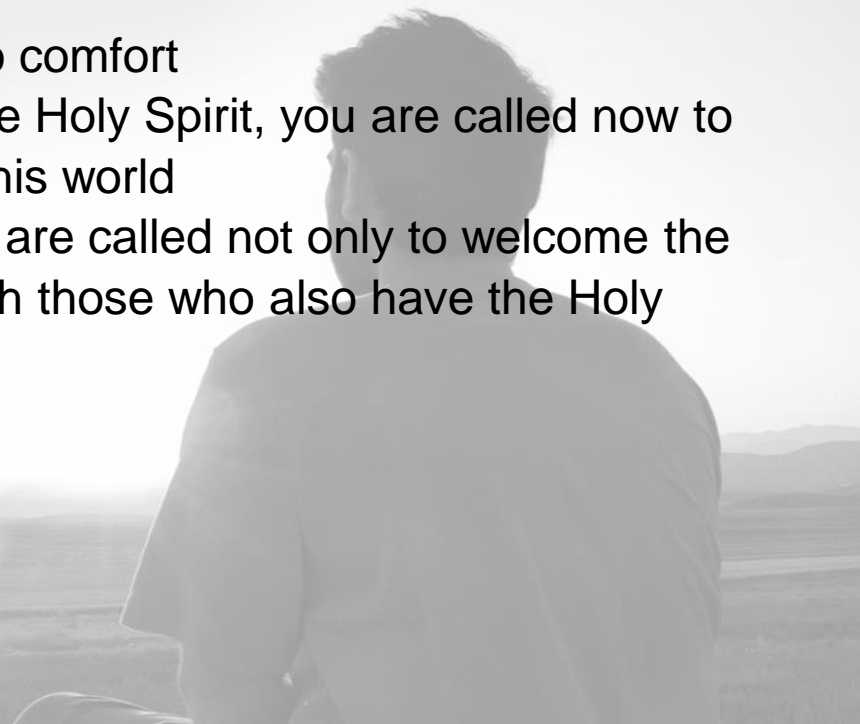
Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 The comfort of community

- There is a Comforter! - John 14:26 But the Advocate (Helper/Comforter), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.
- This promise comes from Jesus to the disciples as he prepares them for his crucifixion and the turmoil to come.
- Turmoil comes in many forms - Peter denying Jesus, brutalisation of the early church, Judas Iscariot - how we react and who we turn to matters.
- We have the same promise in our turmoil - we hear often from underground or oppressed church communities from around the world: they do not pray for the end of religious oppression, but for the comforters support through the oppression.



Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 The comfort of community

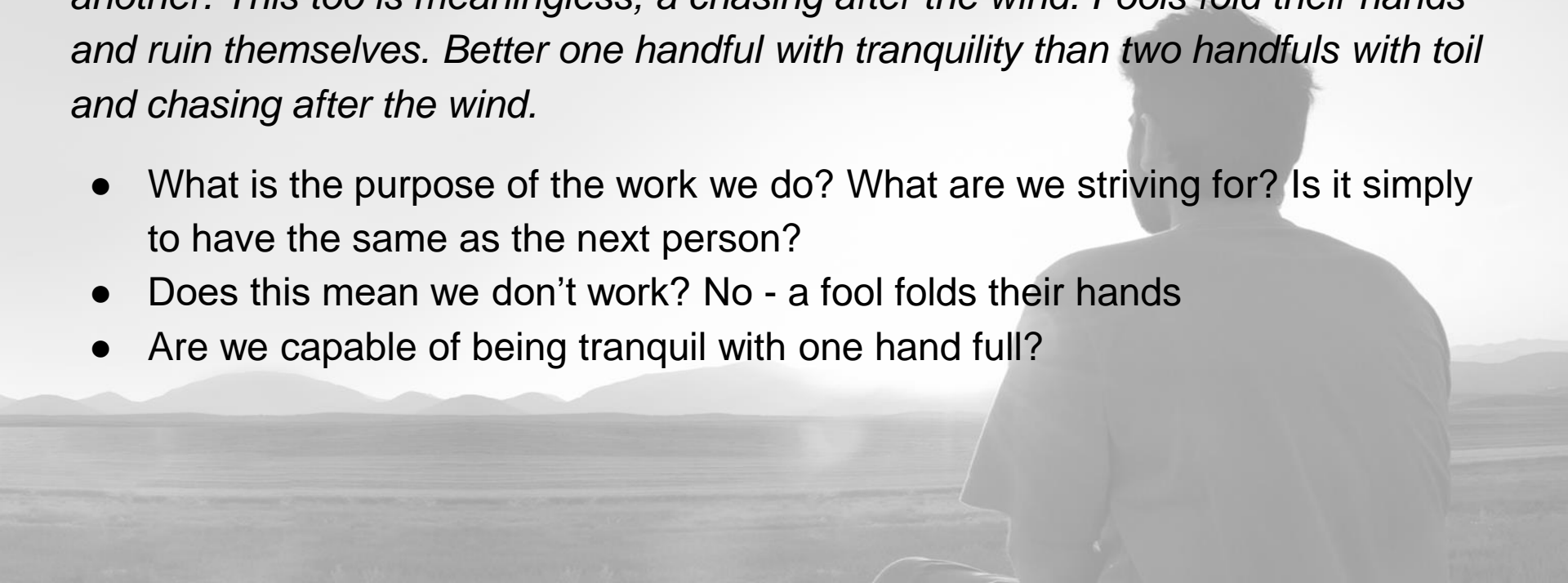
- 1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
- You are not called to be comforted, but to comfort
- If you have experienced the comfort of the Holy Spirit, you are called now to be the comforter of those oppressed by this world
- If you have not experienced comfort, you are called not only to welcome the Holy Spirit in, but to join in community with those who also have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.



Ecclesiastes 4:4-6 the work of community

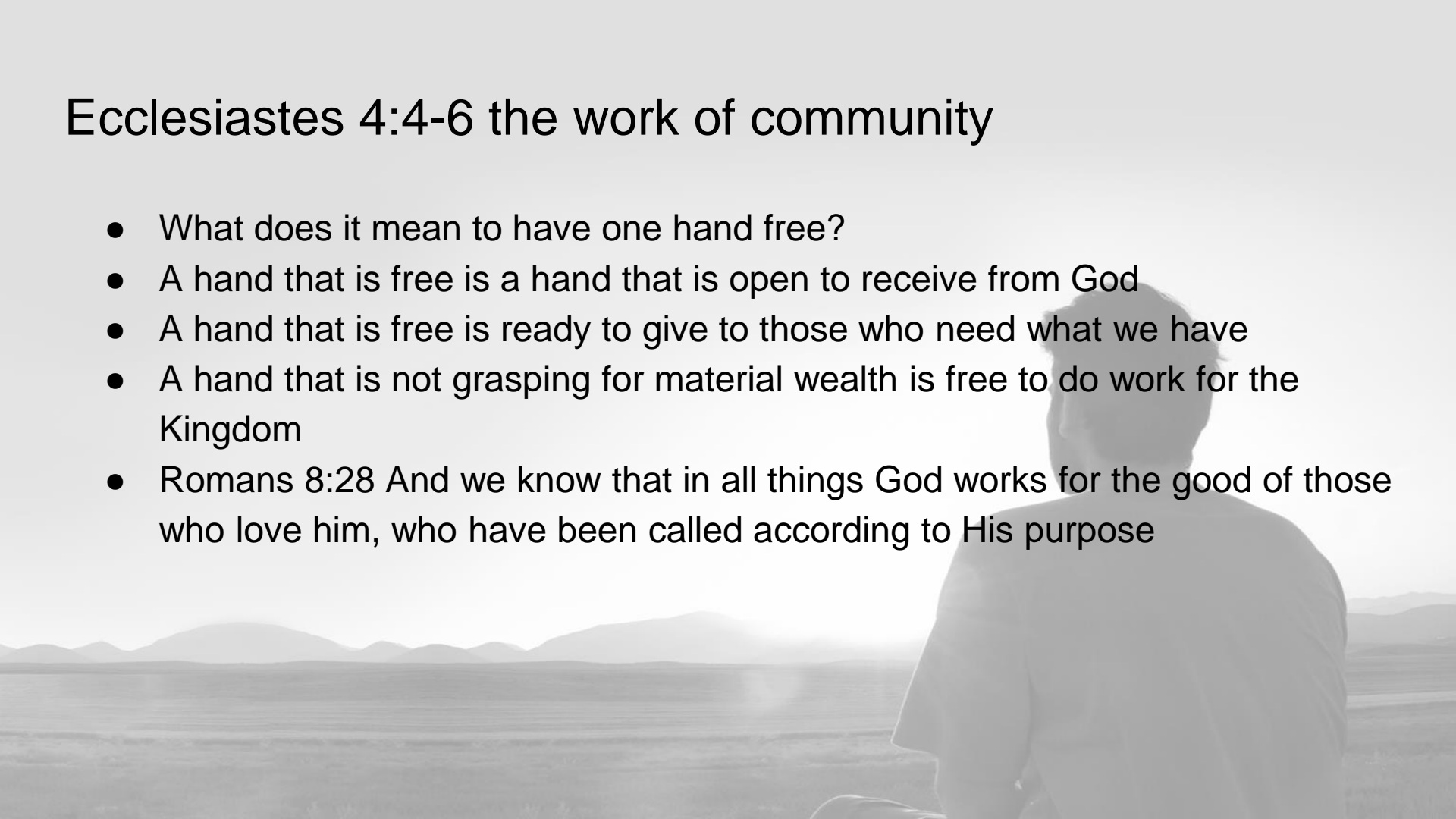
And I saw that all toil and all achievement springs from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Fools fold their hands and ruin themselves. Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

- What is the purpose of the work we do? What are we striving for? Is it simply to have the same as the next person?
- Does this mean we don't work? No - a fool folds their hands
- Are we capable of being tranquil with one hand full?



Ecclesiastes 4:4-6 the work of community

- What does it mean to have one hand free?
- A hand that is free is a hand that is open to receive from God
- A hand that is free is ready to give to those who need what we have
- A hand that is not grasping for material wealth is free to do work for the Kingdom
- Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose



Ecclesiastes 4:4-6 the work of community

- Matthew 9:35-38 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field
- We are those workers, if God has put a call on your heart, a part of that call is to do His work in His field
- This is not for personal accolades or achievement or to satisfy personal envy - that is chasing after the wind.
- This work you are called to is not always to be a preacher or an evangelist
- Colossians 3:23 - and whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men

Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 The support of community

Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless - a miserable business!

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

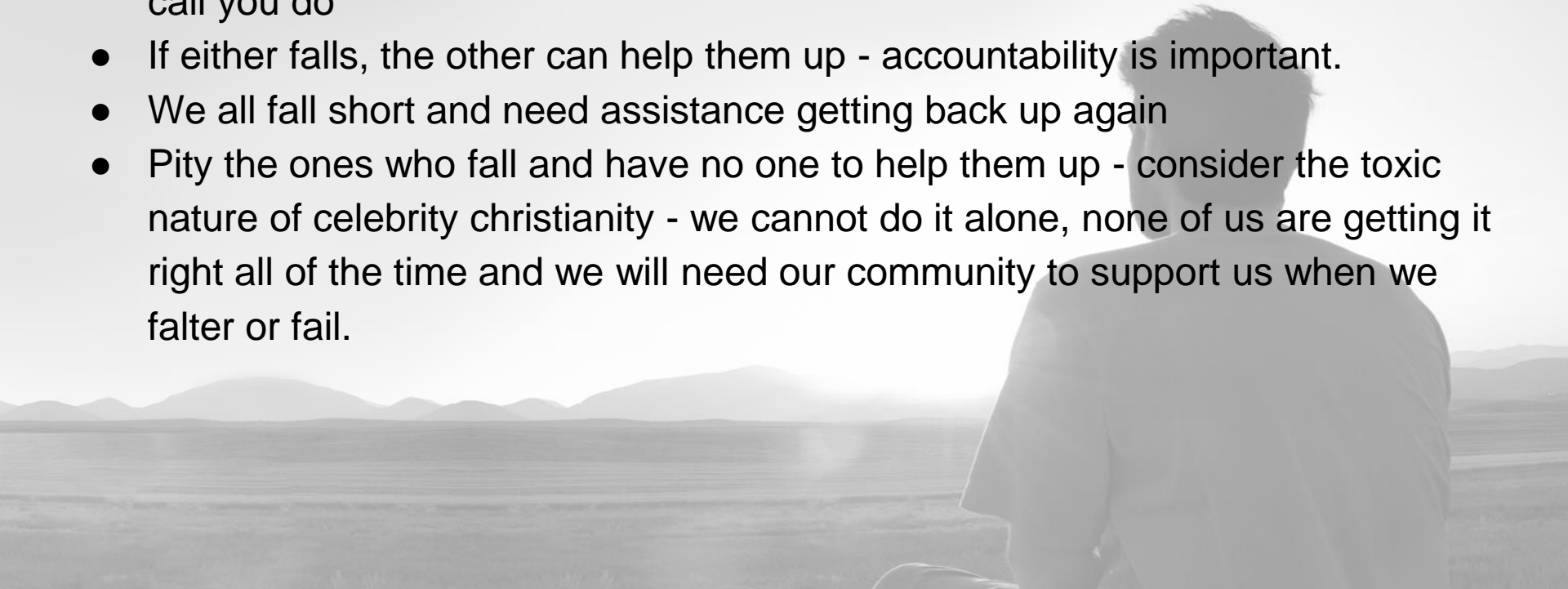
Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 The support of community

- He had neither son nor brother - mentorship and time with peers is an important aspect of discipleship, ministry and community
- For whom are you toiling?
- A miserable business
 - Working without partners
 - Work without enjoyment
 - Discontentment with wealth
 - Seeking only enjoyment - all are ultimately meaningless and miserable
- We need community to make the work meaningful - full of meaning



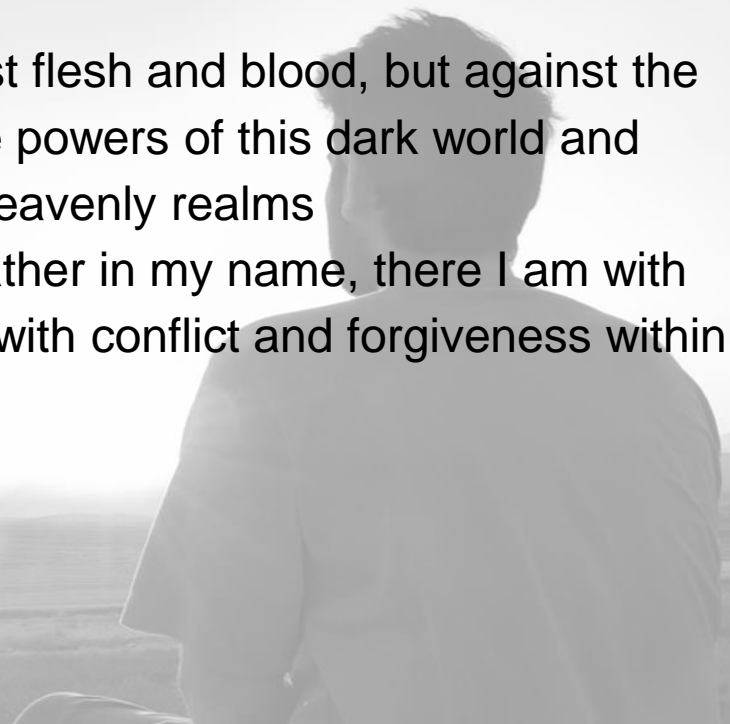
Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 The support of community

- You are not called to God's service alone, seek out people who feel the same call you do
- If either falls, the other can help them up - accountability is important.
- We all fall short and need assistance getting back up again
- Pity the ones who fall and have no one to help them up - consider the toxic nature of celebrity christianity - we cannot do it alone, none of us are getting it right all of the time and we will need our community to support us when we falter or fail.



Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 The support of community

- Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves, a cord of three is not quickly broken
- Ephesians 6:12 our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms
- Matthew 18:23 For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them - a verse specifically about dealing with conflict and forgiveness within the community



My excuses when it comes to community

- Work was really rough today, I don't have the energy for small group - For whom am I toiling that I would deprive myself of community?
 - Working bee? I can barely keep my own house clean! It's foolish to fold my arms and all it does is ruin me.
 - I already consider my job at my school my ministry, so I don't need to go to things like men's breakfast - how am I being a good brother, how am I being a good role model for the young men coming up behind me (sons) if I avoid opportunities for fellowship?
 - I hate it when I fail and others step in to help me, I hate burdening other people with the consequences of my failures. False humility,
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