

A word about the word hebel

Hebel (hevel): vapor, mist, or breath.

Something that cannot be grasped or taken hold of, an enigma.

Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them. So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor.

This too is *hebel* and striving after wind.

The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.

One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.

Then I looked again at hebel under the sun.

There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor.

Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?"

This too is hebel and it is a grievous task.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction. For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom. I have seen all the living under the sun throng to the side of the second lad who replaces him. There is no end to all the people, to all who were before them, and even the ones who will come later will not be happy with him, for this too is hebel and striving after wind.

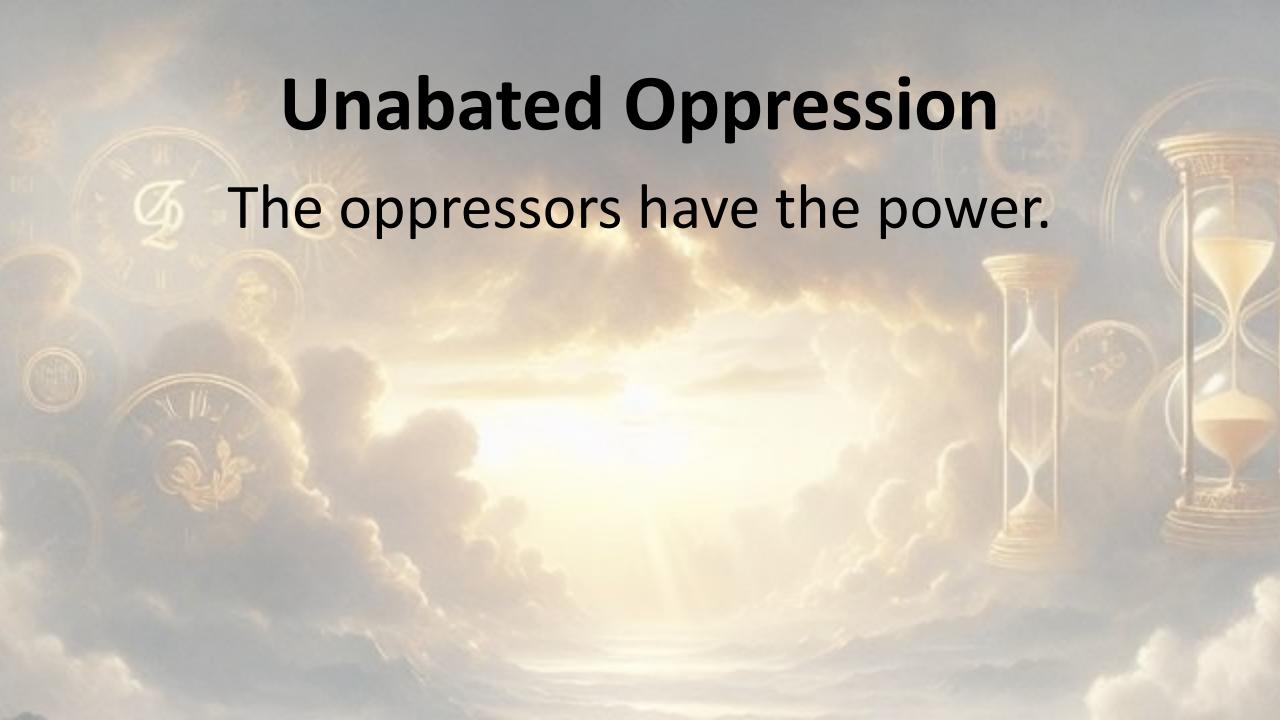
Main Point

God created us as communal creatures, but sin corrupts every aspect of healthy community and makes us dependent on Christ for genuine reconnection.

The Corruptions of Community

Due to sin, there is unabated oppression.

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Micah 2:1-2

Woe to those who scheme iniquity, Who work out evil on their beds! When morning comes, they do it, For it is in the power of their hands. They covet fields and then seize them, And houses, and take them away. They rob a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.

Power does not equal oppression, but oppression is not possible without power.

What should be used for good is very often used for evil, and this is corrupting and confusing.



The oppressors have the power.

The oppressed have no comforters.

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Who were the oppressed?

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The sinful corruption of community is most clear where oppression prevails and where the oppressed are disregarded and even discarded.

Jeremiah 5:28

They are fat, they are sleek,
They also excel in deeds of wickedness;
They do not plead the cause,
The cause of the orphan, that they may prosper;
And they do not defend the rights of the poor.

Qoheleth's Conclusion Under the Sun

Ecclesiastes 4:2-3

So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living.

But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

The culture of death makes sense when there is no firm foundation of faith.

The Corruptions of Community

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Due to sin, there is unhealthy disconnection.

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Exodus 20:17

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Wicked and distorted desires drive wedges into relationships and disconnect neighbor from neighbor.



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and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and bereaving my soul of good?"

This man was captured by the allure of wealth and could not see how impoverished he had become.

The sinful heart is taken captive by the deceptions of imitation and is thereby bereaved of the good God intends.

Mark 4:18-19

These are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.



Here's another thing...

Ecclesiastes 4:5-6

The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.

Proverbs 6:10-11

"A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest" —
Your poverty will come in like a vagabond
And your need like an armed man.

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Proverbs 15:16

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD Than great treasure and turmoil with it.



Riches capture our attention.

Independence robs us of relational connection.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Two are better than one because they have

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This is set in contrast to "There is one and not a second..."

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What follows draws from true wisdom but is intended to point to the harmful effects of disconnected independence.

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Healthy community not only cultivates companionship but creates cohesion, improves productivity, and provides protection.

Independence disconnects us from community and leads to harm.

The Corruptions of Community

Due to sin, there is unabated oppression.

Due to sin, there is unhealthy disconnection.

Due to sin, there is unending dissatisfaction.

Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches....

And leaders are not satisfied with power nor are the people satisfied with their leaders.



A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction.

For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom.

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Power-hungry leaders will feed on their power beyond their capacity to lead.

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The power hungry will never have their hunger satisfied and will carry those they lead into the abyss of discontent with them.



Leadership is dominated by the power hungry.

But the populace is driven by fickle impulse.

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Dissatisfaction destroys!

Psalm 106:13-15

They quickly forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,
But craved intensely in the wilderness,
And tempted God in the desert.
So He gave them their request,
But sent a wasting disease among them.

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Dissatisfaction puts us in opposition to God and destroys our connections to one another because it is fundamentally self-centered.

All the excesses and deprivations and all that corrupts the purity of true community is designed to lead us to Christ, the only one who can reconcile us to God and reconnect us to one another.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Concluding Questions: hat keeps you from a health

What keeps you from a healthy connection to your community?

Are you satisfied?

Is Christ your satisfaction?