

Ecclesiastes 5 Commentary

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Ecclesiastes 5:1 Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:1 Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.

BGT Ecclesiastes 4:17 φ λαξον π δα σου ν ν πορε ε ς ο κον το θεο κα γγ ς το κο ει ν π ρ δ μα τ ν φρ νων θυσ α σου τι ο κ ε σιν ε δ τε ς το ποι σαι κακ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:1 Keep thy foot, whensoever thou goest to the house of God; and when thou art near to hear, let thy sacrifice be better than the gift of fools: for they know not that they are doing evil.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:1 Be careful what you do when you go to the temple of God; draw near to listen rather than to offer a sacrifice like fools, for they do not realize that they are doing wrong.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Better to draw near in obedience than to offer the sacrifice as fools do, for they ignorantly do wrong.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:1 As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut. It is evil to make mindless offerings to God.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:1 Keep thy feet when thou goest unto a house of God, and draw near to hear rather than to give of fools the sacrifice, for they do not know they do evil.

NJB Ecclesiastes 4:17 Watch your step when you go to the House of God: drawing near to listen is better than the offering of a sacrifice by fools, though they do not know that they are doing wrong.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than the sacrifice offered by fools; for they do not know how to keep from doing evil.

NAB Ecclesiastes 4:17 Guard your step when you go to the house of God. Let your approach be obedience, rather than the fools' offering of sacrifice; for they know not how to keep from doing evil.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:1 Watch your step when you go to the house of God. It is better to go there and listen than to bring the sacrifices fools bring. Fools are unaware that they are doing something evil.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:1 Put your feet down with care when you go to the house of God, for it is better to give ear than to make the burned offerings of the foolish, whose knowledge is only of doing evil.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil.

- **Guard your steps** Ge 28:16,17 Ex 3:5 Lev 10:3 Jos 5:15 2Ch 26:16 Ps 89:7 Isa 1:12-20 1Co 11:22 Heb 12:28,29
- **ready:** Ac 10:33 17:11 Jas 1:19 1Pe 2:1,2
- **give:** Ge 4:3-5 1Sa 13:12,13 15:21,22 Ps 50:8-18 Pr 15:8 21:27 Isa 1:12-15 66:3 Jer 7:21-23 Ho 6:6,7 Mal 1:10,11 Heb 10:26

Related Passages:

Exodus 3:5+ Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

NET NOTE - Even though the LORD was drawing near to Moses, Moses could not casually approach him. There still was a barrier between God and human, and God had to remind Moses of this with instructions. The removal of sandals was, and still is in the East, a sign of humility and reverence in the presence of the Holy One. It was a way of excluding the dust and dirt of the world. But it also took away personal comfort and convenience and brought the person more closely in contact with the earth.

Psalms 51:16-17+ For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Proverbs 4:26-27+ **Watch** the path of your feet And all your ways will be established. 27 **Do not turn** to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil.

Proverbs 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Proverbs 28:9 He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

Hebrews 11:4+ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

WALK WISELY IN GOD'S HOUSE AND LISTEN BEFORE YOU SPEAK

[William Barrick](#) gives an excellent introduction to chapter 5 writing "Consumed by his search for meaning in life "under the sun," Solomon first notes that God had "set eternity" in the human heart (Eccl 3:11). Then he indicates that God will right the wrongs and provide justice (Eccl 3:17). Throughout Eccl 4 the author focuses on the ongoing issues of everyday life which demonstrate that individually and corporately people cannot resolve their most persistent problems. Solomon's investigations lead him to a consideration of mankind's relationship to God. **Swindoll** (Borrow [Living on the Ragged Edge page 144](#)) opens his examination of Ecclesiastes 5 with the following thought: "So many of Solomon's ideas and observations are horizontal musings . . . the bitter, barren, boring side of life seen through disillusioned eyes. But on a few, rare occasions the man breaks out of his cynical syndrome. At those times his comments contain a remarkable vertical perspective that scrapes away the veneer of empty religion and takes us back to the bedrock of a meaningful relationship with the living Lord." Each individual must realize that God's involvement in his or her life consists of more than afflicting people with "a grievous task" (Eccl 1:13; cp. Eccl 3:10) and providing work, food, enjoyment, wisdom, and knowledge (Eccl 2:24–26). Therefore, each person "under the sun" must anticipate an encounter with the eternal God beyond the sun. What does that look like? How does one prepare for life beyond the sun? Solomon takes up the topics of worship (Eccl 5:1–3), vows (Eccl 5:4–6), the fear of God (Eccl 5:7), justice (Eccl 5:8), and money (Eccl 5:10–17). **Each topic reveals something about one's relationship to God, Who provides a greater companionship in life** (cp. Eccl 4:7–12)."(Borrow [Eaton Ecclesiastes: An Introduction and Commentary - page 97](#))

[John Butler](#) adds "Much of this chapter of Ecclesiastes sounds like the book of Proverbs. It is good counsel that needs to be followed, but periodically in the chapter, Solomon reverts to the vanity attitude as he looks at matters from a human/horizontal view only.

THE OUTLINE (Main points) OF THE CHAPTER:

- A. Worship (Ecclesiastes 5:1–7)
- B. Wayward (Ecclesiastes 5:8, 9)
- C. Wealth (Ecclesiastes 5:10–17)
- D. Warrant (Ecclesiastes 5:18–20)

Guard ([shamar](#) - watch carefully, give heed; Lxx - [phulasso](#)) **your steps** (לִפְתֵּי - regel - figuratively your conduct) **as you go to the house of God** (Temple) **and draw near** ([qarab](#) - approaching God) **to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools** ([kesil](#); Lxx - [aphron](#)) **for** (term of explanation) **they do not know they are doing evil**. This first section describes the perils of empty worship and the folly of thoughtless offerings. **The sacrifice of fools** refers to external religious acts done without inner reverence, humility, or repentance. **Fools** practice religion and ritual, without repentance. Approach God's house carefully, thoughtfully, and reverently, letting His Spirit speak to your heart. Listening precedes obedience. God doesn't need our many words or empty offerings! He wants our attentive hearts (cf 1Sa 15:22-23+)

THOUGHT- Are you really listening to the sermon and tossing your coins in the offering box, going through the motions of form without engaging your heart with the eternal God? It's easy to fall into this trap. Ritual in worship can be beautiful, but can lull one into apathetic worship, form without substance, the rituals making you think you are truly worshipping the living God. Remember that worship is a "heart posture" not a performance. Ask yourself - am I truly seeking God's will as I worship or am I simply going through religious motions, checking off the box "Go to Church on Sunday Morning"? It is so easy to fall into the trap of going to

church and doing no more than go through the motions of form and yet our heart is not in the worship and our walk the rest of the week gives no evidence that we have met with the Holy God in worship on Sunday. Sadly, those who fall into this "religious rut" are not even aware of their evil in insincere worship.

[Bob Utley](#) sets the context This is verse 17 of chapter 4 in the MT. This is an affirmation of the priority of attitude. Eccl. 5:1-7 deals with warnings associated with religious worship.

[William Barrick](#) Solomon observes that too many of God's covenant people approach worship with a lackadaisical attitude. He notes a lack of true reverence for the holy and for the Holy One Himself. Each act of superficial worship reveals this truth. According to Hubbard, "the Preacher wanted to remind his hearers of the greatness of God who could see through any extravagance in prayer. Wild promises, unguarded commitments, vain repetition were all to be avoided. Poise, control, measured speech and action were considered expressions of sound conduct by the wise." Ec 5:1-3 contain a series of four commands: "Guard your steps" (Eccl 5:1a),⁴ "draw near to listen" (Eccl 5:1b), "Do not be hasty" in word or thought (v. Eccl 5:2a), and "let your words be few" (v. Eccl 5:2b).

*Obedience to the Word of God in private life prepares
the believer for participation in public worship. What a sweet
spirit of praise would prevail in our churches if we all arrived thus prepared.*

[William Barrick](#) on **Guarding Our Steps** (Eccl 5:1a) - "Guard your steps [lit., feet] as you go" might mean that the worshiper should prepare for worship by obeying God beforehand (Ps 17:4-5; Prov 4:20-27). Gathering for public worship must not be taken lightly. The saints must enter the Temple with reverence. (Borrow [Duane Garrett page 310](#)) [Barton's paraphrase](#) warns, "Do not run to the place of worship thoughtlessly, or because it is the fashion to go frequently, but consider the nature of the place and thy purpose in going." As in Christ's statement in John 4:23-24+, we ought not approach worship lightly nor without intentional preparation in heart, head, and hand (or, foot!) we must worship in spirit and in truth. "**The house of God**" occurs throughout the Old Testament in reference to a place of worship. Jacob used the phrase to identify the site where he dreamed about a ladder to heaven (Ge 28:17). The Tabernacle was designated "**the house of God**" (Jdg 18:31; 1Chr 6:48) and the Temple of Solomon also bore this title (1Chr 22:2; 2Chr3:3). Any who are tempted to make the synagogue the reference must, of necessity, take the following reference to sacrifices as figurative, since the Jews did not offer sacrifices at synagogues. The gathering of the saints for public worship in our own day equates well with the setting in Ecclesiastes. Obedience to the Word of God in private life prepares the believer for participation in public worship. What a sweet spirit of praise would prevail in our churches if we all arrived thus prepared.

[William Barrick](#) on **Drawing Near to Listen** (Eccl 5:1b) - Solomon instructs those who worship in the Temple to listen when they come for worship. Listening presupposes a spoken word. The worshiper comes to hear God's Word from God Himself or from His chosen spokesman. Kelley points out that, "*To listen is to obey. To state the matter thus is to specify Who is to have authority over man's life. It is to be God, and God alone.*" (Borrow [The Burden of God page 94](#)) Listening and obeying the Word of God take place only through submission to Him as Sovereign Lord of one's life. "Draw near to listen" echoes "Go near and hear" in Deuteronomy 5:27+, which specifically identifies God as the speaker and the commitment of the hearer to do what God commands. In contrast, someone might offer "**the sacrifice of fools**" (Eccl 5:1). This might refer to bringing an unqualified sacrificial animal or to offering without the correct heart attitude (cp. 1Sa 15:22; Pr 15:8; 28:9; Heb 11:4). By context, it appears to depict someone going through the motions of offering a sacrifice while spewing a torrent of empty words, but not possessing any awareness of God. Matthew 6:7-8+ offers a similar critique of wordy worship. [Kelley](#) suggests that the reference is to an unruly, noisy, hasty, and self-centered irreverence that refuses to submit to God's word. "**Fool**" occurs three times in this chapter (Eccl 5:1, 3, 4). In all three appearances, the Hebrew word is [kesil](#), which denotes "one who is dull and obstinate" and normally refers to a person's "chosen outlook, rather than his mental equipment." (Borrow [Kidner - Proverbs page 40](#)) This "**fool**" (1) does not engage in a pursuit of wisdom (Prov 17:16), (2) manifests a spiritual, rather than mental, problem (Prov 1:29), (3) enjoys his folly (Prov 26:11), (4) has no reverence for truth (Prov 14:8), and (5) is a menace in society (Prov 13:20; 17:12; 18:6). ([Kidner](#)) One take on the final clause's meaning is that the fools "go from their sacrifices with an easy conscience to plunge again into evil." ([Barton](#)) "Who sin without a thought"¹² represents yet another interpretation. Longman argues that it means "that they are so foolish that they are not even aware that their sacrifices are evil, an offense to God."¹³ Thus, the best translation is the simplest: "they do not know that they are doing evil" (NAU, RSV, NKJV, ESV, NIV). In other words, they are so dull of spiritual understanding that they actually think that they are doing something good and acceptable.

¹² Iain Provan, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 116 and NEB.

¹³ Tremper Longman III, The Book of Ecclesiastes, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 151.

David Hubbard - Fake religion distressed him as much as proud wisdom, vain pleasure, abused justice, or hollow freedom.

Apparently the people took a mechanical attitude toward the sacrifices which God had commanded. They were offering them in huge volume and with great attention to detail. But they were missing the deeper meaning, the key purpose, of those animal offerings. Listening to God is better than sacrifice was the Preacher's word to them (in Ec 5:1). "**The sacrifice of fools**" was empty sacrifice, going through the ritual but missing its meaning. What was the basic purpose of the offerings that God required? It was communion with God expressed by "hear," which means virtually to obey, and "draw near," which frequently describes the intimacy between God and those who go to him for worship and fellowship (Deut. 5:27; Pss. 34:18; 85:9; 1 Kin. 8:59). Therefore, the sacrifices dealt with the major human needs: They brought forgiveness, when accompanied by a contrite heart; they expressed thanksgiving, when the offerer was truly grateful; they fulfilled vows, when God had brought unusual blessing. The sacrifices were the means by which God's people were to declare their total dependence on God. Listening ("hear")—paying attention to God—then, was an essential requirement, if the sacrifices were to have any meaning. The whole requirement of reverent obedience and humble penitence was captured in the clause, "walk prudently," which is literally "watch (or guard) your feet." Here as in Proverbs "feet" summed up a total way of life that could lead toward or away from God: Pr 4:26-27 What were the Preacher's fellow citizens doing wrong? They were treating sacrifices like magic. They thought blood and smoke were what God wanted. They forgot that spirit and heart were essential ingredients of true sacrifice. (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Ecclesiastes](#))

Walter Kaiser - Above all else, do "go to the house of God" (5:1) with a receptive attitude and a readiness to listen rather than lecture God on what He ought to do. Worship is here called "sacrifice" because it is offering to God "the calves of our lips" (cf. Hos. 14:2; Heb. 13:15). (Borrow [Quality Living page 90](#))

Henry Morris - To offer a sacrifice in the temple in a spirit of levity or pride or anything other than humility and repentance is called by Solomon "the sacrifice of fools" (Online [The Remarkable Wisdom of Solomon](#))

I am reminded of David's words in Ps 24:3-4+ -

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has **clean hands** and a **pure heart**, Who has **not lifted up his soul to falsehood**, And has **not sworn deceitfully**.

Ray Stedman - Learn to let God be God; that is the first thing he declares to us. The lessons of life will fall into place when you learn that. God is in charge of life, let him be in charge; take these lessons from his hands. The place to learn that is in the house of God. When you go there, **guard your steps**, i.e., enter thoughtfully, expect to be taught something. In ancient Israel, of course, the house of God was the Temple in Jerusalem. There sacrifices were offered, and explanation was made to the people as to what they meant. There the law was read, and the wisdom of God about life was given to people; this marvelous Old Testament was unfolded, with its tremendous insights into the truth about life, about what humanity basically and fundamentally is. The Temple was the only place in the land where people could learn these things. In our day the house of God is no longer a building. We must be clear about that. You, the people, are the house of God. What the Searcher is saying is that when you gather together as the people of God, be expectant; there is something to be learned. Secondly, he says, listen carefully: ...to draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil. (Ecclesiastes 5:1b RSV) A fool is somebody who glibly utters naive, ingenuous and usually false things. What the Searcher clearly has in mind here is our tendency to complain and murmur about what has been handed us in life. When we gripe and grouse about our circumstances we are really complaining against God. We are complaining about the choice God has made in his wonderful plan for our life. We will never learn to enjoy anything that way, not even our pleasures, let alone our pain. So he says, listen carefully, for among the people of God the truth of God is being declared; the wisdom of God is being set forth. Just this morning a man said to me, "I have been going through a painful experience this past week. I learned to see myself and it horrified me. I saw things in myself which I despise in others." That is encouraging. There is a man who is learning truth about himself.

Bob Utley sets the context

1. Chapters 4-5 form a literary unit. Remember, literary units are the original author(s)' way to explain and illustrate the main points of the whole book by means of literary structure.
2. Chapter 5 begins with a **number of commands** (warnings) about worship:
 1. "**Guard** your steps," Eccl. 5:1, BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 2. "Do not be hasty in word," Eccl. 5:2, BDB 96, KB 111, *Piel* IMPERFECT, but used in a [JUSSIVE](#) sense (like a command)
 3. "Impulsive in thought," Eccl. 5:2, BB 554, KB 553, *Piel* IMPERFECT, but used in a [JUSSIVE](#) sense
 4. "Let your words be few," Eccl. 5:2, BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a [JUSSIVE](#) sense
 5. "Do not be late" (in paying a vow), Eccl. 5:4, BDB 29, KB 34, *Piel* IMPERFECT, but used in a [JUSSIVE](#) sense
 6. "**Pay** what you vow," Eccl. 5:4, BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 7. "Do not say. . .," Eccl. 5:6, BDB 56, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a [JUSSIVE](#) sense
 8. "**Fear** God," Eccl. 5:7, BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The paragraph, Eccl. 5:1-7, deals with proper worship attitudes and procedures. The summary command is in Eccl. 5:7 (i.e., #8).

3. The recurrent conclusions of Qoheleth are

1. Enjoy each day and the simple God-given pleasures of life as they come (Eccl. 2:24-26; 3:12,13,22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9).
2. Fear God (Eccl. 1:7; 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12; 12:13) and keep His commandments (i.e., The Two Ways, cf. Eccl. 12:13)!

NET NOTE - **Guard** your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil.

Beginning with Ec 5:1, the verse numbers through Ec 5:20 in the English Bible differ by one from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (BHS), with Ec 5:1 ET = 4:17 HT, Ec 5:2 ET = 5:1 HT, etc., through Ec 5:20 ET = Ec 5:19 HT. Beginning with Ec 6:1 the verse numbers in the English Bible and the Hebrew Bible are again the same.

GUARD YOUR STEPS Heb “Guard your feet.” The Kethib is the plural רַגְלֶיךָ (raglekha, “your feet”), while the Qere is the singular רַגְלֶךָ (raglékha, “your foot”), which is preserved in several medieval Hebrew MSS and is reflected in the versions (LXX, Aramaic Targum, Vulgate, Syriac Peshitta). For example, the LXX reads ποδὸς σου (poda sou, “your foot”) which reflects רַגְלֶךָ. The exhortation, “**Guard your feet**” is an idiom for “**Watch your steps**,” i.e., “**Be careful what you do**.” This is a compound figure: “foot” is a [metonymy](#) for “step,” and “step” is a [metonymy](#) for “action” (e.g., Job 12:5; 23:11; 31:5; Pss 119:59, 101, 105; Prov 1:16; 3:23; 4:26–27; 6:18; 19:2; Isa 58:13; 59:7; Jer 14:10). For example, “I have refrained my feet from every evil way” (Ps 119:101); see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 648.

HOUSE OF GOD - Heb “the house of God.” The term “house” (בַּיִת, bayit) is a [synecdoche](#) of general (i.e., house) for specific (i.e., temple), e.g., 1 Kgs 6:3; 7:12; 1 Chr 9:11; 2 Chr 3:8; 28:11. See E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 620.

The section warns against rash vows therefore, the nuance “to listen” is more appropriate: the wise man will be slow to speak and quick to listen in the presence of God; however, the fool is unrestrained and speaks rashly.

DRAW NEAR TO LISTEN - Alternately, “to obey.” The term לִשְׁמָעַ (lishmoa’, preposition + Qal infinitive construct from שָׁמַע, shama’, “to hear”) may be taken in one of two ways: (1) literal: “to listen” in contrast to speak or (2) figurative ([metonymy](#) of cause for effect) “to obey” in contrast to sacrifice (HALOT 1572 s.v. שָׁמַע 4; BDB 1033–34 s.v. שָׁמַע). The LXX took the term in the literal sense: το ἀκούειν (tou akouein, “to listen”). The English versions reflect both literal and figurative options: “**obedience**” (NJPS, Douay, NAB, NEB) versus “**to hear** [or listen]” (KJV, ASV, YLT, MLB, RSV, NASB, NIV, NRSV). The section warns against rash vows therefore, the nuance “to listen” is more appropriate: the wise man will be slow to speak and quick to listen in the presence of God; however, the fool is unrestrained and speaks rashly.

SACRIFICE - The term “sacrifice” (זֶבַח, zevakh) is the general term that refers to the thank offering and free will offering (Lev 7:12, 16). This section focuses on making vows in prayer and fulfilling them, such as the vow offering. The term “sacrifice” functions as a [synecdoche](#) of general (i.e., sacrifice) for specific (i.e., vow offering).

OF FOOLS - Heb “the fools, a sacrifice.” The term “fools” (הַכְּסִילִים, hakkésilim) is an adverbial accusative of comparison (e.g., GKC 375 §118.r): “rather than giving a sacrifice like fools” (מִתַּת הַכְּסִילִים זֶבַח, mittet hakkésilim zevakh). Contextually, the “sacrifice” is a rash vow made to God that is not fulfilled. The rash vow is referred to in 5:2 as the “voice of a fool.” Qoheleth admonishes the fool against making a rash vow that is not paid: “When you make a vow to God, do not delay in paying it; for God takes no pleasure in fools: Pay what you vow! It is better for you not to vow than to vow and not pay it” (vv. 4–5 [3–4 HT]).

Draw near (offer, bring near) (07126) [qarab/qarav](#) means to come near or approach. It is a verb which basically indicates coming physically closer. In general **qarab** signifies “approach or coming near someone or something” apart from any sense of intimacy. To come near (1Sa 17:41, Jonah 1:6, et al). To come near or approach (“When they saw him [Joseph] from a distance and before he **came close** to them.” Ge 37:18) Speaks of arrival at a country (“came near to Egypt” Ge 12:11) Of the nearness of a time such as the end of mourning (“The days of mourning for my father are near” Ge 27:41) or time of death (“When the time for Israel to die drew near.” Ge 47:29) Of sexual intimacy (“Abimelech had not come near her” Ge 20:4) Judah refused to **draw near** though invited, even while Moses was told (first use in OT) “**Do not come near** here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” (Ex 3:5). Thus it was used of approaching God (Ex. 3:5; Dt. 4:11; 5:23, 27; Isa. 48:16; 1Sa. 14:36).

Another prohibition to **draw near** involved the adulteress ("do not go near the door of her house" Pr 5:8) Foreigners invited to celebrate Passover ("let him **come near** to celebrate it" Ex 12:48) Israel invited to draw near even in their sin! (**'Come near** before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.") A prayer for God to draw near ("Oh **draw near** to my soul and redeem it" Ps 69:18, cp Ps 119:169). Of bringing or **presenting an offering** ("bringing near one's sacrifice") to the LORD and thus often translated "**offer**" (Lev 2:1, 4, 8, Nu 26:61, 31:50, et al). Since Israel would not draw near for worship, God says "I will **draw near** to you for judgment." (Mal 3:5) Figuratively of plague not coming near (Ps 91:10).

Fools (03684) **kesil** is a stupid fellow, a morally insensitive dullard, whether it be in spiritual, intellectual, or moral matters. These are stupid people who are totally confident in own wisdom, thinking they have it all figured out without God's assistance. **Swanson** adds that **kesil** refers to (1) foolishness, stupidity, insolence, i.e., the state of being in complete lack of understanding, implying rebellion (Pr 10:1); (2) fool, insolent person, i.e., one completely lacking understanding, implying to be a rebel against standard or person (Pr 10:18).

Vine - The **kesil** is "insolent" in religion and "stupid or dull" in wise living (living out a religion he professes)....They have knowledge of God but do not properly evaluate or understand what they know...(In Proverbs the fool) rejects the claims and teachings of wisdom. However, in the Bible wisdom is the practical outworking of one's religion. Therefore, even in these contexts there is a clear connotation of insolence in religion. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary](#))

KESIL - 69V - fool(35), fool's(2), foolish(6), foolish man's(1), fools(23), stupid(1), stupid man(1), stupid ones(1). Ps. 49:10; Ps. 92:6; Ps. 94:8; Prov. 1:22; Prov. 1:32; Prov. 3:35; Prov. 8:5; Prov. 10:1; Prov. 10:18; Prov. 10:23; Prov. 12:23; Prov. 13:16; Prov. 13:19; Prov. 13:20; Prov. 14:7; Prov. 14:8; Prov. 14:16; Prov. 14:24; Prov. 14:33; Prov. 15:2; Prov. 15:7; Prov. 15:14; Prov. 15:20; Prov. 17:10; Prov. 17:12; Prov. 17:16; Prov. 17:21; Prov. 17:24; Prov. 17:25; Prov. 18:2; Prov. 18:6; Prov. 18:7; Prov. 19:1; Prov. 19:10; Prov. 19:13; Prov. 19:29; Prov. 21:20; Prov. 23:9; Prov. 26:1; Prov. 26:3; Prov. 26:4; Prov. 26:5; Prov. 26:6; Prov. 26:7; Prov. 26:8; Prov. 26:9; Prov. 26:10; Prov. 26:11; Prov. 26:12; Prov. 28:26; Prov. 29:11; Prov. 29:20; Eccl. 2:14; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:16; Eccl. 4:5; Eccl. 4:13; Eccl. 5:1; Eccl. 5:3; Eccl. 5:4; Eccl. 6:8; Eccl. 7:4; Eccl. 7:5; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:9; Eccl. 9:17; Eccl. 10:2; Eccl. 10:12; Eccl. 10:15

Read through the uses of kesil in Proverbs for a more complete Biblical understanding of a **fool** - e.g., they are complacent, they will be destroyed, etc (Pr 1:32). Then read [Torrey's description of Fools](#)

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

Ecclesiastes 5:1 To draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools. (r.v.)

This is certainly half of our business, when we kneel to pray. It is a drawing nigh to hear. One has truly said that the closet is not so much an oratory, in the narrow sense of making requests, as an observatory, from which we get new views of God, and new revelations of Him.

We are all inclined to be rash with our mouth. We rush into the presence of God, leave our card as on a morning call, and then plunge into the eager rush of our life. We have spoken to Him, but not stayed to hear what He would say in reply. We have suggested many things to Him, but have not sought for his comments, or suggestions, in return. We do not take time to fix the heart's gaze on the unseen and eternal, or to abstract our mind from the voices of the world, so as to hear the still small voice that speaks in silence and solitude.

"Only the waters which in perfect stillness lie Give back an undistorted image of the sky."

Keep thy foot; take off the shoes from thy feet, when entering the Presence-chamber, whether alone or with others. Walk warily and reverently; behold He is near, before whom angels veil their faces with their wings. Come into his presence with holy fear. Let there be no irreverence in demeanor. One writes of the late Mr. Gladstone, "The House of God seemed to be to him at all times just what its name implied; and it is impossible to think of him at any service missing a response, or forgetting ax 'Amen.' Devotion, earnestness, and concentrated attention were the regular attributes of his nature when engaged in worship. He realized in the simplest fashion that worship was communing with God."

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 A Portrait of a True Worshiper

First, we are to enter the place of worship to listen (vv. 1-3).

Second, we are to enter worship intending to keep the commitments we make to God (vv. 4-6).

Third, we enter worship in awe of God (v. 7). (Today in the Word)

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 In God's Presence

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. --Proverbs 1:7

As a farm boy in North Dakota, I often had a sense of awe when I looked at the sky on a clear day or when I listened to the rolling thunder of an approaching storm. God seemed so great, and I felt so small. I often had the same feeling when I entered the church sanctuary or heard my father pray. Today, though, I admit that at times I tend to be quite casual when I think of God, pray, study the Bible, or engage in worship.

When we assemble to worship, sing, pray, and listen to the message, we often do these things half-heartedly and with little sense of the fear of God. Ecclesiastes 5 speaks to those issues and warns us not to make promises to God carelessly and superficially!

We are inclined to hear only part of what God is saying to us through His Word. But genuine hearing includes careful listening accompanied by obedience. Unkept vows are also a serious matter (vv.2,4-6). Just as many dreams have no basis in reality, the careless speech of the fool in God's presence is empty (vv.3,7).

Always keep in mind how great and holy God is, and how small and sinful we are. Thank Him for His mercy and grace. This solemn contemplation of the Lord's character will help us obey the admonition to "fear God" (v.7). —Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

A house of worship is a place
For praise and reverent prayer;
Let holy thoughts your spirit fill
Each time you enter there.
--Bosch

The fear of God is the beginning of true worship

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) WATCH YOUR MOUTH!

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words. Ecclesiastes 5:1-3

God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few." This is more than just good advice; Solomon has stated a fundamental truth of the spiritual life. While reading the Book of Proverbs I stumbled onto another verse from Solomon that made me stop and think. It's a verse the Lord applied directly to me.

The verse is Proverbs 10:8: "The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin." That's a wonderful picture, isn't it? A chattering fool. A simpleton with a dunce cap talking up a storm.

I once knew a woman like that. She had had a hard life and along the way something seemed to come loose inside her brain. Every time I

saw her I knew I was in for a twenty-minute monologue. She wasn't complaining, really, just spouting nonstop talk. If you tried to interrupt her she would raise her voice and start talking faster. If she got you cornered there was no escape. I suppose you would call her a compulsive talker.

What's more, she came to church every Sunday and was as loyal as she could be. Whenever we had a church supper, she would be in there with the rest of the women talking ninety miles an hour. We became good friends, and many times I was glad to see her because when we talked I didn't have to say anything.

Something like that must have been in Solomon's mind when he wrote this proverb. A "chattering fool" is someone who just won't stop talking. And in context, it must refer to a person who always has an explanation, a reason, an excuse for not doing what he is supposed to do.

That's hard, isn't it? Just to do what you are told. Most kids have a hard time learning that. So do most adults. Our natural impulse when we are told to do something is to ask, "Why?" That presumes that unless we fully understand or agree, we don't have to obey. As a general principle, that kind of attitude will get you into trouble more often than not.

I've been thinking about that in my own life. All too often I talk as an excuse not to obey. When a soldier is given an order, the proper response is obedience, not discussion. There is a time to talk and a time to listen, and there is also a time to do what you are told.

As Solomon says, when the time for obedience has come, too much talk makes you look like a chattering fool.

Lord, I pray for the gift of saying more with fewer words. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How do you cure a person who talks too much?
- Would other people say that you talk too much? What steps can we all take to become promise keepers and not promise breakers?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD

Read Proverbs 10:8; Matthew 6:6-8; and 2 Timothy 2:16.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:2 Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:1 μ σπε δε π στ ματ σου κα καρδ α σου μ ταχυν τω το ξεν γκαι λ γον πρ προσ που το θεο τι θε ς ν τ ο ρ αν κα σ π τ ς γ ς π το τ στωσαν ο λ γοι σου λ γοι

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:2 Be not hasty with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be swift to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven above, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:2 Do not be rash with your mouth or hasty in your heart to bring up a matter before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth! Therefore, let your words be few.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:2 Do not be hasty to speak, and do not be impulsive to make a speech before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:2 Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:2 Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:2 Don't make rash promises, and don't be hasty in bringing matters before God. After all, God is in heaven, and you are here on earth. So let your words be few.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:2 Cause not thy mouth to hasten, and let not thy heart hasten to bring out a word before God, for God is in the heavens, and thou on the earth, therefore let thy words be few.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:1 Be in no hurry to speak; do not hastily declare yourself before God; for God is in heaven, you on earth. Be sparing, then, of speech:

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:2 Never be rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be quick to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:1 Be not hasty in your utterance and let not your heart be quick to make a promise in God's presence. God is in heaven and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:2 Don't be in a hurry to talk. Don't be eager to speak in the presence of God. Since God is in heaven and you are on earth, limit the number of your words.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:2 Be not unwise with your mouth, and let not your heart be quick to say anything before God, because God is in heaven and you are on the earth -- so let not the number of your words be great.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:2 Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.

- not rash: Ge 18:27,30,32 28:20,22 Nu 30:2-5 Judges 11:30 1Sa 14:24-45 Mk 6:23
- thing: or, word
- for: Ps 115:3 Isa 55:9 Mt 6:9, let thy , Ec 5:3,7 Pr 10:19 Mt 6:7 Jas 3:2

Related Passages:

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

Matthew 6:7+ “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

Matthew 12:36+ “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

BREVITY IN PRAYER BETTER THAN VERBOSITY

Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God- CSB = "Do not be hasty to speak, and do not be impulsive to make a speech before God."

Solomon exhorts worshipers to discipline their minds and their mouths.

[William Barrick](#) on **Avoiding Hastiness** (Eccl 5:2a)- The first caution against haste addresses the mouth, but the second one addresses the heart (literally, “do not let your heart hurry to cause a word to go out before God”). Biblical wisdom literature warns against hasty words and actions (Eccl 7:9, “eager”; Ec 8:3; Pr 10:19; 20:21; 21:5; 25:8; 28:20, 22; 29:20; Ps 115:3). Hastiness begins in the thoughts then proceeds to the mouth. Solomon exhorts worshipers to discipline their minds and their mouths. God is present everywhere, so the worshiper must always live with that reality, even outside the Temple.

For (term of explanation) explains the admonition against hasty words.

God is in heaven and you are on the earth God is transcendent, exalted, holy (Isa 57:15), and all-knowing. **On the earth** refers to our human limitation for we are finite, sinful, and bound by time and space. This gives us a proper perspective of our position so that we might rightly and reverentially come before Him, not as equals, but as created beings continually dependent on His grace and mercy.

[William Barrick](#) - By declaring that “**God is in heaven**,” Solomon indicates the dwelling-place of God. However, the statement refers to perspective more than to distance. God is above and beyond this world—beyond the sun. His greatness exceeds anything this world has to offer. Therefore, biblical prayer does not seek to manipulate God the way idolaters attempt to do with their deities. Prayer provides the believer with the opportunity to speak openly with the Lord of all creation. When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He also referred to God being in heaven (Matt 6:9).

Therefore (term of conclusion) **let your words be few** This doesn't mean we shouldn't speak to God, but that our prayers should be thoughtful, humble, and sincere and in context warns against rash vows, empty promises, or wordy religiosity. More words do not equal more holiness. God values heart obedience over verbose speech.

*Neither the volume, nor the eloquence,
nor the frequency of prayers were what influenced Him.
In no way could God be manipulated into answering prayer.*

David Hubbard - Prayer was solemn conversation with a mysterious God. The vast gap between human-kind and God—a gap measured by the difference between “heaven” and “earth”—demanded sobriety, not extravagance (ED: NOT "HASTY" WORDS). Neither the volume, nor the eloquence, nor the frequency of prayers were what influenced Him. In no way could God be manipulated into answering prayer. What He would hear were the simple, sincere, brief words of those who truly submitted to His majesty and sought His help. (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 16: Ecclesiastes](#))

Walter Kaiser on **Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought** - And thereby we are rebuked for all pretense, hypocrisy, and superficial religiosity that hopes to be heard for its “much speaking.” Limits are imposed only on the petitioner's pretense, and not on the length of his prayers. There may be times when a person's importunity demonstrates the value and importance of what he asks from God, even as Jacob refused to let the Angel of the Lord go until He blessed him (Gen. 32:26). On the other hand, only fools babble on relentlessly, like a man who has had a busy day and experiences dream after dream all night long (Ec 5:3). (Borrow

THOUGHT - Consider this prayer - Lord, by Your Spirit help me not to come before You with a flood of careless words, but with a heart that listens and obeys, teaching me to honor Your greatness with reverence and truth for the sake of Your Son. Amen.

Ray Stedman on **God is in heaven** - Almost everybody takes the phrase, "God is in heaven." to mean that God is off somewhere, high above the universe, watching the affairs of men, while we insignificant pygmies struggle along down here. But that is not what this is saying at all. Heaven is not some distant place. In the Bible, heaven always means the invisible world of reality, what is going on that we cannot see but yet is really there. God is in that realm, and that is why he sees much more than we do. As I look out on this congregation this morning I see your bodies. They reveal certain things -- some of you are interested, some of you are asleep. If I were to pray for you, however, there is no way I could understand the tremendous complexity and depth of struggle that many of you are going through. But God does. God not only sees you, he sees what is inside of you, what even you cannot see. He sees your heredity, your environment, your struggles. He sees every one of us that way. Remember that when you are dealing with God. When he speaks to you through his word, that word is so much more true than anything you can come up with as an explanation of life because God sees all of life, from beginning to end. He is in heaven and you upon earth, so for heaven's sake, don't start griping about what God has handed you. That is the Searcher's argument. The saints have had to learn this lesson from time immemorial. It is reflected in a hymn by William Cowper,

His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never ending skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.
You fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds you so much dread,
are big with mercies, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

The Last Word

Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. Ecclesiastes 5:2

One day during a university philosophy class, a student made some inflammatory remarks about the professor's views. To the surprise of the other students, the teacher thanked him and moved on to another comment. When he was asked later why he didn't respond to the student, he said, "I'm practicing the discipline of not having to have the last word."

This teacher loved and honored God, and he wanted to embody a humble spirit as he reflected this love. His words remind me of another Teacher—this one from long ago, who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. Although not addressing how to handle an angry person, he said that when we approach the Lord we should guard our steps and "go near to listen" rather than being quick with our mouths and hasty in our hearts. By doing so we acknowledge that God is the Lord and we are those whom He has created (Ecclesiastes 5:1–2).

How do you approach God? If you sense that your attitude could use some adjustment, why not spend some time considering the majesty and greatness of the Lord? When we ponder His unending wisdom, power, and presence, we can feel awed by His overflowing love for us. With this posture of humility, we too need not have the last word. Amy Boucher Pye (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord God, I want to honor You and I bow before You now in silence. Teach me how to pray and how to listen.

Carefully chosen words honor God.

Today's Insights The power and significance of our words is a repeated topic in Scripture. Following the admonitions of Proverbs and anticipating the words of Jesus and James (see Proverbs 10:13, 32; 12:16–17; 13:3; 16:1; Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45; James 3:3–12), the writer of Ecclesiastes warns about controlling our tongues. Why do we need to watch what we say? Because our words are a recognition of who we are in relationship to God. When the writer warns, "God is in heaven and you are on earth" (Ecclesiastes 5:2), he is saying that humility is the proper attitude toward our words because we do not know everything. Being

“quick with your mouth” (v. 2) may lead us to say things that are untrue and make plans based on wrong information. How does knowing that God—the Creator of the universe—is in heaven and we are on earth help you to humbly choose your words?

Ecclesiastes 5:3 For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:3 For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:2 τι παραγ νεται ν πνιον ν πλ θει περισπασμο κα φων φρονος ν πλ θει λ γων

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:3 For through the multitude of trial a dream comes; and a fool's voice is with a multitude of words.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:3 Just as dreams come when there are many cares, so the rash vow of a fool occurs when there are many words.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:3 For dreams result from much work and a fool's voice from many words.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:3 For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:3 As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:3 Too much activity gives you restless dreams; too many words make you a fool.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:3 For the dream hath come by abundance of business, and the voice of a fool by abundance of words.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:2 From too much worrying comes illusion, from too much talking, the accents of folly.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:3 For dreams come with many cares, and a fool's voice with many words.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:2 For nightmares come with many cares, and a fool's utterance with many words.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:3 Daydreaming comes when there are too many worries. Careless speaking comes when there are too many words.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:3 As a dream comes from much business, so the voice of a foolish man comes with words in great number.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:3 For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.

- **fool:** Ec 10:12-14 Pr 10:19 15:2

WHEN WORDS REPLACE WISDOM

For (term of explanation) uses a proverb-like saying to explain the previous passage. Basically Solomon is saying hasty prayers (or any other irreverent approach) are like a crazy dream, and we all know how real our dreams can seem when we awake, only to realize they are not reality and have no substance!

The dream comes through much effort ([inyan](#)) **and the voice of a fool** ([kesil](#); Lxx - [aphron](#)) **through many words** (verbosity) - **NET** = "Just as dreams come when there are many cares, so the rash vow of a fool occurs when there are many words." **NIV** = "As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words." **The dream comes through much effort** speaks of stress and anxiety (Can you identify with that? I can!) This suggests that an abundance of activity or striving leads to dreams, which may be empty, illusory, or overwhelming. Notice how to detect a **fool** - listen for his many words. In other words foolishness prompts wordiness! In short, fools speak much but say little (of substance or value)!

THOUGHT- This verse reminds us that not all speech is valuable—and that in the presence of God, reverent silence is often more appropriate than a flood of hollow words. The fool is not necessarily insincere, but he is careless. He talks much but reflects little. Just as overwork can exhaust and distort our sleep, over-talking can exhaust and distort our worship. In an age of constant noise—texts, tweets, endless opinions—God calls us to

quiet reverence and thoughtful reflection. We should not speak hastily in prayer, in church, or in spiritual matters. When you pray today, speak less—and listen more. Let your heart weigh each word before your lips release it. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you avoid thoughtless repetition and instead approach God in sincerity, brevity, and faith.

*Honor God with reverent sincerity—
not verbosity.*

William Barrick on **the dream** - The “dream” might be nothing more than “day-dreams, reducing worship to verbal doodling.” (Borrow [The message of Ecclesiastes : a time to mourn, and a time to dance](#)) **“Much effort”** (Eccl 5:3) identifies what distracts an individual from the proper exercise of worship and causes the increase of hasty words. Context indicates that the meaning probably involves the thought that “many have delusions of their competence before God and acceptability to him.” (Borrow [Duane Garrett](#)) The reader of the New Testament cannot but be reminded of James 1:19+, “This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.”

One recalls Jesus' similar words in Mt 6:7+ "And when you are praying, **do not use meaningless repetition** as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be **heard for their many words.**"

David Hubbard - A piety gone stale permitted vain, dream-like babbling as a substitute for prayer. No wonder the Preacher took pains to point out its futility. (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 16: Ecclesiastes](#))

Walter Kaiser - only fools babble on relentlessly, like a man who has had a busy day and experiences dream after dream all night long (Ec 5:3). (Borrow [Quality Living](#))

John Butler - The illustration of a dream being caused by much activity, so in like manner, many words indicate and produce a fool. The injunction to “let thy words be few” is good for any situation in life.

Effort (06045) **inyan** from **anah** - to be occupied, busied. Inyan means a task, a burden, a job to be performed, a responsibility to be met, a need to be satisfied. Appears only in Ecclesiastes often with a negative connotation—wearisome labor under the sun. Solomon spoke of the task that God has allotted to humanity (Ec 3:10) and declared that it is a grievous one, full of pain and leading nowhere (Ec 1:13; 2:23). It is significant that he chose to describe life as a task, an assignment, rather than as a pleasure or a source of satisfaction. Man just does his job over and over again, with no good result in view. The sinner spends his life gathering resources, only to give them to the good (2:26). Even the good gathers riches only to die and have them pass to someone else (4:8). In a slightly different idiom, the writer declares that hoarding riches and not receiving the benefit is an evil affair, a bad business (5:14). Solomon said that he tried to determine the nature of life, the meaning of man's task, but found the inquiry impossible (8:16). In 5:3, the Preacher declares that a dream comes through a task, perhaps an idiom for much effort.

INYAN - 8V - effort(1), investment(1), task(6). Eccl. 1:13; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:10; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 5:3; Eccl. 5:14; Eccl. 8:16

Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow!

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed--

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:3 καθ ὅς ν ἐξ ἐχ τ θε μ χρόν σς το ποδο ναι α τ ν τι ο κ σπιν θ λημα ν φροσιν σ ν σα ν ἐξ π δος

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:4 Whenever thou shalt vow a vow to God, defer not to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools: pay thou therefore whatsoever thou shalt have vowed.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in paying it. For God takes no pleasure in fools: Pay what you vow!

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a vow to God, don't delay fulfilling it, because He does not delight in fools. Fulfill what you vow.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:4 When thou vowest a vow to God, delay not to complete it, for there is no pleasure in fools; that which thou vowest -- complete.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:3 If you make a vow to God, discharge it without delay, for God has no love for fools. Discharge your vow.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:3 When you make a vow to God, delay not its fulfillment. For God has no pleasure in fools; fulfill what you have vowed.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you make a promise to God, don't be slow to keep it because God doesn't like fools. Keep your promise.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you take an oath before God, put it quickly into effect, because he has no pleasure in the foolish; keep the oath you have taken.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:4 When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow.

- **vow:** Ge 28:20 35:1,3 Nu 30:2 De 23:21-23 Ps 50:14 76:11 119:106 Isa 19:21 Mt 5:33
- **for:** Ps 147:10,11 Mal 1:10 Heb 10:6
- **pay:** Ps 66:13,14 116:14,16-18 Jon 2:9

Related Passages:

Psalm 76:11 **Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill them;** Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared. (Vowing and paying cannot be separated)

PROMISES MADE PROMISES KEPT

When you make a vow ([neder](#); Lxx - [euche](#)) **to God, do not be late in paying it; for**(term of explanation) **He takes no delight in fools** ([kesil](#); Lxx - [aphron](#)). **NET** = "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in paying it. For God takes no pleasure in fools: Pay what you vow!" We see this painfully played out in the life of Jephthah who appears to have lost his daughter as a result of keeping his vow (see Jdg 11:29–40+). Delay in fulfilling a vow may suggest insincerity, forgetfulness, or deceit. God is not mocked and does not overlook such carelessness. A **fool** in this context is not intellectually deficient but spiritually careless—treating God lightly or making empty promises. While fools delay, the faithful obey, so vow carefully and pay promptly.

Pay what you vow! This is a direct command to follow through, because God values faithful obedience over impulsive commitments.

David Hubbard - Vows played a prominent part in the lives of Israel's men and women. A vow was one way to show how seriously they took their need to God. In times of emergency they used vows to underline their prayer requests (1 Sam. 1:11; Ps. 22:25–26). A barren woman who longed for a son, a frightened soldier under enemy attack, an innocent person accused of serious crime—each might vow to offer a special sacrifice to God if God would deliver him or her from the predicament. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 132](#))

Henry Morris - Ec 5:4–7 deal with the question of making vows or promises to God. In the Old Testament economy, there were definite instructions relative to vows. Vows were not required, but once made, God expected them to be kept. "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee, and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee" (Deut. 23:21–22). Note also Numbers 30:1–16; etc. In the New Testament formal vows, especially if taken in the name of the Lord, were actually discouraged by Christ (Matt. 5:33–37) and the

apostle James (James 5:12). However, if a Christian does make a vow to God, he should certainly keep it (unless, of course, the vow itself was contrary to God's Word). Note the sad case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10). (Online [The Remarkable Wisdom of Solomon](#))

William Barrick on Apprehending Promises to God (Eccl 5:4–7) In this next section, the commands include: “do not be late” in fulfilling the vow (Eccl 5:4), “Pay what you vow” (Eccl 5:4), “Do not let your speech cause you to sin” (Eccl 5:6), “do not say . . . that it was a mistake” (Eccl 5:6), and “fear God” (Eccl 5:7). These verses address the matter of making vows. Even in the New Testament, Christians make vows (Acts 21:23). The Apostle Paul himself took a vow (Acts 18:18). Jesus taught His disciples about unconditional integrity and truthfulness in Matthew 5:33–37 that does not rule out making promises for serving God. Christians must maintain a life of integrity. If anyone makes a vow, he or she must fulfill it in order to maintain integrity of life and word in God's presence. Jephthah's vow (Judges 11) stands as one of the most well-known examples of a rash vow. Exhibit “A” in the matter of insincere or deceptive promises has to be the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–11. See Deuteronomy 23:21–23 and Proverbs 20:25. Biblical vows primarily involve dedicating or giving things to the Lord. One vows to give oneself, a child, money, animals, or sacrifices. Rash vows most often involve saying something is “holy” (Prov 20:25) that probably should not be considered as such. Rash vows could be reversed (Num 30:6–8). Since the New Testament believers are priests of God (1 Pet 2:9), they have the spiritual authority to nullify their own rash vows. Every believer must remove all foolishness from his or her life and pursue wholesome speech (Eph 4:29) and thoughts (Phil 4:8). Have you been guilty of making a rash promise to God? Determine not to make such vows again.

William Barrick on **Fulfilling Commitments** (Eccl 5:4–5) - The message of these two verses stands out clearly. Believers should keep their promises to God—without delay. Only a fool makes promises that he cannot or that she should not have made. Resist making vows in times of trial. If, however, you do make a vow, know that God expects you to fulfill it.

THOUGHT- Vows are not casual remarks tossed before God in moments of emotion. God listens. God remembers. And God expects integrity from those who approach Him. God doesn't require us to make vows, but if we freely offer one, we are bound to fulfill it. Delaying what we promised is treating God as if His presence and holiness do not matter. The fool here is one who speaks lightly before a holy God—perhaps with good intentions, but no follow-through. Have you ever told God, “I'll serve You if...” or “I'll give this...” in a crisis—but then forgot or excused it later? God remembers. Go back and fulfill it. Honor your word. Don't vow hastily. Follow through even when it's costly or inconvenient. Let your yes be yes (read Matthew 5:33–37+) God is holy. Coming before Him with careless lips is spiritual folly.

Vow (05088) **neder** from **nadar** = to vow) conveys the root idea of verbally consecrating (or dedicating to the service) of God. A voluntary promise made to God, often in return for deliverance or blessing (e.g., Hannah's vow in 1 Samuel 1:11). Neder is a noun describes the vow that was sworn or taken. The first aspect for making a vow to Yahweh is a transaction in which the human promises something, usually a sacrifice or abstinence from an act, in exchange for a deed to be performed by Yahweh. A prime example is found in the account of Jephthah (Judg. 11:30). Making a conditional vow in Ge 28:20-21. Make a vow to abstain (Ps 132:2 with specifics of the vow in Ps 132:3-5). It denotes a voluntary obligation in a context of a promise made to Yahweh, generally in exchange for divine favor, as the terms of nāḏar usually center upon divine aid. Baker says it is “an oral, voluntary promise to give or do something as an expression of consecration or devotion to the service of God. 1Sa 1:11 Hannah vowed a life long vow for her son Samuel. God required a lifelong vow of Samson (Jdg 13:5+).

“The word **neder** is related to the verb נָדַר (**nāḏar**, “to make a vow”). A neder in the OT is always a vow made to God, never between two human beings. The neder is either the result of the vow or the thing offered to fulfill a vow. It was a type of thank offering in return for God's favor (Num 21:1–3), and it could either accompany or be a burnt offering (Lev 22:18; Psa 66:13) or a peace offering (Lev 7:16). Numbers 30:2 mentions not only a neder but also an oath (שְׁבוּעָה, šəbū'â) and the obligation (אִסָּר, 'issār) and is therefore instructive when considering how these terms differ. The vow (neder) was vowed (nāḏar) and sealed (שָׁבַע, šāba') with an oath (šəbū'â) of binding obligation ('issār).” (Lexham Theological Wordbook)

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) **HOW TO MAKE GOD ANGRY**

When you make a vow to God, do not defy in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, “My vow was a mistake.” Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God. Ecclesiastes 5:4-7

And now, a word about worship. After considering so many of life's harsh realities, it's as if Solomon wants to remind us that through

genuine worship we can come into contact with the living God. (In fact, Bible scholar Louis Goldberg describes Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 as a kind of interlude in the book.)

But even here there are warnings. When you worship, listen first (w. 1-3). If you make a vow to God, keep it (w. 4-6). Finally, stand in awe of God (w. 7).

That leads me to share some good news and some bad news about your worship. The good news is you can worship God anywhere. I agree with those who say you don't have to go to church to worship God.

That's true, and lots of people who go to church don't worship anyway. They come by force of habit or in order to see their friends. Worship is the last thing on their minds. You can worship anytime or anywhere as long as you catch a glimpse of God's holiness. When you see God, you'll worship no matter where you are.

That's the good news. The bad news is as bad as the good news is good. Although you can worship God anywhere, you cannot worship Him halfheartedly. There is no such thing as halfhearted worship. Oh, there's religious routine and repetitive ritual, but true worship grips the mind and heart and soul.

Once during a radio interview I was asked why so many church members seem apathetic about their faith. I told the interviewer it's because our churches are filled with people who don't believe in God. They are theoretical Christians and practical atheists. They give lip service to God but live as if He doesn't exist. They are apathetic because God bores them. But as Ravi Zacharias has pointed out, "When man is bored with God, even heaven does not have a better alternative."

During the dark days of World War II, William Temple, then Archbishop of Canterbury, declared in a radio address to the people of England, "This world can be saved from political chaos and collapse by one thing only, and that is worship."

Does that sound preposterous? Listen to his definition of worship: "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God." If that is what worship really is, perhaps the archbishop was correct. Only worship can save us. And we will never worship as long as we are bored with God. And God will bore us until we get a glimpse of His holiness.

Holy Father, open my eyes that I might truly see You, and having seen You, to see myself as You see me. I pray to be holy as You are holy. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Why are some people bored with God? What is the cure for that kind of boredom?
- Describe the most meaningful experience you've had in the last few months.

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Judges 11:30-40; and Matthew 5:33-37.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 Unkept Promises

We live in an era of unkept promises. Nations sign important treaties and then break them at will. And many couples show little regard for their wedding vows. In this kind of society, we who are God's people should be known for keeping our promises.

The brilliant Christian scholar and writer C. S. Lewis took that truth seriously. He was determined to pay what he had vowed. His biography tells of the suffering he endured because he kept a promise he had made to a buddy during World War I. This friend was worried about the care of his wife and small daughter if he should be killed in battle, so Lewis assured him that if that were to happen he would look after them. As the war dragged on, the man was killed. True to his word, Lewis took care of his friend's family. Yet no matter how helpful he tried to be, the woman was ungrateful, rude, arrogant, and domineering. Through it all, Lewis kept forgiving her. He refused to let her actions become an excuse to renege on his promise. -H.V.L. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:4 γὰρ ὅτι μὲν ἐξασθα σὲ τὸ ἐξασθα σὲ καὶ μὴ ποδοῦναι

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better for you not to vow than to vow and not pay it.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:5 Better that you do not vow than that you vow and not fulfill it.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better to say nothing than to make a promise and not keep it.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:5 Better that thou do not vow, than that thou dost vow and dost not complete.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:4 Better a vow unmade than made and not discharged.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not fulfill it.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:4 You had better not make a vow than make it and not fulfill it.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better not to make a promise than to make one and not keep it.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better not to take an oath than to take an oath and not keep it.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

- De 23:22 Pr 20:25 Ac 5:4

BETTER TO BE SILENT THAN TO BE FALSE

It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. To vow and not pay was an insult to God. God brought judgment on those who did not fulfill their vow. The message is don't promise lightly to God! God doesn't delight in our lofty spiritual declarations if they lack follow-through. In contrast to human courts that may excuse broken promises with apologies, God considers a broken vow a matter of serious dishonor. He desires truth in the inward parts (Psalm 51:6).

A vow not made is safe.

A vow not kept is sin.

David Hubbard - faithfulness in keeping vows is better than fickleness (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 16: Ecclesiastes](#))

Ecclesiastes 5:5 KEEPING OUR VOWS

Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.—Ecclesiastes 5:5

I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. Psalm 116:14

The night before a scheduled attack, many soldiers wrote letters to their parents. The chaplain who censored the mail was unable to read them until after the battle had taken place. When he did, he found two were in the same handwriting—one penned before and one after the brief but intense engagement. In the first, the young soldier wrote his mother, ". . . I vow to God that if I come through tomorrow, I am going to be a better man." The second letter, written after the danger was over, was addressed to a friend in another regiment. ". . . I've just come through a scorcher up front. . . . If you can get leave and meet me in Paris, boy, we'll go out on the town!" The vow made in the face of great danger had been quickly forgotten.

The writer of Psalm 116 had already experienced deliverance when he wrote his song of praise. He had been in deep distress because he had stood at the very door of death. Rejecting the counsel of men that no help was available, he had cried out to God in faith and hope, pledging allegiance and worship to Him. The Lord had restored him to health, and now he was determined to fulfill the vows he had made. First, he would go to the house of God; and in the presence of the worshipers pour out the drink offering, the "cup of salvation," as a testimonial of his full surrender. Secondly, standing in awe at the thought that a simple person such as he, was precious to God, he would publicly acknowledge Jehovah's mercy (Ps 116:14-16). Thirdly, he would present an offering of thanksgiving to the Lord, something of worth to display his love and gratitude. Unlike the fickle soldier, the Psalmist did not forget the vows he had made while in distress.

Are you keeping your vows to God?

Salvation's cup of blessing now

I take, and call upon God's name;

Be f ore His saints I pay my vow,

And here my gratitude proclaim.

— Psalter

Ecclesiastes 5:6 Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:5 μ ὁ ς τ σ τ μ α σου το ἑαμαρτ σαι τ ν σ ρκα σου κα μ ε π ς πρ προσ που το θεο τι γνοι στιν να μ ργισθ θε ς π φων σου κα διαφθε ρ τ ποι ματα χειρ ν σου

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:6 Suffer not thy mouth to lead thy flesh to sin; and say not in the presence of God, It was an error: lest God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the works of thy hands.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:6 Do not let your mouth cause you to sin, and do not tell the priest, "It was a mistake!" Why make God angry at you so that he would destroy the work of your hands?"

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:6 Do not let your mouth bring guilt on you, and do not say in the presence of the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry with your words and destroy the work of your hands?

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:6 Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:6 Don't let your mouth make you sin. And don't defend yourself by telling the Temple messenger that the promise you made was a mistake. That would make God angry, and he might wipe out everything you have achieved.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger, that 'it is an error,' why is God wroth because of thy voice, and hath destroyed the work of thy hands?

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:5 Do not allow your mouth to make a sinner of you, and do not say to the messenger that it was a mistake. Why give God occasion to be angry with you and ruin all the work that you have done?

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake; why should God be angry at your words, and destroy the work of your hands?

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:5 Let not your utterances make you guilty, and say not before his representative, "It was a mistake," lest God be angered by such words and destroy the works of your hands.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:6 Don't let your mouth talk you into committing a sin. Don't say in the presence of a temple messenger, "My promise was a mistake!" Why should God become angry at your excuse and destroy what you've accomplished?

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:6 Let not your mouth make your flesh do evil. And say not before the angel, It was an error. So that God may not be angry with your words and put an end to the work of your hands.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:6 Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake; why should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands?

- **speech:** Ec 5:1,2 Jas 1:26 Jas 3:2
- **the messenger** Lev 5:4,5 Ge 48:16 Ho 12:4,5 Mal 2:7 3:1 Ac 7:30-35 1Co 11:10 1Ti 5:21 Heb 1:14
- **it was a mistake:** Lev 5:4-6 27:9,10
- **destroy:** Hag 1:9-11 2:14-17 1Co 3:13-15 2Jn 1:8

Related Passages:

Matthew 12:36+ "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. (WOE! THIS VERSE FRIGHTENS ME - A HOLY FEAR!)

RASH WORDS THAT BRING WRATH

Do not let your speech cause you to sin ([chata'](#)) - This clause could stand alone by itself! How important are the words that come out of one's mouth! Your words matter. There is danger in making casual commitments. Rash or deceitful promises even in prayer or worship can become **sin** when not fulfilled.

And do not say in the presence of the messenger([malak](#)) *of God* **that it was a mistake** ([shegagah](#); Lxx - [agnoia](#) = ignorance, "not knowing better") - **Messenger** ([malak](#)) can mean a priest (cf Mal 2:7+), temple official, or even an angel. The point is do not try to back out of your vow by claiming to the **messenger** it was an error. God is not deceived by excuses. Whether before a "messenger" (a pastor, teacher, or church body), or in private prayer, God is a witness to all vows.

*Don't vow lightly,
and don't excuse lightly.*

Why should God be angry ([qatsaph](#); Lxx - [orgizo](#)) **on account of your voice** (what you said) **and destroy** (Lxx - [diaphtheiro](#)) **the work of your hands** - NET - "Do not let your mouth cause you to sin, and do not tell the priest, "It was a mistake!" Why make God angry at you so that he would destroy the work of your hands?" God hears our words and holds us accountable for them. **Work of your hands** refers to divine judgment or discipline. God may bring negative consequences for those who treat Him lightly or break their spiritual commitments. This probably refers to one's material wealth. Note that the word in Greek (Lxx - [diaphtheiro](#)) means utterly destroy! Reckless words can lead to wrecked words! Woe! The "destruction of the work of your hands" implies real-world consequences.

David Hubbard - Apparently one way to get out of the vow was to tell the priest or the temple representative sent to collect the pledge (called here "the messenger") that it was a mistake...."Error" (**mistake** - Heb. shegāgāh) suggests an inadvertent or unintended mistake. It is the regular word for unintentional sin in the ritual laws (Lev. 4:2, 22, 27; Num. 15:24–29). Such excuse-making carries no weight with God but actually provokes his anger. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 132](#))

William Barrick - Who is "the messenger" in this verse? Potential identifications include the angel of the LORD, a prophet (cp. Hag 1:13; Mal 3:1), a priest (Mal 2:7), or a priest's messenger. In ancient Israel, believers would inform the priests of their vows and the priests (or priests' agents) would remind the individual and even receive any sacrifices that had been promised). In this situation a person tells the messenger that it was all "a mistake," an inadvertent error (cp. Lev 4:22–35; Num 15:22–31). Vows should be intentional, not unintentional. God finds no pleasure in foolish promises. Claiming an error in such a situation is tantamount to admitting that the vow was made in haste. The results, when God judges or disciplines such foolish people can be catastrophic—even resulting in the destruction of the work of one's hands.

THOUGHT - What we say in the presence of God does not evaporate. It echoes. In the Old Testament, making a vow was serious. Claiming later, "It was a mistake," is like treating God as a bystander rather than the Holy One who hears and records. We often think our words are ours to take back, but in God's presence, every word is weighty (Mt 12:36+) This verse teaches that God is not mocked (Gal 6:7+). Words of worship, commitment, or promise should be thoughtful, sincere, and followed through. Have I ever treated a spiritual promise like a casual conversation? Have I made a commitment, then shrugged it off as a misunderstanding or emotion? What might be the cost of such disregard? Don't rationalize disobedience by saying, "I didn't mean it." The solemn truth in this passage leads into the command in the next verse "Fear God." A holy fear fosters careful speech and faithful obedience.

Mistake ([07684](#)) shegagah from shagag = to go astray, commit sin or error. Means a sin of error or inadvertance. It refers to refers to an inadvertent sin or error that is not consciously committed.

Gilbrant - The error/sin which is described could have occurred in Israel's worship, for the instructions about the sacrifices were to be followed carefully. Failure to do so, if unintentional, could be atoned for by the priest. A proper attitude when presenting an offering by fire and a sin offering atoned for this kind of error (Num. 15:25). If something holy was inadvertently eaten, the offending person had to restore the lost offering and add a penalty of one-fifth (Lev. 22:14). Breaking a law or committing a general offense had to be dealt with (cf. Num. 35:11; Josh. 20:3). This term was among words used to describe errors by rulers (Ecc. 10:5).

Victor Hamilton (TWOT online) - The noun appears nineteen times. Two clusters are particularly important. First is the use in the description of the sin offering (Leviticus 4:2, 22, 27). In Leviticus 4:13 a form of *shāgā*, not *shāgag*, is used. Accompanying this is the use in the description of the guilt/ trespass/reparation offering (Leviticus 5:15, 18). Thus Leviticus 4:22 reads, "When a leader has sinned and has done something inadvertently." Second is the paragraph in Numbers 15:22ff. dealing with atonement for sins of inadvertence (KJV, "ignorance"). Here *shegāgā* occurs seven times: Numbers 15:24, 25 (twice), 26-29. Note again that the paragraph begins, Numbers 15:22, not with a form of *shāgag* but of *shāgā*, our third illustration of the intermingling of these roots.

To the above may be added the following: Eccles. 5:5, "do not tell the messenger/angel that it was an (unintentional) mistake"; Eccles. 10:5, a reference to the "misjudgment" of rulers, Leviticus 22:14; Numbers 35:11, 15; Joshua 20:3, 9 (cities of refuge as places of safety for perpetrators of acts of unintentional unpremeditated murder).

Protestant theology has been dominated by two basic concepts of sin. One concept is that sin is the breaking of a law knowingly or unknowingly. This is the objective view of sin or the legal interpretation. And certainly the illustrations above taken from Leviticus 4-5 and Numbers 15 buttress this approach. Sin was a positive violation of the covenant relationship, whether voluntary or involuntary. The presence or absence of volition did not alter the objective situation. Sins done in "ignorance" were still sins and needed atonement.

The other concept we may call the ethical understanding of sin. By this is meant the involvement of the human will and personal responsibility. The emphasis here is on the subjective. Neither view is correct to the exclusion of the other. Both are biblical and must be held in tension.

To return to *shegāgā*, a sin of this type may result from two causes: negligence or ignorance. Either the perpetrator knows the law but unintentionally violates it as in the case of accidental homicide (Numbers 35:22ff.; Deut. 19:4-10; Joshua 20:2-6, 9), or he acts without knowing he did wrong. Some illustrations of sins in this category would be: Genesis 20:9 (Abimelech's complaint to Abraham); Numbers 22:34 (Balaam: "I have sinned. I did not know you were standing in my path"). In opposition to these are sins committed with a "high hand" (Numbers 15:30) for which there is no atonement by any means of sacrifice. Here the NT believer can sense something of the inadequacy of the Levitical sacrificial system. The inability of this system to provide a sacrifice even for the presumptuous sin points to the way of a better sacrifice, that found in Christ.

SHEGAGAH - 18V - error(5), mistake(1), unintentionally(14). Lev. 4:2; Lev. 4:22; Lev. 4:27; Lev. 5:15; Lev. 5:18; Lev. 22:14; Num. 15:24; Num. 15:25; Num. 15:26; Num. 15:27; Num. 15:28; Num. 15:29; Num. 35:11; Num. 35:15; Jos. 20:3; Jos. 20:9; Eccl. 5:6; Eccl. 10:5

Angry (07107) **qatsaph** means a strong emotional outburst of anger, especially when man is the subject of the reaction, the first us describing Pharaoh who "was furious." **Qatsaph** is used to give pointed expression to the relationship between two or more persons, one or both of which can be said to feel anger ('ap), have wrath (*hēmā*), indignation (*ka'as*), or express anger ('*ebrā*) as when there is anger, heat, displeasure held or felt within one because of what another has said or done. It is said eleven times that men were wroth, (e.g., Pharaoh, Moses, Naaman, Philistine princes). 23x **qatsaph** is said that God was wroth, whether against the heathen or against his covenant people. As in the present passage it can refer to God being angry or provoked (Deut. 9:7, 8, 22; Zech. 1:2; 8:14). Jehovah's anger at the "strange fire" offered by **Nadab and Abihu** resulted in their death (just as it did for all of the first generation out of Egypt, except for Joshua and Caleb). In Isa 47:6 **qatsaph** speaks of Yahweh's anger that resulted in Judah's exile to Babylon.

Ecclesiastes 5:7 For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, **fear God.**

- **in the:** Ec 5:3 Mt 12:36
- **Rather, fear God:** Ec 7:18 8:12 12:13 Pr 23:17 Isa 50:10,11

Empty Words Before God

EMPTY DREAMS, EMPTY WORDS—FEAR GOD

For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness)

- Note the repetition of "many." Repetition of "many" highlights excess. Just like dreams that are fleeting and unreal, excessive talking in spiritual matters can become hollow, insincere, or distracting. **Many words** refers to religious talk, especially rash vows or verbose prayers that lack sincerity. Many dreams or words can appear spiritual but amount to nothing substantial for they are [hebel](#). Worship without reverence is wind, the sound of emptiness!

Rather, fear ([yare](#); [Lxx](#) - [phobeo](#)) **God** - Less talk, more fear! Fear is not terror, but deep respect, awe-filled obedience, and recognition of God's holiness. This is a command to **fear God**. Stand in awe of God! The [Lxx](#) has [phobeo](#) in the [present imperative](#) and I would submit that believers cannot continually reverentially fear God without [depending on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). This verse serves as a conclusion to the entire section (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7), which warns against careless and insincere speech in worship. It contrasts the vanity of excessive words and visions with the call to reverent fear of God. In a world filled with spiritual talk, ritual, and self-proclaimed visions, Solomon calls us back to the heart of true worship which is the fear of God.

David Hubbard - The first sentence of the summary has prompted a variety of translations. Some, like NEB, have left it out! Of the options available, the one that makes best sense and leaves the Hebrew text intact follows a line proposed by R. Gordis. It makes one sentence of the whole verse: "For in the multitude of dreams, enigmas (vanities), and many words, truly fear God." Thus read, the text recapitulates the pictures of busyness, haste, verbosity, and fickleness that plagued the worship of God as Koheleth viewed it. In the midst of that confused and compromised context comes the simple, powerful command: "Truly (Heb. *kî*) often translated as "but" or "for" can also be a sign of emphasis—"surely," "indeed," "certainly") "fear God" (Ec 3:14). (Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 134](#))

William Barrick - **Fearing God** (Eccl 5:7) - "Many dreams" and "many words" fall into the category of empty things—things with no purpose, no value, or no meaning. Vows made on the basis of such dreams and words result in purposeless, empty prayer.

Most Christians find it difficult to describe what "fear God" means. Does it mean to be afraid, to have reverential awe, or to mortify the flesh or crucify self? If we cannot define it, how can we exercise it? Since "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7), our knowledge faces a severe deficit without it. No wisdom exists apart from "the fear of the LORD" (Ps 111:10; Job 28:28). In addition, Scripture associates blessing with the fear of God (Pss 112:1; 115:13; 128:1, 4). Without "the fear of the LORD," therefore, an individual lacks knowledge, wisdom, and blessing.

God reveals in His Word exactly what comprises "the fear of the LORD." Biblically, the fear of God includes the following six elements:

- 1) Trust God completely (Ps 115:11).
- 2) Experience God's forgiveness in reality (Ps 130:4).
- 3) Delight in God's Word (Ps 112:1).
- 4) Go beyond delighting in God's Word—obey it (Ps 119:63; Eccl 12:13).
- 5) Hate evil (Prov 8:13).
- 6) Steadfastly hope in God's loyal love (Ps 147:11).

The second of these six elements identifies true believers as the only individuals who can fear God (cp. Acts 2:38; 10:43; 26:18; Eph 1:7).

(See in depth discussion of [The Fear of the Lord](#))

Fear ([03372](#)) [yare](#) is a verb meaning to fear, to be afraid (Ge 3:10-[note](#)), to respect, to reverence, to be terrified, to be awesome, to be feared, to make afraid, to frighten. The most common translations are to be afraid, to fear, to fear God. On one had **yare** conveys the sense of threat to one's life, but on the other it can express the idea of reverence and deep respect (as in [Ps 25:14](#)). In the OT fear of the Lord involves a person's total response to the Lord. It is notable that more than 75% of the over 370 uses (see below) of [yare](#) are in the context of reverencing the Lord. In English our word **reverence** (from Latin *reverentia* "awe, respect," from *revereri* "to stand in awe of, respect, honor, fear, be afraid of; revere,") refers to a feeling of profound respect for someone or something, and with [yare](#) in the OT as noted this is most often to God. The classic use is Pr 1:7-[note](#) "The **fear** ([yare](#)) of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Notice that a genuine holy fear of the Lord is often equated with believers (e.g. Mal 3:16-[note](#), Mal 4:2-[note](#), Eccl 8:12-13, cf the last worldwide proclamation of the Gospel which says "Fear God..." - Rev 14:6-7-[note](#))

In general, those who **reverentially feared God** were considered faithful and trustworthy for such fear constrained them to believe and act morally as in (Ex. 18:21) where God instructed Moses "you shall select out of all the people able men who **fear** God, men of truth, (NOTICE THE "FRUIT" OF THEIR FEAR) those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens." In a similar way the midwives feared God and did not kill the newborn Hebrew males (Ex. 1:17, 21). In Dt 6:1 we see that the commandments taught the Hebrews in Dt 6:1 to "fear the LORD your God." In other words a proper fear of the LORD was closely tied to keeping God's decrees and laws. Ps. 66:16 teaches that the those who fear God are the ones who delight in hearing of His deeds (contrast Adam's fear in Ge 3:10-[note](#)). The God of Israel was an object of respectful fear as He Himself declared "'You shall keep My sabbaths and revere My sanctuary; I am the LORD. (Lev. 19:30-[note](#); cf Lev 26:2-[note](#)). Tragically,

Israel wandered from the truth and began to fear and worship other gods, for which they were destroyed by Assyria (Jdg. 6:10; 2 Ki. 17:7, 35). Ps. 96:4 explains "For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be **feared** above all gods. Thus the OT was unflinchingly clear that Israel, the Chosen People of God, were to worship and **fear** only Jehovah, as echoed by Joshua when they entered the land of Canaan filled with promise but also filled with a multiplicity of horrible gods - "Now, therefore, **fear** the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD." (Josh. 24:14).

Borrow William Barclay - [Fear in NT Words Page 226](#)

Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight; for one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:7 ν συκοφαντ αν π νητος κα ρπαγ ν κρ ματος κα δικαιοσ νης δ ς ν χ ρ μ θαυμ σ ς π τ πρ γματι τι ψηλ ς π νω ψηλο φυλ ξαι κα ψηλο π α το ς

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:8 If thou shouldest see the oppression of the poor, and the wresting of judgment and of justice in the land, wonder not at the matter: for there is a high one to watch over him that is high, and high ones over them.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see the extortion of the poor, or the perversion of justice and fairness in the government, do not be astonished by the matter. For the high official is watched by a higher official, and there are higher ones over them!

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see oppression of the poor and perversion of justice and righteousness in the province, don't be astonished at the situation, because one official protects another official, and higher officials protect them.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:8 Don't be surprised if you see a poor person being oppressed by the powerful and if justice is being miscarried throughout the land. For every official is under orders from higher up, and matters of justice get lost in red tape and bureaucracy.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:8 If oppression of the poor, and violent taking away of judgment and righteousness thou seest in a province, do not marvel at the matter, for a higher than the high is observing, and high ones are over them.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:7 If in a province you see the poor oppressed, fair judgement and justice violated, do not be surprised, for over every official there watches a higher official, and over these, higher officials still.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and right, do not be amazed at the matter; for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:7 If you see oppression of the poor, and violation of rights and justice in the realm, do not be shocked by the fact, for the high official has another higher than he watching him and above these are others higher still--.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:8 Don't be surprised if you see poor people being oppressed, denied justice, or denied

their rights in any district. One authority is watching over another, and they both have authorities watching over them.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see the poor under a cruel yoke, and law and right being violently overturned in a country, be not surprised, because one authority is keeping watch on another and there are higher than they.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see in a province the poor oppressed and justice and right violently taken away, do not be amazed at the matter; for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.

- **see:** Ec 3:16 4:1 Ps 12:5 55:9 58:11 Pr 8:17 Hab 1:2,3,13
- **do not be shocked:** Zec 8:6 1Jn 3:13 Rev 17:6,7
- **at the sight:** Heb. will, or purpose, Isa 10:5-7,12 46:10,11 Hab 1:12 Ac 4:27,28 Ro 11:33
- **for:** Isa 57:15 Lu 1:32,35,76
- **watches over another official:** 1Ki 21:19,20 Job 20:19-29 27:8-23 Ps 10:17,18 12:5 58:10,11 Ps 82:1 83:18 140:11,12 Isa 3:15 5:7 59:13-16 Jer 22:17-19 Eze 22:6-14 Am 5:12 6:2-6,12 8:4-7 Mic 2:1-3,9 3:1-4,9-12 Mic 6:10-13 Zec 7:9-13 Mal 3:5 Jas 2:13 5:2-7
- **over another official:** 1Ch 21:15,16 Ps 95:3 Isa 37:36 Mt 13:41,42 Ac 12:7-10,23

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 3:16-18+ - Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. 17 I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there. 18 I said to myself concerning the sons of men, "God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts."

One official watches over another

THE BUREAUCRACY OF INJUSTICE

Ecc 5:8-9 are not easy to interpret. Glenn writes "The point of these verses and their connection with Solomon's argument has often been misconstrued because of erroneous interpretations of some enigmatic expressions in verses 8b-9. Though many other interpretations are possible, as is obvious from the diversity in various translations (e.g., kjv, nasb, niv), these verses probably refer to a hierarchy of corruption. This view, reflected in the NIV, seems to fit Solomon's overall argument in Ecc 5:1-6:9 best. (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament - Page 995](#))

[William Barrick](#) - Ecclesiastes 5:8–20 focuses on the issue of money. Rulers and the oppression they sometimes practice relate directly to money or, more properly, lack of money. The rich and powerful often oppress the poor, because the poor cannot afford to defend themselves. Justice grinds too slowly, costing the poor an increasingly high amount of money. They cannot afford to wait in their situation and cannot afford financially to speed up the process.

If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice ([mishpat/mispat](#)) and righteousness ([tsedeq](#)) in the province, do not be shocked at the sight -- NLT = "Don't be surprised if you see a poor person being oppressed by the powerful and if justice is being miscarried throughout the land." (**International Children's Version**) "In some countries you will see poor people treated badly. They are not treated fairly or given their rights. Don't be surprised!" Solomon says do not **be shocked**, surprised, amazed or disillusioned by injustice in the world because this reflects the brokenness of human systems. Don't let the prevalence of injustice disturb your faith in God's sovereignty. Remember, God sees all, and His justice is ultimate and perfect. The root idea of **oppression** is to extort, exploit, or crush, especially through unjust practices. This oppression is often associated with economic injustice or abuse of the vulnerable (cf. Amos 4:1; Malachi 3:5). The Hebrew word for **denial** is (גזל *gezel*) and the root idea is robbery, violence, or fraudulent withholding, so that it denotes active injustice, not just accidental oversight.

For (term of explanation) **one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them.** - **NLT** = "For every official is under orders from higher up, and matters of justice get lost in red tape and bureaucracy." Another possible way to render it (**International Children's Version**) "One officer is cheated by a higher officer. They in turn are cheated by even higher officers." Human governments are layered and flawed, often reinforcing each other's corruption rather than correcting it.

MacArthur has an interesting comment that "Officials have an unfair advantage to attain wealth." It is amazing how many congressmen and senators enter their service not that wealthy but in time become multi-, multi- millionaires!

[William Barrick](#) - The successive tiers and levels of bureaucracy result in officials watching out for one another (Eccl 5:8). The mutual protection makes it difficult to root out corruption. (Borrow [Garrett page 312](#)) Sometimes that watching involves checks and balances that enable government to operate efficiently and justly. However, all too often those successive levels of governmental provide a means of sharing bribes that are distributed up the chain by the original recipient, who keeps but a small part of it for himself. One ought not be shocked that such things exist within a bureaucracy—it is merely the outcome of fallen human nature. Government comes with a price (1Sa 8:4–18+).

Ryrie interprets this as saying that "There is corruption at every level of government, with higher-level oppressors plundering the equally oppressive lower-level magistrates." (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible page 988](#))

[The Wycliffe Bible Commentary \(online\)](#) says this verse "refers to the system of government in those days. Each official watched the one beneath him in order to obtain part of the spoils of taxation and graft. Because of this system one should) not **marvel** at the oppression and lack of justice."

Ecclesiastes 5:8-12 True Satisfaction

By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life. --Proverbs 22

Becoming rich and famous does not guarantee contentment. If it did, multimillionaire athletes would not jeopardize their careers by using illicit drugs. If it did, a wealthy lawyer would not have tearfully told me that he would gladly trade everything he had for a change in the behavior of his sons. If it did, the occurrence of multiple marriages among celebrities would not be commonplace. Obviously, contentment must come from a source other than wealth and fame.

In Ecclesiastes 5, Solomon said that because sinful people rule the world, we shouldn't be surprised when the poor are oppressed and when justice and righteousness are denied (vv.8-9). The life of those who love money is not as rosy as it seems. They are never satisfied with what they have, and they face the emptiness of watching other people consume their riches (vv.10-11). The humble laborer, content with little, can sleep soundly, while the rich man lies awake at night worrying about his money (v.12).

How about you? Are you frustrated or satisfied? Paul wrote that we are "not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). Only when we trust in the Lord will we find true and lasting satisfaction. —Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

You may have much gold and grandeur,
Yet by God be reckoned poor;
He alone has riches truly
Who has Christ, though nothing more.
--Anon.

Discontentment makes rich men poor;
contentment makes poor men rich!
See [Christian Contentment](#)

Ecclesiastes 5:8-12 Selfish Desire for Wealth

First, Solomon notes that a selfish desire for wealth can lead to oppression.

A second danger to remember is that love for money leads to dissatisfaction.

Third, Solomon notes that a love for money leads to anxiety (vv. 11-12) (Today in the Word)

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) LOST IN THE BUREAUCRACY

If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields. Ecclesiastes 5:8-9

Imagine a typical government bureaucracy in which layers of officials take care of each other and look the other way when corruption occurs. That is what Solomon seems to describe, and he is equally interested by those at the bottom and the top. When you see the poor oppressed, don't be surprised, he says. This is the way of the world and things never change. The people with power rip off the powerless—thus it has been; thus it shall ever be. As with many other statements in Ecclesiastes, this is not a

moral judgment, just a statement of reality. This is life "under the sun."

At the other end of the spectrum, the king profits from the fields. That is, the poor pay exorbitant taxes and the money filters upward as each official takes his cut. And the king gets the biggest cut. In this system everyone makes out pretty well except the poor fellow at the bottom of the heap. He starts out poor and stays that way.

Is Solomon asking us to accept this state of affairs? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that we live in a fallen world and should not be shocked that people in authority abuse their trust to line their own pockets. On the other hand, if we lose our sense of moral outrage we become complacent and actually begin to accept as normal that which is morally wrong.

The fact that sin reigns in the human heart means that we'll never be rid of corrupt leaders, but that's no excuse for tolerating official misconduct. Proverbs 24:10-12 reminds us that we will be judged for what we have done to rescue those who are abused by others. The fact that we cannot help everyone doesn't mean we should not help anyone. There is a time to speak out, a time to protest, a time to write letters, a time to make phone calls, a time to hold a press conference, and a time to sign petitions. God may even call you to run for office so that you can make a difference in high places.

If you cannot change the world, do what you can where you are and let God take care of what you can't do.

Lord, I pray for the strength to do right when those around me are doing wrong Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Have you ever been asked to do something you felt was wrong to do? How did you respond? What happened?
- How can Christians keep a good testimony in a workplace where evil seems to be tolerated or even encouraged?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Daniel 1:1-17; Matthew 5:13-16; and John 15:17-21.

Ecclesiastes 5:9 After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land.

- the profit: Ge 1:29,30 3:17-19 Ps 104:14,15 115:16 Pr 13:23 27:23-27 Pr 28:19 Jer 40:10-12
- the king: 1Sa 8:12-17 1Ki 4:7-23 1Ch 27:26-31

THE KING'S FIELDS

After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land- NLT paraphrases it negatively "Even the king milks the land for his own profit." AMP renders it with a positive slant "After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land." This verse concludes the thought begun in Ecclesiastes 5:8 about injustice and hierarchical government.

Ryrie favors the positive slant - A king who devotes himself to developing the resources of the land brings profit to all. (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible page 988](#))

[The Wycliffe Bible Commentary \(online\)](#) In other words, not only do all the officials get a share of the extortion, but there is no cultivated area which does not fall under taxation.

[William Barrick](#) - Eccl 5:9 contains multiple interpretive issues. The major issue involves the relationship of the king to the cultivated field. Eaton believes that the lesson to be learned is that "bureaucratic officialdom does not totally override the value of kingly authority." (Borrow [Eaton page 101](#)) In other words, despite the presence of oppression and corruption in a monarchy, there is yet an advantage to having a king. Therefore, citizens ought not be too hasty about overthrowing him. As Kidner puts it, "even tyranny is better than anarchy." (Borrow [Kidner page 55](#)) With a slightly different take on the text, Kaiser takes the view that the text refers to ruler and people being "happiest when they both realize that they are served by the farmed fields."¹⁹ Basically, this view echoes 1 Samuel 8:10-18. The king protects the land and its private possession by the nation's citizens. In other words, a text like Proverbs 23:10-11 comes under the domain of the king's authority. (Craig G. Bartholomew, Ecclesiastes)

Ecclesiastes 5:10 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.

- **He who loves money:** Ec 4:8 6:7 Ps 52:1,7 62:10 Pr 30:15,16 Hab 2:5-7 Mt 6:19,24 Lu 12:15 1Ti 6:10

- **This too is vanity.**: Ec 1:17 2:11,17,18,26 3:19 4:4,8,16

Grasping for vanity!

THE FUTILITY OF MORE MONEY

This verse returns to one of Solomon's most consistent themes in Ecclesiastes: the futility of pursuing satisfaction through material wealth, in this section we might call it the "Money Mirage" or the hit song in the Greatest Showman "[Never Enough](#)."

He who loves ([ahab/ahab](#); Lxx - [agapao](#) in present tense = continually loves) **money will not be satisfied** ([saba](#); Lxx - [pimplemi](#) - satisfied totally) **with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income.** It is not wealth itself that's condemned, but the love of it—a craving or obsession with gaining more. Money is like a narcotic because you can never satisfy the urge to get high and the more you do it, the more you want it. It's like the old Mick Jagger song "I can't get no...satisfaction!" Wealth, no matter how vast, never truly satisfies the heart. The appetite for more is insatiable. Loving money leads to a bottomless emptiness. True satisfaction can never come from material things—it's a chasing of the wind.

This verse exposes the lie behind materialism: "If I just had a little more, I'd be content." But the human heart, once enslaved to wealth, always wants more. Solomon had unmatched riches, yet writes as one who found it all to be vapor. Money can buy things, but it cannot buy peace, meaning, security, or eternal joy. Jesus warned about the seductive snare of wealth and money in Luke 12:15+ giving not one but two commands to **"Beware"** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), and **be on your guard** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." The problem with possessions is they usually end possessing the possessor!

THOUGHT - Here are a few thoughts to ponder. Do you desire gold more than God (note there is only one letter difference)? Do you spend more energy gaining than giving, accumulating than adoring? Are you fighting the illusion of "just a little more?" Am I cultivating contentment realizing that true contentment is a choice rooted in gratitude and trust in God's provision (1Ti 6:6–10). See [Christian Contentment](#). The love of money is a road that never ends—and never satisfies.

William Barrick - Dealing with the Pursuit of Money (Eccl 5:10–17) Money leaves human covetousness unsatisfied (Eccl 5:10), attracts hangers-on as self-styled dependents and presents opportunities for gaining more money (Eccl 5:11), disturbs one's peace (Eccl 5:12), places an individual in greater jeopardy because of the potential for experiencing a greater loss (Eccl 5:13–15), and fails to help anyone avoid death (Eccl 5:16–17). Solomon employs a chain of proverbs to speak of money and the impact it has upon people's lives.

This too is vanity ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) - It depicts that which looks substantial but vanishes upon grasping.

*"The love of money increases,
in proportion as money itself increases."*

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) THE MONEY TRAP

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? Ecclesiastes 5:10-11

*I wonder if Solomon looked in the mirror as he wrote these words.
After all, he was the richest man in the world.*

I wonder if Solomon looked in the mirror as he wrote these words. After all, he was the richest man in the world. Did he never have enough? Does anyone ever have enough? Come to think of it, how much is enough?

Those who live for money will be perpetually dissatisfied no matter how much they make. It's like the story of the man who asked the millionaire, "When are you going to stop working and start taking it easy?" Answer: "When I make enough money." "How much is enough?" "Just one more dollar." Money has a way of doing that to you. It's a narcotic—the more you have, the more you want.

But that's only part of the problem. As verse 11 points out, the rich person amasses a great fortune only to see others consume his wealth. Nobody keeps his money forever. Even the entrepreneur who corners the market in pork bellies will eventually have to sell

them or see them rot in the warehouse. And as for admiring your wealth, how many cars do you really need? Or how many shoes can you wear? You can only eat one meal at a time. You can only drive one car at a time. The rest is just for show.

Have you ever read the little book of Haggai? It's all about what happens when God's people decide that money is more important than God. The prophet uses a picturesque phrase—"you earn wages, only to

put them in a purse with holes in it" (Haggai 1:6). This is the Law of the Unproductive Harvest. It happens to us over and over until we learn that God will not be mocked. Why would God do this? He allows us to suffer the results of our wrong choices in order to get our attention, to convict us of sin, and to lead us to repentance. God knows how to ring your phone. He knows where you live and He knows how to reach your private line anytime He wants.

Joyce Baldwin speaks of the "moral paralysis" that keeps us from obeying God. Because we know what God wants us to do and because we don't want to do it, our lives are stuck in a kind of permanent spiritual neutral— we can't go forward or backward. We just stay where we are—miserable and unfulfilled. That won't change until we finally admit that God matters more than money.

God of every blessing, do whatever it takes to free me from loving money more than I love You. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What keeps you from obeying God? Where is the "moral paralysis" in your own life?
- What are you going to do about it?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Haggai 1; Acts 5:1—11; and Revelation 3:14-22.

Ecclesiastes 5:10-20 I Want More!

He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver. —Ecclesiastes 5:10

Things were going along as well as could be expected in the Sunday school class for 2-year-olds. But then along came "Charlie." As soon as we took him from his mother's arms, he squirmed and fussed. Like a broken record, he whined over and over, first for his mommy, then for his daddy.

Then a nickel fell out of his pocket, and his tune suddenly changed. As he clutched the five cents in his chubby little fist, Charlie cried over and over, "I want more money!" Finally, one of the other adults thought he might quiet Charlie down by giving the youngster a penny. Quickly the cry became, "I want another penny!" Then it switched back to, "I want more money."

I couldn't help but think how childish adult his words were. Sure, money has its place. But as the wise man who wrote Ecclesiastes realized, those who love money will not be satisfied with it (5:10). The best way to live, therefore, is to work hard and be thankfully satisfied with whatever increase the Lord gives.

Yes, loving and trusting God makes a whole lot more sense than being like Charlie, who responded to his restlessness with the cry, "I want more money!" If we have the Lord in our life, we need nothing more. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that God has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings—money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven nor your home on high.
—Oatman

To be rich in God is better than to be rich in goods.

Our Deepest Longings

Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied. Ecclesiastes 5:10

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 5:10–12

As a young man, Duncan had been afraid of not having enough money, so in his early twenties, he began ambitiously building his future. Climbing the ladder at a prestigious Silicon Valley company, Duncan achieved vast wealth. He had a bulging bank account, a luxury sports car, and a million-dollar California home. He had everything he desired; yet he was profoundly unhappy. "I felt anxious and dissatisfied," Duncan said. "In fact, wealth can actually make life worse." Piles of cash didn't provide friendship, community, or joy—and often brought him only more heartache.

Some people will expend immense energy attempting to amass wealth in an effort to secure their lives. It's a fool's game. "Whoever loves money never has enough," Scripture insists (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Some will work themselves to the bone. They'll strive and push, comparing their possessions with others and straining to achieve some economic status. And yet even if they gain supposed financial freedom, they'll still be unsatisfied. It's not enough. As the writer of Ecclesiastes states, "This too is meaningless" (v. 10).

The truth is, striving to find fulfillment apart from God will prove futile. While Scripture calls us to work hard and use our gifts for the good of the world, we can never accumulate enough to satisfy our deepest longings. Jesus alone offers a real and satisfying life (John 10:10)—one based on a loving relationship that's truly enough! By: Winn Collier (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

What brings you true satisfaction and fulfillment? How can you more fully live out the fact that only God is enough?

Gracious God, allow me to find my true fulfillment and joy in You. Keep me from a wrong view of work and material things.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 The Greed Problem

Read: Isaiah 5:1-10

He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. —Ecclesiastes 5:10

When I was 15 years old, I spent as much time as I could in the library reading articles and books about social justice. I was troubled by the fact that thousands of men who were willing to work hard could not find a job. I was trying to find out what form of government could best provide economic justice.

Through a better understanding of the Bible and after some experience in the workplace, I gradually began to see that human greed, not an economic system, is the culprit. A poor person may envy the rich and strive to gain great wealth, but if he succeeds he discovers that he still wants more. One translation of Ecclesiastes 5:10 states it this way: "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income" (NIV).

Through the prophet Isaiah, God expressed His grief over what greed did to His people (Isa. 5:1-10). He loves justice, but He saw the rich oppress the poor. He loves righteousness, but He heard cries of distress from the lips of the wronged. And He pronounced judgment on the greedy who kept buying more and more with no concern for others.

Lord, give us thankful hearts that are content and willing to share what we have with those less fortunate. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

I do not ask for treasures here,
To hoard, decay, and rust,
But for the better things of life—
Humility and trust.
—Meadows

Money is a good servant but a poor master.

Ecclesiastes 5:11 When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on?

- **those who consume them:** Ge 12:16 13:2,5-7 1Ki 4:22,23 5:13-16 Ne 5:17,18 Ps 119:36,37
- **So what good:** Ec 6:9, Ec 11:9 Jos 7:21-25 Pr 23:5 Jer 17:11 Hab 2:13 1Jn 2:16

RICHES ATTRACT "ROACHES!"

When good things ([prosperity](#)) increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on? NLT - The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what is the advantage of wealth--except perhaps to watch it run through your fingers!"

[William Barrick](#) - Salary raises and bonuses produce more income, but increased income draws the attention of family and friends

who wish to help spend it (Eccl 5:11). The more the income, the bigger the celebration and list of invitees—thus, the increase in spending. Of course, as long as government levies taxes, an increase in income also results in an increase in taxes. In addition, the increase in wealth can cause increased responsibility in growing the business—channeling the profits back into the growth of the business by adding equipment, employees, employee benefits, increased marketing, building expansion, etc. The truth is, we always manage to live up to our income—and beyond. It is never enough.

So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on? is a rhetorical question, an example of negative affirmation, expecting a negative answer. **NET** has "so what does its owner gain, except that he gets to see it with his eyes?" That's not much of an advantage!!! He won't see it in Sheol that's for sure!

William MacDonald - When a man's possessions increase, it seems that there is a corresponding increase in the number of parasites who live off his wealth, whether management consultants, tax advisers, accountants, lawyers, household employees, or sponging relatives. A man can wear only one suit at a time, can only eat so much in a day. So the main benefit of his wealth is to be able to look at his bank books, stocks, and bonds, and to say with other rich fools, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19+). (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

Charles Swindoll - Solomon concluded that with increased money and possessions comes an accelerated number of people and worries. Wealth is a people magnet (Ecclesiastes 5:11). As people grow richer, they find themselves surrounded by a sudden "fan club." Everybody wants to be close to the one who can buy anything. They all want a piece of the pie, which, Solomon said, also brings more anxiety (Eccl 5:12). Worries linger over losing assets, attracting frivolous lawsuits, maintaining an upper-class lifestyle, or even catching the attention of thieves or greedy friends and relatives. (See [Living on the Ragged Edge Workbook: Finding Joy in a World](#))

Ray Stedman on Ecc 5:11 - That is, you will soon discover that a crowd of parasites gather around you to spend your money for you; you get nothing out of them but expense. A second disadvantage to having money is that you worry about how to take care of your property (Eccl 5:12). You stay awake nights, worrying about how to keep what you have. There is still a third disadvantage (Eccl 5:13-14): You can lose your riches too. They can disappear overnight. A turn of the wheel, a drop in the Dow Jones Averages and your fortune is gone. Finally, riches will not survive death, but you will (Eccl 5:15-17) You can take absolutely nothing away with you. Life is empty and meaningless for so many people. They suffer from "Destination Sickness"; having arrived at where they always wanted to be, and having everything they always wanted to have, they do not want anything they've got.

Good things - The term טובָה (tovah, "good") connotes "prosperity" (Deut 23:7; Job 9:25; 21:25; Ps 106:5; Lam 3:17; Eccl 4:8; 5:10, 17; 6:3, 6; 7:14; 9:18; Neh 2:10; Sir 6:11; 41:13); cf. HALOT 372 s.v. 2 טובָה. The related term טוב (tov, "good") connotes "prosperity" as well (Prov 11:10; Job 20:21; 21:16); cf. HALOT 372 s.v. 1 טובָה.b. Here, it refers to the possessions and wealth a person acquires as the fruit of his labors. This nuance is well reflected in several English versions: "The more a man gains, the more there are to spend it" (Moffatt); "When riches multiply, so do those who live off them" (NEB); "As his substance increase, so do those who consume it" (NJPS); and "Where there are great riches, there are also many to devour them" (NAB). The line does not describe the economic law of "supply and demand," as some versions seem to imply, e.g., "As goods increase, so do those who consume them" (NIV); "When goods increase, those who eat them increase" (NRSV); cf. also KJV, ASV, RSV, MLB, NASB.

Best Deal Ever!

As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners? Ecclesiastes 5:11

Read - Ecclesiastes 5:10–19

How much is enough? We might ask this simple question on a day that many developed countries increasingly devote to shopping. I speak of Black Friday, the day after the US Thanksgiving holiday, in which many stores open early and offer cut-price deals; a day that has spread from the States to other nations. Some shoppers have limited resources and are trying to purchase something at a price they can afford. But sadly, for others greed is the motivation, and violence erupts as they fight for bargains.

The wisdom of the Old Testament writer known as "the Teacher" (Eccl. 1:1) provides an antidote to the frenzy of consumerism we may face in the shops—and in our hearts. He points out that those who love money never will have enough and will be ruled by their possessions. And yet, they will die with nothing: "As everyone comes, so they depart" (5:15). The apostle Paul echoes the Teacher in his letter to Timothy, when he says that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and that we should strive for "godliness with contentment" (1 Tim. 6:6–10).

Whether we live in a place of plenty or not, we all can seek unhealthy ways of filling the God-shaped hole in our hearts. But when we look to the Lord for our sense of peace and well-being, He will fill us with His goodness and love. Amy Boucher Pye (Reprinted by

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"You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You."

Augustine, The Confessions

True contentment does not depend on anything in this world.

Today's Insights Without the living God being brought into the picture, Ecclesiastes is one of the most paradoxical books in the Old Testament. For much of this short reflective work, we see life portrayed without God as an active Person in our lives. As a result, much of the text, though inspired by the Spirit, describes secular beliefs. Nonetheless, today's reading showcases wisdom in various aspects of life.

Ecclesiastes 5:12 The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much; but the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep.

Related Passages:

Psalm 4:8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For Thou alone, O LORD, dost make me to dwell in safety.

Psalm 127:2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.

Proverbs 3:24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid; When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

Jeremiah 31:26 At this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.

THE LABORING MAN vs THE LUCRATIVE MAN

The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much- I like this but as a physician I would advise not eating "much" shortly before you go to bed or you increase your chances of reflux. This verse contrasts the contentment of a hardworking individual with the restlessness of the wealthy. The laborer, regardless of his meal's size, enjoys restful sleep due to physical exertion and lack of anxiety. In contrast, the rich, burdened by the responsibilities and worries of wealth, often find sleep elusive. See in depth discussion of [Christian Contentment](#).

[William Barrick](#) - Two biographical samples highlight the contrast between having riches and not having riches (Eccl 5:12). The poor working class individual sleeps soundly even on beans and rice, but insomnia afflicts the wealthy even on a full stomach. The word used for "the full stomach" in Eccl 5:12 comes from the same root as the word for "satisfied" in Eccl 5:10. One would think that the banquet of the rich would bring some degree of satisfaction. The irony of it is that it does not bring satisfaction—instead, his full stomach will keep him awake, disturbing his rest.

*True rest comes from a content heart,
not abundant possessions.*

but (term of contrast) **the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep-** A rich man is not satisfied with enough money and so even when satisfied by a full stomach, he is not satisfied in his heart and mind. The more you have, the more you have to worry about! In short, riches rob rest!

This passage shows that when one works hard for what he has, then he is doing what is right. His sleep should be pleasant. Other reasons to work hard according to the New Testament passages are to share with those who have need and to help the weak. Believers are to work in order to take care of one another, to support those believers who are not able to provide for themselves. But if one is able to work, then he is not to be supported by the church, by other believers.

*Make all you can, save all you can,
give all you can.*

Warren Wiersbe comments on Eccl 5:12 - "There is no escaping the fact that we need a certain amount of money in order to live in this world, but money of itself is not the magic cure-all for every problem. John Wesley, co-founder of the Methodist Church, told his people, "Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can." Wesley himself could have been a very wealthy man, but he chose to live simply and give generously. The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much. But the full stomach of the

rich man does not allow him to sleep." The late Joe Louis, world heavyweight boxing champion, used to say, "I don't like money, actually, but it quiets my nerves." But Solomon said that possessing wealth is no guarantee that your nerves will be calm and your sleep sound. According to him, the common laborer sleeps better than the rich man. The Living Bible expresses verse 12 perfectly: "The man who works hard sleeps well whether he eats little or much, but the rich must worry and suffer insomnia." More than one preacher has mentioned John D. Rockefeller in his sermons as an example of a man whose life was almost ruined by wealth. At the age of fifty-three, Rockefeller was the world's only billionaire, earning about a million dollars a week. But he was a sick man who lived on crackers and milk and could not sleep because of worry. When he started giving his money away, his health changed radically, and he lived to celebrate his ninety-eighth birthday! Yes, it's good to have the things that money can buy, provided you don't lose the things money can't buy. Do you think there is a direct correlation between having an abundance of money and an abundance of peace? Why? What do you think of Wesley's command to "Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can"? To what extent do you think that worrying about money is a source of other problems in your life? In what ways?" ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

John Piper - When you work like this—no matter what your vocation is—you can have a sweet sense of peace at the end of the day. I don't think God has created us to be idle. Therefore, those who abandon creative productivity lose the joy of purposeful work. Ecclesiastes 5:12 says, "Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the surfeit of the rich will not let him sleep." People who spend their lives mainly in idleness or frivolous leisure are rarely as happy as those who work. Most of the retired people at Bethlehem know this, and so have sought creative, useful, God-honoring ways to stay active and productive in God's kingdom. And we should help each other in this, and with the whole problem of unemployment. It is not first an economic problem. It is first a theological problem. Human beings are created in the image of God and are endowed with traits of their creator that fit them for creative, useful, joyful work. Therefore, extensive idleness (when you have the ability to work) brings down the oppression of guilt and futility. ([Why God Wills Work | Desiring God](#))

John Butler - We use to listen to a children's program in Chicago which in one of the programs showed how some foolishly and ignorantly envy of the rich. The narrator reminded the envious that the rich he so envied ate toast and milk because he could not eat a normal meal. Wealth does not have all the advantages. I once read of a man who owned millions in wealth but literally starved to death. For many months before he died he was unable to digest any solid food. He gave great banquets, but he could not partake of the fine foods he provided for others. He could buy anything to eat he wanted, but he could not eat much of anything. Riches do not have to do that to you, but they often do. Our text contrasts the lucrative man and the laboring man. You may envy the wealthy as you labor long and hard every day, but the truth of the matter is that he may envy you. Do not begrudge your place in life. You may be without, but troubles have a way of pestering those with much. Our text contrasts the wealthy and the laborer. Folk envy the wealthy, but the laborer has what is important. - Sermon Starters - 7

The sleep of the working man is pleasant - Butler comments "Famous (and wealthy) people, such as movie stars, often die of sleeping-pill overdose. They cannot sleep because of their fame (and guilt) which they got by living the way of the flesh. They gained much in this world but lost the valuable entities such as sleep. You may flop into bed at night and be sound to sleep quickly because you are tired from your daily labor which you do to put food on the table and clothes on the back. Do not feel sorry for yourself. You have more than money can buy.

As someone has said we can see the work we do as either a problem or a privilege. And the truth of Ecclesiastes 5:12 should provide us a proper perspective of our "privilege."

Whether he eats little or much - This speaks of the fact that a working man does not usually have funds for excess or extravagant food. He eats beans rather than Bearnaise.

The full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep - George Pullman who made a fortune as inventor of the Pullman train car said that since he got rich he did not sleep as well. We do not wish poverty on anyone but neither do we wish the curse of wealth on anyone. Do not envy those who do not have to do hard manual labor daily.

Ralph Turnbull said that "There is a danger of doing too much as well as of doing too little. Life is not for work, but work for life, and when it is carried to the extent of undermining life or unduly absorbing it, work is not praiseworthy but blameworthy."

As sleep is sweet to those who are wearied with labour and travail (Ecc 5:12), so also death is sweet and comfortable to the faithful, being wearied and turmoiled with sin, and with the manifold miseries of this life. (G. Petter.)

John Trapp - When some have a loss in their riches, it is, as it were, raked out of their bellies; a piece of their very heart goes with it, Job 20:15, and they are filled with unmedicinal sorrows, Ecc 5:12.

Solomon uses two words for sleep - shenah and yashen.

Sleep (08142) (shenah) describes a state of rest in which there is no physical activity (sure we all toss in bed and we all dream but essentially those functions are on "auto-pilot" so to speak). Sleep is a blessed gift of God to all men for it provides rest and refreshment for our body and our mind (but there seems to be a "special" blessing afforded to those who are His own children - Ps 127:2). Sadly, Samson was asleep spiritually (morally) and so when he awoke from his physical sleep after Delilah had cut his hair, "he did not know that the LORD had departed from him!" (Jdg 16:14, 20).

Brown-Driver-Briggs Expanded Definition - noun feminine sleep — שָׁנָה Psalm 90:5 3t.; שָׁנָה Psalm 127:2, שָׁנָה Psalm 132:4 (Ges^s 80g, h.); construct שָׁנָה Jeremiah 51:39 3t.; שָׁנָה Genesis 31:40; Jeremiah 31:26, etc.; plural absolute שָׁנָה Proverbs 6:10; Proverbs 24:33; — **sleep** Genesis 28:16 (J), Judges 16:14,20; Proverbs 3:24; Proverbs 6:9; Proverbs 20:13; Ecclesiastes 5:11; Jeremiah 31:26; Zechariah 4:1; Proverbs 6:4 ("מַעַט שְׁנוֹת מַעַט תְּנוּמוֹת"; Proverbs 6:10 = Proverbs 24:33 (these two of sluggard אִישׁ עָצֵל; see also Proverbs 6:9; Proverbs 20:13); note also וַתֵּדֶד שְׁנָתִי מֵעֵינַי Genesis 31:40 (E) **and my sleep fled from mine eyes**; וַתֵּדֶד שְׁנָתִי מֵעֵינַי Esther 6:1; וַתֵּדֶד שְׁנָתִי מֵעֵינַי Proverbs 4:16; וַתֵּדֶד שְׁנָתִי מֵעֵינַי Daniel 2:1; וַתֵּדֶד שְׁנָתִי מֵעֵינַי Ecclesiastes 8:16; וַתֵּדֶד שְׁנָתִי מֵעֵינַי Psalm 132:4 (**all of lack of sleep**); וַתֵּדֶד שְׁנָתִי מֵעֵינַי Psalm 127:2 = **he giveth to his beloved in sleep**, compare Ges^s 118, 3; **of sleep of death** (so Arabic رَسَنَ Dozy ii. 806) Job 14:12; Psalm 90:5 (compare De Che); Song of Solomon , as accusative of cognate meaning with verb, Psalm 76:6; Jeremiah 51:39,57 (in these two שְׁנָתִי מֵעֵינַי).

John Hartley -Sleep is a blessing; it provides rest and refreshment. One who works hard, though poor has sweet sleep; but the rich in their surfeit are denied this refreshment (Ec 5:12; cf Ps 3:5; 4:8). One is not to love sleep, for that will lead to poverty (Pr 6:10ff; 20:13). Neither is one to rob himself of rest to increase his wealth (Ps 127:2). Sleep, however, can afford the opportunity for an opponent to gain the advantage; e.g. Delilah robbed Samson of his strength during his sleep (Judges 16:20). In the new age Yahweh will make a new covenant of peace restoring harmony between man and nature once again. Then man may lie down to sleep in the woods unafraid of nature (Ezek 34:25). God may communicate a message during one's sleep; e.g. God caused Pharaoh to dream about the approaching famine (Ge 41:1-7). While Adam slept very deeply, the Lord took part of his side and created Eve (Gen 2:21ff). Sleep was a quality ascribed to pagan gods, e. g. Elijah's taunt concerning Baal's being asleep (1Ki 18:27). In contrast, the Psalmist says concerning Yahweh, "He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps 121:4). Amidst a polytheistic environment this confession possessed dramatic content. Yet figuratively sleep is attributed to Yahweh for his apparent inactivity by one who has heard about but not experienced his great deeds (Ps 44:23). Similarly Yahweh's bursting into action is described as his awaking from sleep (Ps 78:65ff). **Sleep** may stand as a euphemism for death (Ps 13:3; Ed: Frequently in NT to describe the death of God's children as "falling asleep" in Jesus!). In the last days Yahweh will raise up "those who sleep in the dust of the earth" (Da 12:2). Their new life will be one of either everlasting life or everlasting contempt. - Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

SHENAH - 24v - translated - asleep(1), sleep(22), sleep*(1). Lxx - hupnos (5258) (cf our Eng "hypnosis") Gen. 28:16; Gen. 31:40; Jdg. 16:14; Jdg. 16:20; Est. 6:1; Job 14:12; Ps. 76:5; Ps. 90:5; Ps. 127:2; Ps. 132:4; Prov. 3:24; Prov. 4:16; Prov. 6:4; Prov. 6:9; Prov. 6:10; Prov. 20:13; Prov. 24:33; Eccl. 5:12; Eccl. 8:16; Jer. 31:26; Jer. 51:39; Jer. 51:57; Dan. 2:1; Zech. 4:1

Sleep (03462) (yashen) is a verb means to sleep, to go to sleep, to be asleep. In Leviticus 13:11 yashen refers to "chronic leprosy" which in the Niphal participle means "grown old", the idea being that the mark is "an old enduring skin disease that keeps on developing or recurring." (NET Note). In Lev 26:10 yashen refers to "the old supply" referring to produce, this phrase speaking of produce that has been stored away from previous harvests. Yashen is used in Psalm 44:23 figuratively of the Lord's apparent (apparent because He is always working behind the scenes if not overtly on the scenes) lack of activity on the part of Israel. In Pr 4:16 "they cannot sleep" is paired with doing evil, so even as sleep is absolutely necessary, so too is the doing of evil for such depraved men! In Jeremiah 51:39, 57 yashen is used in the phrase "**sleep** a perpetual sleep and not wake up" which is a metaphorical description of their death.

Brown-Driver-Briggs Expanded Definition of yashen - [יָשַׁן] **verb sleep** (Late Hebrew id.; Aramaic noun ܫܢܐ sleep; Arabic وَسَنَ be sleepy, سَيْنَ sleep Assyrian šittiu, sleep, Di^{HWB} 246, šunatu, šuttu, dream, Id^{ib}, Flood: iv. 22 Asrb^{Annals}, v R. 2,97) —

Qal Perfect יָשַׁן Job 3:13; יָשַׁן consecutive Jeremiah 51:39 2t.; **Imperfect** יִשָּׁן Isaiah 5:27; Psalm 121:4; 1 יִשָּׁן Kings 19:5, etc.; **Infinitive construct** לִישוֹן Ecclesiastes 5:11; — **sleep, go to sleep, and be asleep**, Genesis 2:21 (J), Genesis 41:5 (E), Ezekiel 34:25; Job 3:13; Psalm 3:6; Psalm 4:9; Proverbs 4:16; Ecclesiastes 5:11, also 2 Samuel 4:6 5 We Dr Kit Bu, see חָמַשׁ; with לֹא, of Ass. army Isaiah 5:27 (נוֹם); of Baal 1 Kings 19:5; of 1 לִמָּה תִישָׁן אֲדָנִי 1 Kings 44:24; 1 לֹא יִשָּׁן Kings 12:14 (נוֹם); with accusative of cognate meaning with verb עוֹלָם יִשָּׁן Jeremiah 51:39,57 (see שָׁנָה), of death, compare אִישׁוֹ הָמוֹת Psalm 13:4. **Niphal** only in derivatives sense of *become inactive or stationary*; **Perfect** וַיִּשָּׁן consecutive Deuteronomy 4:25 **and ye be grown old** בָּצָרָךְ, i.e. (see Di Dr) have lost freshness of first impressions; of inanimate things, *be old, stale*, only **Participle** נֹשֵׂן Leviticus 26:10 (H), feminine צָרָה

נִשְׁן Leviticus 13:11 = *old leprosy* (P); these possibly denominative from נִשְׁן

Pi`el causat. *Imperfect* וַתִּשְׁן Judges 16:19 and she made him sleep.

Gesenius Definition of yashen

נִשְׁן fut. יִשְׁן, inf. יִשְׁן Ecclesiastes 5:11, pr. to be languid, weary (fchlaff, müde fehn), hence

(1) of persons, to fall asleep, Genesis 2:21, 41:5 Ps. 4:9 to sleep, to be sleeping, Isaiah 5:27; 1 Kings 19:5. (Arab. وَبَسَّ to begin to sleep, to slumber, [fchlummern; بَسْتُ the beginning of sleep. As to sleep itself, they commonly use the verb ذَام, which on the contrary is used in Hebrew of slumbering, see נָוַם). Persons are said, poetically, to sleep who are

(a) idle, doing nothing, whence νηρωπομόρφως, Psalms 44:24, “why sleepest thou, O Jehovah?” Psalms 78:65.

(b) dead. Job 3:13 concerning whom the idea is more fully expressed with an accus. following, נִשְׁן שָׁנַת Jeremiah 51:39, 57 Jeremiah 51:57, and נִשְׁן מָוֶת Psalms 13:4.

(2) used of inanimate things, to be flaccid, dried, hence to be old (opp. to fresh or new), compare נָבֵל, נָבֵלָה. So adj. נִשְׁן, and

Niphal נִשְׁן

(1) to be dry, used of old [last year's] corn, opp. to what is fresh. Leviticus 26:10.

(2) to be old, inveterate, of leprosy, Leviticus 13:11 of a person who has long dwelt in any country, Deuteronomy 4:25.

Piel, causat. of Kal No. 1, to cause to sleep, Judges 16:19.

YASHEN 20v translated chronic(1), fell asleep(1), remained long(1), sleep(10), sleeps(1), slept(5), supply(1). Note most of uses are in Psalms. Gen. 2:21; Gen. 41:5; Lev. 13:11; Lev. 26:10; Deut. 4:25; Jdg. 16:14; Jdg. 16:19; 1 Ki. 19:5; Job 3:13; Ps. 3:5; Ps. 4:8; Ps. 13:3; Ps. 44:23; Ps. 121:4; Prov. 4:16; Eccl. 5:12; Isa. 5:27; Jer. 51:39; Jer. 51:57; Ezek. 34:25

God's gifts in sleep

I. **PROTECTION** (Ps 121:3-4; Ps 91:1; Ps 91:5; Psa 91:9-10).

II. **REFRESHMENT** (Ecc 5:12; Jer 31:26).

III. **ENLIGHTENMENT** (Gen 46:2; Dan 7:1; Act 16:9; Act 18:9). No one is foolish enough to think that there is a Providence--a voice from God--in all our dreams. Perhaps most of them are self-originated. But unquestionably there are gifts of God--revelations of God to His tried, and sorrowing, and faithful ones in sleep. There are, perhaps, few of His children who have not heard His voice in the night. He not only protects and refreshes us, but enlightens us. Let us not despise those good and perfect gifts which come from above in the hours of gloom and loneliness. Let us thank and bless God for all those precious things which He giveth to His beloved while they sleep. (A. G. Maitland)

The Success Syndrome - The March 1991 issue of Omni magazine included an article about the *success syndrome*. Its victims suffer from the three A's: aloneness, adventure-seeking, and adultery. The article noted that the successful person snaps his Midas fingers and people jump. Yet, when a person seems to have it all, the castle comes crashing down and everything he or she touches turns to garbage. —Joel Gregory,

ILLUSTRATION - He Won the State Lottery - Bill Curry of the south Boston worked most of his life as a cafeteria cook for the Merit Food Company—modest income but he managed to provide for his wife and his son and his daughter. So when Bill Curry won the state lottery, 3.6 million dollars, his first thought was just to buy a Dalmatian puppy for the youngsters. That was the extent of the celebration. But then the parasites converged—the lawyers and the investment advisers, the accountants and the financial analysts—he was overwhelmed by them. And by people wanting handouts for all manner of charities. He returned to his job in the cafeteria, but even there financial advisers were everywhere. His nearest relative says there's no doubt about it, in the weeks since he won the lottery, it was not the money that caused his stress but it was all of those people who wanted to deal themselves in. Bill Curry has died of a heart attack at 37.

Today in the Word on Ecclesiastes 5:12 - Since the Sacagawea dollar was introduced in late January, the U.S. Mint has made hundreds of millions of the gold-colored coins. But these coins, which honor the Shoshone Indian woman who was an interpreter on the Lewis and Clark expedition, seem to be having circulation problems. A newspaper report in May said that relatively few people were using Sacagawea dollars, although 500 million had been minted by that time. The reason is that people are apparently collecting Sacagawegas instead of using them--either because of their novelty or because people think the coins will be valuable someday. The problem of loving and hoarding money is not a new phenomenon. Some people who have a Sacagawea dollar or two will want to add them to their collection--just in case the coins become valuable. The result of this is summed up in verse 11. Solomon didn't have coin collecting in mind when he wrote these words, but the Sacagawea situation illustrates the problem. In fact, the government is worried that as more Sacagawea coins are put into circulation, more people will collect instead of use them. But the only benefit to the coin owners will be a stack of coins they can feast their eyes on. This part of Ecclesiastes isn't one of the book's summaries, and the writer doesn't offer any particular advice. But the beginning of verse 12 makes it clear that gaining real satisfaction and enjoyment from our work has nothing to do with what we have, but with what has us. God warns us against wearing ourselves out to accumulate money and the stuff it can buy not because He doesn't want us to enjoy ourselves. Solomon says repeatedly that God is the only source of true satisfaction. God warns us about loving money because it can replace our love for Him (Matt. 6:24), and devour the people who chase after it. We have heard this admonition before, but we still need to be reminded of it. Greed and contentment have nothing to do with the amount of money we have.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FRUSTRATED

The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep. I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him. Ecclesiastes 5:12-14

Whenever I am under pressure, worry, or have problems I can't easily solve, I toss and turn all night long. Meanwhile my sweetheart sleeps contentedly next to me, blissfully unaware that I doze off and wake up every fifteen minutes. Over the years I have tried many remedies—taking a hot shower, drinking a glass of milk, counting sheep, praying through my problems, reading a book, and watching TV.

I should mention these bouts with insomnia don't happen all the time—or even most of the time—but they happen often enough that when I read about the rich man of verse 12 I didn't think about someone else. I thought about me. So I sympathize with the rich man, even though I am not rich. The poor guy has trouble sleeping at night.

There's a real contrast in verse 12: "The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep." The rich man is the classic Type A personality.

Hard-driving, demanding of himself and everyone around him. A workaholic. Up early. In bed late. Stressed out. Worried about protecting his investments. Doesn't exercise because it's a waste of time. Doesn't eat right because he doesn't have time. Doesn't spend much time with the kids and wife because he's got a business to run. He's living on the edge with a time bomb ticking inside his chest.

And do you know the worst of it? He can't sleep. The poor fellow tosses and turns, adjusts the pillows, lies awake staring into space worrying about his investments and whether he can fight off that hostile takeover. This man eats, sleeps, and drinks his work.

In contrast, the employee who runs his computer system for him is sleeping just fine. And why not? He doesn't have the boss's money; he doesn't have his problems either. His wife sleeps beside him. She works

to help make ends meet. Between them they do just fine. It's a good life, made better by the fact that they aren't driven by the fear of losing all that they have. He's not as rich as his boss, but he's a much happier man—and he has a better life. Best of all, he sleeps like a baby, because he's learned that being rich has nothing to do with having money in the bank.

Father of Glory, I pray to discover the true riches that are already mine in Christ Jesus. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How well did you sleep last night?
- How important is money in your life? Did you tell the truth when you answered that question?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 127:1-2; Proverbs 27:23-27; and 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.

Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:12 σπιν ρρωστ α ν ε δον π τ ν λιον πλο τον φυλασσ μενον τ παρ α το ε ς κακ αν α το

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is an infirmity which I have seen under the sun, namely, wealth kept for its owner to his hurt.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:13 Here is a misfortune on earth that I have seen: Wealth hoarded by its owner to his own misery.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a sickening tragedy I have seen under the sun: wealth kept by its owner to his harm.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt,

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner,

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is another serious problem I have seen under the sun. Hoarding riches harms the saver.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a painful evil I have seen under the sun: wealth kept for its possessor, for his evil.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:12 Something grossly unjust I observe under the sun: riches stored and turning to loss for their owner.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a grievous ill that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owners to their hurt,

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:12 This is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches kept by their owner to his hurt.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a painful tragedy that I have seen under the sun: Riches lead to the downfall of those who hoard them.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a great evil which I have seen under the sun -- wealth kept by the owner to be his downfall.

- **There is a grievous evil** : Ec 4:8 6:1,2
- **riches**: Ec 8:9 Ge 13:5-11 14:16 19:14,26,31-38 Pr 1:11-13,19,32 Pr 11:4,24,25 Isa 2:20 32:6-8 Zep 1:18 Lu 12:16-21 Lu 16:1-13,19,22,23 18:22,23 19:8 1Ti 6:9,10 Jas 2:5-7 5:1-4

Clinging to a crumbling chest of gold

RICHES HOARDED TO OWNER'S HURT

There is a grievous ([chalah](#)) evil ([note](#)) which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded ([shamar](#); Lxx - [phulasso](#)) by their owner to his hurt - NLT - "There is another serious problem I have seen in the world. Riches are sometimes hoarded to the harm of the saver," **A grievous evil** is a Hebrew phrase that can be translated "a sickening evil," meaning something morally and emotionally disturbing. It conveys a strong disapproval of what is being described. **Riches** (‘ōsher) means wealth, material possessions, abundance. It is often used neutrally but in the present context speak of a snare or false security. **Hoarded** ([shamar](#)) in the Greek is [phulasso](#) which helps under what this person is doing, for this verb pictures one carrying out the functions of a sentinel on guard duty, protecting by taking special measures and in the present tense signifies this is the person's lifestyle or habitual practice. **To his hurt** speaks of the self-destructive nature of greed, the curse of clutching, so to speak. Hoarding brings harm, injury, or calamity, so that the end result of hoarding is not blessing, but personal damage. This verse pierces through the illusion that wealth equals security. The tragedy isn't simply that the man is rich—but that he hoards it selfishly, and in doing so, destroys himself.

*Riches, when selfishly clung to,
bring not security—but sorrow.*

William Barrick - Some people tend to hoard their financial gains, never investing them in the lives of others or themselves (Eccl 5:13).

THOUGHT - What am I holding onto so tightly that it's hurting me spiritually, emotionally, or relationally? Is my love of money crowding out trust in God? Am I using what God has given—or just guarding it? Saving is wise, but hoarding out of fear or greed leads to spiritual sickness. Let your possessions serve others, not enslave you. Wealth is meant to bless, not just accumulate. Invest in the kingdom, in others, and in eternal things. Are you saving because you're a good steward or because you don't trust God to provide? Selfish storing turns blessings into burdens. Far better to give freely and live lightly. Freedom comes not in how much you have, but in how lightly you hold it.

Grievous (Make ill, sick, weak)(02470)(**chalah**) means to be or become weak, be or become sick, be or become diseased, be or become grieved, be or become sorry. In OT usage, of the various expressions referring to general conditions of bodily malaise and disease. The basic meaning, "to be weak," "to be sick" or "to be tired," occurs in the Qal stem. In Gen. 48:1, Joseph was told that his father was "weak" or "sick." Jeroboam's son also "became sick" (1 Ki. 14:1, 5). Illness is spoken of as the result of accidents (2 Ki. 1:2), or it may be the state of animals (Ezek. 34:4). Chālāh may refer to mortal illness (2 Ki. 20:1), or it may refer to love-sickness (Song 2:5). The wicked do not become ill in the face of the Lord's rebuke because they have hardened themselves to his correction (Jer. 5:3).

Eternal Legacy

I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners. Ecclesiastes 5:13

As Dust Bowl sandstorms ravaged the United States during the Great Depression, John Millburn Davis, a resident of Hiawatha, Kansas, decided to make a name for himself. A self-made millionaire with no children, Davis might have invested in charity or economic development. Instead, at great expense, he commissioned eleven life-size statues of himself and his deceased wife to stand in the local cemetery.

"They hate me in Kansas," Davis told journalist Ernie Pyle. Local residents wanted him to fund the construction of public facilities like a hospital, swimming pool, or park. Yet all he said was, "It's my money and I spend it the way I please."

King Solomon, the wealthiest man of his day, wrote, "Whoever loves money never has enough," and "as goods increase, so do those who consume them" (Ecclesiastes 5:10–11). Solomon had grown keenly aware of the corrupting tendencies of wealth.

The apostle Paul also understood the temptation of wealth and chose to invest his life in obedience to Jesus. Awaiting execution in a Roman prison, he wrote triumphantly, "I am already being poured out like a drink offering . . . I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6–7).

What lasts isn't what we chisel in stone or hoard for ourselves. It's what we give out of love for each other and for Him—the One who shows us how to love.

What will others remember about you? What changes might you need to make as you ponder your eternal legacy?

Heavenly Father, please help me pour out my life for others in some small way today.

Today's Insights In Ecclesiastes, Solomon has a lot to say about material wealth. He also devotes a hundred or so sayings in the book of Proverbs to the subject of riches and money. Material wealth can either be a blessing (Proverbs 10:22) or a curse (30:7-9), depending on how one relates to it (see Deuteronomy 8:7-19). God warns us not to get rich by wrongdoing or unjust means (Proverbs 15:27; 22:16; 22:22-23). We're to seek wisdom rather than wealth (3:13-15; 8:10-11; 16:16), for the godly life is better than the good life. Right living is better than rich living (15:16; 16:8; 28:6). Money is a fleeting commodity that gives us false security (23:4-5; 27:24; Ecclesiastes 5:10-11). Rather, we need to invest for eternity. Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where . . . thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20).

Ecclesiastes 5:14 When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:14 But those riches perish through misfortune; When he begets a son, there is nothing in his hand.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:13 καὶ πολέται πλοῦτος κενοῦ ἐν περισπασμῷ πονηρῷ καὶ γέννησεν υἱὸν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν χειρὶ αὐτοῦ οὐδέν

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:14 And that wealth shall perish in an evil trouble: and the man begets a son, and there is nothing in his hand.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:14 Then that wealth was lost through bad luck; although he fathered a son, he has nothing left to give him.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:14 That wealth was lost in a bad venture, so when he fathered a son, he was empty-handed.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:14 and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:14 or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:14 Money is put into risky investments that turn sour, and everything is lost. In the end, there is nothing left to pass on to one's children.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:14 And that wealth hath been lost in an evil business, and he hath begotten a son and there is nothing in his hand!

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:13 An unlucky venture, and those riches are lost; a son is born to him, and he has nothing to leave him.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:14 and those riches were lost in a bad venture; though they are parents of children, they have nothing in their hands.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:13 Should the riches be lost through some misfortune, he may have a son when he is without means.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:14 These hoarded riches were then lost in bad business deals. The owners had children, but now they have nothing to give them.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:14 And I saw the destruction of his wealth by an evil chance; and when he became the father of a son he had nothing in his hand.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:14 and those riches were lost in a bad venture; and he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.

- those: Ec 2:26 Job 5:5 20:15-29 27:16,17 Ps 39:6 Pr 23:5 Hag 1:9 Hag 2:16,17 Mt 6:19,20
- and he: 1Sa 2:6-8,36 1Ki 14:26 Ps 109:9-12

CASH CLUTCHED CAN QUICKLY CRASH

When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him. Money makes itself wings no matter how well we manage or hoard it. If we don't lose our assets in this life, we will definitely lose them when we die. As you've surely heard, there is never a "U Haul" trailer following a funeral hearse. When time becomes eternity, earthly riches are eternally lost. As my wife likes to say when I fret over something that breaks -- "It's all gonna burn someday anyway!" There is an exception clause and that is if we have been diligent in using our riches to store up for ourselves treasure in heaven, then as Jesus promised moth and rust will not destroy and thieves will not be able to break in and steal. This begs the question - Where is your treasure stored - in this present passing world or in God's eternal vault in heaven?

Solomon observes the futility and danger of hoarding wealth. Accumulated riches can be lost through misfortune, leaving nothing for one's heirs. This highlights the transient nature of material wealth and the potential harm in prioritizing accumulation over prudent stewardship.

[William Barrick](#) - Others engage in risky investments that result in leaving their families without adequate support (Eccl 5:14).

Ecclesiastes 5:15 As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand.

- Job 1:21 Ps 49:17 Lu 12:20 1Ti 6:7

Related Passages:

Job 1:21 He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Luke 12:20+ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'

1 Timothy 6:7+ For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.

THE END OF EARTHLY GAIN

As he had come naked from his mother's womb - We enter life with nothing.

So will he return as he came - This emphasizes life's cyclical nature. Death reverses all earthly accumulation. We depart exactly as we arrived: empty-handed. This verse emphasizes the inevitability of death and the inability to take material possessions beyond the grave. It serves as a reminder of life's brevity and the importance of focusing on eternal values.

He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand - No matter how hard a person worked, none of it can be carried beyond the grave. **In his hand** is a vivid image for once his physical hand was full of treasure from his toil, but in the end it will be empty. The message is clear that earthly wealth is temporary. Labor without an eternal perspective ends in loss. In the Septuagint **take nothing** is a double negative (ouden ou) strongly emphasizing he will take absolutely nothing. There will be no U-Haul following his hearse! No title, no bank account, no achievement follows us into eternity.

THOUGHT - Given the futility and emptiness and transience of earthly treasures we all do well to hear and obey Jesus' wise words in Mt 6:19-21+ - "**Do not store up** ([present imperative with a negative](#) = stop doing this or do not begin) for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 "**But store up** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for (term of explanation - why obey Jesus?) where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What you keep, you lose. What you give for God's purposes, you keep forever. Make your investment in the "Bank of Heaven" where you will reap an eternal "R.O.I." (Return On Investment)! You were born with nothing and will die with nothing except what you sent on ahead to Heaven! Live not to fill your hands, but to fill heaven with the fruit of a life lived in the power of the Spirit and for the glory of God.

[William Barrick](#) - Most biblically literate people recognize Eccl 5:15 as one of the more familiar verses in Scripture when it comes to the topic of money. No one takes their money with them when they die—they all go empty-handed (cp. Ps 49:10, 17). Paul cites this concept indirectly in 1 Timothy 6:7 in the context in which he commends godly contentment and warns against the love of money (1Ti 6:6–10).

*I have not sought eternal treasures,
therefore I actually have nothing at all.*

William MacDonald - Cecil Rhodes spent years exploiting the natural resources of South Africa. When he was about to die, he cried out in remorse: I've found much in Africa. Diamonds, gold and land are mine, but now I must leave them all behind. Not a thing I've gained can be taken with me. I have not sought eternal treasures, therefore I actually have nothing at all. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind? All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.
Ecclesiastes 5:15-17

Death is never far from Solomon's mind. Some people might say he is obsessed with it. I think he would say that most of us desperately try to avoid it. We swiftly change the subject to something more pleasant. But we would be better off if we thought about our own death more often.

A sixteen-year-old girl lay dying in a hospital room. A close friend came by for a final visit, not knowing what to say. As he tells it, he must have looked dreadfully upset, for "She looked upon my worried and harried face and said, 'Don't be afraid.'"

That is the heart of the Christian theology of death. It is most profound when it is the dying who can say to the living, "Don't be afraid."

As a pastor I spend a fair amount of my time dealing with death. Hardly a day goes by without someone asking me to pray for a loved one who is dying. As I write these words, I can think of a half dozen people who languish in nursing homes and hospital beds. Several have heart problems, others do daily battle with cancer. Any of them may die before the week is out.

Meanwhile Solomon points out that we go as we come—naked. We've even coined a term that reminds us of how we came into this world. If a person has no clothes on, we might say he's wearing his "birthday suit." To add insult to injury, Solomon points out that you can't take anything with you when you die. The rich man dies like the pauper. Oh, the surroundings may be different, but the one is just as dead as the other. The rich man can't take his riches with him, nor will the poor man take his poverty. Both leave it all behind. Death plays no favorites.

Most of us, if we thought about it, would like to live a long time. Maybe not forever, but at least for many more years. It's only natural to feel that way. If given the choice, we would keep our families together so that death would not intrude.

In recent years Easter has become my favorite Christian holiday. When I was young, it was mostly a day to dress up and hunt for Easter eggs. With each passing year, it has become more meaningful. Open the

paper and death stares out from every page. Death is everywhere. Where is the resurrection? Easter reminds us that death is not the worst. "Fear not," said the angel. "For he is risen." (Matthew 28:5, 6 KJV). And those who sleep in Jesus shall also see resurrection.

Lord Jesus, hasten the day when death shall die and I shall rise from the grave, never to die again. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead? If so, how does this truth affect the way you view your own death?
- What will you "leave behind" when you die?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:1-3; and Philippians 3:20-21.

Ecclesiastes 5:16 This also is a grievous evil--exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. So what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind?

- **a grievous evil:** Ec 5:13 2:22,23
- what: 1Sa 12:21 Jer 2:8 Mk 8:36
- for: Ec 1:3 Pr 11:29 Isa 26:18 Ho 8:7 Joh 6:27

This also is a grievous evil--exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. So what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind?

[William Barrick](#) - Since a person enters this world without any material wealth and leaves this world in the same condition, of what use is laboring for and gathering material possessions and money (Eccl 5:16)?

Ecclesiastes 5:10-17 Working For The Wind

What profit has he who has labored for the wind? —Ecclesiastes 5:16

Howard Levitt lost his \$200,000 Ferrari on a flooded Toronto highway. He had driven into what seemed like a puddle before realizing that the water was much deeper and rising quickly. When the water reached the Ferrari's fenders, its 450-horsepower engine seized. Thankfully he was able to escape the car and get to high ground.

Howard's soggy sports car reminds me of Solomon's observation that "riches perish through misfortune" (Eccl. 5:14). Natural disasters, theft, and accidents may claim our dearest belongings. Even if we manage to protect them, we certainly can't haul them with us to heaven (v.15). Solomon asked, "What profit has he who has labored for the wind?" (v.16). There is futility in working only to acquire belongings that will ultimately disappear.

There is something that doesn't spoil and we can "take with us." It is possible to store up eternal heavenly treasure. Pursuing virtues such as generosity (Matt. 19:21), humility (5:3), and spiritual endurance (Luke 6:22-23) will yield lasting rewards that can't be destroyed. Will the kind of treasure you seek expire on earth? Or, are you seeking "those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God"? (Col. 3:1).

Dear God, please give me a passion for the unseen, eternal rewards that You offer. Make me indifferent to the temporary pleasures of this world.

Treasures on earth can't compare with the treasures in heaven.

INSIGHT: The book of Ecclesiastes is often viewed with skepticism, and its message is considered dark and hopeless. Today's passage exemplifies much of the book—the emptiness of riches and the transitory nature of things of this earth. But as with many great stories, this book saves the best for last. After all the reflections and lessons learned, the writer's final conclusion is to "fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (12:13). The things of God are what truly matter. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Ecclesiastes 5:17 Throughout his life he also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness and anger.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:17 All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:17 All his days he also eats in darkness, And he has much sorrow and sickness and anger.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:16 κα γε π σαι α μ ραι α το ν σκ τει κα π νθει κα θυμ πολλ κα ρρωστ κα χ λ

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:17 Yea, all his days are in darkness, and in mourning, and much sorrow, and infirmity, and wrath.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:17 Surely, he ate in darkness every day of his life, and he suffered greatly with sickness and anger.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:17 What is more, he eats in darkness all his days, with much sorrow, sickness, and anger.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:17 Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:17 All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:17 Throughout their lives, they live under a cloud-- frustrated, discouraged, and angry.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:17 Also all his days in darkness he consumeth, and sadness, and wrath, and sickness abound.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:16 as he spends the rest of his days in darkness, mourning, many sorrows, sickness and exasperation.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:17 Besides, all their days they eat in darkness, in much vexation and sickness and resentment.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:16 All the days of his life are passed in gloom and sorrow, under great vexation, sickness and wrath.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:17 They spend their entire lives in darkness, in constant frustration, sickness, and resentment.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:17 All his days are in the dark, and he has much sorrow, pain, disease, and trouble.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:17 and spent all his days in darkness and grief, in much vexation and sickness and resentment?

- he eats: Ge 3:17 1Ki 17:12 Job 21:25 Ps 78:33 102:9 127:2 Eze 4:16,17
- much: 2Ki 1:2,6 5:27 2Ch 16:10-12 24:24,25 Ps 90:7-11 Pr 1:27-29 Ac 12:23 1Co 11:30-32

THE MISER'S MEAL

Throughout his life he also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness and anger - This verse describes the tragic emotional and spiritual state of a person enslaved to materialism especially the wealthy man who hoards (Ec 5:13–16). Though he may have wealth, his existence is joyless. **He eats in darkness** is a metaphor for loneliness, gloom, or hopelessness. Eating is normally associated with fellowship and celebration but here is done in solitary gloom. **With great vexation, sickness, and anger** describe his this man's inner condition as emotionally agitated (vexation), physically unwell (sickness), and spiritually bitter (anger). His wealth did not shield him from pain, but in fact contributed to it.

*Riches without relationship
become a prison of darkness.*

[William Barrick](#) - “**Vexation, sickness and anger**” accompany the wealthy as they eat in darkness (Eccl 5:17). Vexation refers to the burdensome cares of this life. Sickness indicates the physical toll on the laborer. Anger identifies the emotional outcome of the frustration of ambitions, becoming the target of other ambitious people, and the failure of one's plans to come to fruition due to economic downturns, governmental interference, cruel competitors, and industrial spies.

Ecclesiastes 5:8-17 Stockpiling Or Storing?

Just exactly as he came, so shall he go. —Ecclesiastes 5:16

Rugs, lamps, a washer and dryer, even the food in the cupboards—everything was for sale! My husband and I stopped at an estate sale one day and wandered through the house, overwhelmed by the volume of belongings. Dish sets littered the dining room table. Christmas decorations filled the front hallway. Tools, toy cars, board games, and vintage dolls crowded the garage. When we left, I wondered if the homeowners were moving, if they desperately needed money, or if they had passed away.

This reminded me of these words from Ecclesiastes: “Just exactly as he came, so shall he go” (5:16). We're born empty-handed and we leave the world the same way. The stuff we buy, organize, and store is ours only for a while—and it's all in a state of decay. Moths munch through our clothes; even gold and silver may not hold their value (James 5:2-3). Sometimes “riches perish through misfortune” (Eccl. 5:14), and our kids don't get to enjoy our possessions after we're gone.

Stockpiling possessions in the here-and-now is foolish, because we can't take anything with us when we die. What's important is a proper attitude toward what we have and how we use what God has given. That way we'll be storing up our treasure where it belongs—in heaven. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Whatever we possess on earth
We have to leave behind;
But everything we give to God
In heaven we will find.
—Sper

Letting go of earthly possessions enables us to take hold of heavenly treasure.

Ecclesiastes 5:18 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:18 **Behold** that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for

it is his portion.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:18 Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:17 δο εδον γ γαθ ν σπιν καλ ν το φαγε ν κα το πιε ν κα το δε ν γαθωσ νην ν παντ μ χθ ατο ν μοχθ π τ ν λιον ριθμ ν μερ ν ζω ς ατο ν δωκεν ατ θε ς πι ατ μερ ς ατο

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:18 **Behold**, I have seen good, that it is a fine thing for a man to eat and to drink, and to see good in all his labour in which he may labour under the sun, all the number of the days of his life which God has given to him: for it is his portion.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:18 I have seen personally what is the only beneficial and appropriate course of action for people: to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in all their hard work on earth during the few days of their life which God has given them, for this is their reward.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:18 Here is what I have seen to be good: it is appropriate to eat, drink, and experience good in all the labor one does under the sun during the few days of his life God has given him, because that is his reward.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:18 **Behold**, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:18 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him--for this is his lot.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:18 Even so, I have noticed one thing, at least, that is good. It is good for people to eat, drink, and enjoy their work under the sun during the short life God has given them, and to accept their lot in life.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:18 **Lo**, that which I have seen: It is good, because beautiful, to eat, and to drink, and to see good in all one's labour that he laboureth at under the sun, the number of the days of his life that God hath given to him, for it is his portion.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:17 So my conclusion is this: true happiness lies in eating and drinking and enjoying whatever has been achieved under the sun, throughout the life given by God: for this is the lot of humanity.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:18 This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot.

- **good and fitting.** Ec 2:24 3:12,13,22 8:15 9:7 11:9 1Ti 6:17
- it is his: Ec 2:10 3:22 Jer 52:34

GOD'S DAILY REWARD

NAS leaves out **Behold** ([hinneh](#)) which is used to call our attention to what follows. It is as if Solomon knows he has been a bit depressing and pessimistic regarding riches and so he seeks to shift our attention.

Here [Behold** ([hinneh](#))] is what I have seen to be good and fitting ([yapheh](#)): to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him - Eat and to drink**

is a common idiom in Ecclesiastes for a person enjoying the fruit of his labor (e.g., Ec 2:24; 3:13). Notice how eating here contrasts with eating in darkness in Ec 5:17. Solomon now offers a positive perspective on enjoying life. **Good and fitting** means not extravagant or indulgent, but appropriate, wise, and God-approved. **To eat, to drink, and enjoy oneself** is a repeated refrain in Ecclesiastes (cf. Ec 2:24; 3:13; 8:15), meaning to receive life's daily blessings with gratitude. **In all one's labor** refers to enjoyment is not in escape from work, but in God's grace amid work—finding satisfaction in what one does. **The few years of his life which God has given him** describes life as short regardless of how long you live and it also emphasizes each of our days is a gift which is sovereignly assigned by the Lord. As David said "in Thy book they were all written, **the days that were ordained for me**, when as yet there was not one of them." (Ps 139:16⁺).

William Barrick - Concluding Thoughts Regarding Money (Eccl 5:18–20) Though the experiences Solomon describes in verses 8–12 produce a sense of hopelessness and frustration, a remedy exists. The key word in this section is "God." All of those experiences

take place “under the sun” apart from God. Solomon had observed those who included God in their worldview and how that impacted their enjoyment of life, despite its ups and downs, its times of want and times of abundance. God desires that people enjoy His gifts, whether as a poor individual (Eccl 5:18) or as a wealthy individual (Eccl 5:19). “**To eat, to drink**” involves sharing the enjoyment of fellowship and being satisfied with that which God has given, regardless of the amount. The historian identifies the same aspects of life in his description of the glory days of Solomon’s reign (1 Kgs 4:20). During those early years of Solomonic splendor, power, affluence, and influence, the nation prospered. Its citizens were contented and happy. Things were good because Solomon was still serving the Lord and honoring Him in all that he did. Perhaps Solomon remembers those years with nostalgia and writes of them in Ecclesiastes 5:18–20.

For this is his reward ([cheleq](#) - lot, portion, heritage) Throughout Ecclesiastes, the term ([cheleq](#)) is used in reference to man’s temporal profit from his labor and his reward from God (e.g., Eccl 3:22; 9:9). This is the divinely assigned piece of life, what God gives us to enjoy. Enjoyment of simple, daily blessings is a gift from God, not a meaningless accident. The upshot is that true enjoyment is found not in hoarded wealth but in gratefully receiving the simple gifts of daily life from the hand of God.

[Ray Stedman](#) (Ecc 5:18, 19) - Enjoyment does not come from possessions, or from riches. Nor does it come from companionship, from popularity and fame, from the approval and the admiration of others. Enjoyment comes by knowing the Living God and taking everything from his hand with thanksgiving, whether it be pain or pleasure. That is the gift of God, and that is the lesson of this great book.

THOUGHT - The Beauty of Enough - Ecclesiastes 5:18 is countercultural wisdom. While the world races after more, God’s Word says: receive, rest, rejoice. You don’t need abundance to have joy—you need gratitude, contentment, and perspective. God gives you this moment, this job, this meal, this day. Life is short. And that’s not tragic—it’s clarifying. When you live each day as a gift from God, the ordinary becomes sacred. Am I waiting for life to get better before I enjoy it? Am I missing today’s portion because I’m craving tomorrow’s abundance? Ask God for the grace to see the good and fitting gifts He’s already given you.

A few applications...

- Practice daily gratitude (1Th 5:18). List the small gifts of each day—meals, moments, labor, people. These are not small. They are your portion.
- Enjoy what God gives without guilt. God is not glorified by misery. Right enjoyment honors Him (1Ti 6:17 – “God... richly supplies us with all things to enjoy”).
- Avoid both greed and asceticism. Ecclesiastes steers between materialism and denial. It teaches contentment—not hoarding, and not rejecting joy.
- Rest in God’s timing (cf Mt 11:28-30). The “few years” are from His hand. Don’t strive to control what you can’t. Receive the days with reverent joy.
- Enjoy ordinary life. God is present not just in miracles, but in meals. To enjoy daily work and food is a quiet act of faith.
- A grateful heart that finds joy in the labor, food, and days God gives is one that walks in wisdom under the sun.

Reward ([cheleq](#)) - The term כֶּהֱלֵק (kheleq, “lot”) has a wide range of meanings: (1) “share of spoils” (Gen 14:24; Num 31:36; 1 Sam 30:24), (2) “portion of food” (Lev 6:10; Deut 18:8; Hab 1:16), (3) “portion [or tract] of land” (Deut 10:9; 12:12; Josh 19:9), (4) “portion” or “possession” (Num 18:20; Deut 32:9), (5) “inheritance” (2 Kgs 9:10; Amos 7:4), (6) “portion” or “award” (Job 20:29; 27:13; 31:2; Isa 17:14) or “profit; reward” (Eccl 2:10, 21; 3:22; 5:17–18; 9:6, 9); see HALOT 323 s.v. II כֶּהֱלֵק; BDB 324 s.v. כֶּהֱלֵק.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) WHISTLE WHILE YOU WORK

Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him— for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart. Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

Several months ago my wife and I ate lunch with some friends who were visiting from another state. When we started our meal I noticed that the husband looked more relaxed than I had seen him in a long time. I soon learned the reason for his calm demeanor. He heard a minister suggest a simple prayer for the beginning of each new day. The minister challenged his listeners to pray this prayer for twenty-one days straight. My friend, who I’ll call Sam, said that he had tried it and that the prayer had made a profound difference in his life.

At that point his wife chimed in to say that she had noticed a drastic difference in him as well. Before he began the day with the

prayer, Sam often returned home tense over things that had happened to him during the day. Now, she noted, Sam would come home relaxed and in a good mood. As I listened, I wondered to myself what kind of prayer could make that kind of difference. Later Sam explained that for him the key was to pray the prayer the moment he woke up—even before he got out of bed. He even said that he had awakened that morning at 4:30, so he prayed the prayer and then went back to sleep.

The prayer itself is the essence of simplicity. It goes like this: "Heavenly Father, You are in charge of everything that is going to happen to me today—whether it be good or bad, positive or negative. Please make me thankful for everything that happens to me today. Amen."

I think Solomon would heartily approve of those sentiments. When my friend told me the story, he emphasized how this prayer works. "It doesn't change anything outside of me, but it does change everything inside of me. My circumstances don't change, but my attitude does." And that's why he looked so relaxed when we ate lunch.

In our final verses of Ecclesiastes 5, the key word in the passage is God. Bible commentator Derek Kidner notes that Solomon mentioned God four times in three verses—each time to remind us that the secret of happiness is to receive whatever comes to us as sent from heaven.

That is the essence of Sam's prayer, to remember that all that comes our way arrives via heaven, from the loving God who is in charge. May I challenge you to pray Sam's "secret" prayer for the next twenty-one days? See if the Lord doesn't work miracles inside your heart.

Heavenly Father, You are in charge of everything that is going to happen to me today—whether it be good or bad, positive or negative. Please make me thankful for everything that happens to me today. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Are you a thankful person? How have you experienced joy from God even during hard times?
- Name the joy-thieves in your own life.

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Habakkuk 3:17-18; John 7:37-39; and 2 Timothy 2:20-21.

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 Too Strict

Read: Genesis 3:1-6

God . . . gives us richly all things to enjoy. —1 Timothy 6:17

The tempter knows his craft. After all, he has been practicing it since the world began. He tries to get us to forfeit God's blessing by urging us to ignore God's laws or by slyly getting us to add to them. He knows we can fall into a ditch on either side of the road.

In his chat with Eve, he first suggested that God didn't want her to enjoy any of the trees in the garden (Gen. 3:1). Eve jumped to God's defense, explaining that it was only the fruit of the middle tree that was off limits (vv.2-3). But then she added that even touching the tree would bring death (v.3). God, though, hadn't said anything about touching it.

Some of us try to defend God by being more strict than He is. We believe we are holier if we go beyond His commands. As a result, we miss out on the orchard because we are denied a single piece of poisoned fruit. Not only will we not touch that tree, but we also will not touch the tree next to it or a tree that looks like it. By doing so we dishonor God.

God has given us all good things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). He's not pleased when we focus on what is prohibited and fail to enjoy all His blessings. It is not only a shame but also a sin not to enjoy life. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

For Further Study

What do these verses say about enjoying life?

Genesis 1:28-31; Psalm 36:7-9; Ecclesiastes 2;

Acts 14:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 2:20-23

The joy of living comes from a heart of thanksgiving.

Ecclesiastes 5:9-20 Work And Its Rewards

It is good and fitting for one . . . to enjoy the good of all his labor. —Ecclesiastes 5:18

In a conference for Christians who were 50 and older, we were talking about work. After we studied the last few verses of Ecclesiastes 5, one person said, "I wish that someone had explained these verses to me when I was younger. Perhaps I wouldn't have been so driven in my work. Maybe I would have relaxed more and let myself enjoy life."

There is virtue in honest, hard work—no one would argue with that. But some Christians have the idea that work is all there is to life. To relax, to enjoy life, to spend a little of their hard-earned money somehow makes them feel guilty and lazy. So they keep driving themselves till they are stopped—often for health reasons.

The author of Ecclesiastes learned that it is "good and fitting" for us to enjoy the benefits of our work (5:18). When he spoke of eating and drinking, he was talking about a joyous feast—a banquet with plenty of good food available and all the family gathered around to enjoy the festivities.

The Bible clearly teaches that God expects us to work (2 Th. 3:10). He also wants us to enjoy some of its rewards. Whether the Lord has blessed you with great riches or just enough to pay the bills, take time to enjoy the fruits of your labor. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

If you're working hard to make a living,
Never taking time to smell the roses,
Now's the time to heed the Bible's wisdom:
Find some joy before your life's day closes.
—Hess

Work to live—don't merely live to work.

Ecclesiastes 5:19 Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:19 As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor-- this is the gift of God.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:18 κα γε π ς νθρωπος δωκεν α τ θε ς πλο τον κα π ρχοντα κα ξουσ ασεν α τ ν το φαγε ν π α το κα το λαβε ν τ μ ρος α το κα το ε φρανθ ναι ν μ χθ α το το το δ μα θεο στιν

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:19 Yea, and as for every man to whom God has given wealth and possessions, and has given him power to eat thereof, and to receive his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:19 To every man whom God has given wealth, and possessions, he has also given him the ability to eat from them, to receive his reward and to find enjoyment in his toil; these things are the gift of God.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:19 God has also given riches and wealth to every man, and He has allowed him to enjoy them, take his reward, and rejoice in his labor. This is a gift of God,

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil-- this is the gift of God.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift of God.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:19 And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life-- this is indeed a gift from God.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:19 Every man also to whom God hath given wealth and riches, and hath given him power to eat of it, and to accept his portion, and to rejoice in his labour, this is a gift of God.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:18 And whenever God gives someone riches and property, with the ability to enjoy them and to find contentment in work, this is a gift from God.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:19 Likewise all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find enjoyment in their toil-- this is the gift of God.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:18 Any man to whom God gives riches and property, and grants power to partake of them, so that he receives his lot and finds joy in the fruits of his toil, has a gift from God.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:19 It is a gift from God when God gives some people wealth and possessions, the power to enjoy them, the ability to accept their lot in life, and the ability to rejoice in their own hard work.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:19 Every man to whom God has given money and wealth and the power to have pleasure in it and to do his part and have joy in his work: this is given by God.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:19 Every man also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and find enjoyment in his toil -- this is the gift of God.

- **to whom:** Ec 2:24 3:13 6:2 De 8:18 1Ki 3:13
- **this is the gift of God:** Ec 2:24-26

BLESSED TO RECEIVE EMPOWERED TO REJOICE

Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward ([cheleq](#); Lxx - [meris](#)) and rejoice ([samah](#); Lxx - [euphraino](#)) in his labor ([amal](#); Lxx - [mochthos](#)); this is the gift of God. - NET = "To every man whom God has given wealth, and possessions, he has also given him the ability to eat from them, to receive his reward and to find enjoyment in his toil; these things are the gift of God." Wealth itself is not condemned. It is recognized as something granted by God's providence, not earned solely by human effort. **He has also empowered** (shalat - domineer, be master of) emphasizes that the key is not just *having wealth*, but being given the capacity ("power or permission"; Lxx - [exousiazō](#) - having and exercising authority) to enjoy it without guilt, worry, or striving. Not just the wealth, but the ability to enjoy it in contentment is a divine gift. It means God gives the person control and freedom to enjoy his wealth. This verse reminds us that the ability to enjoy what we have is not a matter of strategy or success but is a gift from God.

God not only gives wealth

He gives the ability to enjoy it.

THOUGHT- Some people have much, but enjoy nothing—because they lack peace, contentment, or gratitude. Others have little, but rejoice deeply. Why? Because God gave them the greater gift: the freedom to receive and enjoy. As Paul affirmed it is "God, Who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." (1Ti 6:17+) Have I thanked God not just for what I have, but for the ability to enjoy it?

[William Barrick](#) - Ec 5:19 makes it clear that wealth itself is not the problem. As Paul writes, "the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil" (1 Tim 6:10). Elsewhere, the apostle also addresses the matter of living with a contented attitude whether in want or in prosperity (Phil 4:12; see also Matt 6:19–24). In his book [Business for the Glory of God](#), ([borrow book, page 46](#)) **Wayne Grudem** states that "In fact, money is fundamentally good because it is a human invention that sets us apart from the animal kingdom and enables us to subdue the earth by producing from the earth goods and services that bring benefit to others. Money enables all of mankind to be productive and enjoy the fruits of that productivity thousands of times more extensively than we could if no human being had money, and we just had to barter with each other."

Consider the following factors that describe money:

- It is more widely accepted than bartered goods of any kind (including food).
- It lasts longer than most goods.
- It is more transportable than other goods.
- Everyone is willing to exchange goods for money.
- It stores value until exchanged or spent.
- It "makes voluntary exchanges more fair, less wasteful, and far more extensive." (Borrow [Business for the Glory of God](#))

As good stewards of our finances, we can employ money to glorify God. Whenever we give to the Lord's work or to those who are in need, we exercise a rulership over the things of this world (cp. Gen 1:28). In giving to others we imitate God's mercy and love. By our wealth we can expand and strengthen Gospel ministries worldwide in order to bring others to salvation in Christ. What Solomon teaches in Ecclesiastes 5 matches what the apostle Paul teaches in his epistles. Both Old and New Testaments agree that contentment and joy accompany those who think and live with a perspective beyond the sun, rather than limiting themselves to what is "under the sun." As Eaton so aptly states, "Secular man may live a life of drudgery, but for the God-centred man it will be otherwise." (Borrow [Eaton page 104](#)) Ecclesiastes does not exude skepticism and pessimism. Instead, it proclaims a need for godly satisfaction with that which God has given. The apostle Paul makes the same observations and proclaims the same teachings—confirming the accuracy of Solomon's observations and the integrity of his conclusions.

William Barrick - Questions related to Ecclesiastes 5:

- How can we prepare ourselves for worship on Sunday mornings?
 - What causes us to sometimes speak or act too hastily?
 - What kinds of vows would be legitimate for New Testament believers?
 - In what ways is Solomon qualified in writing a critique of a monarchy?
 - Why is the love of money the root of all sorts of evil?
 - What good qualities does money possess?
 - What produces godly contentment?
 - What can you do this week to enhance the gladness of your heart?
-

Ecclesiastes 5:13-20 How To Enjoy Things

As for every man . . . to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God. —Ecclesiastes 5:19

In his book *Daring To Draw Near*, Dr. John White writes that several years earlier God had made it possible for him to acquire a lovely home with many luxuries. His feelings about the house fluctuated dramatically.

When he reminded himself that it was a gracious gift from God, he felt joy and thanksgiving. But when he would begin to compare it with those of his friends, he would feel proud because he had such a fine house and his joy would evaporate. His home would actually become a burden. All he could see were the many hedges and trees to care for and the endless odd jobs to do. White said, “While vanity clouds my eyes and burdens my heart, gratitude clears my vision and lightens my load.”

The writer of Ecclesiastes saw God at every turn in the enjoyment of material things. The power to eat the fruits of our labors and even the strength to receive and rejoice in them is from Him (5:18-19).

From beginning to end, all of life is a continuous gift-giving by God. We deserve nothing. He owes us nothing. Yet He gives us everything. If we remember this, we need not feel selfish or guilty. Whatever material blessings we have are a gift from our gracious God. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes those gifts with joy.
—Addison

*God, Who has given so much to us,
gives one more thing—a grateful heart.*
—Herbert

Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.

KJV Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart.

BGT Ecclesiastes 5:19 τι ο πολλ μνησθ σεται τς μρας τς ζω ς α το τι θε ς περισπ α τ ν ν ε φρο σ ν καρδ ας α το

LXE Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; for God troubles him in the mirth of his heart.

NET Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he does not think much about the fleeting days of his life because God keeps him preoccupied with the joy he derives from his activity.

CSB Ecclesiastes 5:20 for he does not often consider the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with the joy of his heart.

ESV Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

NIV Ecclesiastes 5:20 He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

NLT Ecclesiastes 5:20 God keeps such people so busy enjoying life that they take no time to brood over the past.

YLT Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he doth not much remember the days of his life, for God is answering through the joy of his heart.

NJB Ecclesiastes 5:19 For such a person will hardly notice the passing of time, so long as God keeps his heart occupied with joy.

NRS Ecclesiastes 5:20 For they will scarcely brood over the days of their lives, because God keeps them occupied with the joy of their hearts.

NAB Ecclesiastes 5:19 For he will hardly dwell on the shortness of his life, because God lets him busy himself with the joy of his heart.

GWN Ecclesiastes 5:20 These people won't give much thought to their brief lives because God keeps them occupied with the joy in their hearts.

BBE Ecclesiastes 5:20 He will not give much thought to the days of his life; because God lets him be taken up with the joy of his heart.

RSV Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

- For he shall not much remember: or, Though he give not much, yet he remembreth, etc. Ps 37:16
- because: De 28:8-12,47 Ps 4:6,7 Isa 64:5 65:13,14,21-24 Ro 5:1,5-11

THE GLADNESS GOD GIVES

For he will not often consider the years (literally "days") **of his life** - NET = "For he does not think much about the fleeting days of his life." The one who walks in God's joy isn't anxiously reflecting on how long or short life is. He does not dwell on the passing of time or brood over life's limits. He isn't burdened with regret or consumed with mortality, but lives peacefully in the present.

Because (term of explanation) **God keeps him occupied with the gladness** ([simchah](#) - a deep, inner sense of delight; Lxx - [euphrosune](#)) **of his heart** ([leb](#); Lxx - [kardia](#)) **NET** = "because God keeps him preoccupied with the joy he derives from his activity." This is the key: God actively engages the person, not with trivial distractions, but with inner joy and meaningful contentment. **Keeps him occupied** speaks of God filling the person's heart and time with gladness so he is not troubled with existential dread. **With the gladness of his heart** (ESV - "with joy in his heart") signifies a deep, abiding heart-level joy that God gives to those who trust Him, recalling that the **heart** ([leb](#); Lxx - [kardia](#)) is the control center of our life! This divinely ordained joy crowds out earthly fear, regret, and obsession with time. When God is your focus and your source of joy, you can live with peaceful satisfaction, not fretting over the brevity of life, but gratefully enjoying each moment as a divine gift.

David spoke of this **gladness of heart** in Psalm 16:11⁺ (using same Hebrew and Greek words) -

You will make known to me the path of life; **In Your presence is fullness of joy** ([simchah](#); Lxx - [euphrosune](#));
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Ray Stedman - Notice how the chapter closes: For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart. (Ecclesiastes 5:20 RSV) Have you ever met people like that? They have lived a full life, but they never talk about the past. Some people live in the past. [William Randolph Hearst](#), who amassed one of the great fortunes of our time, ended his days amidst all the opulence and splendor of the castle which he built in Southern California, sitting in a basement, playing over and over again the movies of his paramour from Hollywood, in an effort to eke out a degree of enjoyment from the past. When people discover the richness of life which God has provided they do not think of the past, or even talk about it (ED: I WOULD ARGUE THIS POINT SLIGHTLY. I THINK ABOUT THE PAST BUT ONLY TO BE REMINDED OF HOW FAR GOD HAS BROUGHT ME IN THE

PRESENT!). They do not talk about the future either because they are so richly involved with the savor of life right now. (ED: I DISAGREE WITH THIS FOR SURE - I SPEAK OF THE FUTURE ALL THE TIME FOR THAT IS OUR BLESSED HOPE!) How good it is to know the Living God, to know that he controls what comes into your life. He expects you to make choices; Scripture always encourages that. But rejoice in the wisdom of a Father's heart, and richly enjoy what is handed you day-by-day; that is the secret of life. Such a one "will not much remember the days of his life" because God will keep him occupied "with joy in his heart."

THOUGHT - Ecclesiastes 5:20 paints a beautiful picture of a life so full of God-given joy that it's unburdened by constant reflection, regret, or fear of time slipping away. This is not a call to ignore mortality—it's a call to live fully in light of God's goodness. When we receive our days as gifts, and see even our labor as blessed, we become too joyfully busy with the present to mourn the past or dread the future. Paul expresses this idea similarly in Philippians 4:11–13+, where contentment was something Paul learned and which led to peace in all circumstances. Is my life marked more by regret over the past or joy in the present? Am I preoccupied with aging, deadlines, or legacy—or with the gladness of heart that only God can give?

Oswald Chambers - If we try to find lasting joy in any human relationship (ED: OR WEALTH) it will end in vanity, something that passes like a morning cloud. The true joy of a man's life is in his relationship to God, and the great point of the Hebrew confidence in God is that it does not unfit a man for his actual life. That is always the test of a false religion. (The Shade of His Hand)