

CHASE "SPEECHLESS" ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7

This Week's Core Competency

Worship – I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me. Ps 95:1-7

*Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.*

*2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.*

*3 For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.*

*4 In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.*

*5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.*

*6 Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;*

*7 for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.*

The LORD rejected Saul as king because he was disobedient. When he disobeyed the instruction of the prophet Samuel in preparation for battle against the Philistines (1Sa 13:13), and when he refused to totally destroy the Amalekites as he had been commanded to do by the word of the LORD through Samuel (15:7-9, 13-15), he ceased to be an instrument of the LORD's rule over his people.

In the first instance, with his troops quaking in fear and some scattering, rather than wait for Samuel, he offered the burnt and the fellowship offerings

***It's better not to vow than to make a
vow and not fulfill it.***

– the Teacher

himself in an effort to secure the LORD's favor before engaging the Philistines.

He explained to Samuel, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, I thought, "Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor." So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.'

'You acted foolishly,' Samuel said. 'You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure.'"

Meticulous observance of divinely appointed ritual worship is important but not more important than obedience.

In the second instance, he failed to execute the LORD's judgment on the Amalekites. He had been commanded to attack and utterly destroy them (15:3). And that's what he did—partly. Scripture says, "He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed" (vv. 8, 9).

The next day when Samuel appeared, Saul greeted him, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions.'

But Samuel said, 'What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?'"

cont. pg. 2

At that point Saul did his best to rationalize his behavior, but Samuel would have none of it. In an attempt to excuse his *poor judgment*, Saul explained, "The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal." The end doesn't justify the means, however. Worship is no excuse for disobedience, and partial obedience amounts to disobedience.

Samuel made that perfectly clear when he replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (v. 22). By the way, "sacrifice" denotes "worship" in this verse.

The priority of obedience over acts of worship in a show of worship is evident in Ecclesiastes 5:1-7, in which the Teacher warns against making rash vows to God. These he calls "the sacrifice of fools" because they grow out of excessive then imprudent speech and are made to God in a show of worship. God takes pleasure in neither the show of religion nor the hypocrisy of the religious.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

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.

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.

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

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in
fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. 5
It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill
it. 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? 7 Much dreaming and many
words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.

Cf., another translation

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.

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.

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

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!

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

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?"

5:7 Just as there is futility in many dreams,
so also in many words.

Therefore, fear God! (NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Bracket "house of God" and "sacrifice of fools" in v. 1.

* Box "rather than" indicating *contrast* in v. 1.

* Write "(for)" in front of "God" in v. 2.

* Underline "heaven" and "earth" in v. 2.

* Box "so" indicating *result* in v. 2.

* Box "as" and "so" indicating *comparison* in v. 3.

* Circle "vow" in v. 4.

* Highlight verse 5.

* Bracket "destroy the work of your hands" in v. 6.

* Double underline "much dreaming" and "many
words" in v. 7.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What does the Teacher warn against in verse 1?
2. Some think verse 2 is about prayer. What do you think it's about?
3. Explain the link between the parallel ideas—*quick mouth* and *hasty heart*—in verse 2.
4. Explain the *relationship* of verse 2b to verse 2a.
5. Put the point of verse 3 in your own words.
6. What do you infer about "vows" from verse 4?
7. Explain why verse 5 is true.
8. Unfulfilled vows bring dire consequences. How dire?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the contemporary relevance of the Teacher's warning against making rash "vows" to God.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 is about one thing, not three. Donald R. Glenn explains: "These verses are often wrongly interpreted as an interlude in Solomon's argument. They are assumed to give advice on proper worship, including the proper attitude for worship (v. 1), the proper practice of prayer (vv. 2-3), and the proper payment of vows (vv. 4-7). In reality, however, they are an important part of Solomon's argument, warning against the folly of rash vows which could cause a person to lose the fruits of his labor through God's destroying **the work of his hands** (v. 6). Thus Solomon warned against the folly of rash vows which he called **the sacrifice of fools** (v. 1) and **the speech of a fool** (v. 3). He warned against uttering a hasty and ill considered **vow to the Lord: Do not be quick with your mouth; do not be hasty in your heart**" ("Ecclesiastes," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 988). In a nutshell, Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 warns against letting one's mouth write a check to God that one's flesh can't cash.

Verse 1 opens with a general warning: "Be careful what you do when you enter the house of God" (CEV). More specifically, stand in hushed awe before him and by all means, watch what you say for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1Sa 15:22). God isn't impressed by religious rites and rituals. Clearly he wants our obedience more than our empty promises, which the Teacher calls "the sacrifice of fools" and a modern writer calls "the calves of our lips" (Walter C. Kaiser, *Ecclesiastes*, 74). Ironically, foolish people who bring their rash vows to God don't get it; they don't recognize their wrongheaded ways.

Verses 2-3 warn against excessive speech

because "the speech of a fool," or "the sacrifice of fools," i.e., rash vows, mentioned in the previous verse come "when there are many words." The Teacher would doubtless agree that "be quick to listen and slow to speak" (Jas 1:19) is good advice even with respect to God. The stark contrast between deity and humanity implies as much. After all, God in heaven is transcendent; humans on earth are terrestrial. Good manners require that we respect the infinite divide. A preacher once said to his congregation, "Do you know the difference between you and God?" Then after the appropriate dramatic pause answered, "He doesn't think he's you." How true! Careless commitments made to a friend are one thing. Careless commitments made to God are quite another. And since "many words" lead to rash vows, just as certainly as "many cares" lead to bad dreams, we would be wise to hold our tongues so we don't let our mouths drag us into sin. To say, "My vow was a mistake," will not do. God expects us to keep our promises to him even as we expect others to keep their promises to us. Otherwise, we may face his discipline. As one writer says, "Quite simply, those who do not fulfill their vows are in a worse situation than those who never make them in the first place. After all, vows are optional; they are not commanded. Thus, he warns his hearers not to play religious games-to make vows and then try to get out of them. Jesus later also threatens those who try to manipulate the laws to avoid repaying a vow (Matt. 13:16-22)" (Temper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, NICOT, 155). Dreaming is meaningless; so is religious prattle. "Therefore, stand in awe of God."

The Message of the Passage

Don't make reckless promises to God that you can neither take back nor keep, thereby inviting his displeasure.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Speechless”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **guard your steps** Heb. "guard your feet" "refers to demeanour and preparedness as one comes to worship, particularly readiness to obey, for listen refers to heeding as well as hearing (cf. Lk. 8:18)" (Michael A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*, TOTC, 97, 98). "Cf., "Be careful what you do when you enter the house of God" (CEV); "Be careful when you go to worship at the Temple" (NCV).

v. 1 **house of God** "Here the reference is to Solomon's temple built in the tenth century BC and destroyed in 587 BC, or (on a post-exilic dating of Ecclesiastes) to the second temple built in 520-516 BC, destroyed by the Romans in 63 BC, rebuilt and enlarged by Herod the Great in 19 BC" (97). "Jesus eradicated the distinction between holy and profane places, but in the OT specially designated places appear. The distinction between holy and common space is abolished only with the death and resurrection of Christ, and this is symbolized in the Gospels by the ripping of the temple veil (Matt. 27:51). During Qohelet's time, God's presence was manifest only in certain locations and paramount among these was the house of God, the temple. Of course, as is likely, the book of Qohelet may be postexilic. If so, then house of God is a reference to any local worship site" (Longman, 150). Both of these authors are open to the possibility that Solomon did not write Ecclesiastes, but to call that possibility "likely" is an overstatement.

v. 1 **sacrifice of fools** "The term 'sacrifice' 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)" (the NET Bible, 5tn on Ecc 5:1). Obedience is more important than sacrifice (cf., 1Sa 15:22). Rash vows offered to God as a sacrifice of worship can never replace simple obedience. "Worship is here called 'sacrifice' because it is offering to God 'the calves of our lips' (cf. Hos. 14:2; Heb. 13:15). Neither should men attempt to bribe God with vows" (Walter C. Kaiser, *Ecclesiastes*, 74). "The sacrifice of fools" refers to rash vows offered in worship by foolish people who would rather make vows than obey God.

v. 2 **mouth, heart** The mouth reveals what the heart contains (cf., Mt 12:24; 15:18; Lk 6:45).

v. 2 **God** Cf., "for God is in heaven" (NET). The proverbial statement (v. 2b) explains why rash vows (v. 1) should be avoided. "Traditional wisdom advocated thought before speech so as to avoid rash remarks. Qohelet also warns against precipitate speech. He implies that thoughtful consideration of what to say before God will result in fewer words" (James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, OTL, 116), which will result in fewer rash vows (v. 3b).

v. 3 **as . . . so** "The exact relationship between the two halves of the proverb is uncertain. Though a comparative particle is not used in this verse, I deem it likely that an analogy is set up between the first and the second cola of the proverb. The NIV makes this explicit by adopting an 'As . . . so' format for its translation. This translation is a good dynamic equivalent for the Hebrew, but the Hebrew simply puts the two cola side by side and expects the reader to make the comparison explicit (the NRSV more closely reflects the Hebrew)" (Longman, 152). Cf., "For dreams come with many cares, and a fool's voice with many words" (NRSV); "For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words" (ESV).

v. 6 **temple messenger** Lit., "messenger;" cf., "so that you have to tell God's priest that you didn't mean it" (GNT). "The priests recorded what Israelite worshipers vowed (Lev 27:14-15). When an Israelite delayed in fulfilling a vow, a priest would remind him to pay what he had vowed. Although the traditional rabbinic view is that Qoheleth refers to an angelic superintendent over the temple, Rashi suggested that it is a temple-official. Translations reflect both views: 'his representative' (NAB), 'the temple messenger' (NIV), 'the messenger' (RSV, NRSV, NASB, MLB, NJPS), 'the angel' (KJV, ASV, Douay) and 'the angel of God' (NEB)" (the NET Bible, 16tn on Ecc 5:6). One commentator refers to this individual as "a kind of religious bill collector" (154).

v. 7 **much dreaming . . .** "Solomon compared rash vows to futile or meaningless dreams. This is the thought in verse 7a, which may be translated somewhat literally, 'Through many dreams there is futility and also though many words' (Glenn, 988). The difficulty translating and understanding this verse is made abundantly clear by the multiple uses of the Heb. conjunctions *ki* and *waw* as well as the preposition *beth* (Longman, 155, 56).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Special note to parents: Our summer series in the book of Ecclesiastes is called Life on Mission. We will be studying the same scripture as adults and will be adding an exciting missionary story each week. We are looking forward to learning about these heroes who did not chase the wind but lived life on mission!

It looked like an ice cream sundae. Vanilla ice cream scooped into a tall fluted glass, drizzled with caramel and a cherry on top. I could hardly wait to dig in! Unfortunately, I forgot it was April Fool's Day but the first bite of my sweet treat reminded me. What I thought was going to be a delicious dessert ended up being mashed potatoes, gravy and a roasted red pepper! That "ice cream sundae" lacked integrity! It was not what it appeared to be on the outside. Our worship can be like that sometimes. The words of our mouth don't match our actions. As a parent, I am reminded how important it is for my life to have integrity. My kids are watching me. Am I living out the truth I profess? Do I daily trust the God I worship with my lips on Sunday? Search the internet for "April Fools Food" and choose one to make for your family. Use this as an opportunity to discuss how the meditations of our heart and the words on our lips should be the same.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Ecclesiastes 5: 1-7

1. According to verse 5, is it better to not make a promise to God or to make a promise and then break it?
2. In verse 6, what should we not allow to lead to us into sin?
3. In verse 7, how are we to stand before God?

What Do You Think

1. What does it mean to stand in awe of God?
2. Why is it important for our words and heart to be the same?

What R U Going To Do

Take some time this week to worship together as a family. Attend church together or put on worship music at home or in the car. Demonstrate what it looks like to "stand in awe" of God and His greatness.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Worship - I celebrate God for who he is and what he has done for me.

Memory Verse

Colossians 1:18 - "And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-five years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.