

Ecclesiastes 5 New International Version (NIV)

¹ ^[a] 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 A dream comes when there are many cares,
and many words mark the speech of a fool.

⁴ When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. ⁵ It is better not to make a vow than to make one 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 fear God.

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. ⁹ The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

¹⁰ Whoever loves money never has enough;
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.
This too is meaningless.

¹¹ As goods increase,
so do those who consume them.

And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them?

¹² The sleep of a laborer is sweet,
whether they eat little or much,
but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.

¹³ I have seen a grievous evil under the sun:

wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners,

¹⁴ or wealth lost through some misfortune,

so that when they have children
there is nothing left for them to inherit.

¹⁵ Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb,

and as everyone comes, so they depart.

They take nothing from their toil
that they can carry in their hands.

¹⁶ This too is a grievous evil:

As everyone comes, so they depart,
and what do they gain,
since they toil for the wind?

¹⁷ All their days they eat in darkness,
with great frustration, affliction and anger.

¹⁸ This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. ¹⁹ Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. ²⁰ They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.

^[a] [Ecclesiastes 5:1](#) In Hebrew texts 5:1 is numbered 4:17, and 5:2-20 is numbered 5:1-19.

Discussion Questions

1. What exactly is being said in v.1?
2. The author tells us to be careful with our speech, particularly when it comes to a vow. What did Jesus have to say about vows? Is this relevant today?
3. It is clear the author has witnessed government corruption, likely from the top. What should be the response of a modern-day believer to such systemic evils?
4. Are there any parallels in the way this writer speaks of wealth to the way that Jesus spoke about it? How are we to view and treat wealth today?

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