

ECCLESIASTES SERIES SEVEN
LISTEN! LISTEN!
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ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7
S-1725

•SLIDE: So many of Solomon’s observations are horizontal musings—the bitter, barren, boring side of life as seen through his disillusioned eyes.

But, in chapter five he zeros in on a vertical perspective that scrapes away the veneer of empty religion and takes us to the bedrock of a meaningful relationship with Christ. Jesus Christ is not some morning mist that dissipates as the day goes on. He is substantial—He is real.

•SLIDE: 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 they do wrong.

(The house of God equals the Temple or church or entering into His presence in whatever setting.)

•SLIDE: Ecclesiastes 5:2-3: 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.

•SLIDE: Ecclesiastes 5:4-5: When you make a vow to God, do not delay 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.

•SLIDE: 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?

•SLIDE: Ecclesiastes 5:7: Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore, stand in awe of God.

Solomon says, we hear God and implement what He says into our lifestyle by a series of vows to produce a holy life that pleases God.

•SLIDE: SOLOMON’S THESIS: God is speaking. Listen carefully and take seriously what He says.

FOUR COMMANDS (SUGGESTIONS?) AND THE REASONS FOR THE COMMANDS FLOW THROUGH THE PASSAGE.

•SLIDE: 1. Draw near and listen—because God is speaking to you.

•SLIDE: 2. Be quiet and stay calm—because God has the best perspective on your life.

•SLIDE: 3. Make a commitment and keep it—because God believes in you.

•SLIDE: 4. Don’t decide now and deny later—because God takes you seriously.

Let’s work through these four together.

•SLIDE: 1. DRAW NEAR AND LISTEN—BECAUSE GOD IS SPEAKING TO YOU.

•SLIDE: *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 they do wrong.*

The “sacrifice of fools” is the perfunctory, careless observance of religion, unattached to any Godward movement of the soul—enacted out of custom or habit.

The Bible mentions several types of the “sacrifices of fools.”

•SLIDE 1. Giving God the Leftovers.

READ MALACHI 1:8,13b-14.

These people were just going through the motions! What were they going to bring to God? The best?

No they were bringing the lame and the sick.

God says, “If you are going to bring me an offering, don’t bring me a crippled or a lame one. You bring me the best that you have or don’t bother to bring me anything.

Tithe Today: Top 10% of pay check.

•SLIDE: 2. Giving God lip service without changed lives

Jacob (Genesis 28:20-26)

“If God will be my God and protect me, then I will erect a statue in his honor and pay him a tenth.”

He kept the financial part and neglected the altar and his life was miserable until God said, “Move back to Bethel and build that altar.”

God blessed him when he finally fulfilled his vow.

•SLIDE: 3. Making stupid decisions without carefully involving God

Jephthah (Judges 11:29-40)

READ JUDGES 11: 29-35.

“If God will give us victory over the Ammonites in battle, then I will offer as a burnt sacrifice the first thing that comes out of the door of my house when I come home from battle.”

The first one out was his daughter, the apple of his eye and he sacrificed her.

•SLIDE: GOD SPEAKS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS.

(Read the list for effect and for the CD ministry: Just listen or follow along in you sermon insert.

Listen for how many ways. You will be shocked.)

The Bible (Psalms 119:105)

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3)

Sign and wonders (Acts 3:1-10)

Putting out “fleeces” to discern God’s will (Judges 6:36-40)

Godly People (Ecclesiastes 4:13; Galatians 1:1-10)

The Creation (Romans 1:18)

Preachers and prophets (Acts 11:28-29)

In our inner-most-human spirit during quiet moments (1 Kings 19:11-13)

In the human mind by sorting out the “pros and cons” of a decision (Isaiah 1:18)

Dreams (Joel 2:28-29)

Visions (Joel 2:28-29)

Failure (Matthew 26:75; John 21)

In our inner-most-human spirit when we are consistently seeking God (Jeremiah 29:12-13)

Circumstances

I count 14 different ways God speaks to the heart of people.

Open your eyes and ears, see and hear God everywhere!

When is the last time you heard God speak?

Let me illustrate just a few of the ways that God speaks to us.

•SLIDE: THE BIBLE

Ps 119:105: Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.

Woman: “God told me to marry this non-Christian.” Who spoke?

Answer is already given in the Bible

•SLIDE #: PUTTING OUT FLEECES TO DISCERN GOD’S WILL.

Judges 6:36-40.

36 Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— 37 look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said."

38 And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew — a bowlful of water.

39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew."

40 That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

Gideon’s fleece and my story of choosing a college. It is one thing for God to tell you He will give a sign; it is quite another for us to ask God to arrange one.

You can’t make God speak. But you can listen.

You can only put out a fleece when God invites you to—otherwise we fall into the sin of presumption.

•SLIDE : GODLY PEOPLE

A.W. Tozer: “Listen to the people who listen to God.”

Jake Ellis, most knowledgeable Bible in our church: “You have the spiritual gift of teaching.

•SLIDE #: PREACHERS AND PROPHETS

Acts 11:28-29: One of them, named Agabus , stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

How many of you have had a special moment in here when all of a sudden the preacher stopped preaching and God began speaking to you?

•SLIDE: IN OUR INNER-MOST-HUMAN SPIRIT DURING QUIET MOMENTS

1 Kings 19:11-13: “And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it he pulled his cloak

over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”

Buy this used car.

"Should I take this job, should I not?" And all of a sudden when God speaks there's this sense of peace. You just know what you're supposed to do.

•SLIDE: IN THE HUMAN MIND WHILE SORTING OUT “PROS AND CONS.”

Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD.

Will of god is open to reason

Is it God’s will for me to take another job in another state and move my family there?

•SLIDE: DREAMS: WHEN YOU ARE ASLEEP.

Joel 2:28: And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

God speaks through dreams—man among scaffolding of dreamed relocation building. This was from God.

•SLIDE: VISIONS: WHEN YOU ARE AWAKE.

Joel 2:28: And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

Visions of angelic beings over me and those ministering on Sunday.

•SLIDE: Angel: Visions Last month’s Casas Adobes Baptist Church Magazine

•SLIDE: FAILURE

Matt 26:75: Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

•SLIDE: IN OUR INNER SPIRIT WHEN WE ARE CONSISTENTLY SEEKING GOD.

Jeremiah 29:12-13: “Then you will call upon me and come and pray and listen to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Story of neighborhood houses while I was shaving. Told elders. Fiasco.

“Thou shalt not covet your neighbor’s house.”

•SLIDE: CIRCUMSTANCES

Tom Lutz: church building finally.
 Had all the steel girders in place
 Wind storm
 “Pastor, you’d better get over here.
 All steel blown flat. Everything leveled.
 “Maybe God did not want us to do this!”
 Elders got together and prayed: “We built too small.
 Doubled the size:
 Now have 6 worship services on the weekend.

Multiple ways God was speaking in this situation: Circumstances: Many counselors: Prayer:
 Obedience.

Do you have the eyes to see God’s hand at work in your life.

Something blown down in your life?
 Maybe what is going on is not what you think at all.
 Maybe God is trying to tell you something.

Samuel: never too young to hear God speak. (parents, help you children)

•SLIDE: 2. BE QUIET AND STAY CALM—BECAUSE GOD HAS THE BEST PERSPECTIVE
 ON YOUR LIFE.

•READ ECCLESIASTES 5:2-3: *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.*

God is in His heaven.

As I look out over the congregation I see bodies. Some interested, some asleep; but if I were to pray for these people, there is no way I could understand the complexities and depths of struggle so many are going through.

But God does. He sees not only the outside, He looks with in to the struggles and pains and troubles and depression that make up so many of our lives.

He is in heaven and you are on the earth, so please don’t start griping about the lot in life God has handed to you.

•SLIDE: 3. MAKE A COMMITMENT AND KEEP IT—BECAUSE GOD BELIEVES IN YOU.

•READ ECCLESIASTES 5:4-5: *When you make a vow to God, do not delay 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.*

Listen is in the context of commitment

John 7; we have to be willing to do his will before he will speak.

Man in counseling: Tell me what God says and then I will decide whether or not I want to do it.

•SLIDE: 4. DON’T DECIDE NOW AND DENY LATER—BECAUSE GOD TAKES YOU
 SERIOUSLY.

Don't play games with God.

"Cross my heart and hope to die; stick a thousand needles in my eye."

Remember saying that!

I never once saw someone stick a needle in their eye; but I saw a lot of kids break their promise of "cross my heart and hope to die."

There is no king's X in decisions we make with God. There is no "Time out." "Ah God, it's been 20 years and I am a lot smarter than I was then!"

But God takes us at our word! "It is all a mistake; I didn't know what I was doing!"...

•READ: *ECCLESIASTES 5:6-7: 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?*

•SLIDE: *Ecclesiastes 5:7: Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore, stand in awe of God.*

Dealing with Jesus Christ is serious business.

•SLIDE: *Hearing God Speak May Cost Us Our Lives, But It Is Worth It At Any Price.*

•SLIDE: *EXODUS 20:18: "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But, do not have God speak to us or we will die."*

When a man finally hears the voice of God nothing will ever be the same again.

Open arms of intimacy.

•SLIDE: *Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

•SLIDE: *Adam and Eve walking with God in the cool of the evening before the Fall into sin.*

•SLIDE: *Psalms 131:1-2: My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a child quieted at its mother breast, like a child that is quieted is my soul.*