



[Ecclesiastes 5:1-7](#)

(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. (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. (3) For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. (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. (5) Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. (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? (7) For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

King James Version

It is interesting that, in the New King James Version, verse 1 begins, “Walk prudently when you go to the house of God.” The King James Version reads, “Keep your foot when you go to the house of God.” *Prudently* indicates “with care.” “Keep your foot” can just as easily be translated as “watch your step,” which is also a warning to be careful. Careful of what? Following the previous chapter where [God](#) is not even hinted at, chapter 5, in which Solomon is observing people going to the House of God, implies a warning to be careful not to leave God entirely out of life.

More positively, we can also take it as an admonishment to make sure that we strive to keep Him actively involved in our lives because at [baptism](#) we gave Him a solemn promise always to submit to Him in every facet of life. We have been converted to serve Him. Before committing our lives to Him in baptism, we are strongly counseled that we must count the cost of Him being first in our lives.

Were the attitudes and conduct of those whom Solomon observed such that they were robbing God of the reverence, honor, and respect that He deserves? Were their acts of worship perfunctory, insincere, and hypocritical? Our so-far cursory reading of the context has provided us with a clue: Solomon does not direct the admonishment of chapter 5 toward those who have no relationship with God at all, but he focuses it on those who do have a relationship with Him. They have specifically gone to the House of God, ostensibly to continue the relationship.

However, additional information reveals that, though they have good intentions, their minds wander easily. They find it hard to focus, to give Him their full attention, and to follow through in obedience. This is another gentle reminder to the called of God that in our lives *everything matters*. Going to the House of God is most definitely not a time to lose focus and let down in our discipline.

To help drive this thought home, notice the next phrase in verse 1. It speaks of those who “draw near to God” but who “give the sacrifice of fools.” “Draw near” clearly describes people who are doing

something about their relationship with God, which shows a good intention. The word “sacrifice” indicates something given in the behalf of another, as [Christ](#) sacrificed His life in our behalf.

The subject here, though, is a foolish sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice was not foolish in the least. These sacrifices are not *merely* foolish, however, because Solomon immediately elevates them to a far more serious level: as evil. English synonyms for the underlying Hebrew word translated as “evil,” are “bad” as a modifier and “wickedness” as a noun. Thus, what these people—who have a relationship with God and who are making a sacrifice in attending Temple services—are doing is far more dangerous than they appear to understand.

Strong's Concordance adds that the Hebrew word behind “evil” combines both the deed and its consequences, indicating injury both to the perpetrator and to those around him. Solomon is saying that whatever these people are doing will do nobody any good. It is especially grievous in its effects to those who have a relationship with God because their actions either begin or sustain a destructive course.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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