



[Ecclesiastes 5:1-7](#)

(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.

(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.

(3) For a dream comes through much activity,
And a fool's voice *is known* by *his* many words.

(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—

(5) Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. (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? (7) For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there is* also vanity. But fear God.

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Notice what [God](#) says about speaking:

[Proverbs 10:19](#): “In the multitude of words [sin](#) is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”

[Proverbs 17:27](#): “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.”

[James 1:19](#): “Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

[James 3:2](#): “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.”

So many verses give similar counsel about speech that one cannot help but understand the importance that God places on being careful about what we allow to leave our mouths. [Matthew 12:35-37](#) drives this point home:

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Speaking is a major aspect of character, providing a clear window into our hearts. A quotation often mistakenly attributed to [Abraham](#) Lincoln is apropos to the passage in [Ecclesiastes 5:1-7](#): “Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.” What sets Solomon's counsel apart from other verses on speaking is that the others are good advice for relationships in general. Solomon's verses, however, are focused directly on a person's relationship with God.

What do we talk about when we are before God? Before going any further, we should clarify the nature of being “before God.” Solomon says that we must not forget that God is in heaven and we are on earth, implying His sovereignty. Yet, he also mentions going to the House of God, implying a specific place and time we go before God. Is Solomon's main concern here on God's sovereignty or on the specific place? Since the unwritten but over-arching theme throughout Ecclesiastes is that everything in life matters, his main concern here is a gentle reminder that we are *always* before God.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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