



**The Wisdom of Ecclesiastes:
Choose Eternity over Futility**

Ecc. 5.1-7 (CSB)

God Is Not Fooled

Intro: Victoria Osteen and Madison video referenced

[pic of Victoria Osteen next to pic from Billy Madison] <https://youtu.be/7RclqhcNNhw>



I plan to share a clearly heretical viewpoint espoused by Joel and Victoria Osteen that says God doesn't care about being worshipped but that worship is really for us to be happy. That is a very deadly and wrong view of God. But it is the false gospel that millions have embraced.

We know that such a message is wrong, and it is probably shocking to us that someone would actually have the audacity and foolishness to say the words out loud.

The problem is that we often live like how V.O. said it.

Proclaimed belief + Actual practice= Actual Belief

5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Better to approach in obedience than to offer the sacrifice as fools do, for they ignorantly do wrong.

2 Do not be hasty to speak, and do not be impulsive to make a speech before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

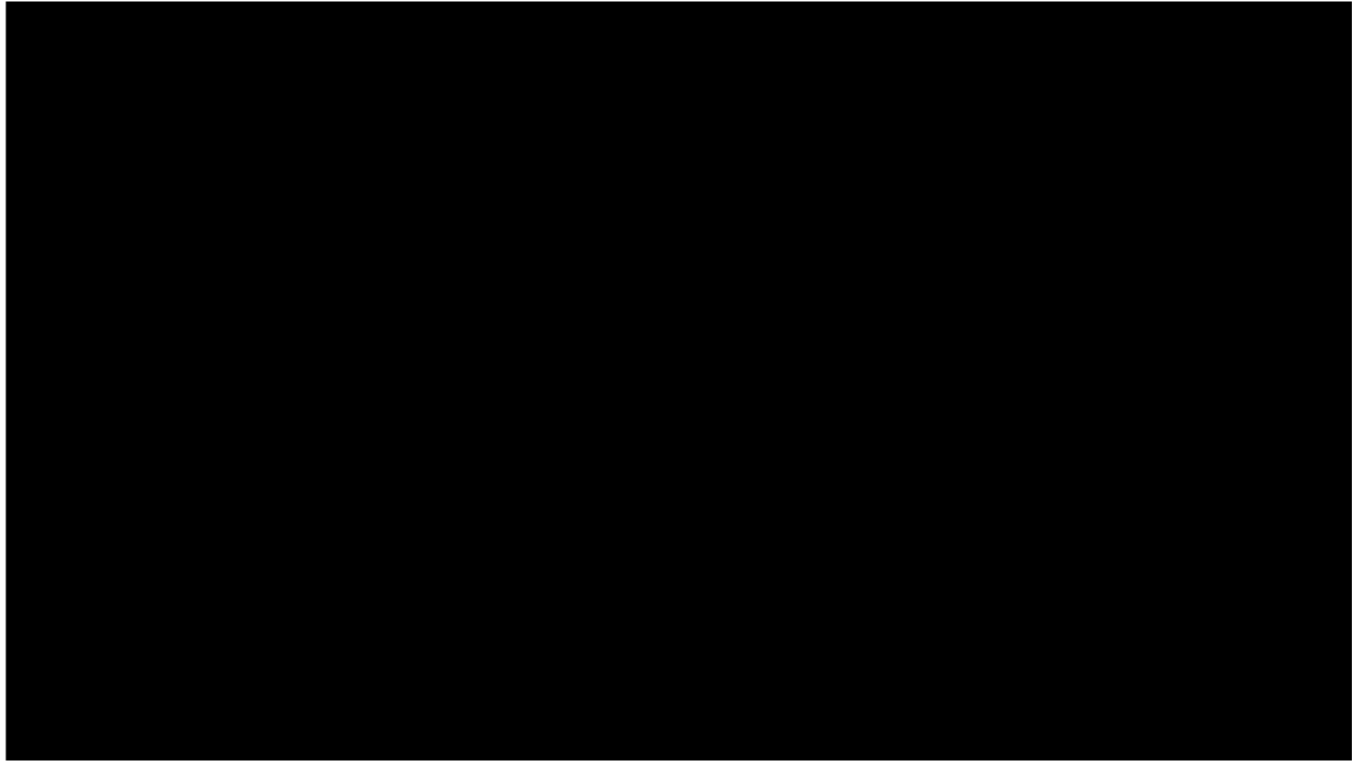
**3 Just as dreams accompany
much labor, so also a fool's voice
comes with many words.**

**4 When you make a vow to God,
don't delay fulfilling it, because he
does not delight in fools. Fulfill
what you vow.**

**5 Better that you do not vow than
that you vow and not fulfill it.**

6 Do not let your mouth bring guilt on you, and do not say in the presence of the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry with your words and destroy the work of your hands?

**7 For many dreams bring futility;
so do many words. Therefore,
fear God.**



Pray

**Don't have your ears closed
shut to God but your mouth
wide open about Him.**

*Don't have your ears closed shut to God but your mouth wide open about Him.

Another way of saying this is don't misrepresent God or mislead others in regard to Him.

In our time if someone says exactly what he or she feels, one is honored as being authentic. Solomon says that very authenticity may be what makes you foolish.

Your emotions and your experience do not determine God's character and nature. They may even lead you to understand him wrongly.

Your emotions can be erratic. Your emotions are part of how you are motivated to action. The actions motivated can be clearly wrong, or they can move you to do what is right that no one else is willing to do.

Qohaleth tells us that when people would approach the Temple, he expected them to be impressed by the structure and sanctity of the Temple. That experience of awe would move them emotionally.

He basically says don't trust your emotions to move you. Be moved and led by God according to what He has revealed about Himself.

Your emotions will follow if you lead them with truth and faith.

Trust God. Be critical of yourself when it comes to discerning truth and what is proper in action, especially your emotional reactions.

Emotions need to be students that are taught how to express themselves, not be the teacher in the classroom.

Do you know what is a line preschool teachers have to repeat over and over? “Learn to use your words to express yourself.”

They have to help little kids know that the emotions they feel at the time should not be determinative for how they act.

Emotions need to be students that are taught how to express themselves, not be the teacher in the classroom.

I mentioned in the Focus for Friday what it is like to have students express their emotions at youth events and camps after a moving service or an experience in which they feel God is at work in their lives.

Youth workers do well to shepherd young people into consistent discipleship relationships, into a regular pattern of taking in and discussing the Word, praying according to the Word, and obeying God in practice, especially when difficult.

It is not just youth who must learn to trust God’s Word over emotions.

Our emotions are not the only faulty authority we go to for a flawed education on God. We may also be deceived by our reasoning that we can manipulate God like we do others.

We can cover over many sins, we think, by saying a lot of words or offering nice sacrifices. But God says in Joel 2:13 to rend your hearts, not your garments. He tells us by means of Jesus that God wants mercy in our actions, not sacrifices. The offering we are to make is the offering of our lives daily consecrated to God, lived out in holiness and love.

Jesus told His disciples that when they pray they should not try to use many words to seem impressive to God. Rather, he taught them a model for praying that emphasizes humility.

-Humility is knowing God and lining ourselves up with Him properly.

We only know ourselves properly by knowing the glorious God who has made a way for us to refer to Him as our Father. He is our heavenly Father. He is distinct from us yet has remade us and adopted us by means of Christ the Son. We know who we are in lowliness by knowing the greatness of the God who embraces us as His adopted children.

-God wants your heart (center of who you are) offered in humility and contrition, not your many words.

In Proverbs 10:19

When there are many words, sin is unavoidable,
but the one who controls his lips is prudent.

17:28

Even a fool is considered wise when he keeps silent—
discerning, when he seals his lips.

Here in Ecclesiastes, Solomon is telling us wisdom with our words is not just about relating to each other. We are to learn wisdom in relating to God with how we use and filter our words in relation to God.

And so James tells us about speaking about God, especially as leaders, within the church

3 Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is mature, able also to control the whole body.

-Christians are necessarily followers. If we are to lead the world to Christ it is because we know how to follow Him. We follow Him because He has given us new hearts. 33 “Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. 34 Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. 35 A good person produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil person produces evil things from his storeroom of evil. 36 I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

-If we are to speak words of faithfulness, we must listen to Him. As we saw with Hebrews, God has now spoken by means of Christ as recorded in Scripture. If we want to grow in prayer and how to pray, we need to take in the Word of Scripture. As we do, the Spirit will lead us to be more like Christ, lead us to pray according to truth.

I know this is intimidating, but you have others in the church to help you grow in proper belief and practice. Our CGs are designed to have believers further along in maturity with those less mature. We walk together in what this new life in Christ looks like. We read the Word together, discuss the revelation of God, and pray together. As we do, we're helping to encourage one another in faithfulness, in faithful practice.

-Elders prayer instruction and guide for this week in the e-news

Don't try to deceive Deity with bribery.

*Don't try to Deceive Deity with Bribery.

First, vows are not wrong in themselves. The Old Testament allowed for certain types of vows. John the Baptist lived under the Nazarite vow his entire life. Paul fulfilled a vow in Acts when he entered Jerusalem.

The problem with the vow in this passage is a little different than the many words already referenced. The many words and dreams of the fool led that person to say things that were not true and misrepresented God.

With the vow issue, Solomon is saying the vow may be for a legitimate stated reason. But the person in the passage making it does not count the cost of the vow. When it is difficult to keep what one promised, these apparently pious people then change their minds.

They don't go to God with the issue. They try to go to the "messenger" to get the vow annulled. Solomon is not clear who the messenger is at this time. It appears to me that this is speaking about a priestly representative in the Temple.

He tried to come back to tell the messenger at the Temple that the vow no longer makes him happy and that God just wants him happy.

The one who made the vow isn't worried about the honor and glory of God. He is trying to get a representative of God to say that our words don't matter.

The heart of this person is communicating, "God does not really matter. His character is easily manipulated. Surely, God is impressed with the promises we make. Surely,

God will bend to our circumstances. He won't have expectations of us." Thus saith the fool.

The reasoning of a person without a new heart is one that thinks little of God.

This person does not acknowledge God's transcendence nor does he recognize that the Creator is distinct from His creation.

Commentators disagree on what exactly Solomon is signifying by saying God is in heaven and you are on earth.

The difference in interpretation is based in understanding of authorship and your understanding of the speaker's perspective.

Believing this is Solomon writing, this is my best understanding:

Solomon understood that God is transcendent. In 1 Kings 8, Solomon dedicated the Temple. When God declared that His glorious presence would fill the Temple and caused it to happen at that moment, Solomon, and everyone else, was amazed. Solomon retained the understanding that God is beyond us and that there this is a distinction between the Creator and the creation. While God's presence indwelt the Temple, God was not isolated to the Temple.

It appears that Solomon is addressing those who think God heard and cared about matters inside the Temple but had no control outside the Temple, nor cared how people lived outside the Temple.

We are finite beings, not just that we are mortal but we are finite in presence. God is omnipresent.

There was a pagan King Aram in the OT whose advisors noticed God's people always won battles near mountains. They said he should fight in the valley instead.

They found out El Shaddai, God Almighty, is not God of the hills alone but that all of the earth belongs to Him.

In the situation Solomon is discussing, depraved reasoning is coupled with a society that treats God as mere ritual.

In that scenario, people don't think they have any real accountability to God. He is just a means for social respectability and elevation.

As Galatians 6:7 warns us, God is not fooled.

7 Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, 8 because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

What you say you believe about God is tested and revealed by your actual practice.

Christians, We are to live consistently according to our shared faith that we profess on Sundays. True profession of faith is revealed in a life changed by God when away from the church.

-Your words matter. And the actions you back them up with matter. They reveal whether you know God or not.

Vows, like oaths, tend to be for the elevation of the speaker, not for obedience to God. (Let yes be yes and your no be no. Jesus tells us that anything more than this comes from the evil one.

If we belong to God, there needs to be a time that we do publicly profess Him before others. As one theologian has put it, there can be no secret disciples. Either the secret will cancel out the disciple or the disciple will make himself known, canceling out the secret.

We are to make a confession that we belong to Christ if really do we belong to Him.

But Jesus tells us that we should avoid making oaths and vows to make ourselves seem more credible in our promises. Why? We can't control the future. We can't determine the circumstances that we will face that will tempt us to not keep our word.

We are responsible to be people of integrity. We should let our yes be yes and no be no.

Don't put on pomp and circumstance with your promises. Be someone who simply keeps your word.

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians that all of God's promises are always yes in Christ.

We who are God's children are to be like our Father.

We should let our yes be yes, be people of our Word. We should live simply and consistently.

So what is the purpose of certain spiritual disciplines like fasting? Are we trying to get God to pay more attention to us by our works? Are we trying to get him to enter into contractual obligations with us? If we do this or don't do that, God, then you will need to answer 5 more prayers.

God is not a genie. He is Lord. So what is the purpose of fasting and similar disciplines?

-Purpose of fasting is not bribery, but to promote godliness in us, to focus us on eternity by getting us out of our survival habits. We thrive on knowing God, not filling our bellies. We don't sacrifice to get love or approval. We sacrifice because we are loved and approved of in Christ. We sacrifice because we want to know and obey more the One who loved and obeyed the Father on our behalf.

As we line our hearts and lives up more with Christ, we will find that our desires are lined up with God's desires.

Matthew 6—Jesus doesn't deny the place of fasting and prayer in the life of the believer. But saving faith in Christ changes our perspective in how we and why we fast and pray.

Fear God and approach Him in humility by means of simple faith in Christ.

*Fear God and approach Him in humility by means of simple faith in Christ.

-Not a good option to ignore God's existence and hope he looks past you

-If we are to approach the transcendent God, it is because 1) he has approached us 2) made Himself knowable, and 3) made known the way to stand before Him in restored relationship.

-Authorities for Theology

He has revealed Himself by means of His Son. And we the only objective basis by which we can know God in Christ is God's Word. We will not reason our way to God apart from God revealing Himself to us. And we will not know Him accurately apart from His Word.

There are many devotions that are available at Christian stores that make God out to be a therapist whose priority is our happiness and stability, not His glory, which brings us joy and stability.

We will not work our way to God nor do enough rituals to appease God apart from Him coming to us in grace. We will be told in this world all kinds of ideas about God and encouraged to participate in all kinds of practices.

But how are we to know that the ritual is even good or if it is being done in the right way apart from Scripture?

We are supposed to experience new life, but we can be deceived in interpreting our experiences wrongly. We need to have the church walk with us in examining to see that our experience is lining up with the true gospel.

We cannot trust our emotions to be determinative in understanding God's will, but we should train our affections by delighting in the Lord.

-Humility is knowing God and lining ourselves up with Him properly. He is the Creator, we the creature. We are the sinners in need of salvation. God is judge who also is the Savior.

Luke 18—how to approach God when you feel compelled to respond

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.’

13 “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, ‘God, have mercy on me, the sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Call to believe the gospel

