



# Troubles in Life

## Open it

1. Describe a time when you put your foot in your mouth (not literally!).

## Daily Devotions

### Day 1 — Today's Theme: Explore It

We're going to use the 5P method of Bible Study to help become familiar with the passage. I learned this on a mission trip, and it was a helpful way to read passages like the one found in Ecclesiastes.

Purpose/Point, Primary Verse, Promises, Problems, Practical Questions

Read Ecclesiastes 5:1–20. (I find reading this in ESV and NLT helps me understand it better.)

2. I see 2 sections in this passage, 5:1–7 and 8–20. What do you find is the purpose or point of Ecclesiastes 5:1–7 and 8–20? (Sometimes this is found by looking for repetitive words.)

1–7 —

8–20 —

3. Which verse seems to contain the primary (most important) thought in the passage? Write it out completely and memorize it.

4. What promise do you find in the passage?

5. What problems/questions/things you don't understand do you have from the passage?



## Day 3 — Today's Theme: Open Mouth, Insert Foot

Read Ecclesiastes 5:3, 7; 1 Peter 3:4.

I love it when one verse leads me to another verse in the Bible. Have you ever had that happen? That happened to me with this passage. Ecclesiastes 5:3, “*Let your words be few for a dream comes with much business and a fool's voice with many words.*” I am a woman of *many words* so this verse certainly caught my attention as the purpose of this section (1–7), and it reminded me that there's another verse in the Bible, 1 Peter 3:4, “*Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.*” I used to read that verse and love the *idea* of being a “gentle spirit because it is of great worth in God's sight” but the *quiet part* seemed impossible.

My name, Melinda, actually means: *gentle spirit*. I desired to be a gentle and quiet spirit, but I knew I talked too much. I said things that just came to me so I could be funny. I wanted to sound smart or seem important, so I talked and I talked a LOT! As I read the Bible, I learned more (and continue to learn) that my tendency to appeal to people was natural because of sin but it would only lead to trouble. Those tendencies are naturally foolish. I cared so much about what people thought which Ecclesiastes 5:7 says is vanity! ARGH! Apparently, I'm supposed to only care about what God thinks and that I should actually *fear Him* (v.7).

Do you know what that means? I had to look it up. I liked what Colin Smith says, “Fearing God will give you wisdom, it will keep you from sin and motivate you toward evangelism.”<sup>1</sup> From this definition I realized what fearing God is not. It's not trembling, knees knocking and voice shaking, coming before God to hope He doesn't strike you with lightning. Of course, we do need to be in awe of God and realize His holiness. BUT...

Fearing God is putting Him first. It's waking up and giving your day to him. When you are worried, you trust him. Fearing God means when you have a question, you go to His word to find the answer and/or you pray to ask His plan. You do everything with Him and for Him in the forefront of your mind.

Needless to say, for me there was work to be done. You'd think over time, I'd “get it.” Even now, I'd like to say I've overcome all those things but it's simply not true. I struggle with controlling my words, and taming my tongue. Yet, I have changed. I've learned that talking isn't the problem. The problem is not being quiet when I should. The Holy Spirit leads me in what I say and when I need to say something. I need to pay attention to *that* nudging. I'm still working on NOT saying everything that comes to mind, admitting when I've said too much and asking forgiveness when necessary. You know what else? It gives me a grateful heart because of God's grace and patience with me. When I fear Him by seeking His wisdom and His ways over mine, I will surely find joy.

**10. What do you do when you say something you didn't realize was hurtful or that you just shouldn't say until after you said it?**

**11. It's hard to care about what God thinks. BUT this is PART of fearing Him. What are practical ways you can live out the fear of God?**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://openthe bible.org/article/why-fearing-god-important-omg-culture/>

## Day 4 — Today's Theme: More Money!

### Read Ecclesiastes 5:8–20.

As discussed in Day 3, instead of talking too much about what we want or dream about or think we know, we are supposed to fear God. Another trap for people is money. Often, money will take the place of God because with money comes power and authority. Think about people with money, power, and authority: kings, politicians, celebrities, sports stars.

When I was in high school I was in a musical, *Hello Dolly*. The main character, Dolly Levi, is a matchmaker. She has her eye on a match for herself, Horace Vandergelder. The problem with him is his money. He likes it. He doesn't trust anyone. He's grumpy because of it. He's mean to his workers and he's angry all the time. The show goes on to display how using money to take care of others, to bless others and bring others joy, help relationships and not focusing on hoarding it and keeping it for yourself is better. One of the lines I still remember was, "Money, Money, Money, Money...pardon the expression, is like manure. It isn't worth a thing, until it's spread around encouraging young things to grow."

Money can keep you from fearing God because it can cause you to want more. More money. More power. More! But the promise at the end of this passage is the HOPE. God gives us all toil or work to do. How we do it is up to us. Look at it begrudgingly or remember God is providing for you through your labor. Work hard, sleep hard, play hard.

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* **John 16:33.**

**12. Who can you think of that has money and now has power and authority?**

**13. What are some things the passage says happen with money?**

**14. What distractions, like talking or money, do you find stop you from fearing God?**

**15. How can you change your perspective of toil/work to one of joy? What work has God called you to be joyful in right now?**