Ecclesiastes 5:1–7 "No Quid Pro Quo with God"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 October 2025

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?
The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless. Let's just bow our heads in silent prayer before we open God's Word together. Father, we ask, Father, we give you permission, full and unconditional permission for your Word to speak deeply into our hearts and form us. And you know how hard it is for us to listen. So we ask that you have mercy upon us and help us to listen well and be prepared to do what you say. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.
So there's several problems we have this morning when it comes to looking at the Bible text. And the first problem is this. I don't know how many people are here today. I don't know, counting kids, maybe 90, maybe 100, if you add the kids. And here's the big problem. Probably every single one of us thinks that we're the best listener in the room.
Now, you're all well-instructed Christians, so you know that would be very proud. So you, many of you would say, I'm the third best listener in the room, or the second best listener in the room, because it would be proud to think that you're the best listener in the room. But you think about you're the people sitting around, and you think, I'm a better listener than them. And it is, in fact, if you think about it for a moment, they're thinking that about you. And some of you might say, yeah, but in my case, it's true. Well, that's, you know, maybe it is. I mean, there obviously has to be a best listener in the room. But it is, in fact, a problem if, generally speaking, if you ask a room of Canadians, it doesn't matter if they're Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, Jordan Peter conservatives, woke activists, doesn't matter your political party, ask a room of Canadians that question. And inwardly, most Canadians will think they're the best listener. And the second problem is this, is that we also think this with no sense of irony whatsoever, that our place, our family, our church, our place of work, our neighbourhood would be better if more people listened to us.
[3:28] So here we have a room full of people who all think this church would be better, or their family would be better, or their ministry would be better, if people listened to them more. That's the problem.

And we think both things without having any sense of contradiction or irony, that we think both things at the same time. And so this is describing a human problem. And the Bible comes into this, and if we receive and hear the Bible well, I mean, one of the things about the Bible is, it is, in fact, a revelation from God. That's the Christian claim, that when you hear the Bible, you're hearing God speak to us. But the Bible is, on one hand, as a revelation, it's, on one hand, a mirror. God has revealed it so that if we look at it and pay attention to it, we begin to actually see ourselves. And you'll see in a moment why I gave those illustrations about the fact that most of us think that we're better listeners than everybody else. And most of us also think that things would be better off if more people listened to us. And it's not only a mirror that helps us to see ourselves, it's also a window by which we see God and the real world, the real God, the real world that we are to inhabit.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 06:18:19

And so the text this morning, well, why did I use it? Well, let's turn to Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verses 1 to 7. And let's look at what the Bible says about this, why I began with this, and help us to understand that we have a bit of a problem when it comes to the Bible. And here's how it begins. Verse 1, guard your steps when you go to the house of God.
God. Chardonnay, to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. So just in terms of how the sentence works, the opening command, guard your steps when you go to the house of God, that's the basic command about all of the rest of it, verses 1 to 7. That's the theme. And in fact, if you were to have sermon points, your first point would just have to be to say this, guard your steps when you go to the house of God. And guard your steps here in house of God, what it really means is it's speaking very generally. When you as a human being decide to get into God's presence, that's what it's sort of referring to. So if you want to go into God's presence, how is it that you can't just sort of go in willy-nilly? You need to be careful. You need to think about it. Not because, well, you need to think about it because, you know, going into God's presence isn't like going into the presence of a tree or something like that, or a rock. It's a person. And just as in a sense, if you think about it for a second, when you go into the presence of another person, you have to think a little bit about how you're going into that person's presence, even more so when you go into the presence of God. You need to examine how you're doing it.
And then the Bible, in the verse one, it continues then with a very classic biblical way of thinking. And that classic biblical way of thinking is to say that there's two paths.
And you need to realize that there's two paths, not five or 23 or 72, but two paths. And you're on one of them already. And the question is, like, one is a path of wisdom and one is definitely not the path of wisdom. So look what it says. To draw near to listen. That's path number one. To draw near to listen. And then there's an evaluative comment, better. To draw near to listen is better than to, the other way, to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.
[7:14] And in the original language, this is a very good thing, but you need to understand in terms of of fools, what that means, because of fools can mean different things in English. What it means is fools, the thing, the sacrifices that fools make, that's really that there's two ways. You can try to go into God's nearer presence with a heart that desires to listen, or you can go into God's presence as a fool, offering sacrifices, giving him things, so to speak. And that's the two types of ways. And there's another thing you need to know about listen, and this is a bit intimidating or scary to Canadians.

When it says to draw near to listen, the word listen here in the original language assumes listen to do, or listen to obey. That's the implication. So it's not just, oh, hear that beautiful music, or oh, hear the sound of the birds.
That's just, in a sense, mere listening with no consequence. The implication of this listening is that we are to have a posture, if we enter into God's presence, that we want to listen to him, and we want to do what he says.
That should be the posture of our heart. Now, this is problematic for all sorts of reasons for Canadians. I sometimes see on t-shirts in people in Ottawa, it's usually maybe like a black t-shirt within very, very big letters for a four-letter word, obey. Or it's a white t-shirt with black. It's either black with white or white with black or some other color, but obey is very prominent right there on the chest.
And so to hear that God desires us to enter into his presence, to listen to him with an attitude of obedience, for many people, the image that comes up, there's a bit of a, we're irked by it. And it's almost as if, just to be very, very, you know, blunt about it, is like, is really, guys, you think the Christian God is up there wearing a black shirt saying obey, strutting around, stomping his feet, demanding that we all obey? Like, that's frankly, like not a, people who wear t-shirts like that, or the type of people, actually, probably what most of us would think is somebody who wears a t-shirt like that is the last person in the world you should obey, if we're honest, right? Now, if some of you have that t-shirt in your, and you wear it, well, and maybe it means something different that I don't understand, which is possible, because I'm old and clueless about certain cultural things. But that's the image that we have. And the second thing, that the type of person who would wear a t-shirt that says obey is the type of person we would never obey in a million years. So what's going on here in the way of wisdom to, you know, what is it when it says to draw near to listen is better than this other option, coming to God as a fool, offering things to God? It's, first of all, the way to understand it is not in terms of the t-shirt obey, but to understand it within the context of intimacy. Intimacy. And

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 06:18:19

the natural type of desire to do what the person says that flows out of intimacy. So an example for this would be, my wife's not with us this morning, so it's handy, otherwise she'd maybe be a little bit embarrassed by it. But a really nice thing, three of my teenage, or tween, almost grand, a couple of them are like 11 and 12 and a 13-year-old or 14-year-old, I can't remember their ages. Anyway, three of my grandsons are being baptized today, and that's why she's not here at church with us. She's going to see them be baptized. I'm very pleased about it, obviously. But many, many, many decades ago in the fall, I was at the university library sitting there trying to do some work, and I noticed, I turned to my left, and I noticed a vision of blonde beauty in the library stacks, and I was completely and utterly smitten by her.
[11:25] Smitten is too small a word. I was just struck by her. And I spent the next two years trying to actually meet her. It's not stalking, we just happened to keep crossing paths, and every time I saw her, I was just so struck by her, this vision of loveliness. And finally, after two years of attempting to meet her somehow naturally, I did something which I had never done in my entire life.

I was very, very shy around women, and the better looking the woman was, the more my shyness and introvertedness went up or down, whatever the right, like I just got even more. But I just said, next time I see her, I'm going to just walk up and introduce myself to her. I'm going to take the risk of her thinking I'm a crazy, you know, guy. So I saw her a couple of days later, and I walked up and said, you know, I've seen you around for a long time, and I thought I'd introduce myself, and you know, maybe we could talk sometime. I don't know what I even said, by the way. She was here, she could tell you, George, it wasn't as coherent as that. But she said hi, and then like, you know, a week later, we bumped into each other, and I stopped and chatted with her. And let me tell you, I was knees wobbling, sweat pouring from my armpits, nervous, and just so delighted that someone like her would talk to me, and I could be in her presence and listen.
That's the way of wisdom with God. The triune God would like to speak to me, have me close to speak to me. The second way to understand this as a way of wisdom is also to understand it as a type of humility connected to learning. So some of you might not have heard of him, but J.I. Packer, many, many different things towards the end of the millennium, listed him as one of the greatest and most important theologians and Christian thinkers of the 20th century, J.I. Packer. And I ended up becoming friends with him. Not friends that we'd go on trips together or anything like that, but I had his private home phone number, amongst other things. We could be at a gathering and I'd sit and have a meal with him or we'd talk. And I remember the very first time I met him, and in fact, the first time I met him, he was at a gathering where I had to begin the gathering by teaching the Bible. I'm thinking, how can I teach the Bible to J.I. Packer? That's completely and utterly preposterous. But anyway, here the amazing thing was, is that afterwards during coffee time, he and then other coffee times and other times, I got to sit with him and talk to him and listen to him.
And let me tell you, I didn't sit down and say, by the way, Jim, I've been looking forward to meeting you. I have a list here of 29 things you got wrong in your last book, and I'm here to correct you. No, I was just so honored that I could sit and listen and ask this guy questions and learn from him. That's the way of wisdom approaching God. That's what it's meant by, it says, to draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice to fools, for they do not know what they are doing is evil.
[14:59] Now, most of the rest of the verses, so that's the big idea. If you're coming into God's presence, you need to think about what you're doing and how you're acting and your attitudes, your posture, and that you need to think about that. You just don't go in. In fact, just to go in as if you don't have to think about that, is one of the marks of a fool that comes in just to give things. But the way of wisdom is that when you're coming into God's presence, that you're there to listen in a posture that you want to do, where you're willing to do what you hear from God. That's the way of wisdom.

And most of the other verses are going to unpack more directly the way of the fool. And of course, indirectly behind that, it also shows you in sort of a backhanded way, the way of wisdom. So the next thing is verse 2 and 3, and it's focusing more on just words in general. Like, look what it says, verses 2 and 3.
Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God. I'll say it again. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God. And just what that's saying is, the heart is sort of the very center of who you are. So be not rash with your mouth, just superficial, and nor let your heart, the very center of who you are, be hasty to utter a word before God. And here's the profound truth. For God is in heaven and you are on earth. And then

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 06:18:19

there's a therefore, which helps to understand as well all of, I mean, that's the big idea. God is in heaven, you are on earth. Why should you not be rash with a superficial rashness or a deep rashness, like a habit of rashness? Is therefore, let your words be few. That's the command. That's the way of wisdom.
Let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business. And interestingly enough, the original language can also be translated with busyness and a fool's voice with many words. And so we get that very clearly that these are sort of like dreams, like doodles. Some other time, I hope to talk a little bit about the Bible. It's not, Ecclesiastes isn't opposed to the right type of dreaming, the type of dreaming that's involved with planning and preparation. But it is involved, it does here warn us against the type of self-exalting, rash doodling of our own desires. So that rather than being in the presence of God to know that he is God and listen and be prepared to do, what we do instead in the presence of God is to daydream about the things that we want to do and the things that we want to say. That's the type of dreaming it's warning us against. Okay? So what's going on here with this text? There's several things going on here about this text that if we think about it, we'll realize it's quite wise. The first is, imagine that I announced to you that I'm diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. And obviously, if I said that, I probably couldn't just say it like this. I'd probably have tears in my eyes. In fact, it might even be that I couldn't say it without getting emotional. I'd have one of the wardens or somebody make that announcement. You'd all be engaged in deep prayer for me.
[18:23] And let's say, as part of that prayer, one of you comes up and says, hey, listen, by the way, like maybe it's our friends from Taiwan or, you know, friends from some other country from Ukraine or China. And they say, by the way, you know, the absolute world expert on pancreatic cancer is a friend of mine.

And they're going to be in Ottawa next week. And I think if I asked them, they could give you 40 minutes to an hour to look at your charts and talk to you. Do you want to take it? I'd say, of course, that'd be fantastic. So let's say I go there for the hour and I have my charts with me or whatever. And, you know, one of you drives me and afterwards, you know, you're waiting outside.
And afterwards, you say to me, George, how did it go? Like, what did he say? And he said, well, I don't actually, you know, I feel a little bit embarrassed. Like, you know, they like, I mean, I, I go in and I just started chatting away about what I'd learned about pancreatic cancer from TikTok.
And, and, and the next thing, you know, I'd spend a whole hour and he never even got a chance to speak. And you guys be going, oh, George, like, what a dummy you are. And maybe some of you would even say, George, you actually want to die. Because obviously, if I go to get an opportunity for Lat-Free Expert, my word should be, few. I'm there to listen. And it's desperate because I have pancreatic cancer. I'm not there to just go on and on and on and on about myself.
And, and so, you know, in this particular text, then, like the, the idea is that God is in heaven. It means he's transcendent. He's eternal. He's the creator. He's the sustainer.
[20:11] And therefore, if I get a chance to be in his presence, I should have few words and I should listen prepared to, to, to tell, I should listen and be prepared to, to do.

And if I just chatter on and on and on and on and on and just daydream with things about my own greatness as if I'm going to live to be 150 and all of that, that's not the sign of a wise person.
So why is it if we come into God's presence with exorbitant claims about our future and our powers and what we're going to do and what we might deign to even, like it's almost as if it's a privilege, we're giving God a compliment that we're in his presence. That's obviously the way of a fool.
We have to be there to listen and with a heart of obedience. And even in this language of God being in heaven, the whole implication within all of this is that God desires to have a relationship with you. That's the God who really does exist as a God who has a personal relationship with his people.
Now, the next little bit, the next three, four verses, verses four to seven, it explains another habit of our heart that we have that's responsible for our disappointment with God.
[21:40] If you're here and you're outside the Christian faith and you're trying to figure out what Christianity is all about, one of the things you might not know is that a lot of Christians have disappointment with God. And in fact, if you're here or you're watching and you may be on the way out of the Christian faith, a large number of people who are on their way out of the Christian faith are on their way out of the Christian faith because they're disappointed with God.

Now, one of the ironies about all of that, of course, is that they're also disappointed in lots of other areas of their life and they don't realize that their disappointment comes from the things with idols.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 06:18:19

But, well, here, let me show you why I mean it's connected to disappointment with God. Let's read it. It goes like this, verse four, when you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools, pay what you vow. Now, before I go anything anywhere further, the idea of a fool here is very, very important to the text. Remember I said there's three sections, and if you notice in the three sections, every one of the sections has the word fools. Like, go back up to verse one, it is better to draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools. If you go down to the second section and look at verse three, for a dream comes with much business or busyness and a fool's voice with many words. And then you go to the third section, which helps explain our disappointment with God.
When you vow, verse four, when you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. So that's the issue. Fools don't listen, they speak. Fools are, you know, asserting themselves in service rather than dying in service. Fools don't listen.
Just a bit of an aside. In terms of the importance of listening, and if you think about this in terms of relationship with God, you understand how important listening is.
[23:39] um, how many, how many people would believe it if I was to say to all the wives who are present, uh, how many of you wives have the problem that your husband listens to you too well?

Now, no wife would say that. Or if you're talking to your sister and she's dating a guy and the, and she says to you, I don't know if I'm going to keep going out with that guy. He just listens to me really, really well. And he wants to act in terms of listening. I think I have to break off with him. Like, nobody would say that. That's how important listening is in terms of relationships, right? We desire more of that. God desires more listening of you. And the implication of all of this is the problem isn't that God isn't able to listen. I mean, you just list, read this text and you understand that God listens to your heart so well he knows who you are. The problem isn't that God doesn't listen. It's that you don't listen. But to go back to this, when you see verse 4, when you vow a vow to God, the, the basically just understand vow is making a promise or a commitment or a pledge to God. So verse 4, when you vow a vow to God and do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. Pay what you, do what you promise. Do what you commit to. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin. And do not say before the messenger, and messenger here is a very flexible word in the original language. It could mean an angel. It could mean God speaking to you through your conscience. It could mean, literally it could mean in the Old Testament, the servant coming from the high priest to collect what you've promised. Do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity. There is vanity. But God is the one you must fear. And the word vanity there, for those of you who have been here for other weeks, it literally means vapor. And it's an image of transience. And so if a trans, if vapor, if, if, you know, if, if those of you who smoke are used to you, and you, you blow out the smoke, and in a sense, that's the smoke that you see that you broke, blow out, that's the image there. It's just there for a moment, and the wind blows it away. But if that's what human beings like, if life is very transient, but you always are thinking great things about yourself, and that you're going to live forever, and all those other types of things, then that's a type of vanity. And to think that the smoke can actually accomplish things that last on for eternity. Those are vain pursuits. And that's, that's what's going on here. So when your daydreams and all your doodling, that coming out of your own ego increase, and words grow many, there is vanity.
But God is the one you must fear. So what's going on here in this text, and how does it relate to us? The problem it's describing is that we human beings, often in terms of our relationship with God, in our relationships with other people, we are quid pro quo people. So what does that mean?
[26:55] It means you do this, I do this, you do that. You know, you do this, I'll do that. You, I give something, you give something. That's, that's the way it works. And how is it a problem? Well, he's been, passed away many, many years. But when I went to my first church, after I was ordained, I was an assistant somewhere, and then I went and had my own church. I was actually looking after four little churches out in the country. And I went to, the first time I got to meet two of the, the wardens, they're the key lay people in the congregation. I, you know, I sat down with them, had a meeting with them. And as I'm talking about some things, you know, I asked them questions, and I talked about some of the things I thought we could be doing in the church I'd like to move towards. And one of the wardens, he just sat back in his chair like this the whole time, looking at me. And after I'd finished a couple of my suggestions, he said, well, if we do that for you, what are you going

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 06:18:19

to do for us?

I think, what? What if, if, if you do this for me, what am I, like, one of the suggestions, I think, was that we buy NIV Bibles for the pews. Like, I was trying to think of things that would help to grow the church and grow godliness. It wasn't as if I'd said, could we install a sauna for my private use out back? Maybe if that was my request, he could say, well, if we do that for you, what are you going to do for us? But although even then, he should say, no, absolutely not. The church isn't all about building you a sauna for your private use. That was such a terrible idea. But that was his attitude. And so here's the problem with quid pro quo people. Quid pro quo people are very hard to deal with.

They are manipulative. They are manipulative. And they don't keep their word. That's the very nature of it. There's always an excuse. Okay, well, you know, you said you'd do this, and well, and I would do that. But you know, you didn't exactly do it exactly the right way that I was expecting. So I'm not going to do what I said. Quid pro quo people, as it becomes a deep part of your personality, are people who are manipulative and untrustworthy and hard to deal with. And why is it then that many of us have disappointment with God? In our hearts, we think, God, you know, I think all the money I gave to that church, and all the time I sacrificed, you know, looking after the kids, and all the time I spent as a warden, and all the time I did that, and now this happens to me?

What have we done? We haven't given any money for God's glory. We haven't helped the kids because it's good to help kids and it brings God glory. We haven't served because it's good for others and good for God's glory. We did all of that expecting something in return. Quid pro quo people think that you can put God in your debt. And the big lesson of Ecclesiastes and the whole Bible is you can absolutely never put the triune God in your debt. God is in heaven. He has no environment. He doesn't need anything. He is only the giver, and you are one unending. Your whole existence is an existence that completely and utterly depends on receiving from God and from others. Right? If the Bible describes you as vapor, how am I vapor? So I'm only vapor who's alive because God holds that together, not because I hold it together. Everything about my life is one unending need, one unending reception from God.

And yet that's a common thing. You know, I did this and I did this and I did this and then this happens to me. God, like... I was just talking to an older pastor just a month ago and he, and just so you don't think it's just that pastors are immune to it. And he was telling me that, you know, he'd worked really, really hard, I think for 20, 25 years in the church, and now like three years later the church was down to like a handful of people. And he literally said to me, why all that work? It was like it was completely and utterly for vain and useless. Why did I do that? Why did God allow that to happen? Well, because he's a very godly man, but he had a quid pro quo mindset with God. [31:36] It's very deeply human. So what does it mean here about at the end when it says, for when dreams are increase and words grow many, there is vanity, but God is the one you must fear. And what's sort of going on there in that whole that whole bit?

Go back up to verse 2 again. I think it's in verse 2. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. And how does that connect to verse 7 and all those other things about quid pro quo and the importance of listening? It's not obvious in the English, but if you go back and read Acts 17, you get a record, a summary of Paul's speaking to the intellectual elite of the pagan world in Athens. And one of the points he makes is profoundly true. And that is that on one hand, most people think of God as being close. There is something about the human imagination that tends to picture God as close. But at the same time, if you press into it a little bit, there's also a sense when you strip all the pride and presumption and arrogance that goes, when you strip it away, you also have a sense that God is infinitely distant.

And Paul makes that point in his speech to the intellectual elite, that on one hand, you all have the sense that God is intimately close, very, very close, but not there. But at the same time, that there's an infinite distance between you and between God. So when it says that God is in your heaven and you are on earth, and it's all part of that the wise people understand that they come into God's presence to listen rather than speak. How do you cross that infinite distance to God?

God is in your heaven and you are on earth. You can't. God could shout so loud that you hear, but God doesn't shout at you most of the time.

God is in your heaven and you are on earth. And so the first thing to understand is, God asked me to draw near to listen. I think I drove 14 kilometers to be here. The mathematicians will tell you that

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 06:18:19

14 kilometers towards infinity is still an infinite distance. I'm still an infinite distance away from 14K doesn't cut it. You're still an infinite distance. That means that God's the one who crosses that infinite distance to you for me to draw my few steps or to drive those 14 kilometers or the distance of picking up my phone to read God's word. God is the one who crosses that infinite distance to come to you.
[34:42] That's profoundly humbling. And the other thing about the Bible and how God speaks to us is that we all know that the best communication is one that won't just be for the elite but for all. And God speaks in a way which humbles us very profoundly and deeply. We Christians believe that this book, this Bible is God's word written, that when you read the Bible you're hearing God speak. And the thing about hearing God speak in the Bible is that it's a public revelation. That means that if one of you have a friend who has Down syndrome and you also have a friend who has the highest IQ in Canada, neither of them are at any advantage when it comes to hearing God's word because it's a public revelation.

In fact, as we all know, it is far more likely that the Down syndrome child will interpret the Bible better than the brilliant people who inhabit the courts of justice and the highest elites of intellectual accomplishment in the country because they're far more willing to listen and pay attention with fewer dreams and are prepared to obey. But it's a public revelation which is humbling.
Other religions are all about basically how we speak to God or how we achieve certain types of higher consciousness or mysticism. And those are at least. The Bible is profoundly, Christian, God speaks to us in a way which humbles us. And he speaks to us in a way that humbles us even more when we think about the fact that one of the things which is so unique about the Bible, about biblical Christianity, is that God acts. God actually acts. And the best communication is speaking and acting. I've had a role in helping all of my kids learn to drive. And at some point in time, as those of you have helped people learn to drive, one of the things which is very hard for people to understand is the counter-intuitive idea that when you turn a corner to straighten the wheels, you don't straighten the wheel but step on the gas.
It's very counter-intuitive. And I try to tell my kids that and then eventually I have to stop and say, watch. And I drive and turn the corner and then I'll take my hands almost completely off the wheel and I step on the gas and the car straightens. And you go, oh. You speak and you act. And that's unique.
You know, one of the things about Islam is there's no miracles in Islam. And even the two times, I think, or one time in the Bible, in the Quran, where it appears as if Muhammad claims that Allah did something miraculous with him. It of course happened in the middle of night when there's no witnesses.
[37:29] But the Bible is filled with God acting with his miracles. And the thing is that we understand that the most supreme revelation of God is Jesus dying on the cross.

And the thing which is so amazing about that is this. If you were a Roman Tribune or a Roman noble who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion, and you had your young son with you, your young daughter, you would have pointed at Jesus hanging on the cross and saying, this reveals the glory of Rome. Look what we can do to our enemies.
not realizing that that one dying upon the cross would launch a movement of followers and the saved and born again that would vastly outlast the Roman Empire and reach every corner of the planet, even the most oppressive anti-Christian regimes. There are Christians.
Christians. God reveals who he really is and his great love. He doesn't just come down to speak to us. He comes down to save us. And the cross reveals the humility and the love of God.
My final sort of really point. I don't know where you are with Christ, but I do know this, that one of the reasons that people don't become Christians is they think to themselves like this.
[39:08] George, I could never be a Christian. Gosh, I'll just really be honest with you. I like sleeping in on Sunday mornings. I couldn't go to church.

I like getting hammered every once in a while. I just can't really imagine that I'd be able to even live one year without getting hammered a couple of times. I just really, really, really like playing hockey. I can't imagine making some changes like that. And you see, in every one of those reasons why people give for not becoming Christians, what they're thinking is that you become a Christian by making a vow. But that's not how you become a Christian.
You become a Christian by saying, God, I've read your word and I understand what Jesus did for me on the cross. And I need, there is an infinite distance between you and me. And I want to be

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 06:18:19

able to draw near with you. I want to be wise.
And God, you know that, boy, I am terrible at keeping vows and promises. And I have issues with alcohol. And I have issues with money. And I have issues with thinking I'm the smartest person in the room all the time. And I know I can't make any vows or promises. But I come to you humbly and ask that you would have mercy upon me and that your son would be my savior and my Lord. And you become a Christian by that humble asking, not by making vows.
He knows you can't keep the bloody vows. He knows you can't keep the vows. You see, vows and commitments come out of grace. They flow downstream from it.
[41:01] And they have within it that complete dose of humility that will acknowledge that you will fall and you need to amend your life. But God is gracious and God is kind. And it's from listening to him that you believe you come to believe that you need to do.

And if as Christians, we are formed more and more and more to understand that we come into God's presence to listen and act, we are formed and modeled to do that with others. And the world needs people who listen outside of echo chambers and understands and speaks with gentleness and truth.
I invite you to stand. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, you know that most of us lots of times think that everything would get better if people just listened to us more.
And we ask, Father, that you begin to form within us that we consider, Father, that maybe we need to spend more time listening and understanding before we speak. And you know, Father, how we are filled with daydreams and other types of things and things that we think you need to correct and improve on. And you know, we have different disappointments. But Father, we thank you for your word.
We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for what he did on the cross. We thank you for his resurrection. We thank you for your name. We thank you for your name, that you would be the name of God, that you would be humble before him and that you would draw us into your presence day by day, moment by moment, week by week, that we might come into your presence, knowing the privilege and the honor that you desire to have us come close in intimacy and grant us hearts that are willing to obey, to listen first and then do, Father, as you speak. We ask that you would form us into those people. And if there are any here or listening who have not yet, Father, given their life to Christ, we ask that your Holy Spirit would move in them now, not to make vows, to die from the idea of making vows to you, to earn your favor, but that they would call out to you in repentance and faith and be born again. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your
[43:41] Son and our Savior. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 06:18:19