

# You Are What You Love: Week 4

Week: 4 Teach your Children Well

Ecclesiastes 5:7

Welcome the online people.

## Review:

There are three main voices in the Wisdom literature sections of scripture. Think of them as **three voices**. Proverbs is a wise young counselor; Ecclesiastes is a middle-aged brilliant cynic and Job is an older experienced man.

They are all working to answer two questions:

What is a good life?

How do I get it?

Each “voice” gets a chance to answer this.

We are spending this series looking at the slightly cynical voice of Ecclesiastes. He will work to show what is really in the heart and what it will really do.

Today we look at the pursuit of wisdom.

Before we get into it I need to make two statements: (Keep these up through the golf illustration.)

- Knowing a truth and embodying it are two very different things.
- Values and priorities are two different things.

Values are what you want to be. Priorities are what you actually do.

## Opening Illustration:

(Have the pictures of Mike with a diaper on his head and Cara with a jock strap ready.)

Have you noticed how our kids reveal things in us? For example; I like to goof off in the evenings. The other day I was supposed to be putting Cara to bed and instead I put her diaper on my head and danced around her room. A few days later we sent her to get ready for bed. She didn't obey and we found her with a jock strap on her head dancing around. She was mirroring me, even in my breaking the rules. I have discovered my kids do what I model way more than what I say.

## Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 5:7

“For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear.”

## Observation:

Let's bring some modern context to this verse.

"For when **dreams** increase..."

- This is literally and figuratively dreams. It's the things you think you hear from God.
- Let's talk about when you "hear" from God. You need Christian community. You don't only have a church family to hear from the Lord, you have a church family to help you weigh what you think you have heard from the Lord.

Illustration: When I was in college I had a friend who had a dream, a vision from the "lord", that he was going to have 400 people come to his wedding. He seriously thought God told him that this was going to happen. His desire was to proclaim the gospel in the wedding and they both loved Jesus. It lined up with Scripture, it was a glorious goal and we told him he was probably wrong. In full confidence he prepared for 400, he even bought enough food to feed 400 people. Well, if I remember right not even half came. What went wrong? He is a produce of the post enlightenment view of God. It's not *our* view, *its my* view that counts. Once someone throws out the "I feel like God told me to" statement they can get away with anything. We need real Christian community and accountability back.

- Let me say it again: You don't only have a church family to hear from the Lord, you have a church family to help you weigh what you think you have heard from the Lord.

"Words grow many..."

- We have to be aware of the words that fill our conversations. What do you find yourself constantly talking about?

"Vanity..."

- The Hebrew word "Hevel", literally smoke. Are you giving your all to what is mere vapor and can't last?
- The enemy is fighting to make your life not count. He is fervently working to get you to waste your days on things that are actually vapor, that have no eternal value.

"God is the one you must fear..."

- Think of "fear" in this context as the core consideration in your life.

Now let's read the text again:

Ecclesiastes 5:7

"For when dreams increase" (the things we want from God) "and words grow many" (when we obsess over our desires being fulfilled), "there is vanity" (it is possible to pursue God with selfish ambition that still leads you to obsess over what doesn't matter); "but God is the one you must fear" (let the will of God, rather than your appetites, be your prime consideration and pursuit).

## Final Thoughts: (Invite worship arts team up)

Why does this all matter? Just saying you like Jesus isn't enough. You must make Christ your prime consideration.

In Schwitzgebel's paper on Moral Mediocrity he makes the case that people mirror not what they hear primarily but what they believe to be the norm of the people they do life around. In it he uses Arizona's Petrified Forest National Park theft problem as an example. When the park rangers posted signs that basically said "Many people steal from the park, don't be like most people," the theft rate was at its highest, 8%. When the signs were changed to basically say "most people don't steal, you can help protect the forest too," the rates dropped to 1.7%. If the implication was that everyone was stealing more people stole. When the implication was most people don't steal very few actually stole. People responded to what they believed was the normal behavior.

What does this mean for us?

What you model is just as powerful, if not more powerful than what you say. Your strongest Christian witness is your visible life rhythm and behavior.

Or...

How you live speaks louder than what you say.

Let me pin this down to a level that will offend someone.

- When you lay out all of your weekend activities and options, what do your kids see you make space for first? That behavior will become the perceived morally right thing to do.
- What do your children and friends see you do first with your money? That behavior will become the perceived morally right thing to do.

"If we want to be people reoriented by a Biblical worldview and guided by Biblical wisdom, one of the best spiritual investments is to mine the riches of historic Christian worship, which is rooted in the conviction that **the Word is caught more than taught...** [Life] liturgies [or rhythms] are calibration technologies. They train our loves by aiming them towards a certain Telos (prime consideration). -James Smith (P. 84; 57)

My wife bought me a personal journal. On the back of it are inscribed the final words in the final book of the chronicles of Narnia, *The Last Battle*.

*"All their life in this world and all their adventures had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."* -C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*

This is my prime consideration. This is what I want to model as most important. That all of this is pointing to something so much better and bigger, something that can actually fulfill us. The presence of a living God.

## Next Steps:

What “vapor” do you need to let go of?

What eternal priority do you need to make happen?

Close out the online service.

## References:

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Smith, James K. A. You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, a Division of Baker Group, 2016. Print.

Understanding the Wisdom Literature: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/wisdom-series/>

Understanding the literature types and postures of Wisdom Literature: Bartholomew, C. G. (2012, 2016). Wisdom Literature. In Faithlife Study Bible. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The word used here, hebel, means “vapor” or “breath” and is used in Isa 57:13 parallel with “wind” and in Prov 21:6 for “a fleeting vapor.”

Garrett, D. A. (1993). Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs (Vol. 14, p. 282). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Ecclesiastes is a book of wisdom sayings that examines the meaning of life’s endeavors, the value of common wisdom, and the problem of injustice. The opening verse presents the speaker as a member of David’s royal family, but his name is not mentioned.

Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Ec 1:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

C.S. Lewis, The Last Battle

Schwitzgebel, Moral Mediocrity, 1997