

5. Lord of Our Speech

Biblical material: Psalm 9; Acts 1:8; Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:15, 29; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; James 3:5-13; 4:11.

Quotes:

- Lord, make my words gracious and tender, for tomorrow I may have to eat them! *Anon*
- One of the first things that happens when a man is really filled with the Spirit is not that he speaks with tongues, but that he learns to hold the one he already has. *J. Sidlow Baxter*
- Words are the looking-glass of the mind. *Thomas Watson*
- The jawbone of an ass was a killer in Samson's time. It still is. *Morris Gilber*

Introductory questions

How do we "speak the truth in love"? In what ways do we speak in truth without love, or in love without the truth? How did Lucifer use speech in presenting his ideas in the beginning of the great controversy? What's wrong with "speaking your mind"? If we want to speak well of God, how do we do it?

Discussion ideas

The first Bible passage cited in this lesson is Psalm 9. Take another look, and even though we can see that it is presumably cited as an example of godly speech, what is David asking for here?

He seems very keen on revenge against his enemies. He identifies God as the one who "avenges blood." He rejoices in the fact that "The nations have fallen into the pit they have dug; their feet are caught in the net they have hidden." Finally he calls upon the Lord to "strike them with terror." (vv. 12, 15, 20 NIV).

In what way do you think David is utilizing speech wisely? Or is it OK to speak in violent terms as long as we ask the Lord to do it for us? How do cultural norms affect our answers? Should we today be calling on the Lord to "strike them with terror"?

Speech, with its use of language and imagery and tone of voice, conveys much about who we are and the way we relate to others. We are wisely counseled to be careful in our speech and to make sure we are not misusing this gracious gift. In the end speech is a tool that can be used for good or ill, and we should measure our words and make sure they are said the best way we can. We most often convey a picture of God by our speech, along with our actions and attitude.

The gracious way of answering (Col.4:6) sums up our approach. While we want to convince others ("witnessing"), this must be done wisely and well. Our aim is to build others up, thinking of how we can help meet their needs (Eph. 4:29).

James states that our tongue is a fire, lit by the flames of hell! What do you think he intended by such an "inflammatory" statement? What is hell anyway?

"God intends that all our speech be delivered with a demonstration of divine power." Wednesday's lesson. What do you think this means? Is the great controversy over the demonstration of divine power, or over the way in which God uses his power? Lucifer did not charge God with not having enough power, but in misusing his power and position. When it came to God's speech, the Lucifer accused God of saying one thing and doing another, of being arbitrary and unjust. How does God refute such charges?

Ellen White Comments

Of all the gifts that God has bestowed upon men, none is more precious than the gift of speech. If sanctified by the Holy Spirit, it is a power for good. It is with the tongue that we convince and persuade; with it we offer prayer and praise to God; and with it we convey rich thoughts of the Redeemer's love. {CM 70}

The Lord has shown me that great interest should be taken by Sabbathkeepers to keep up their meetings and make them interesting. There is great necessity of more interest and energy being manifested in this direction. All should have something to say for the Lord, for by so doing they will be blest. {EW 114}

What is the use of blistering the tongue with words of scolding and fretfulness? The gift of speech is a precious talent. Glorify God by speaking right words. {BEcho, March 9, 1903}

We may have knowledge, but unless we know how to use the voice correctly, our work will be a failure. Unless we can clothe our ideas in appropriate language, of what avail is our education? Knowledge will be of little advantage to us unless we cultivate the talent of speech; but it is a wonderful power when combined with the ability to speak wise, helpful words, and to speak them in a way that will command attention. {1T 380}

Extra material

Overnighting in a hotel, I was disturbed by a group of teens drinking in the parking lot.

Laughter, screams, shouts—and the sound of bottles smashing. I looked down from my window. Just a few kids being foolish, I told myself. But I watched for a while.

The alcohol had already taken effect. They were laughing at nothing and everything. Pushing each other around, mock fighting, teasing—and all the while making as much noise as possible. Obnoxious? Maybe. Harmless? Debatable. Annoying? Definitely!

Really annoying. Not because I wasn't getting my much-needed sleep. Not because they were intruding into my right to peace and quiet. But because they were quite literally *disturbing* me. Disturbing me because here were some young people out "having fun" and yet they needed to see how wonderful life could really be. And I wanted to tell them about *God's* wonderful life—but I didn't know how. I was disturbed and annoyed more with myself than with them!

How do you approach a group of drunk kids with the gospel?

The quick and perhaps the only answer—I decided after much deep reflection—is that you cannot. At least, not while they're drunk. In an alcoholic haze, Christian witness surely makes little impact. A pointless activity. These teens weren't making sense in their own foolishness—so what hope for the gospel? Or was I just rationalizing my non-involvement? I wondered. Why not go down and at least *try*? And get attacked with a broken bottle, probably, I told myself.

Go anyway, I replied. I went downstairs, a long way down. I stepped outside, with questions still unresolved.

They saw me coming. And they ran off giggling, wobbling and stumbling. I called, but they just ran faster. Maybe they thought I was security. And they were gone. No one left to say anything to—not even the drunkest of the drunk.

At least the question of what might happen was resolved, I reflected. But as I walked back upstairs to the room, I was praying. Praying for them that they would find the God I know and love. Praying that they would discover the "life to the full" that Jesus came to share. And praying that I would find the right words at the right time in the right place, so that I could share my gracious God before it is too late. Before all the bottles smash.

6. Lord of Our Prayers

Biblical material: Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:18, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5, John 14:12-14, Isaiah 53:12, 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:6, 12:24, Romans 8:34.

Quotes:

- Prayer is the gun we shoot with, fervency is the fire that discharges it, and faith the bullet that pierces the throne of grace. *John Trapp*
- All my discoveries have been made in answer to prayer. *Isaac Newton*
- Yank some of the groans out of your prayers, and shove in some shouts. *Billy Sunday*
- When thou prayest, rather be thy heart without words than thy words without heart. *John Bunyan*

Introductory questions

What is prayer *for*? How do we understand it/describe it? What about recent studies that seem to suggest that prayer is a force for good—even for those who don't want prayers?! How would you explain to non-believers what you think prayer really does? If you don't pray, does God not get involved? In what way can we make prayer "better"?

Discussion ideas

How is it we can call God "Daddy"? (Rom. 8:15). Does this not seem to be over-familiar, and lacking the necessary respect? What kind of God invites us to speak to him in this way?

Prayer is much misunderstood. The formalism that has invaded prayer, turning it into chants and mantras, familiar phrases and repetitive lines, means that we often "do" prayers than really mean what we say! Imagine how one of your friends would react if you said you were going to "do" a conversation with him/her...

The lesson refers us to John 14:12-14. Why not begin at verse 6 and see the whole picture? In these words Jesus is describing the heart of his mission—to show us the Father. Once we see God in Christ, then we can have confidence in such a trustworthy God, and want to spend time in conversation with him, learning from him and sharing our lives with him.

To Isaiah 53:12 we should also add Isaiah 1:18—"Come let us reason together." For this is what our prayers are meant to be, talking to God as to a friend, thinking things through. God's desire is that we understand—and by our thoughtful prayers we gain such enlightenment.

The concept of a mediator is brought up in the lesson, and is mentioned in the texts. How do you understand the term? Could it be that we think of Jesus as the mediator because we have a poor view of our heavenly Father and want to have someone in-between? Certainly this has been the view of some, even perhaps the majority, all down through history... In fact, could this be the reason for prayers to Mary or the saints, because God is seen as too holy/distant/hostile?

"By praying in the name of Jesus, we are openly expressing our faith in Him as the One who has closed the gap caused by sin between heaven and earth, the One through whom we, as sinners, have been reconciled to our heavenly Father." (Monday's lesson). We need to make sure that we realize it was not that God the Father needed reconciling. In fact it was his desire for us to come home, to be reconciled, that led to Jesus' coming to earth in the first place.

As we talk to our loving Lord as to a friend, let us take these words seriously and practice what we preach. For what is the point of going through all the rituals, "saying" prayers, when we miss the wonderful opportunity of conversation with the God of the Universe?

Ellen White Comments

As you pray, speak to Christ as you would to a trusted, much-loved friend. Maintain a sweet, free, pleasant dignity, as a child of God. {6T 323}

He [Moses] became united to, submerged in, the Holy One of Israel. He believed in the great God. He held communion with the Father through humble prayer. He looked to the Highest for an education in spiritual things and for a knowledge of his duty as a faithful shepherd. His life became so closely linked with heaven that God talked with him face to face, “as a man speaketh unto his friend.” Exodus 33:11. {CT 407.3}

Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. {FLB 225}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {SC 93}

There are two kinds of prayer—the prayer of form and the prayer of faith. The repetition of set, customary phrases when the heart feels no need of God, is formal prayer. . . . We should be extremely careful in all our prayers to speak the wants of the heart and to say only what we mean. All the flowery words at our command are not equivalent to one holy desire. The most eloquent prayers are but vain repetitions if they do not express the true sentiments of the heart. But the prayer that comes from an earnest heart, when the simple wants of the soul are expressed just as we would ask an earthly friend for a favor, expecting that it would be granted—this is the prayer of faith. The publican who went up to the temple to pray is a good example of a sincere, devoted worshiper. He felt that he was a sinner, and his great need led to an outburst of passionate desire, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” . . . {ML 19}

Extra material

Prayer without thanksgiving is like a bird without wings. William Hendriksen.
Thanksgiving is good but thanks-living is better. Matthew Henry.

This morning Lord, I have only thanks for you. Thanks for who you are, and for loving me. Because it is only the sure knowledge that you love me that gives me value--that makes life meaningful and worthwhile. Because of you Lord, I can laugh and smile and shout out loud for joy.

How long it's taken me to realize that I am only truly happy with you, my loving Lord. How often I have wanted to me, just me, without anything else. And then found in this me nothing to make me happy. If I am only me, then there is nothing--I have no reason to be, no past and no future.

You are my God, my family, my closest relation. My connectedness to you makes me part of it all—the whole vast Universe you made and you sustain. To be born, to live for a few brief moment, and die—what is that?

But to be made by you, live for you and with you, and even if I die I live in you memory and am resurrected to be with you forever--how incredible, how wonderful, how brilliantly loving.

To give us all a part, a voice, lines in the script of the Universe—

Lord, let me ever give you thanks, because you are the one who includes me in, and makes a part of all you are.

Amen.

7. Lord of Our Relationships

Biblical material: Exodus 20:14, 17; Psalm 127, 128; Luke 6:27, 28; Acts 2:41-47; Ephesians 4:32; 5:25; 6:1-4.

Quotes:

- Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities. *Voltaire*
- There is a sense in which the people of the Lord are a people apart, belonging to each other in a sense in which they don't belong to anyone else. *A. W. Tozer*
- I would give nothing for that man's religion whose very dog and cat are not the better for it. *Rowland Hill*

Introductory questions

How can we love, especially the unlovable? Are we *required* to have good relationships, or is that the outcome of God's working in our lives? How do our human relationships illustrate the way we relate to God? Why is God concerned about our human relationships? How can family relationships also damage us?

Discussion ideas

Our attitudes to family ideals may change, but the importance of relationships remains the same. While today we may not be praying for a "quiver-full" of sons or wanting them to be like "olive shoots," we still want the best relationships with those who are close to us. We still look forward to seeing our children's children.

But how is it really possible to love your enemies? Those who were listening to Jesus give this discourse must have found many things hard to bear, but when it comes to this—now he's really pushing the limit. And Jesus surely agrees, and tells his hearers they are finally getting the point: for from a human perspective this is next to impossible. Only the grace of God can turn enemies into friends, can give the grace that is so essential in all our relationships.

The early church had a wonderful "communal" experience that exemplified the purity of such interpersonal relationships. That's why the "crime" of Ananias and Sapphira was so damaging: not that they could not have kept money for themselves, but that they were subverting the beautiful ideal and trusting attitude of the believers.

We're called to be kind and compassionate to one another. Those are easy words to say; how much harder to do! Is this just a matter of keeping a command—doing what we are told because God says so—or is it far more a matter of sharing in the very nature of the character of God? Only as we discover that God's way is the only way, that right is right and makes such good sense, that we love to truly love—only then can we truly follow this "command."

Ephesians 5 and 6 give us much direct advice. But once again, how easy is it to follow—or is the answer far deeper, lying in the way we relate to the truth about God himself?

Here some very practical questions arise. Should a wife stay in an abusive relationship? What do we do when children are the victims of domestic violence? It's all very well praising the ideals, but what of the all-too-common family problems? *That's* when we find out what we truly believe...

"Relationships have become damaged and fractured by sin. God desires that we experience the meaningful intimate relationships that were part of His original plan." (Sabbath's lesson). The question is how...

Ellen White Comments

We may never know until the judgment the influence of a kind, considerate course of action to the inconsistent, the unreasonable, and unworthy. If after a course of provocation and injustice on their part, you treat them as you would an innocent person, you even take pains to show them special acts of kindness, then you have acted the part of a Christian; and they become surprised and ashamed, and see their course of action and meanness more clearly than if you plainly stated their aggravated acts to rebuke them. {2MCP 432}

Be lovable. Let your life win the hearts of all who are brought in contact with you. There is too little done at the present time to render the truth attractive to others. {2MCP 433}

He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity. Only through sympathy, faith, and love can men be reached and uplifted. Here Christ stands revealed as the Master Teacher; of all that ever dwelt on the earth, He alone has perfect understanding of the human soul. {Ed 78}

Extra Material

Friendship is different from all other relationships. Unlike acquaintanceship, it is based on love. Unlike lovers and married couples, it is free of jealousy. Unlike children and parents, it knows neither criticism nor resentment. Friendship has no status in law. Business partnerships are based on a contract. So is marriage. Parents are bound by the law, as are children. But friendship is freely entered into, freely given, freely exercised. Friends never cheat each other, or take advantage, or lie. Friends do not spy on one another, yet they have no secrets. Friends glory in each other's successes and are downcast by the failures. Friends minister to each other, nurse each other. Friends give to each other, worry about each other, stand always ready to help. Perfect friendship is rarely achieved, but at its height, is an ecstasy. *E. Ambrose Comrades*

Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket - safe, dark, motionless, airless - it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable. *C.S. Lewis*

Do you consider yourself God's servant or God's friend?

"Oh," you might say, "I consider myself something even better. I consider myself God's child."

Why is it better to be God's child?

"Ah, because children have rights, and I prize the rights Jesus bought for me at such price."

As I heard a man say in the pulpit the other day, "When I get to heaven and meet God, and he should wonder how a person such as I could possibly be there, all I'll have to do is show him my rights. He doesn't have to like me. All he has to do is see my right to be there."

To me, that's servant talk. And it's certainly not very friendly. Besides, I know many children who are not their father's friends. Absalom was David's son, and he was his father's worst enemy.

So I would have to say for myself, I would rather be God's friend than just his child. But fortunately we can be all three. We don't have to choose.

I believe it is a great honor to be God's servant, and especially to be regarded as a faithful one.

It is also a high privilege to be called God's child.

But most of all, I'd rather be his friend. A trusting and trusted friend. *A. Graham Maxwell*

8. Lord of Our Resources

Biblical material: Deuteronomy 8:7-18; Matthew 6:19-21; 24:45-51; 1 Corinthians 9:11-14; Philippians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:5; James 1:16, 17.

Quotes:

- You can never get enough of what you don't need to make you happy. *Eric Hoffer*
- The most pitiful among men is he who turns his dreams into silver and gold. *Kahlil Gibran*
- We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give. *Duane Hulse*
- Many a man becomes empty-handed because he does not know the art of distribution. *C. H. Spurgeon*

Introductory questions

What do we most value? How do our lives reflect this choice? In an age of consumerism, how do we see other gifts? Is it true that our dependence on God decreases as our bank balance increases? How do we reveal that where our treasure is, so are our hearts? What can't you serve both God and money? How should we view our resources?

Discussion ideas

God speaks often of remembering him. When life is good, it may seem to some that they have less need of God. Indeed, as we witness to those who are well-off, the gospel to the poor may not work! However as Jesus made abundantly clear, as man's wealth does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses. God has to help us understand that what is of real and lasting value cannot be given a worldly price-tag.

In the story of the unfaithful steward, it seems that having charge over all the master's possessions led to the steward becoming very focussed on this world. How do we avoid the urgency of material issues crowding out our spiritual values?

Paul's conclusion that those who spread the gospel should receive a living from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14) is interpreted in interesting ways today. How do we best help those who are doing some special work, and not endorse wrong thoughts and attitudes? Do I need to excuse myself from this conversation?!

Can we, like Paul, say that I am content with whatever state I am in? How are we to react to our circumstances? Some see only challenges and problems, others see exciting possibilities. The real question is the *love* of money, as the root of all evil, for it speaks of the self-centred perspective that is at the heart of sin. As we seek to help ourselves, as we focus on what we want, then the principles of God's kingdom are easily forgotten. At base, it's a question of trust, as Hebrews 13:5 makes clear. If we love money, it's because we think through our wealth we can be safe and content. But this leaves God out of the picture.

All too often such Bible studies can be viewed as a reminded to the faithful to pay their tithes and give offerings. But this is not to be our main aim. For the way we live our lives, how we handle our resources, all this speaks to our understanding of God and our relationship to him. After all, what is so important in accumulating things of "value" in this life? Jesus reserved some of his hardest words of rebuke to those who failed to see the value of eternal things. Even then it must have been said in terms of great disappointment as he saw that unless they experienced a change of heart, they would be utterly lost. So what—or who—are we truly valuing?

Ellen White Comments

... the character of Christ must be understood before men could love Him or view the cross with the eye of faith. Here must begin that study which shall be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In the light of the cross alone can the true value of the human soul be estimated. {AA 273}

The gospel . . . teaches us to estimate things at their true value, and to give the most effort to the things of greatest worth--the things that will endure. This lesson is needed by those upon whom rests the responsibility of selecting a home. They should not allow themselves to be diverted from the highest aim. . . . {AH 131}

If the eye is kept single, the whole body will be full of light. If the spiritual vision is clear, unseen realities will be looked upon in their true value, and beholding the eternal world will give added enjoyment to this world. {CS 136}

Our money has not been given us that we might honor and glorify ourselves. As faithful stewards we are to use it for the honor and glory of God. . . . All we possess is the Lord's, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it. . . . Money has great value, because it can do great good. In the hands of God's children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, and clothing for the naked. . . . But money is of no more value than sand, only as it is put to use in providing for the necessities of life, in blessing others, and advancing the cause of Christ. {FLB 160}

Extra material

Mirrorland: the place where everything is different—reversed. This is the way Jesus describes his kingdom. Yet how do we know which way is “right way round”?

Jesus turns our value systems around, and all that this world sees as important is reversed in God's kingdom. Priorities are inverted, and “reality” seems back-to-front. Yet this is “real reality” according to Jesus—it is we who have been living in a topsy-turvy world.

Mirrors not only reverse, however. They also show us the way we are and point out who we are. They reveal to our eyes what is actually there, not what we would like to be there. If we do not take time to look in the mirror, then we cannot see ourselves. . . .

In his sermon on the mount, Jesus explained this mirrorland, where values are very different to those we expect. The Beatitudes reveal those who are truly blessed (happy), because their present state will be reversed etc. A mirror of the real nature of God's kingdom. Remember also Jesus' comment at the very end, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

For the first shall be last, and the last first. The proud abased, the humble exalted. Those who seek to save their lives will lose them. In these “reversal sayings” Jesus speaks of opposites and antithesis of popular views, especially of religion. He shows us that popularity and achievement in world's eyes are very insignificant in the eyes of God. In his parables—for example the Pharisee and publican, or the Good Samaritan, Jesus reveals he is so much at odds with the way the world views things. . . .

“You have heard it said, but I say to you,” Jesus tells his audience, extending and expanding on previous commands, demonstrating the real meaning behind them. He tells them to “seek first kingdom of God,” in other words set priorities straight according to God's mirrorland.

For in truth and in fact, it is we who live in mirrorland—the opposite of the way things really are. We live in a world that has perverted God's value system and the way things should be? We are the “anti-matter” world, the anti-God, the opposite of what God intended. And as we return to what is truly real, we are the example—the players in the theatre of universe!

9. Lord of Our Body Temples

Biblical material: John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:16, 17; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:18,19; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:31.

Quotes:

- I have better use for my brain than to poison it with alcohol. To put alcohol in the human brain is like putting sand in the bearings of an engine. *Thomas Edison*
- I never see a sign “Licensed to sell spirits” without thinking that it is a licence to ruin souls. *Robert Murray M’Cheyne*
- Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I’m not sure about the universe. *Albert Einstein*

Introductory questions

Why is God even concerned about our bodies—shouldn’t he worry about our spirituality instead? The Greeks saw the physical world as evil—do we do the same? How are we “fearfully and wonderfully made”? Why have Adventists stressed the importance of healthy living? Isn’t the kingdom of God more than food and drink? What of the sensual side?

Discussion ideas

“The Corinthian believers were facing some intense challenges. They lived in a city where sexual immorality was not only prevalent, it was encouraged. Satan was marring the image of God in unbelievers and believers alike. Promiscuity was not only plaguing the culture, it was permeating the church.” (Tuesday’s lesson). In what way do you see such a situation as misrepresenting the picture of God? How does this work?

The texts from John and Colossians stress Christ’s creative aspect; Galatians, 1 Peter and Corinthians the redemptive part. So what has this to do with how we see God and his interest in us?

It reveals how God is most concerned with the intimate details of our lives. He is not distant, but like a friend, wants us to have the best lives we can. Jesus’ own statement in John 10 is that he came that we might have life, abundant life—or as one translation puts it, “life to the full.” By not caring for our bodies, through unhealthy habits, we limit our capacity for the true enjoyment of life! Thinking of God in this way means he is not seen as a joy-killer or a “wet blanket,” but rather as a very close, special friend who cares about our personal welfare and who always wants the very best for each of us.

We often use the concept of the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19, 20) to hammer home the point of not drinking, smoking, and using illicit drugs. This is all well and good, but is there more to this text than just such an emphasis? If our bodies—even more specifically our brains, our frontal lobes even—are where God “dwells,” then is there not even more significance in wanting to maintain our physical status so we can best think, understand, and act on the insights into God that we gain?

For it is the close communication, the relationship with our Creator and loving Lord that we most need. Since we all experience the degradation of the physical due to sin, how much more important to keep our minds and bodies in the best shape we can, heredity permitting!

Ellen White Comments

The bread of life must be eaten by each one. Individually we must partake of it, that soul, body, and mind may be revived and strengthened by its transforming power, thus becoming assimilated to the mind and character of Jesus Christ. God must be made first and last and best in everything. {TM 385}

Some do not realize the sinfulness of impure habits, and the sure results. Long indulgence in evil has blinded their understanding. The sensitive nerves of the brain have lost their healthy tone, and the result is a deadening of the moral sensibilities. {CTBH 135}

The brain is the organ and instrument of the mind and controls the whole body. In order for the other parts of the system to be healthy, the brain must be healthy. And in order for the brain to be healthy, the blood must be pure. If by correct habits of eating and drinking the blood is kept pure, the brain will be properly nourished. {CH 586-7}

Sweet cakes, sweet puddings, and custards will disorder the digestive organs; and why should we tempt those who surround the table by placing such articles before them? The more largely flesh composes the diet of teachers and pupils, the less susceptible will be the mind to comprehend spiritual things. The animal propensities are strengthened, and the fine sensibilities of the mind are blunted. Diligent study is not the principal cause of the breaking down of the mental powers. The main cause is improper diet, irregular meals, and a lack of physical exercise. Irregular hours for eating and sleeping sap the brain forces. {CD 395}

Extra material

The experience of Solomon (Eccl. 2 NIV) is a salutary lesson for us today. v1,2: He tried **living for pleasure**—but that brought only passing satisfaction. And he concludes that pleasure had no real meaning. It didn't solve his heartfelt need for assurance and permanent meaning in life. v3: So then he went on the **booze**, and with all his riches he could afford the very best wines. Chateau Lebanon 971 BC! He tried to escape the pressing problems of pointlessness by refusing to think, by escaping into oblivion offered by alcohol. He tried to be happy by living in a drunken stupor. Did it work? Of course not. The same problems and questions still haunted him when he awoke, only then he had to deal with them with a head banging like a gong. Writing of his own experience he said, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Prov. 20:1.

And so he tried "**folly**" playing the fool, being daft, joking around. But can you escape this way? Does this false merriment lead to true happiness and joy. Never. Solomon concluded -- having tried this route—"the fool walks in darkness" (Eccl. 2:14), see also Prov. 17:10, 12, 16, 21, 24. There are no answers in closing your eyes and playing the fool. ("For as the crackling of thorns under a pot so is the laughter of the fool" Eccl. 7:6) Pointless!

v.4-7: So then Solomon tried the "throwing yourself into your **work**" route—making yourself so **busy** you don't have time to think of why you're here or what you're doing. As king he was able to work on massive and grandiose projects. Great houses and garden, parks and orchards and vineyards. v.8-9 He also tried the **money-getting** way, the **power-seeking** way—grabbing all you can, making yourself as rich as possible. By modern standards Solomon would have been a multi-millionaire. The search for joy and happiness through money and possessions, through social advancement and the increase of personal power. Did it work? Solomon says he enjoyed himself in his work, and felt good about the results of his labour. v.10 Yet, verse 11: Yet... "everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

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