

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Watch Your Step

"And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." -Mark 8:34 ESV

1. Watch Your Step (1-3)

A. Ready to be Humble. Recognize Who God is.

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." -Philippians 2:1-4 ESV

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." -1 Peter 5:6-7 ESV

"But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." -James 4:6-10 ESV

B. How We Should Approach God

"Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." -Proverbs 19:2 ESV

"When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent." -Proverbs 10:19 ESV

C. The supremacy of God

"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." -Psalm 115:3 ESV

D. He cannot be manipulated

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." -Matthew 6:7-8 ESV

"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of Lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes

justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing." -Deuteronomy 10:17-18 ESV

2. Vows (4-7)

A. A Formal Vow

"After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow." -Acts 18:18 ESV

"When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality." Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them." -Acts 21:17-26 ESV

B. Reckless Vows

"But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth." -Deuteronomy 23:22-23 ESV

"But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation." -James 5:12 ESV

"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or

black. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." -Matthew 5:33-37 ESV

"As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." -2 Corinthians 1:18-22 ESV

3. Fear God! (7)

"Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off." -Romans 11:22 ESV

A. Our Starting Point

"Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil." Proverbs 3:7 ESV

"You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord! He is their help and their shield." Psalm 115:11 ESV

"The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor." -Proverbs 15:33 ESV

B. As Followers of Jesus...

"Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." 1 Peter 2:17 ESV

"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And ***walking in the fear of the Lord*** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied." -Acts 9:31 ESV (Bold Italics for emphasis)

"And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." 1 Peter 1:17-19 ESV

"Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience." 2 Corinthians 5:11 ESV

C. Fear of the Lord in Worship and Relationships

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." -Ephesians 5:18-21 NASB1995

Reflection:

1. *How would you explain "the Fear of the Lord" or how you "fear God"?*
2. *Is this an important part of how you know and approach the Lord? How is it resolved in your life, work, worship, and relationships?*

Follow UP in the Word through the Week...

Monday: Mark 8:27-9:1. What question does Jesus ask to begin this conversation? How does Jesus invite people to follow Him in 8:34? How does this impact your life today?

Tuesday: James 4:6-10. How does James describe our need for humility? Why do you think that he sounds so extreme in his description? How does this impact your life as you approach Jesus?

Wednesday: Deuteronomy 10:17-18. What is the bottom line when it comes to God in this description of Him? What assurance can this give to each person who approaches Him?

Thursday: Matthew 5:33-37. How important does Jesus say our words are? How careful are you with the words that you speak even as you make commitments to God and others?

Friday: Acts 9:31. Describe the churches in this passage. Have you ever been a part of a group of believers that lives this way?

Saturday: 1 Peter 1:17-19; Ephesians 5:18-21. What effect does fearing Christ have on our relationships and our worship? What difference does that make?