

# Message 19: Five core behaviors for wise Believers:

3.26.2023

Ephesians Series

Ephesians 5:15–21 (CSB)

<sup>15</sup>Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—<sup>16</sup>making the most of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. <sup>18</sup>And don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit: <sup>19</sup>speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music with your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.

Introduction: [The Apostle's final thoughts on how to walk.](#)

A. First, Paul made sure we knew out to sit with Jesus.

1. Then the language changes to “walking” with Jesus.
2. Ephesians 5:15 warns us to pay careful attention to how we walk.
3. We are to walk wisely.

B. Who in here likes to watch people?

1. **Have you noticed that most people are not paying attention to how they walk or where they are going?**
2. 7 years ago, the Wall Street Journal set up in San Francisco for an experiment.
3. VIDEO

C. It is unwise for us to walk in a busy city, burying our heads, eyes, and ears in our phones.

1. Just because this is acceptable, it doesn't mean it is wise.
2. This morning, we look at 5 core behaviors the Apostle Paul instructs believers to follow.

### Core Behavior#1. Wise believers make the most of the time.

A. Some translations say "redeeming the time."

1. The verb is a commercial metaphor used for purchasing a commodity, and it implies a period of vigorous trading while there is profit to be made.<sup>1</sup>

2. There are two ways to measure time:

a. Chronos is the amount of time in a day.

1. Minutes,
2. hours
3. years.

b. Kairos refers to the opportunity within time.

1. Harvest season is not merely a measured time, but an opportunity.
2. If you don't harvest at the right time, Chronos, you miss the Kairos.

3. Paul tells the Ephesians believers that wise people make the most of the opportunity God gives us.

B. This is especially important when we understand that the days are evil.

1. There is limited time and limited opportunity to tell people about Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Osborne, Grant R. 2017. *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*. Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

2. There is limited time to say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done.

3. The Apostle Paul is aware of the temptation to waste this time and opportunity.

C. We redeem the time by understanding the Lord's will and doing it Vs 17.

<sup>17</sup>So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

1. Doing the Lord's will is not limited to church activities.

2. Included are raising kids, loving spouses, witnessing to neighbors, serving in the community, and a myriad of activities.

3. Never has the fleetingness of time been more obvious when we look up and whole months and years have gone by in a blink.

1. We are constantly asking, "where did that time go?"

2. But with that is "where did the opportunity go?"

4. Be wise, and redeem the time by making the most of every opportunity.

Core Behavior #2. Wise believers pursue a Spirit-filled life.

A. "Be filled with the Spirit" is a present-tense imperative, commanding a continuous infilling rather than a single, as it were, crisis experience.<sup>2</sup>

1. This means that Paul tells the Ephesus believers to stay filled with the Spirit.

2. We are broken vessels, and we leak.

a. We need more than just one experience or encounter.

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<sup>2</sup> Osborne, Grant R. 2017. *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*. Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

b. We need a life that is continuously being filled with the Spirit.

B. But Paul starts this sentence with a negative imperative: "Do not get drunk with wine...but be filled by the Spirit."

**1. The Ephesian context is key to understanding this:**

Paul uses a pair of strikingly contrasting imperatives to focus our attention on just what is and what is not involved in worship: "Do not get drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Wine and Spirit are set in contrast as ways of worship. In the Asiatic world of Ephesus one of the most prevalent forms of worship centered around the god Dionysius. Dionysiac worship employed dances and exciting music to produce ecstatic rapture.

Dionysius was the god of wine. Intoxication with wine combined with dancing and music was the method of choice for getting to the desired state of enthusiasm (literally, ally, "the god within"). Paul points to these riotous, drunken orgies on display all around the people of Ephesus and contrasts them with what takes place in worship as Christians come to be "filled with the Spirit." Not the "mere anarchy" of drunken dances, but rather the sweet harmony of "singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts" (5:19). The manic debauchery associated with Dionysiac worship sets a sharp and unforgettable contrast to the beauty of the singing, the melodic harmonies, that it is the work of the Spirit to bring to expression in each worshiping congregation. This is the church at worship as we drink our fill of God's Spirit. We listen to God's Word read and preached, and once again get our story straight; we receive the life of salvation eating and drinking the Lord's Supper, his "fragrant offering and sacrifice to God," and recover our Jesus focus; we find ourselves in the singing and giving thanks, in the greetings and the prayers,

freshly renewed by the Spirit to practice resurrection in the company of the Trinity.<sup>3</sup>

C. Paul's language on alcohol strongly contrasts the former life of the Ephesians with their present life in the Spirit.

1. Because the Ephesians used to drink as worship of false-gods, and false-hopes, he is telling them to stay away from what used to be and to embrace the new worship found in being filled with the Spirit and NOT with wine.
2. Their old life was filled with drunken dances and drunken singing.
3. Their new life would be filled with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

D. Is drinking alcohol a sin?

1. Not necessarily, but in this context, it certainly seems unwise.
2. This is evidenced in Paul's advice to the pastor of Ephesus, Timothy.
3. 1 Timothy 5:23 (CSB)

<sup>23</sup> Don't continue drinking only water, but use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

4. If it had been Timothy's habit to drink some wine, Paul would not have had to prescribe it medicinally.

E. From my understanding of Scripture, I believe it is unwise for believers to consume alcohol.

1. The writer of Proverbs 20:1 (CSB) says

Wine is a mocker, beer is a brawler;

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<sup>3</sup> Eugene H. Peterson. Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ (Kindle Locations 2569-2576). Kindle Edition.

whoever goes astray because of them is not wise.

**Proverbs 31:4–7 (NIV)**

<sup>4</sup> *It is not for kings, Lemuel—*

*it is not for kings to drink wine,*

*not for rulers to crave beer,*

<sup>5</sup> *lest they drink and forget what has been decreed,*

*and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.*

<sup>6</sup> *Let beer be for those who are perishing,*

*wine for those who are in anguish!*

<sup>7</sup> *Let them drink and forget their poverty*

*and remember their misery no more.*

2. Every time I read this Proverbs 31 passage, I'm reminded of a few things:

a. First, I'm seated with Christ Jesus and co-heirs with Him:

1. I am seated with Him in a position of authority and power.

2. Thus, I need to think clearly and be sober-minded.

b. Second. I am not as one perishing, or in anguish or in poverty.

1. Let beer and drink be for those without hope and in poverty and misery.

2. But that isn't who I am.

3. The Apostle Paul says excess leads to reckless living.

a. At primary issue here is who is in control.

b. If alcohol is in control, then the Spirit of God isn't.

c. The Apostle Paul presents a better life, one filled with the joy of the Spirit.

4. One Christian writer explains:

He does not seek simply to take away joys and pleasures from people's lives. He would replace them by higher joys and better pleasures. It is no mere coincidence that in Acts 2 also the fullness of wine and the fullness of the Spirit are set side by side. There is the implication there, repeated here, that the Christian knows a better way than by wine of being lifted above the depression and the joyless monotony of life, a better way of removing self-consciousness and quickening thought and word and action than by the use of intoxicants. It is by being *filled with the Spirit*.<sup>4</sup>

5. The Spirit of God presents us with a better, wiser, way to enjoy life and shoulder life's heavy burdens.

6. We can either be filled with alcohol, which leads to reckless living, or filled with the Spirit, but we cannot be both.

7. To walk wisely, I live by the words of Peter:

1 Peter 5:8 (CSB)

<sup>8</sup>Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.

Core Behavior: #3. [Wise believers minister with their words.](#)

A. The Spirit-filled believer will minister one to another.

1. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs will characterize our speech.

2. Perhaps there is some distinction between a psalm (scripture) hymns( which teaches doctrine), and spiritual songs that draw our spirits closer to the Lord.

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<sup>4</sup> Foulkes, Francis. 1989. [Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary](#). Vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

3. But the three categories together stress the beauty of corporate and congregational worship.

B. This is, again, contrasted with the former way of life for the Ephesians:

1. Formerly, they would be drunk, singing in a drunken stupor to their idols.
2. But NOW, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, singing words that build each other up in Christ Jesus.

C. Music, perhaps more than any medium, connects our spirits with the spiritual realm.

1. Genesis 4:21 tells of Jubal, the first musician.
2. Since that time, people have sung and played instruments for many reasons:
  - a. For many of us, our internal radio is tuned into whom we are worshipping.
  - b. What we are humming or singing to ourselves when we don't realize it is a good indicator of what is happening in our spiritual life.

D. The Apostle encourages the Ephesians, and us, to use our voices wisely.

1. Our voices and platforms are not for tearing down others but for building them up.
2. All throughout Ephesians, Paul implores us to be mindful of what we say to each other.
3. This is not our natural language, which is why we are to be filled with the Spirit, so that we may *“speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music with your heart to the Lord,”*



## Core Behavior #4. Wise believers give thanks for everything.

<sup>20</sup> giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

A. Giving thanks is a sign of wisdom and maturity among believers.

1. Little children are happy when they get what they want.
  - a. They are also upset when things do not go their way.
  - b. Part of maturity is growing in contentment.
2. Wise believers give thanks for everything.

B. How do we do that?

1. First, thankfulness is a decision.
  - a. There are days and seasons where I have to “choose” thankfulness.
  - b. I don’t want to be satisfied.
  - c. I don’t want to be happy.
  - d. Thus, I have a decision; give thanks ALWAYS for everything to God or to be bitter and angry.
2. Second, thankfulness is a perspective.
  - a. When I lose sight of God the Father, I grow ungrateful.
    1. It’s significant for Paul to refer to God as Father here.
    2. “To refer to God as Father points to an intimacy of relationship that stands at the centre of the Christian faith. It is with gratitude that believers have a place in God’s family.”<sup>5</sup>
    3. God didn’t have to love me, but He did.

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<sup>5</sup> Bock, Darrell L. 2019. Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary. Edited by Eckhard J. Schnabel. Vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. London: Inter-Varsity Press.

4. He didn't have to send His son to pay for my sin, but He did.

5. God didn't have to make room for me in the Kingdom, at the Throne, or at the Table, but He did.

b. Thankfulness is a perspective.

1. When I see the world through the perspective of what Jesus did for me, I'm thankful.

2. Wise believers can view tragedy, disappointment, pain, success, and joy differently than other people.

3. Everything about my life is different because of what Jesus has done, and for that, I'm thankful in everything.

#### Core Behavior #5. Wise believers submit to one another.

A. This one is so important, it sets the tone for the next three paragraphs.

1. Because we will discuss this more in-depth in a few weeks, I want to comment on the big picture.

2. The word for submitting means: "to be or become inclined or willing to submit to orders or wishes of others or showing such inclination."

B. The Apostle's picture of the Church is of a body, with everything submitting, assisting, and working together.

1. When a knee decides it doesn't want to hold us up, we go down.

2. A toe causes us to hobble.

3. A bad back can cause everything to come out of alignment.

C. As believers, we were designed to work with each other, not against each other.

1. That's why it is important for us to submit one to another.

2. Maturity and wisdom are always built within community and relationship.

3. Romans 12:3–5 (CSB)

<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one.

<sup>4</sup>Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup>in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.

D. A couple of weeks ago I was driving back from Springfield.

1. I'm moving along well and come up to a vehicle driving slower than I am.

a. Not a lot, mind you, but definitely not the same speed.

b. In the passing lane is a car coming alongside, with some room for me to move over if I did it right then.

2. But instead of hitting my blinker right then, I tapped the brake.

a. The car passes by, I blinker, and then I too am around the car.

b. But here is what came to my heart:

c. Submission to one another is tapping the brake when you really want to hit the gas.

d. Submission is letting someone to take your spot, even for a second.

3. A way to practice submission is through little things:

a. Let someone in front of you at checkout.

b. Purposefully wait in a line so others can go ahead.

c. Tapping a brake when you really want to hit the gas.

d. Practicing submission in these little ways before we get to the hard ways of marriage, work, and parenting.

When believers act wisely by making the most of our time, and staying full of the Spirit, and build each other up with our words, and are thankful to God for everything, it makes submitting to each other much easier.

Bring up the worship team

Closing: There is an old hymn that holds a powerful reminder:

Verse 1:

You may own earth's silver  
Have riches untold  
But all of earth's wealth, my friend  
Won't save your soul  
You may live in a mansion  
All the world know your name  
But at the foot of the cross, my friend  
Everyone stands the same.

Chorus:

The ground is level at the foot of the cross.  
Anyone may come there for there is no cost  
Rich man or poor man, bonded or free.  
The ground was leveled that day at Calvary.

This morning, I pray:

1. First, I pray that we may all grasp how much Jesus has done for us.
2. Second, I pray that we will strive to live wisely in this evil world.
3. The Kingdom of God does not need us fighting each other, so let us walk wisely, for the days are evil.

**4. This morning, I want to lead us in a time of prayer where we each pray for maturity and wisdom.**