

WALK WISELY
Sermon Notes
February 13, 2022

Ephesians 5:15-21

If you are new to LEFC, we are currently in a series 1 Lord, 1 church, 1 mission, from the book of Ephesians. As we move through the book, we are learning that chapters 4-6, focuses on what it means to live the Christian life. It's not doing certain things to become a Christian but doing because of what Christ has done for us. Because we have become Christians, we are to live a certain way. There should be a sweeping effect that affects every part of our life. Paul, the writer of Ephesians, identifies contrasts between a Christian life and an unbeliever's life.

Last week, Tony identified, three warnings from Ephesians 5:5-14. (1) Do not be deceived by pretenders or prodigals of the Christian life. (2) Do not partner with people who do not measure up to the light of the Gospel. (3) Do not conceal dark things but call them out.

Today I want to focus on chapter 5:15-21. Let's read the text. Before I unpack this passage, let's look at how Paul addresses living the Christian life in several of his other letters.

Philippians 1:27, "Whatever happens, **conduct** yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

Colossians 1:10, "So that you may **live a life worthy** of the Lord and please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."

1 Thessalonians 2:12, "Encouraging, comforting and **urging** you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

Ephesians 4:1, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I **urge** you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." (use a split screen by bringing each verse up)

Paul is urging Christians to live differently, not to become a Christian, but, because of who we are in Christ, should live differently than those who are not believers. Is Paul's instruction in 60AD relevant to people in 2022?

In 2020, Barna Group released a 20year research on Christianity in the United States. **Practicing Christians** were identified as agreeing strongly that faith is very important in their lives and have attended church within the last month. **Non-practicing Christians** are self-identified Christians who do not qualify as practicing. **Non-Christians** are adults who do not identify as Christian. Currently, just 1 in 4 Americans are practicing Christians. **Practicing 2000-45%-2020-25%: Nonpracticing 2000 35%-2020 43%: Non-Christian 2000 20%- 2020-32%.** (chart)Where did practicing Christians go? The data indicated that the shift was evenly split. Half of them fell away from consistent faith engagement, essentially

becoming non-practicing Christians while the other half moved into the non-Christian segment.

I'm assuming here today, that you identify with one of these three ways of relating to Christianity. You might describe yourself as a practicing Christian several years ago but have fallen away from a consistent faith engagement. Maybe you have fallen because of the way you've witnessed Christians living their faith. Let me be clear, **"How we live out our Christian faith matters."** It matters for me personally, and it matters to those around me.

Let's unpack the text.

5:15, "be very careful then, how you live, not as unwise, but as wise." The word **careful** carries the meaning of something done accurately, precisely, or given close attention. The word **live**, in the Greek, is actually the word walk. In scripture, walk is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle. How we live out our Christian life requires careful attention to how we live out our life. It's not meant to be casually lived out. **Share how the three types would respond to this verse.**

"Not as unwise (self-centered), but as wise (God centered)." Read Prov.4:1-12. Provides a great context for valuing building my life around wisdom so that I'm being careful how I walk each day. A wise person will listen and engage God's word in their life. A wise person's steps will not be hampered. An unwise person builds their belief system around themselves. When they stumble, they don't understand why. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:19, "for the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight." **1 Cor. 1:18-26. Unwise living is living life apart from God. It's living life like there is no God.**

Here is what is difficult for practicing Christians, it is challenging to slow down long enough to seek and heed wisdom. To walk in wisdom, to walk with an obedience to God, requires that we slow down and take time to consider and examine situations before we get involved and, once we are involved in them, to thoughtfully solve problems through wise decision making. Another reason it's hard to walk in wisdom is because of cultural influences that makes living wisely so difficult. As an example is God's word says to live or respond one way and the world says that doesn't make sense.

5:16 "making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." The word opportunity comes from a Greek word meaning "toward the port." It suggests a ship taking advantage of the wind and tide to arrive safely into harbor. Life is brief. If I'm going to walk wisely, and realizing life is brief, then I need to be very intentional about how I live my life. An example of making the most of every opportunity a wise person is intentional with decisions they make. As an example: (1) what is the most strategic thing I could do (2) what is the best use of my time (3) what would bring the most good (4) what is the best use of my gifts (5) what is best for people around me. **(bring up one behind the other)** Every opportunity I

have before me is an opportunity to make an unwise decision. A practicing Christian would see this as an opportunity to glorify God in what we do each day.

Why do I need to make the most of every opportunity? Because the days are evil. The decrease in those who are practicing Christians over a 20-year span, illustrates that the lure to live with a self-focus is strong. Each day brings temptations to do evil just as it brings opportunity to do good. *Ephesians 4:17-18, "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility (vain) of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the Life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts."* The vain thinking Paul mentions is the thinking like those who don't know Christ. Basically, it means I will decide what is true or not, what is right or wrong. Vain thinking leads to a darkened understanding. Which leads to a life separated from God.

5:17 *"Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is."* Practicing Christians are interested in knowing and doing the Lord's will. In the flow of this text, I see this not about addressing God's will regarding major decisions, but about God's intent for the way to live every day, about what is pleasing Him. Paul uses understanding what the Lord's will is. **How does that happen?** Colossians 1:9-10, *"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."* His will is revealed through His word and through His Spirit. Speaking of the roll of the Holy Spirit in walking wisely, look at verse 18.

5:18, *"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."* Interesting contrast between being drunk on wine and being filled with the Spirit. However, at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came, the work of the Spirit on the lives of people was interpreted by those observing them that they that they had too much wine. (Acts 2:13) Is there some kind of likeness or similarity between being drunk and being filled with the Spirit? One commentary addresses the word drunk in this verse as meaning soaked. It means to be saturated with, to be dominated by. When you add "leads to debauchery," **debauchery means wasted living**, you could also say unwise living. When days are bad, or when days are evil, when you are feeling frightened or discouraged, depressed, or anxious, what do you turn to for help? Don't turn to alcohol Paul would say. We are created to live in relationship with God. **Any practice that diminishes a person's awareness of God and ability to respond suggests a life out of control, an unwise life.**

If we are going to be careful how we live and to live wisely, it will require the Holy Spirit. "To be filled with the Spirit," uses a verb that is presentence. **The word "filled" means keep being filled.** The word "filled" in the Bible means controlled by. To be filled with the Spirit means to be constantly controlled by the Spirit. It's what

helps us to walk wisely. When we place our faith and trust in Christ to save us, we received the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 3:14-19. Ephesians 1:18-20

Without the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, we will find it impossible to live like a practicing Christian who carefully and wisely walks in this life. Walking wisely looks to the Word of God for how to live out our faith. We will find it much easier to live like a non-practicing Christian because it's up to us on how we are going to live. If we don't daily ask the Holy Spirit to fill us and allow the Spirit to have freedom and influence in our lives, we will revert to our own ways to handling life. **I cannot live the Christian life apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in my life.** What would be evidence of someone who is walking wisely by being filled with the Spirit?

5:19, *"speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord."* Some might interpret this as singing worship music. Imagine someone walking up to you and start singing a worship song to you. Strange right? However, if someone came up to you and shared something that God was doing in their life, you would listen. Last Sunday night we had a Celebrate God event. People got up and shared a psalm they wrote or one that spoke to them in the book of Psalms. I've been deeply moved when individuals share how God is working in their lives. Call it truth talks. Christians sharing truth with each other helps encourage wise living. A friend shared with me one time that if I'm always treating people as if they are non-Christians, and not speaking to them as if they are Christians, I'm not giving the Holy Spirit something to work with. I've also been moved by worship where my heart is engaged speaking and singing to him. Worship is a matter of the heart not the ear. Another evidence of a wise person who is filled with the Spirit is in living a "thank filled" life.

5:20, *"always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* If we are being careful how we live and using wisdom in decisions we make, we will better understand that God is for us and that circumstances are not the source of joy and peace. God is. With the days being evil, it would be easy to allow fretting, complaining, and resentment to build and drive our emotions. **Runaway emotions can lead us to make unwise decisions and choices that take us further away from God.** When we come to Him in prayer, we need to come to Him with thankfulness. The kind of thankfulness that trust that God is working for our good even in unpleasant circumstances. Thankful for what He has done.

Closing—The days we are living in require us to carefully examine our walk. Are we using wisdom found in God's word or choosing to build our own wisdom based on the things of this world? God has provided everything I need to walk wisely. A wise person is not working independently of God but is relying on God's work through the Holy Spirit to help them do the right thing. You may need to take time to reexamine your walk today. Are you about to make a decision that is not wise? Are you taking time to have spiritual conversations with others? A word from you

today may help someone to make a wise decision tomorrow. Are your emotions driving away from God or drawing you towards Him? Pray