

Theme: Live Wisely

Ephesians 5:15-20 (NIV)

15 Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to one estimate, in an average lifetime, the average American spends, 16 years working, 13 years watching TV, Spends \$89,281 on food, consumes 109,354 pounds of food, Makes 1811 trips to McDonalds, Spends \$6881 in vending machines, Eats 35,138 cookies and 1483 pounds of candy, Catches 304 colds, Is involved in 6 motor vehicle accidents, is hospitalized 8 times (men) or 12 times (women), and spends 24 years sleeping. Another breakdown of the average life listed that we even spend, on average, 2 years of our lives getting dressed! Can you guess how much time this same chart listed the average American spends doing religious activities? Only half a year, or 0.7% of their entire life! Not even 1%! In other words, the average American spends more time dressing him/herself than they do taking care of their spiritual well-being!

How would your life break down compared to that of the average American? If you were to make a chart of how you have spent your time, your energy, and your resources so far in your life would you look at that chart and be shocked at how much you've wasted? Or would you say you have made the most of your time here on this earth?

This is the subject Paul is addressing in our text for this morning. His instructions to the Ephesian Christians, and to us, can be summed up with just two words: **Live Wisely**. He opened our text with these words, **"Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise" (v. 15)**. What does he mean by this? How do we make this one life we've been given "count"—I mean *really* "count"? How can we truly **Live Wisely**?

Paul in our text lists three very simple, yet profound things we should be doing if we are truly going to **Live Wisely**. First, he tells us to **"[make] the most of every opportunity" (v. 16)**. If we want to make our life "count" we need to make the time we've been given "count." Benjamin Franklin once said, "Don't waste time; it is the stuff of which life is made." King David once wrote in **Psalm 39:4, "Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life."** Moses wrote in **Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom."**

Time is one of the greatest gifts God gives to us. You and I and every other person born into this world has a limited amount of time in this life, and no matter how many years you live it goes by very fast! All of us get the same number of hours to use each day, the same number of moments to make the most of. Once they are gone you can never get them back. What's the best way to make use of God's great gift of time and **"make the most of every opportunity"** we are given in this life? Look again at Paul's words in **v. 16** of our text, **"[make] the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."** The **"opportunities"** Paul is speaking of here are first and foremost the **"opportunities"** God gives us in our lives to **"let our light shine" (Matthew 5:16)** in these increasingly evil and dark days. This would include everything from serving God by serving our fellow man to sharing the Good News about our Savior, Jesus with others who may not yet know Jesus. Paul once wrote in his letter to the Colossians, **"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:5-6).**

God will give you—and has given you—many of these types of “**opportunities**” to let your faith and love for Christ shine through your actions and your words. Watch out for them. Make the most of every one of them that the Lord puts in your path.

Let’s not forget one other great use of our time. If we are seeking to truly **Live Wisely** and make the most of every opportunity then ask God for help! Our Scripture reading from the Book of James reminded us to pray to God for wisdom, “**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him**” (James 1:5).

The other two sets of instructions Paul gives us in our text as to how we can truly **Live Wisely** also relate to “**making the most of every opportunity**” and making the best use of the time God has given us. Paul reminds us that we are not only to be concerned with the souls of others by witnessing the Good News of the Gospel of Christ to them, but also we are to “**make the most of every opportunity**” to further our own spiritual growth. Paul tells us in v. 17 of our text to “**understand what the Lord’s will is.**” How do we find out “**what the Lord’s will is**”? Well, we listen to what He says! You can’t know what God’s will is, what He wants us to do and doesn’t want us to do if you never read or hear what He says to you in His Word! Read His Word for yourself! That is a great use of the time we have been given! Not only is God’s Word filled with instructions as to how you and I can truly **Live Wisely**, it is also filled with many comforting and powerful promises which He gives to each one of us to help us in this life and to help focus our hearts and minds on the eternal life in heaven He has prepared for us!

Thirdly, Paul reminds us in our text that if we are to truly **Live Wisely** we need to “**be filled with the Spirit**” (v. 19). We are “**filled with the Spirit**,” of course, when we do what we just mentioned: Read and hear God’s Word. That is how the Spirit came into your heart and mine to create and strengthen our faith. But our text also reminds us what we will do once we are “**filled with the Spirit.**” He reminds us to do some of the very things we are doing today, “**Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (v. 19-20). In other words, in order to be continually encouraged (and encouraging), in order to continue to “**be filled with the Spirit**” we need to continue to gather together for worship and praise; for fellowship and the sharing of our faith and love; and for instruction and sharing in the Word of God. There is a great passage in Hebrews that encourages much the same thing, “**And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching**” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

You and I have approximately 780 minutes left before this day officially ends, or approximately 46,800 seconds (moments) left in this day [or for our East Bay service: 600 minutes, or 36,000 seconds left]. Lord willing, we will all have 10,080 minutes, or 604,800 seconds (moments) in this coming week. Are we going to use those moments and those days to **Live Wisely**? Or are we going to waste them by living “**foolishly**” in “**drunkenness**” and “**debauchery**” (literally: “*reckless immoral behavior*”) as Paul warns against in our text. Not only will that kind of “**foolish living**” damage—and possibly *destroy*—our minds, bodies, and souls; think of how it completely destroys our Christian witness to others and ruins all those opportunities God gives us to serve Him and share the life-saving Gospel message of Jesus Christ! Jesus has given us purpose and meaning to the moments He has given us. He has given us reason to “**Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything**” (v. 19-20). By His cross He has washed away all the times we have wasted the “**opportunities**” He has given us in this life. By His resurrection He has given us the strength to live a “**new life**” (Romans 6:4) and to make use of the “**opportunities**” He will give us in this life. Most of all, His death and resurrection assure us that we will live forever with Him in heaven and have limitless “**opportunities**” to thank and praise Him! Live in Jesus; live for Jesus; live thankfully to Jesus and you will truly **Live Wisely!** Amen.