

WALK YOUR TALK! EPHESIANS 5:15-20 SERMON

Do you like to take walks? I do! Sally and I try and take walks several times a week. We have a regular route that we take through our neighborhood and then on to one of the Jacksonville Woodland trails.

Some famous historical figures walked a lot. Samuel Johnson, the great English author, walked the muddy road between Litchfield and Birmingham every day, a distance of some 32 miles! The German philosopher Immanuel Kant's daily walk was so consistent that merchants would set their clocks according to his routine! Charles Dickens walked through London day and night. Thomas Jefferson loved walking!

Last Sunday, Dustin Thompson, our Youth Director preached from the early verses of Ephesians, chapter 5. Dustin emphasized that we should walk as children of light, as Paul teaches in vs. 8 of chapter 5. Paul also mentioned walking in love in 5:2.

The word for "walk" in the original text can be translated either "walk" or "live". The word means literally "to walk around". It indicates movement, activity, liveliness. The word for "walk" or "live" conveys two basic ideas: first, the idea of *behavior*. It refers to how we behave, how we choose to live our lives. Second, it conveys the idea of *progress*, such as walking from one point to another. Obviously, walking can physically take you from one point to another but the word also means helping us progress in our personal development such as our mental, emotional or spiritual progress. Many times I have started a walk steeped in stress over a problem that seems daunting and overwhelming but by the end of my walk I've seen a greater vision and picture of a positive way to handle the problem. The walk has stimulated a new perspective towards tackling the seemingly enormous problem.

Today, in **vs.15**, our key verse, Paul teaches us, **"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise"**. Remember, Paul's addressing this letter to believers in Ephesus so he's encouraging them and he's encouraging us to walk or live as wise people or wise Christians. I express it this way on your sermon outline: **live as a wise Christian! Live as a wise Christian!**

Over my long ministry in this church God has sent me very wise, mature Christian leaders to help me with some key decisions that had to be made in the life of the church. In my early years John Gates would often provide counsel when I consulted him for questions and issues that had to be resolved. Later, Mary Ann Byrne, Cal Pipal and Jim Wolfe provided great wisdom and counsel. I remember sitting up on the 10th floor of the Rogue Valley Manor one day about ten years ago with Jim Wolfe. I consulted him during the time that our church was considering leaving our previous denomination and moving into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. We discussed the reasons for the potential move and the possibly divisive, church issues involved. After we finished Jim said to me, "Larry, it sounds like the elders want to pursue this and I have two words for you, "go slow". Then, Jim repeated it for emphasis, "go slow" meaning that we should go slowly with the anticipated move.

I heeded Jim's sage advice. We started the process of leaving our previous denomination in 2008 and we didn't become a full member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church until February, 2011. It took us nearly three years to make the switch! But, going slow with the process allowed us the opportunity to have many meetings in which we explained our reasons for leaving to the congregation. Because we went slowly with the process, our congregational vote to leave the PCUSA only had *one* negative vote! The congregational vote was nearly unanimous!

Jim had given me and our elders great wisdom! Jim lives as a wise Christian and his example and the text encourages all of us to do likewise! Listen to this: just because you have been a Christian for a long time doesn't necessarily mean that you have become a *wise* Christian!

The Apostle Paul gives us some help with developing wisdom; how we can become more wise Christians. Paul teaches us that wise Christians:

1. Use their time effectively. Paul begins this section encouraging us to live as wise Christians in vs. 15 and then he says in the next verse, vs. 16, **“making the best use of the time, because the days are evil”**.

The wise person realizes that time is a gift from God. God wants us, He expects us to use His gifts in a careful, prudent, effective way. We must be good stewards of all the good gifts God gives us, including time! Wise people use their time carefully and effectively; they use every opportunity for God and His glory.

Do you use your time effectively? Do you use it wisely? Paul's directive concerns moderation and balance. Using time effectively includes taking time each day for God; to spend time with Him in prayer and Bible study. Using time effectively means taking time for our families, giving our loved ones attention and our presence. Using time effectively means taking adequate time for exercise, rest, recreation, for eating properly and treating our bodies with respect and dignity. God wants us to balance time with God, our work, our family and ourselves.

So, what or whom gets neglected in your life? Is it time for your spouse or your kids or yourself? For many of us our work or our favorite hobbies have become our idols. We eat, breathe, sleep work or our favorite hobby. If you have a tendency to let your work dominate your life, consider this: I have never, ever heard someone tell me when they are dying that they wished they could have worked more. The fact of the matter is, wise people balance their use of time! ***Wise people use their time effectively!!***

I hate to waste time! I love being able to shop online with Amazon Prime It really reduces my need to go to a store and look for a particular product. There are some products that I still must go out and look for, such as shoes. But, I can shop for most products online and it has really cut down on shopping time, which I consider to be a poor use of time!

Many years ago, we took our two girls on a trip to Seattle. Our son had already left home and joined the Army. So, I was outnumbered by the females in our house, 3-1. One day we spent the entire day shopping in downtown Seattle at Old Navy, the Nordstrom Rack, REI, Pike's Place and my legs were tired, by brain frazzled and we returned to the little house we stayed in at Seattle Pacific University. Right after we collapsed from our exhausting shopping trip, Courtney turned on the television. Guess what show was on? The Shopping Network! I about died! After I groaned, Christy turned the channel to CNN Headline News and they were doing a story on Old Navy. I couldn't get away from it!! Guys, give me a little love!!

Some of you have asked me what I will be doing when I retire. Let me assure I will *not* be shopping! I am praying for the Lord's wisdom in the use of my time in retirement. I have several ministry opportunities that I will be pursuing and I will be swimming with the local Master's swim program. Master's swimming is competitive swimming for old people. I have not swam competitively in 45 years so it will be quite a challenge! We'll see what happens!

Remember, wise Christians **use their time effectively**. I challenge you to look at your schedule carefully. Do you take time for God, your family, your work and yourself? Strive for balance in using time effectively!!

2. Avoid foolish behavior. Wise Christians avoid foolish behavior!! Paul connects being foolish with getting drunk. Wise Christians strive for moderation when they drink alcoholic beverages. This helps us avoid foolish behavior. Look in the text in vs.17-18, **“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the Spirit”**.

Note Paul’s method. First, he mentions what we *shouldn’t do* or be and then he tells us what we *should do* or be. He states, “do not be foolish”, then he emphasizes the positive rejoinder, “but understand what the will of the Lord is”. Again, the negative counsel, “do not get drunk with wine” and then the positive, “but be filled with the Spirit”, meaning the Holy Spirit.

Consider the idea of being foolish. Paul tells us *not* to be foolish! Greek writers would often use the word for “fool” to describe an inert object or statute. Remember, statutes exist as immovable, fixed forms. Used in this way, Paul means that the real fool fails to move in a wise direction, in the direction of discerning God’s will for their life. *Rather, he or she remains immovable, or stuck in their own foolish way of doing things.*

Rather than being foolish Paul instructs us to **“understand what the will of the Lord is”**. Clearly, Paul draws a contrast. The fool doesn’t understand what the will of the Lord is and doesn’t care. The wise Christian seeks to understand what the Lord wants. We should strive to understand God’s will through prayer, surrender of our own selfish will, the counsel of mature Christian believers, the worship of God and common sense.

How easy it is to profess faith in Christ as our Savior and Lord but block Him or prevent Him from entering the decision making and behavioral aspects of our lives! Listen carefully: *God cares more about your transformation as a believer in Christ than about the information you have received about your faith!*

You could have your Bible entirely memorized but if that information in your head hasn’t transformed you, your behavior, your choices, your relationships, the way you use your time, money and spiritual gifts, then what good does having all that information in your head really do? Paul wrote to Timothy about the scripture, **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be equipped for every good work”**. (2 Tim 3:16-17) Much of the focus of Paul’s instruction to Timothy concerns transformation: listen to transformation words and phrases: “reproof,” “correction”, “training in righteousness”, “equipped for every good work”.

The wise Christian avoids foolish behavior! This means that the wise Christian doesn’t get “drunk with wine for that is debauchery”. The word in the original text for “debauchery” has sexual connotations; it means extreme indulgence in sensuality. Peter connects drinking with debauchery in his first letter. He wrote in **1 Peter 4:3 “For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery and they malign you”**. Wise Christians avoid foolish behavior by drinking in moderation or not drinking alcoholic beverages entirely.

Drinking in moderation means being aware of and sticking to your own limits when it comes to the consumption of alcohol. Some people simply cannot drink alcoholic beverages. I have a good friend who cannot drink alcohol and he doesn’t avoid it because of addiction. His body simply can’t tolerate it. Of course, others simply don’t want to drink alcoholic beverages. So, be aware of your own limits and tolerance.

Paul proceeds to advise that we should be “filled with the Spirit” and this admonition brings us to our last point about living as a wise Christian.

3. Live everyday in the fullness of the Holy Spirit! Look in vs.18b-21 “**but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ**”.

I have two glasses of water in front with me on the podium. The first glass of water is half full; the other glass is completely full of water. Imagine the Holy Spirit being like the water in the two glasses and the glasses representing my life.

Notice that when I move the first glass of water the one that’s half full, I can move it around easily without losing any of the water. It’s manageable, fairly predictable and there’s definitely room for something else in the glass!

The second glass is full of water. I have to be careful moving this full glass of water because it’s so full I might spill some of the water.

The Bible teaches that when we invite Jesus Christ into our lives as our Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit enters our lives and takes up residence. He lives within us!

When it comes to the Spirit’s *activity* in our lives, most of us live like the first glass of water, the one that’s half-full. The Holy Spirit exists in our lives but not in His fullness!! Many of us strive to keep the Holy Spirit at a manageable, fairly predictable level in our lives. Many times we forget that He’s even in our lives!! We want to leave plenty of room for ourselves so we can really live the Christian life on our own terms.

But the Christian life should be lived in the *fullness of the Spirit*, like the second glass of water. This glass has so much water in it that we have to be careful moving it around because it might spill! When the Holy Spirit occupies our lives in a full and complete way, He easily spills over into our choices, relationships, and the way we live our lives. With the Holy Spirit’s full presence, it’s hard to contain our joy, enthusiasm and love for God! It spills over all the time! Our lives *overflow* with joy, gratitude and praise! As Paul wrote in vs.20, “**giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ**”. When joy and love for God spill over in our lives, they spill over in such a powerful and compelling way that people notice a difference in our lives. Both Christians and non-Christians notice the transformation. People think: “Bill, or Justin or Naomi or Sue, she really *lives* like a Christian!” When we live in the fullness of the Spirit, our lives overflow with the fruit of the Holy Spirit in a very powerful way!!

Let me challenge you to live with your glass full not half-full! Live every day in the fullness of the Holy Spirit!! Ask the Holy Spirit every day to fill you with His wonderful, powerful presence!!

We’ve learned this morning that God wants every one of us who claim to be Christians to live as wise Christians. Living as a wise Christian involves using our time effectively, avoiding foolish behavior and living every day, every single day in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord help us heed his counsel today, to strive to live as wise Christians! Let us pray.