

*Walking As Wise*  
*Ephesians 5:15-17*  
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**INTRODUCTION**

1. I would like to invite you to take God's Word and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5.
2. We are looking tonight at verses 15-17 as we hear Paul's exhortation to wise living.
3. Read Ephesians 5:15-17
4. The Bible has much to say about wisdom.
5. In fact, the word "wisdom" occurs 228 times in the Bible.
6. In a few of those listings we hear things like Ps.37:30-31 which says, "The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, And his tongue speaks justice. 31 The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip."
7. We hear in Ps.111:10 that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" or in Prov.1:7 it being the "beginning of knowledge."
8. We also hear sections of Scripture like Proverbs chapter 2 which is devoted to the subject of wisdom (read).
9. It is clear that God desires His people to live wisely and that is Paul's point in the passage we're considering tonight.
10. In our last couple of times together, we heard Paul exhorting the Ephesians to be imitators of God by walking in love (5:2),

light (5:8) and now wisdom (5:15).

11. The wisest man who ever lived gave this advice at the end of his life when he said in Ecclesiastes 12:13, “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.”
12. How you live is Paul’s concern.
13. He wants you to please God in all you do.
14. According to verses 15-16, he wants you to *be careful how you live*.
15. Notice again what he says in verse 15: “Therefore be careful how you walk.”
16. In other words, *scrutinize your life*.

## I. Be Careful How You Live (vv.15-16)

“Therefore be careful how you walk.”

### A. Scrutinize Your Life

The word “be” (blepo) means to “look or observe.” It is translated “beware” in Philippians 3:2.

Paul wants the Ephesians to “see that they walk carefully.” This is based on what he has just been teaching as indicated by the use of the word “therefore.”

He refers them back to his call for them to “walk as those who have been raised from the dead and are living in Christ’s light (v.14). It also reaches ever further back to build up his call for believers to be imitators of their heavenly Father (5:1)” (John MacArthur, Ephesians, 217).

The word “walk” (peripateo (pres.act.ind.) has already occurred in this letter in 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8 and Paul uses it again to refer to their manner of living.

They are to order their life or behavior in a manner that is “worthy of the calling with which [they] have been called” (4:1). To do that they must walk “carefully.”

The word “carefully” (akribos) basically means to be accurate or exact. It carries “the associated idea of looking, examining, and investigating something with great care. It also carries the idea of alertness” (MacArthur, 219). It is translated “circumspectly” in the AV.

Paul’s charge then is for the Ephesians to make sure they

are walking “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:2-3).

In other words...

1. They are to make sure they are no longer walking “just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind” (4:17) because they “did not learn Christ in this way” (4:20).
2. They are to make sure they are walking in “the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (4:24).
3. Therefore to walk in this manner, it will manifest how they treat one another.

They change from speaking falsehood to speaking truth (4:27). They change from stealing to sharing (4:28). They change from unwholesome words to edifying words (4:29). They change from “bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander” (4:31) to being “kind...tenderhearted...[and] forgiving” (4:32).

4. They “walk in love” and thanksgiving (5:6) not in “immorality...impurity...greed...filthiness...silly talk, or coarse jesting” (5:2-4).
5. They do not listen to those who do not listen to God’s Word but rather they “expose” their “unfruitful deeds of darkness” (5:11).

Being careful how you live involves scrutinizing your

life in such a way as to see if you're living in this manner.

It's what David said in Psalm 139:24-25, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting" (NKJV).

B. Walk as Wise (v.15b)

"Walk, not as unwise men but as wise."

1. Unwise men walk in sin

- a) They live in  
"immorality...impurity...greed...filthiness...silly talk, [and] coarse jesting" (5:2-4).
- b) They, according to Romans 1:28-31, do not  
"see fit to acknowledge God...[They are] filled with unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, [and] unmerciful."
- c) They, according to Ps.14:1 are unbelieving, corrupt and unable to do what is right  
  
"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good."
- d) They also give hearty approval to those who

live in this way and mock the judgment of God

Romans 1:32 says, “And, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, ***but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.***”

2. Wise men walk in wisdom

a) They hear and increase in learning

Prov.1:5 says, “A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.”

b) They receive God’s commands and not reject them

Prov.10:8 says, “The wise of heart will receive commands.”

c) They are cautious and sensitive to their sin

Prov.14:16 says, “A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil.”

d) They “fear the Lord”

Prov.8:13 says, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate.”

3. At salvation every believer has been made “wise”

a) Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim.3:15, “And that

from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the *wisdom* that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

- b) Jesus, according to 1 Cor.1:30, “became to us *wisdom* from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.
4. The moment we were saved we were immediately made righteous, sanctified, redeemed, and wise and because of that we have been rendered responsible for our behavior.
- a) Therefore, we are to grow in what we have already been given in fullness. We are to grow practically in what we already possess positionally.

Even Jesus “kept increasing in wisdom” (Luke 2:52), and some believers in the Jerusalem church were “full of...wisdom” (Acts 6:3).

- b) James said in James 1:5, “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”
- c) Paul prayed in Col.1:9 that the Colossians would “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”
- d) He also charged the Colossians in Colossians 3:16 to “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and

hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

“When Christians sin and fall into Satan’s traps, they do so because they live as unwise men, rather than as wise. The revert to following the wisdom of their old lives, which was really foolishness. ‘For we also once were foolish ourselves,’ Paul said, ‘disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another’ (Titus 3:3).

That is the kind of living from which God’s wisdom is to separate us...Our change in relationship to God is meant to bring a change in daily living” (MacArthur, 219-20).

Anytime we do not believe God fully or when we are disobedient or put our hearts on the wrong things, we are living as unwise men. In other words we are being foolish.

John MacArthur says, “It is tragic that so many Christians foolishly do not take God at His word in everything He says, do not obey Him in everything He commands, and desire so many things that He warns against. There is no excuse for Christians to live foolishly when God’s wisdom belongs to them” (220).

### C. Walk Responsibly (v.16)

#### 1. Take advantage of opportunity

Paul says in verse 16, “Making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”



- a) “Making the most of” (exogorazo) means to “redeem—to buy up.” “In the middle voice, as it is used here, it means ‘to buy up for one’s own self or one’s advantage.’ Metaphorically, it means, ‘to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good’” (Kenneth Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek NT, 126).

“We are to redeem, buy up all the time that we have and devote it to the Lord” (MacArthur, 222).

Paul told the Galatians in Galatians 6:10, “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

- b) “Time” is not chronos but kairos, “opportunity” (Fritz Rienecker, The Linguistic Key to the Greek NT, 221).

It is “time as regarded in its strategic, epoch-making, seasonable, opportune seasons. The idea is not to make best use of time as such, which is what we should do in the sense of not wasting it, but of taking advantage of the opportunities that present themselves” (Wuest).

“As believers we can achieve our potential in His service only as we maximize the time He has given us...Outside of purposeful disobedience of God’s Word, the most spiritually foolish thing a Christian can do is to waste time and opportunity, to fritter away his life in trivia and in half-hearted service to the Lord” (MacArthur, 222).

Napoleon said, “There is in the midst of every great battle ten to fifteen minute period that is the crucial point. Take that period and you win the battle; lost it and you will be defeated.”

- (1) Moses said in Ps.90:12, “So teach us to number our days, That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.”
- (2) Jesus said in John 9:4, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work.”
- (3) Paul told the Colossians in Colossians 4:5, “ Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.”
- (4) In the words of 1 Cor.15:58 we are to be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”

2. The reason is clear

“The days are evil.”

The word “evil” (poneros) means, “evil in active opposition to good, pernicious” (Wuest).

Paul may have had in mind here the “corrupt and debauched living that characterized the city of Ephesus. The Christians there were surrounded by paganism and infiltrated by heresy. Greediness, dishonesty, and immorality were a way of life in

Ephesus, a way in which most of the believers had themselves once been involved and to which they were tempted to revert (4:19-32; 5:3-8)”  
(MacArthur, 224).

## II. Understand God’s Will (v.17)

“So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

### A. Do Not Be Foolish

Paul is reinforcing his previous plea to not be unwise.

The word for “foolish” (aphron) means “without understanding, senseless” (Rienecker), “stupid” (Wuest). “The word refers to imprudence or folly in action” (Rienecker).

“The unwise believer who behaves in a foolish manner tries to function apart from God’s will, and is inevitably weak, frustrated, and ineffective, both in his personal life and in his work for God” (MacArthur, 226).

Understanding that the days are evil and the times are urgent, this drives the wise believer to *understand what the will of the Lord is*.

### B. Understand God’s Will

What is God’s will? According to what Paul has told the Ephesians so far and through to the end of the letter concerning God’s will is that you...

1. God’s will is that you “be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” (3:16).

2. God's will is that you be "rooted and grounded in love" and that you "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God" (3:17-19).
3. God's will is that you "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1-3).
4. God's will is that you be equipped "for the work of service" (4:12).
5. God's will is that you be built up and "attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (4:13).
6. God's will is that you "no longer...be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (4:14).
7. God's will is that you speak "the truth in love" (4:15).
8. God's will is that you "grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ" (4:15).
9. God's will is that you do your "part" which will then cause "growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (4:16).

10. God's will is that you "walk no longer just as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding" (4:17-18).
11. God's will is that "you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (4:22).
12. God's will is that you "be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (4:23).
13. God's will is that you "put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (4:24).
14. God's will is that you lay "aside falsehood" and "speak truth each one of you with his neighbor" (4:25).
15. God's will is that you "be angry, and yet do not sin" (4:26).
16. God's will is that you "steal no longer; but rather...labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need" (4:28).
17. God's will is "no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification" (4:29).
18. God's will is that you "not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (4:30).
19. God's will is that you "let all bitterness and wrath

and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (4:31).

20. God’s will is that you imitate God by being “kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (4:32).
21. God’s will is that you “walk in love, just as Christ also loved you” (5:2).
22. God’s will is that no “immorality or any impurity or greed...be named among you” (5:3) as well as any “filthiness and silly talk, or coast jesting” (5:4).
23. God’s will is that you give “thanks” (5:4).
24. God’s will is that you not listen to those who say God will not judge those who practice immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness, silly talk, or coarse jesting” (5:6).
25. God’s will is that you not “be partakers with them” in these things because you “were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light” (5:7-8).
26. God’s will is that you “do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (5:11).
27. God’s will is that you “be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time” (5:15-16).
28. God’s will is that you “understand what the will of the Lord is” (5:17).

29. God's will is that you "not get drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit" (5:18).
30. God's will is that you speak "to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (5:19).
31. God's will is that you "always [give] thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God" (5:20).
32. God's will is that you "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (5:21).
33. God's will is that "wives...[submit] to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (5:22).
34. God's will is that "husbands, love your wives as their own bodies" (5:25, 28).
35. God's will is "the wife must see to it that she respects her husband" (5:33).
36. God's will is for "children" to "obey [their] parents in the Lord" (6:1).
37. God's will is that children "honor your father and mother" (6:2).
38. God's will is that "father...not provoke [their] children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (6:4).
39. God's will is that "slaves be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to

Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (6:5-6).

40. God’s will is that “masters do the same things to” their slaves “and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him” (6:9).
41. God’s will is that you “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (6:10).
42. God’s will is that you “put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (6:11).
43. God’s will is that you “take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm” (6:13).
44. God’s will is that you “pray at all times in the Spirit” and “be alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” (6:18).
45. God’s will is that you “love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love” (6:24).

As demonstrated by what we have looked at in the book of Ephesians concerning God’s will, the place to go to find His will is in the Scriptures.

It is here where we find His perfect and sufficient guidelines for knowing and doing what is pleasing to Him.



John MacArthur rightly says, “When our priorities are God’s priorities, He is free to work in us and through us to accomplish great things; but when our priorities are not His priorities He can do little with us because He has little of us” (226).

## CONCLUSION

1. How much of you does He have tonight?
2. Are you being careful how you live your life?
3. Are you walking in wisdom or living foolishly by constantly falling into sin?
4. Understand what the will of the Lord is!
5. Go back over these 45 truths that are His will for your life and walk as wise.
6. As I mentioned earlier, when God saves you, you get the wisdom of God.
7. If you’re not saved, I want to call you to repent of your sin and turn to Jesus Christ who alone can save you.
8. Let’s pray.