

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

T H E B O O K O F

EPHESIANS

How to live the Christian life

EPHESIANS: HOW TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – PART 35

Walking Wisely / Ephesians 5:15-17

*“¹Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ²And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. ³But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them. ⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. ¹⁴Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.” -Ephesians 5:1-14 (NKJV) *focus vv.7-14*

“¹⁵See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” -Ephesians 5:15-17 (NKJV)

KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR EPHESIANS

To gain a better understanding of the Book of Ephesians, consider the following background information:

1. **Authorship: The Apostle Paul** - Traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul.
 2. **Date of Writing: A.D. 60-63** - Likely written around A.D. 60-63 during Paul's Roman imprisonment.
 3. **Place of writing: Rome** – Paul wrote the book/letter of Ephesians from a Roman prison
 4. **Audience: Ephesian Christians at Ephesus and surrounding area** Addressed to the Christian community in Ephesus, a major city in Asia Minor. Ephesians is considered a “circular letter” meant to be circulated to church in the area of Ephesus... possibly the same 7 churches
 5. **Purpose: How to live the Christian life** To strengthen the faith of believers and address issues of unity and spiritual maturity.
 6. **Themes: Grace, the church, and holy living** - Key themes include grace, the church as the body of Christ, and the importance of living a holy life.
 7. **Structure: Ephesus is divided into two main sections** - Divided into two main sections: doctrinal teachings (chapters 1-3) and practical applications (chapters 4-6).
 8. **Cultural Context: Ephesus was center of commerce and religion** - Ephesus was a center of commerce and religion, known for the Temple of Artemis.
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Application Questions

1. **Does your concept of being godly include being a person of godly purpose? Should it? What does this mean?**
2. **How can a person inclined to living impulsively by his feelings develop self-discipline? What steps should he take?**
3. **What is the difference between being self-disciplined and being legalistic? What warning signs should a person watch for?**
4. **Of the opportunities listed (under Point 3), which one or two should be at the top of your priority list?**

In warning us of the persecutions and attacks on the Christian faith we would endure in the last days (the day we are now living) Jesus said...

“¹⁶ Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” -Matthew 10:16

Some questions to ponder:

1. ***What do you think Jesus meant when he said he was sending us out as sheep in the midst of wolves?***

2. *In what way are we like sheep? And in what way is the world, the flesh and the devil live wolves? What is the danger to sheep among wolves? How real a threat is the world, the flesh and the devil to our lives as believers in what ways?*
3. *What do you think Jesus meant when he said we, as believers/Christians, were to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves? How might this help us to navigate the world as wolves?*
4. *Why do you think this statement by Jesus sounds strange to us?*
5. *How is a serpent wise and in what ways should be as believers be like one? How do we balance being wise as a serpent with being harmless as a dove, and why might this be important for our lives as believers?*

Jesus speaks of the times in which we are living as living as sheep among wolves. Jesus was using similes (figures of speech that compare two unlike things) to instruct His followers in how to behave/live/walk in their lives as believers. Just before He tells them to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, He warns them that they were being sent out “like sheep among wolves.”

The world, then as now, was hostile to believers—not *incidentally* (parenthetically, accidentally) hostile, but *purposefully* (*on purpose*) hostile.

- Wolves are intentional about the harm they inflict upon sheep.
- In such an environment, the question becomes: “How can we advance the kingdom of God effectively without becoming predatory ourselves?”
- Jesus taught His followers that, to be Christlike in a godless world, they must combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove.
- In using these similes, Jesus invokes the common proverbial view of serpents and doves.
- The serpent was “subtle” or “crafty” or “shrewd” in Genesis 3:1.
- The dove, on the other hand, was thought of as innocent and harmless—doves were listed among the “clean animals” and were used for sacrifices (Leviticus 14:22).
- To this very day, doves are used as symbols of peace, and snakes are thought of as “sneaky.”
- We need not look far or hard for an accurate analysis of the world in which we live.

The Bible is timeless and actually tell us clearly what the world we live in is like **(READ: 2 Timothy 3:1-6)**

*¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”
-2 Timothy 3:1-6 (NJKV)*

Again, the phrase “last days” refers to this age, the time since the first coming of the Lord Jesus. The phrase “terrible times” (or “perilous times” in the NKJV) is interesting. The same Greek word used here and translated as “terrible” is used to describe the savage nature of 2 demon possessed men in Matthew 8:28. And the words “times” had to do with epochs, rather than clock or calendar time. Such savage, dangerous eras or epochs will increase in frequency and severity as the return of Christ approaches. The church age in which we are in is fraught with these dangerous movements accumulating strength as the end nears. In other words we should not be surprised by the things we see happening in our day. Others may scratch their head and wonder why we such mind-boggling violence, brutality, abuse, moral corruption and depravity, but Paul told us we would live in “perilous times.” Then Paul launches into this list of attributes characterizing and describing those in this world during these terrible last day times.

Here we find that Paul’s assessment, not unlike our passage in Ephesians 5) fits our times almost like he was looking through a time machine window and reading our day. We could perhaps more easily summarize Paul’s description in three words... these are three words that very much give us a dose of reality to the times... the tough times we live in today.

Some Words that Characterize Paul’s Description of His Day and Ours: (in 2 Timothy 3:1-9)

1. **Perilous** (v. 1) – We are told that “*perilous times will come*” (“terrible” in NIV, “perilous” in the KJV & NKJV, “difficult” in LB & NLT). Some scholars have translated this word as “terrible” or “perilous.” The Greek root word from which this term comes means “grievous, harsh, fierce, savage.” It’s used only one other time in the New Testament – in Matthew 8:28. There we read of two demon-possessed men whose consequent behavior was “exceedingly violent.” That’s an excellent description of our world – violent, harsh, perilous, difficult. **Present day illustration:** *Can you cite any present day examples of the perilous times we live in!*
2. **Ungodly** (vv.2-5) - *Can you cite any present day examples of the ungodly times we live in!*
3. **Depraved** (vv. 6-9) – Here Paul cites two men from Moses’ day as prime examples of man’s ungodly state apart from salvation. Paul describes them as having a “depraved mind” – that is – as possessing a corrupted or ruined understanding of the truth. (How do we get a “ruined” understanding of truth?) A world such as ours which is filled with people like those is indeed a difficult place in which to live. **Present day illustration:** *Can you cite any present day examples of the depraved times we live in!*

An Important Question: *How do you walk wisely as a Christian/believer in our world today?*

Biblical Advice on Walking Wisely: *Pair up into groups of 2-3. Ready the assigned verse and come with a principle for how to practically walk in wisdom based on your verse/*

- (1) **Proverbs 29:11** – *“A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (2) **James 3:17** – *“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (3) **Matthew 7:24** – *“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (4) **Proverbs 12:15** - *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (5) **Proverbs 1:7** – *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (6) **Proverbs 11:2** – *“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (7) **James 3:13** - *“Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (8) **Psalm 19:7** - *“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (9) **Proverbs 1:5** - *“Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**
- (10) **Colossians 4:5-6** - *“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”* **What does this say about how to walk wisely?**

(*Christianity Today* [Oct., 2006], p. 90.) **Billy Graham** lived a relatively long life... he died at 99 almost 100, but he still felt the sting of life’s shortness. He said, *“The older you get, the more you think about using your time wisely in light of eternity.”*

It seems the older we get the more we try to evaluate what really matters. Think of Moses...

- Moses must have been feeling this when he wrote Psalm 90.
- He had spent his first 40 years as a son of Pharaoh’s daughter, living in the comfort of the palace.
- He spent his next 40 years as a fugitive shepherd, wandering around the Sinai Peninsula.
- He spent the last 40 years of his long life leading a rebellious bunch of Israelis out of slavery in Egypt, but not quite into the Promised Land.
- As they were camped somewhere in the wilderness, shy of that goal, he wrote Psalm 90, reflecting on the brevity of life and the severity of God’s judgment.
- In **Psalm 90:12** he prayed, *“So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.”*

- He concluded the Psalm with the prayer in Psalm 90:17, *“Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands.”*
- The poignant repetition of his final plea shows that even Moses was afraid that his life’s work would amount to nothing, unless God confirmed it, or [NASB margin] gave permanence to it.

Our text tells us how to walk wisely, so that we make the precious years that God allots to us count for His purpose and glory. There is a paradox in that God is the sovereign over time. He has a divine will (5:17) and He *“works all things after the counsel of His will”* (Eph. 1:11). And yet at the same time, He allots time to us to use responsibly to bring about His sovereign will. We must walk carefully and redeem the time that He gives us (Eph. 5:15-16). To make your life count for eternity, you must give careful thought to how you spend your time.

When we think about being godly, we probably think about holiness in the moral realm. **But do we think about being people of godly purpose?** The fact that God is a God of purpose means that if we are to be like Him, we will be people of purpose in line with His purpose. Jesus lived to accomplish the Father’s purpose and knew that He had done so as His short life neared the end. Jesus, Himself, prayed in John 17:4, *“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”* Jesus knew the Father’s purpose and He lived according to it. To be like Jesus, we must follow His example by being people of godly purpose.

Paul wrote in Romans 8:28-29, *“²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

- *Based on these verses, what is God’s purpose for our lives?*
- *What does this say about walking wisely and how to walk wisely?*
- *How do we go about fulfilling this purpose?*

The apostle Paul was also a man of godly purpose...

5 Way Paul Exhibited Walking Wisely with Purpose in His Own Life:

(1) Paul lived to exalt Christ and to know Him - (Phil. 1:20-21; 3:8-16)

“²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” – **Philippians 1:20-21**

“⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus ¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.” - Philippians 3:8-16

(2) Paul purposed to preach the gospel to the lost and to disciple the saved (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Col. 1:27-28)

“²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize ^[b] is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” – 1 Corinthians 9:25-27

“²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” – Colossians 1:27-28

(3) Paul told believers like ourselves (Timothy) to discipline themselves for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7-8; see also, 2 Tim. 3:10)

“⁷ But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸ For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” -1 Timothy 4:7-8

“¹⁰ But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,” – 2 Timothy 3:10

(4) Paul faced persecution and even execution, and he knew that he had fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7)

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” -2 Timothy 4:7

(5) Paul showed other believers like us how to walk wisely, so that we make the most of our lives in light of God’s will, His plan for the ages (Eph. 5:17)

“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” – Ephesians 5:17

KEY THOUGHT: To walk wisely, you must know what God wants you to be, what dangers to avoid, and how to take advantage of the opportunities that God gives you.

Let’s look at these...

TO WALK WISELY, YOU MUST KNOW WHAT GOD WANTS YOU TO BE AND HOW TO GET THERE

Some popular TV preachers will tell you that God wants to help you fulfill your dreams. But that’s backwards, because it leaves you as the lord of your life and makes God your servant. The Bible is clear that God is the Sovereign and we are His servants. We exist to fulfill His will, not vice versa! So it is vital to know from Scripture, where does God want us to go with our lives? Much more could be said, but note these things:

2 Things God Wants You to Know:

(1) God wants you to know what He wants you to be –

What God Wants You to Be:

- 1. God wants you to please and glorify Him with your life** - As we saw in verse 10, we are “to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.” Colossians 1:10 says that we are “to please Him in all respects.” Paul said (2 Cor. 5:9) that his ambition was “to be pleasing to Him.” He wrote (1 Cor. 10:31), “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” As the Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” To glorify God, in simple terms, means to make Him look good, as He truly is. You extol, magnify, and exalt His person and attributes through praise, honor, thanksgiving, trust, and obedience. To do this requires a second goal:
- 2. God wants you to know Him more deeply** - You can only extol, magnify, exalt, and glorify God to the extent that you truly know Him as He has revealed Himself in His Word. Martyn Lloyd-Jones often lamented that our chief problem as believers today is that we do not know God as deeply as we ought. Paul said that he counted everything else in life as loss and rubbish in order that he might know Christ (Phil. 3:7-8). The only way that we can know Him is as He has revealed Himself in His Word. So as you read the Bible over and over, from cover to cover (not just your

favorite verses!), ask God to open your eyes so that you come to know Him more deeply. With Moses (Exod. 33:18), pray, “show me Your glory.”

3. **God wants you to be a godly person** - You can only glorify God to the extent that you display His holiness through your obedient life. As 1 Peter 1:14-16 puts it, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” Jesus said (Matt. 5:6), “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” To walk wisely, so that your life counts for eternity, ask God to give you that hunger and thirst after His righteousness. He promises that you will be blessed and satisfied when you pursue that course. Sin always brings pain and sorrow.
4. **God wants you to proclaim His excellencies by your life and words** - First Peter 2:9 says, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Or, as Paul has told us (Eph. 5:8), “you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.”

Thus God wants you to be growing in the direction of pleasing and glorifying Him with your life. You will do this as you come to know Him more deeply and grow in godly character. He wants to use your transformed life (from darkness to light) to display His excellencies, both by your behavior and your words as you bear witness to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- (2) **God want you to know how to get there** - Again, much more could be said, but note three things:

How Do You Get Where God Wants You to Be?

1. **You must discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness** - You can sit around wishing that you were godly for the next ten years, but it won’t happen! You must discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7). In all of my years of pastoral ministry, I would say that the presence or absence of self-discipline is one of the most determinative factors in whether a person will do well or have serious problems in his Christian life. Self-control or discipline is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Paul compares discipline for godliness with physical exercise and the analogy is helpful in thinking about how to do it. The athlete sets a goal and then works hard to reach that goal. By definition, self-discipline means going against your feelings for a higher goal. The athlete wants to win, so he works out every day and controls his diet even when he doesn’t feel like it, so that he might win the prize. Also, discipline is an ongoing process and not a quick fix. You must set aside all hindrances, keep your eye on the goal, and manage your time in line with your goal. Many Christians will hear this and say, “That sounds like legalism!” But it is not legalism if your motive is right. Sure, if your motive is to take pride in how spiritual you are because you had your

quiet time, you're being legalistic. But if your motive is to love and know God so that you might please Him because He saved you by His grace, that is not legalism. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit who is working in your life to make you godly.

2. **Godly discipline includes the disciplined intake and application of God's Word** - Paul says that we should walk as wise people, not as unwise. Proverbs 2:6 tells us where wisdom comes from: "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." He has given us His wisdom in the Bible and especially in the message of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18-25). To be a godly person who glorifies Him through your life, you must be getting a steady intake of His Word. As Psalm 1 pictures it, the godly man meditates on God's Word day and night, so that he is like a tree planted by a river. His deep roots sustain him in times of drought. You should have a plan to read constantly and consecutively from both the Old and New Testaments. I also try to read a daily portion from the Psalms or Proverbs. But note that I said, "the disciplined intake *and application* of God's Word." The bottom line for every portion of Scripture (even the genealogies!) is, "How should I then live?" How does this Scripture affect the way I should think, feel, behave, and relate to God and to others?
3. **You must learn to think biblically about all of life** - Walking wisely requires that you be a thinking person. But, not just thinking logically, but also thinking *biblically*. You should develop a biblical worldview, so that you filter news, movies, literature, moral issues, and all of life through a biblical grid. Both Francis Schaeffer and Martyn Lloyd-Jones did this well, and I commend their writings and their biographies to you.

Thus, to walk wisely, you must know where God wants you to go and how to get there. But there is another side to this:

TO WALK WISELY, YOU MUST KNOW WHAT DANGERS TO AVOID

Paul says that we are *not* to walk as unwise people, but as wise. We are to redeem the time, "*because the days are evil.*" He warns us *not* to be foolish, but to understand what the will of the Lord is. As we saw last week, the Lord's will involves His purpose for the ages to sum up all things in Jesus Christ. If we don't live in light of that purpose, we are foolish. Again, more could be said, but note three things that characterize unwise people:

3 Things That Characterize Unwise People:

- (1) **Unwise people are oblivious to the dangers that fill evil days** - Certainly, all times are evil because the world is under the dominion of the evil prince of darkness (Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19). But it seems that some times and places are more evil than others are. The world I grew up in was evil, but you could not see sex scenes or hear profanity on television or even at the movies. But now it's hard to find movies or even TV shows that are not filled with filth and profanity. This very day, our city is featuring a celebration of deviant sexual behaviors and lifestyles as if it were normal and wonderful! We live in

especially evil times! Psalm 1:1 says, *“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers.”*

Unwise people ignore such warnings and cavort with such people. Jesus said that we should pray that we not be led into temptation, but many believers play around with it as if it were a toy. In reality, it is a loaded gun.

- (2) **Unwise people adopt the world’s relative system of morals and values** - As I said a couple of weeks ago, when you’re around a bad odor for a while, your nose adjusts and it no longer smells so bad. When you’re in an evil day, if you aren’t careful, after a while you don’t even notice how rotten things have become. We may begin to tolerate, accept, adopt, conform to things in this world that are clearly condemned as sin just because... well, it’s become normal for our day, socially accepted and okay... Hey, everyone is doing it! We begin to look just like the world, except that we go to church occasionally. But Paul calls such behavior unwise and foolish.
- (3) **Unwise people live for temporal fulfillment and pleasure** - In the Bible (especially in Proverbs), fools live for immediate gratification according to their feelings, impulses, and desires. Fools, like the rich man building bigger barns to store his goods, don’t think about the fact that today could be their last and then they face God and judgment. Fools don’t think about storing up treasures in heaven. They are focused completely on the here and now. In short, they do not understand the will of the Lord.

The Bible warns us about these and many other dangers that can sabotage our walking wisely with the Lord. To walk wisely, you must know what God wants you to be and how to get there. And, you must avoid the spiritual dangers of this evil day. Finally...

TO WALK WISELY, YOU MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT GOD GIVES YOU

As we saw last time, *“making the most of your time”* is literally, *“redeeming the opportunity.”* The idea is, being alert to the spiritual opportunities that God brings your way, so that you grab them as a wise merchant grabs a bargain. The reason that you are alert to these opportunities is that you are living wisely, with a view to eternity and God’s kingdom. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:18, *“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

Here are a few of the opportunities that God will bring your way. If you’re wise, you’ll grab them:

Wise Opportunities to Take Advantage Of: (redeem the time to do and be a part of these things as a Christian)

- (1) **Bible intake**—Read through your Bible each year. Listen to the Bible on CD’s while you drive. Study the Word in a more in-depth fashion. Take advantage of the many fine

Bible teachers on the internet. Plug into our adult Sunday school or come on Sunday nights and interact on the sermon. The opportunities are abundant!

- (2) **Prayer**—Pray with your mate. Join a home fellowship. Join us on Sunday evenings for prayer. Form your own small group for prayer. Pray through our directory.
- (3) **Church**—I refer to Sunday’s sermon. Christian need the church and need to be in church. It is where we grow, and learn, and develop our walk and relationship with God. It is where we worship together and receive power and strength to walk wisely. You need to be in church... among the fellowship of other believers regularly, all the time, every time the doors are open. Go!
- (4) **Reading good Christian books**—Set a reading goal. I put on the church web site a bibliography for various areas of reading, plus another one for Christian biographies. If you’re currently reading no books per year, set a goal of two or three. If you meet that goal, up it to five or six. If you aim at nothing, you’re sure to hit it every time. So, aim at growing through reading.
- (5) **Discipleship**—Take a newer believer under wing and help him to grow to maturity. Get into a Forum of Four and after you’ve been through one or two cycles, lead your own group. It will stretch you to grow!
- (6) **Witnessing**—If you’ve never been trained in how to share your faith, go through the Evangelism Explosion or Way of the Master training that is offered here from time to time. Be ready to give a defense for the hope that is in you (1 Pet. 3:15). The jail ministry or the international student ministry can always use more workers.
- (7) **Sharing material blessings**—If you are not consistently, faithfully giving more than a tithe, you’re probably not being a good steward by laying up treasures in heaven. You should give enough that it crimps your lifestyle, where you have to ask God to provide the extras for you.
- (8) **Helping others in practical ways**—Take a meal to a family when the mom is in the hospital. Help an elderly person with yard cleanup or a ride. Cook or help clean up for the college ministry.
- (9) **Victory over sin**—You will face strong temptations to sin, which can either be a time of testing your faith, where you grow through victory; or a time of defeat. Be prepared, be armed, and grow through the testing.
- (10) **Suffering**—Suffering is an opportunity for ministry. As you trust in Christ and show His sufficiency through your trials, other believers will be strengthened and those who don’t know the Savior will be drawn to Him.

CONCLUSION

All of us want to make a difference. We want to make an impact while we can because no one lives forever. Life is so short. We are here today and gone tomorrow. We want to know our life counted for something. We want to be sure we didn’t waste it on things that don’t matter. We want to know that walked and that we are walking wisely

Here is what James actually said in James 3:13, *“Who is wise and has understanding among you? He should show his works by good conduct with wisdom’s gentleness.”* In just one verse, he gives us four keys to wise walking. So what does wisdom look like in real life? Here is the truth of this verse in one sentence... four keys to wise living according to James in James 3:13

4 Keys to Wise Living: (James 3:13)

- (1) **KEY #1: Have a seeking heart** – **“Who is wise . . . among you?”** Where does wisdom begin? Remember that wisdom is much more than the accumulation of knowledge. It’s more than reading books and attending classes. We all have known very smart people who wasted their life with foolish choices. Wisdom is not about the letters after your name. *The first step in acquiring wisdom is simply to desire it more than anything else.* Wisdom is free, but it will cost you all you have. Because it is supreme among the virtues, it cannot be had at a bargain basement price. You cannot become wise by accident. You must search after wisdom as if you were searching for silver or gold.
- (2) **KEY #2: Make smart choices** - **“Who . . . has understanding among you?”** The word “understanding” is used only here in the New Testament. It has the idea of being a specialist. No one become a specialist by accident. *I know of only two ways to become a “specialist” in the Christian life: people and pain.* We learn a great deal simply by hanging around with people who are wiser than we are. The other way to grow is through pain. *No one likes this, but no one is exempt from it either.* James has already said our trials produce perseverance that leads to spiritual growth so we lack nothing we need (1:2-4).
- (3) **KEY #3: Live a beautiful life** - **“He should show his works by good conduct.”** James chose a very important word to describe the third mark of a God-blessed life. Some translations talk about “good behavior,” which is fine but doesn’t quite get to the point. One translation calls it “noble conduct,” which gets closer. James used an adjective that means “beautiful.” It describes something pleasing to the eye. Applied to people it means “beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life.” Unbelievers watch us all the time Here is the principle: *Live so that even unbelievers are impressed by your behavior. Whether we know it or not, unbelievers watch us all the time.* They study us from a distance, and they pay attention to how we do things. People who don’t know Jesus are watching how you handle problems at work. They watch to see
- (4) **KEY #4: Have a gentle spirit** - **“He should show his works by . . . wisdom’s gentleness.”** Here is the final proof of a life filled with God’s wisdom. Such a person lives with gentleness. The Greek word used here is the same one Jesus used in the Third Beatitude: *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).*

While all of our times are in God’s hands (Ps. 31:15), He wants us to walk wisely, redeeming the time, in accordance with His sovereign will. No matter who you are, if you walk with Christ and grow wise through His Word, He can use you greatly for His eternal purpose.