

## “Spending Time Wisely”

*Ephesians 5:15-21*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • August 12, 2018

In the field of business and organizational management there is one man who is considered the most influential thinker and writer of the Twentieth Century. If you have ever studied or been involved in any kind of management or leadership then you will recognize the name of Peter Drucker. During his 70 year career, Drucker wrote 39 books, most about management. One of his concepts that radically changed management practice worldwide was what he called management by objective, or MBO for short. The idea is that you break down any project into individual steps and then manage for the desired objective.

There were two important aspects to managing by objective. One of those was “efficiency.” The job of management is to accomplish the task in the least amount of time with the least amount of resources. In other words, you want to find the best way to do something. That’s very important. But the other aspect Drucker highlighted was “effectiveness.” He said that doing things right (efficiency) is not the same as doing the right things (effectiveness). Drucker wrote in the *Harvard Business Review*, “There is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all.” Knowing how to do things efficiently takes knowledge and skill. But knowing what things should be done at all takes wisdom. And that’s what our passage this morning is all about.

Paul begins by saying, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise.” In other words, pay attention to how you live your life. Don’t just be efficient, be effective. Live wisely not foolishly. Wisdom can be kind of difficult to define. For example, a wise man and a wise guy are not the same thing. In fact a wise person and a smart person are not the same thing. There’s a difference between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is the result of learning, whether it’s from being

taught or from discovering information on our own. Either way knowledge is primarily in our brain.

Wisdom, on the other hand, combines knowledge and experience and an awareness of the current circumstances. Wisdom is how knowledge becomes useful. Here’s a good example. Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit and not a vegetable. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad. The Bible calls us to both knowledge *and* wisdom.

James Montgomery Boice, who was pastor of Tenth Presbyterian in Philadelphia for many years, says that there are two parts to this wisdom that Paul is writing about. First is “its content, centered in the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ” and then second, “the application of that content practically.” This is very similar to John Calvin’s statement that “Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” The first few chapters of Ephesians are all about knowing who God is and who we are. That’s the content of this wisdom. The rest of the book of Ephesians is devoted to how we apply that knowledge practically.

The first way we apply our knowledge of Jesus practically, according to verse 16, is by “making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” Not surprisingly, Peter Drucker wrote a lot about effective use of time. He said, “Everything requires time. It is the one truly universal condition. All work takes place in time and uses up time. Yet most people take for granted this unique, irreplaceable and necessary resource. Nothing else, perhaps, distinguishes effective executives as much as their tender loving care of time.”

In the Bible there are two different Greek words for time. One is *chronos*, which is where we get our words like chronograph, which is another name for a very accurate clock or watch. *Chronos* refers to the passing of time in

seconds and minutes and hours. In Drucker's understanding, *chronos* would refer to using the time efficiently, getting maximum productivity out of the limited amount of time.

The other word for time in the New Testament is *kairos*, which refers to a particular moment that is significant. It literally means an opportunity. So what God is saying to us here is that being wise means not wasting the opportunities He is giving us. Because if we don't actively work to redeem each moment it will be wasted, or as Paul puts it, "the days are evil." What he means by evil is that without God's people actively taking advantage of the time God gives, the moments will not accomplish God's purpose on their own. We must act for that to happen.

But what opportunities, what *kairos* moments are we supposed to take advantage of? Paul answers, "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." This is the second way we exercise wisdom. This is probably one of the areas Christians struggle the most. How do I know what God's will for my life is? The reason we struggle is because we're looking for the wrong answer. God's will for your life is less about what job you should have or where you should live or what kind of car you should drive. God's will for your life is about your relationship with Jesus.

Again, there are the same two components of wisdom – knowing and applying. We learn about God's will in Scripture. Romans 12:1-2 says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." And 1 Thessalonians 4:3 is even clearer. The will of God is for your sanctification.

God's will is for you to be in the process of becoming more holy. That's why Paul says not to get drunk but instead be filled with the

Holy Spirit. God's not saying you can't have a glass of wine. He's saying that in your daily walk with Jesus you should be getting rid of worldliness and replacing it with holiness, filling that space in your life with more of God. Actually, verse 18 says, "be filled with the Spirit." It's passive. You can't really contribute anything to being filled by the Holy Spirit. The best you can do is NOT do the things that get in the way, like getting drunk. That's the third way Paul says we demonstrate wisdom—examining our lives and getting rid of the things that get in the way of God.

Paul then tells us three characteristics of a Spirit-filled life. First is a life of worship, "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. If the Holy Spirit is working in you it's going to come out in worship. Singing praises to God is an important part of worship and as we see here it should flow from the music that's in your heart. Notice also that worship is not a private matter between you and God. It's something we are to do together!

The second characteristic of a Spirit-filled life is thanksgiving, "giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now this doesn't mean that we are to be thankful for the bad things that happen in life. We certainly shouldn't thank God for evil. The idea is that no matter what happens we thank God for what He has done for us in Christ. This is what Calvin meant when he said that wisdom included knowledge of God and of ourselves. It's an understanding of how sinful we are and what we really deserve from God. When we realize how much God has forgiven us we naturally thank him always.

The third characteristic that demonstrates the Holy Spirit working in your life is "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." When you compare yourself with God's standard and realize how far you are from it, you are then able to treat others with dignity and compassion instead of judgment and criticism. Or as Romans 12 puts

it, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."

So how do we practically give thanks to God? We give thanks by submitting to one

another. We show our thanks by our passionate worship. And we thank God by not wasting the time and money He has entrusted to us. I pray that for each of you.

*Amen.*