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**Sermon Series: Be Imitators of God**

**Message #3 - Walk in Wisdom**

**Getting the Nod**

**What would you say if I told you that you have access to calm in every storm… peace every time you panic… and access to heavenly guidance for every touch and difficult decision? Would you want it? Today I am going to give you the biblical truth that provides this.**

Two weeks I began a sermon series in Ephesians 5:1-21 called, “Be Imitators of God.” Today, I want to examine how Christians imitate God by walking in wisdom. Let’s read about walking in wisdom in Ephesians 5:15-17:

15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17)

**Opening Illustration:** Sometimes it’s good to get a child’s perspective on topics we discuss. Listen to these words of WISDOM on the topic of wisdom…

THE WISDOM OF CHILDREN:

Patrick aged 10: "Never trust a dog to watch your food."

Michael aged 14: "When your dad is mad and asks you, "Do I look stupid?" don't answer him."

Joel, aged 10: "Don't pick on your sister when she's holding a baseball bat."

Andrew aged 9: "Puppies still have bad breath even after eating a breath mint."

Taylia aged 11: "When your mom is mad at your dad, don't let her brush your hair."

Armir aged 9: "You can't hide a piece of broccoli in your milk."

Mitchell aged 12: "Don't sneeze in front of your mom when you're eating a cracker."

Michael aged 14: "Never tell your mom her diet's not working.". (Copied from Sermon Central)

When Paul used the word, “Wisdom”, he wasn’t using the world’s version… he was using a spiritual version… intended to be seen as a phenomenal source that believers would draw from in their spiritual journey.

Some examples of wisdom given to me by those great Christians who invested in my life…

* Turn your worries into worship… and your problems into praise.
* Never stay long around a negative person.
* Difficulties are a part of life in the world of a Christian… so live in the Psalms where difficulties are overcome.

**There’s a powerful story in the Bible where someone walked in wisdom. It’s found in 2 Chronicles 1. It is Solomon’s story…**

**Solomon’s Request for wisdom:** After King David died, his son, Solomon, became the third king of Israel. The Bible says that “Solomon the son of David established himself in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.”

One night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, “Ask what I shall give you.” And Solomon said to God, “….Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?” God answered Solomon, “Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like” (2 Chronicles 1:10-12). **Because Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge first… God promised to bless his life and leadership.**

**Transition: Solomon would agree with Paul’s instructions in Ephesians 5 that one of the characteristics of those who imitate God is that they possess wisdom.**

Connecting Us

As I have already mentioned, in his letter to the Ephesian Christians, the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:1a, “Therefore be imitators of God.” That is Paul’s overall command for this section of Scripture. **He then stated three ways in which Christians imitate God.**

* First, Christians imitate God by walking in love.
* Second, Christians imitate God by walking in light.
* Thirdly, today we see Paul’s instructions to imitate God by walking in wisdom.

Let’s listen to the Apostle Paul who wrote in verse 15, our text for today, **“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise.”**

**Thoughts on Christian Wisdom:**

1. **The moment a person becomes a Christian, God gives them access to wisdom.**
* **Wisdom is essential in overcoming fear and chaos and confusion. We need more than knowledge… which is information. Wisdom is God given to help us thrive and survive through our spiritual journey!!!**
* Look at Colossians 2:2-3… NLT — I want them to be encouraged and knit together by Strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand god’s mysterious plan, which is in Christ Himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge..
* That means we begin our new life in Christ with all the wisdom necessary to live for the Lord. It is one of the wonderful blessings that God has available for us!!!
* **Illustration of a hotel key card.** When we have gone on vacation, usually we are given a key or a wristband to have access to our room. The front desk is the only one with the authority to give my family access to our vacation getaway lodging. **God Himself is the only One who can give us access to the wisdom already promised to us!**
* That leads us to the second thought on Christian wisdom…
1. **Wisdom is offered generously by God himself.**
* It’s found in James 1:5… NLT — If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But, when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in god alone.
* The key to accessing wisdom from the Lord is to ask through a faith in God alone!
* **Illustration of Getting Closer:** A young man once lost his job, and growing somewhat desperate about his plight, went to see an old preacher that he knew. As he poured out his heart to the preacher he angrily declared "I’ve begged and begged God to say something to help me, preacher. Why doesn’t God answer?" The old preacher, who was sitting across the room, spoke a reply so quiet the young man was unable to make it out. The young man stepped across the room. "What did you say?" he asked. The preacher repeated himself, again in a soft tone. So the young man moved closer until he was leaning on the preacher’s chair. "Sorry," he said. "I still didn’t hear you." With their heads bent together, the old preacher spoke once more. **"God sometimes whispers," he said, "So we will move closer to hear him."** (Sermon Central)
1. **There are those believers who choose to walk unwisely.**

* 15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17)
* Paul knows that Christians can revert to walking in foolishness. In fact, Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, eventually slid into half-hearted obedience to God by marrying unbelievers and worshiping other gods.
* **So, Christians are not immune from reverting to walking as unwise.**

**Transition: Being Imitators of God involves us walking in wisdom. What does that look like?**

**God’s Take on Walking in Wisdom**

**How Can Christians Walk Wisely in Imitating God?** (5:16-17)

**Paul tells us that there are two ways that Christians walk in wisdom:**

1. **By Making the Best Use of our Time (5:16)**
* Paul said in verse 16, “…making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”
* The phrase **“making the best use of”** ***(exagorazo)*** means **“to do something with intensity and urgency, to work urgently, to redeem the time.”**
* **When God saved us he did not immediately take us to heaven.** No. He left us here on earth. We are to worship and serve him to the best of our ability. We are to tell others about the hope that we have found in Jesus Christ. We are to live as salt and light before a watching world, pointing people to Jesus.
* **Illustration of Jonathan Edwards:** And John Stott notes that “Jonathan Edwards, the philosopher-theologian who became **God’s instrument in the ‘Great Awakening’ in America** in 1734–5, **wrote in the seventieth of his famous Resolutions just before his twentieth birthday: ‘Resolved: Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.’**
* **The first sign of wisdom which Paul gives here is a disciplined use of time.”**
1. **By understanding the will of the Lord.**
* **Illustration of the imaginary lemon:** Everyone put your hand out. Imagine with me that you have a lemon in your hand. Feel how cold it is since you just took it out of the refrigerator. Feel the two knobs on the ends? Ok, now take a knife and cut the lemon in half. Careful! Don’t cut yourself. Oh, look at the juice run down over the sides. Now, put one half down and just hold the other half of the lemon. Now, look at the inside of the cut lemon. Lean down and smell the lemon. Get a good full sense of the lemon fresh scent of the just cut lemon. Ok, now squeeze the lemon. See the juice ooze up and cover the surface of the cut lemon? Now - lick the lemon. That’s right! Lick the lemon. **Ok, who feels like you have more saliva than you did a minute a go?** How can that be? It was only pretend! **The reason is because your body reacts to that which your mind thinks about.**
* Paul said in **verse 17, “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”**
* **Wow, what a huge task!! Finding God’s will for our lives has been a pursuit of believers for two millennium!**
* Even though God’s plan for our lives isn’t drawn out specifically for each believer in Scripture, **there are general principles for understanding them are there.”**

**General Principles in Understanding God’s Will for Our Lives:**

1. **It is God’s will that we be saved.** Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:3–4, “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”
2. **It is God’s will that we be Spirit-filled.** In the very next verse of our current text, Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:18, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.”
3. **It is God’s will that we be sanctified. That means to be set a part for a special purpose, and a cleansing from the carnal nature. (*Hagiasmos /* Hagiodzo)** Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:3a, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification.”
4. **It is God’s will that we be submissive.** Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:13–15, “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.”
5. **For some, God’s will may include suffering.** Peter also wrote in 1 Peter 3:17, “For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.”
6. **It is God’s will that we be satisfied.** Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

**Application:** So, when a person is saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, understands suffering, and is satisfied, he understands what the will of the Lord is. He is walking in wisdom by understanding the will of the Lord.

**Conclusion**

**Jesus is our perfect example to go to when we hunger to be imitators of God:**

* **Jesus always lived as a walking example of His Father.**
* **Jesus knew that his time of earthly ministry was short. Jesus always followed the will of His Father.** “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work” (John 4:34).

So, let us commit ourselves to walk in wisdom. That means that we make the best use of the time and that we understand the will of the Lord. May God help each one of us to accomplish this goal. Amen.

**Illustration of the Young Man Seeking spiritual enlightenment:** John Cassius tells a story of a young man who was seeking to find spiritual enlightenment, so and he went to visit a prophet. He went to the prophet and asked him if he would share with him the way of true spiritual understanding. The prophet looked at him and asked, "Do you want to find the deep spiritual meaning of life?" And the young man said, "Yes that is my ultimate desire." So the prophet said, "Come with me." The prophet led the young man out into a lake. As the walked out into the lake the young man presumed that he was about undergo some special rite of cleansing or purification. But when they were some distance out into the water, the prophet suddenly turned grabbed the young man’s head and forced it under the water and held it there. Finally, in a last gasp, the young man wrenched himself free, came to the surface and was gasping for air. The young man looked at the prophet in shock and disbelief. But the old prophet just asked him a question. "When you thought that you were drowning, what did you want most in life?" The man said, "Air, I wanted air!" To which the prophet replied, "When you want the deeper things of God as much as you wanted air, then you will find it." **Wisdom is ours. We have access to it. How badly do we want it?**

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.** Matthew 5:6 (NIV)

(Sermon is partially adapted from a sermon of Rev. Freddie Fritz in Sermon Central)

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**Ephesians 5:15-17**

**(Filled In Outline)**

**Thoughts on Christian Wisdom:**

1. **The moment a person becomes a Christian, God gives them access to wisdom.**
2. **Wisdom is offered generously by God himself.**
3. **There are those believers who choose to walk unwisely.**

**How Can Christians Walk Wisely in Imitating God?** (5:16-17)

1. **By Making the Best Use of our Time (5:16)**
2. **By understanding the will of the Lord.**

**General Principles in Understanding God’s Will for Our Lives:**

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