

Be wise
Ephesians Part 27

*“Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise,
making the most of every opportunity,
because the days are evil.”*

Ephesians 5: 15-16

Paul has been talking about bringing everything into the light. In other words, let truth guide your life, your decisions, your relationships and your speech. There are things we do as believers that Jesus would not do. It is wise to stop and ask yourself, what would Jesus do? Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

Now, as Paul continues to encourage us to walk in the light of truth, he gives us some wonderful counsel, be very careful how you live i.e., be wise. What is wisdom? Jesus would often teach in parables where people would have to ponder what he meant. Solomon wrote many proverbs. These pithy sayings are used by many to guide them in making decisions and relating to people. In the world of Hebrew thought, wisdom took on two meanings like the two sides of a coin. First, wisdom referred to the concrete, practical how-to skills of life.

As a spiritual being the Lord has given each one of us intelligence. We observe, we learn, we apply. The key to wisdom in this sense is the final step: application. Jesus referred to people, in the parable of the sower, who were ever hearing but never understanding, ever seeing but never perceiving. You can observe, learn, listen and see but never really grow if you don't apply. It is in the application that life thrives. In what areas of your life can you challenge yourself to apply what you have seen or learned? When you hear and see how to do something, what stops you from following through? Be wise, make the most of every opportunity, and apply what you have learned.

Secondly, wisdom is the way you approach living based on lessons learned through experience. So if you have never applied what you have learned, you cannot advance in wisdom. In advanced wisdom you begin to form a way of thinking and a body of truth that guides your decisions. You are led by sound judgment. You have discernment and you know how to read a situation by cause and effect. You say to yourself, if I do this, this will happen. You have an internal warning system that is not based on fear but wisdom. You can draw righteous conclusions. You can truly contrast desirable versus destructive behavior. I think this is how Solomon wrote the Proverbs. He developed a body of teachings to pass on wisdom because he could read life correctly. Can you read your thoughts? If you can, are they wise?

Is wisdom a gift or something that we develop? The answer is “yes”. James tells us that if we lack wisdom we should ask God and He will give generously to all without finding fault (1:5). But James is emphatic about application. He says, “Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like” (1:23-24). How can you throw off the curse of forgetfulness today and pick up the blessing of wisdom? At every crossroad there is a right way. Find it, walk it, be wise.