



Silverdale Baptist Church

5 Decisions That Will Change Your Life • I Will Live Out My Priorities •
Ephesians 5:15-17; Matthew 6:33 • 02/17/2019

Main Point

Followers of Christ are called to prioritize what's important in order to make the most of their lives as they seek the kingdom of God.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How can you tell where a person has given priority in their life?

Why is it easy to go off-course in life and give priority to things that do not ultimately matter?

A person's priorities can usually be recognized when observing where they give the most time and attention. A person may say that their family or church is a high priority in their life, but if they fail to give much time or attention to these things, then their claims will ring false. In order to rightly prioritize our lives, it is helpful to reflect on what is truly most important so that we are motivated to live in accordance with this truth. In Ephesians 5, Paul reminded his readers to recognize their brief amount of time on earth and make the most of it. The way that we do this is by seeking the kingdom of God above all things.

Discussion

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about our topic.

| Have a volunteer read Ephesians 5:15-17.

Why is wisdom necessary if we want to use our time to bring glory to God? Give some practical examples of what it looks like to live as wise people.

According to verse 15, what's the first step to living a life of wisdom with the right priorities?

Why do you think the first sign of wisdom that Paul gave was the careful use of time?

Paul's charge for us to live in wisdom comes on the heels of the previous verses in Ephesians 5, which help us understand what lives changed by the gospel look like. Living in wisdom means taking every opportunity to glorify God and reflect the gospel to those around us. When we resolve to live in the light, we choose to pursue Christ above all worldly pursuits. Part of the reason we do this is so our lives will testify to others about God's grace, mercy, and love.

What does it mean to "be careful" or "look carefully" when it comes to time and living?

What's the difference between living carefully and living fearfully?

The verb rendered "making the most of" is literally, "redeem" or "buy back." Once gone, wasted opportunities can never be recovered. Thus, we are called to take advantage of the moments as we are given them. Foolish persons have no strategy for a disciplined use of time. Believers are to take care to use opportunities to the full because the days are evil.

What is the casual approach toward using time? What is the careful approach?

Paul's concern was for believers to think carefully about how they walk. He had used this same verb earlier in the letter as a way to speak about lifestyle or behavior (see Eph. 2:2,10; 4:1,17; 5:2,8). The apostle noted two contrasting ways to live. One is the way of the unwise; the other is the way of the wise (sensible or prudent). God's wisdom has already been lavished on believers (1:8; see also 1:17; 3:10). Thus, to live wisely is simply to live in accordance with the principles for success God has made clear through His Word.

What command did Paul give the Ephesians in verse 17? Why is this an example of wise living? How can we know if we're being "foolish"?

Living under the influence of the Holy Spirit is the primary characteristic of "children of light." Being filled with the Spirit also explains how we're to "be very careful" with how we live, the command that begins verse 15. This reiterates our need for the Spirit's help to live as imitators of God.

How can we be more careful in how we use our time? What does “wise” time management look like? What does it have to do with God’s will? Would you consider an over-scheduled person to be wise or unwise? Why?

Do you think our problem with God’s will is understanding it or obeying it? How can we be intentionally careful when it comes to the Lord’s will?

| Have a Volunteer read Matthew 6:33.

How does seeking the kingdom of God above all things help us prioritize the rest of our lives correctly?

If you seek first the kingdom of God, what are some things you currently prioritize that may become less important?

In the passage where this verse is found, Jesus was addressing anxiety. Typically, we give priority to the things that concern us most. So many of our anxieties would be solved if only we trusted the Lord with what is best for us. Jesus said that whatever we need for life—food, clothing, and drink—will be provided for by Him. Further, the Lord doesn’t simply want to keep us functioning at bare minimum. Jesus said that He came so that we “may have life and have it in abundance” (John 10:10). Certainly, that does not mean that life will be without difficulties for us, but it does mean that we can trust the Lord to always have our best interest in mind.

As we recognize this central truth, we are able to better ascribe or remove value from various priorities in our lives. Seeking the kingdom of God first in our lives will enable us to better give time and attention to the things that truly matter for His glory.

Application

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to our lives.

Where specifically have you been convicted that your priorities need to change? What next step will you take?

How would the church look different if all believers sought the kingdom of God first together?

How does prioritizing our lives correctly connect to the value we place on evangelism?

Prayer

Pray and confess the things you have prioritized above the things of God. Ask Him to help you recognize the brevity of life and the urgency to seek His kingdom first above all things.

Commentary

Ephesians 5:15-17

5:15-17. The world in which we live is filled with dangers and deceptions. It is not always easy to live an enlightened life even when we want to. We can get tripped up or ambushed by events and people without even being aware of the danger. We must be very careful to live our life rooted in wisdom, using our time wisely. Not to do so would be foolish. The will of the Lord is that we live carefully, cautiously, always matching our lifestyle with the teachings of Scripture.

Matthew 6:33

6:31-33. With these three verses, having illustrated and supported His theme, Jesus built His case. In verse 32, He made two more points about anxiety. First, it was downright pagan; anxiety was the attitude of those who were not a part of God's kingdom. Second, it was totally unnecessary to worry about what to eat or drink or wear, because your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Three times in verses 32 and 33, we find the phrase all these things. We might imagine Jesus using it somewhat disparagingly. This was not to belittle the importance of basic necessities, but to place them at the back of the mind of His disciples, far behind His kingdom and righteousness in importance. "All these things" are what pagans (and the Pharisees) scrambled after. "All these things" are thoroughly known by the Father. "All these things" will fall into place when we put God's kingdom and righteousness in its proper place and serve the kingdom's interests.