



First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS VS CULTURE: BUILDING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW • WATCH YOUR STEP! •
EPHESIANS 5:15-17; PSALM 90:12; ECCLESIASTES 11:4 • 2/18/2024

MAIN POINT

Because the Lord is speaking today, we cannot put off obedience until tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION

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

In general, what are some reasons people might give for putting things off until tomorrow?

In what sense is procrastination a spiritual issue?

How does procrastination affect our relationship with God? How might it affect our relationship with others?

From ages 0-18, parents have approximately 936 weeks to be the primary influencers in their children's lives. With the prevalence of smartphones and other digital means, the influence may be even less than we realize. The things that used to be discussed in homes around a kitchen table between families have now shifted to the digital realm. Individuals and groups across the world now can have significant influence on you and your children without you getting off the couch.

Unfortunately, we typically assume we will have another chance or more time. We think tomorrow will be another opportunity to get our hearts right, mend a relationship, make an important decision, or get rid of a sinful habit. But the Bible teaches us over and over again that God is looking for immediate obedience to His commands and the time to do it is now!

UNDERSTANDING

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

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 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." (ESV)

What parallels do you see in this passage and the others we have studied today?

According to verse 15, what's the first step to living a life of wisdom? Why do you think the first sign of wisdom that Paul gave was the careful use of time?

What does it mean to "be careful" or "look carefully" when it comes to time and living? How is that different than procrastination?

These verses say we should "redeem" or "buy back" time. Once gone, wasted opportunities can never be recovered, so we are called to take advantage of the moments as we are given them. The foolish person has no strategy for a disciplined use of time, but Christ-followers are to take care to use opportunities to the full because the days are evil. The Lord is speaking today, and we can't put off action until tomorrow any longer.

| HAVE VOLUNTEERS READ PSALM 90:12 AND ECCLESIASTES 11:4.

Psalm 90:12 "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

Ecclesiastes 11:4 "He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap."

How do these verses counter our tendency toward procrastination?

How might an understanding of the limited number of days of our lives increase our wisdom?

Why is moving forward in action despite imperfect conditions an act of faith?

What does a refusal to procrastinate on important issues reveal about what we value?

We act on what we value the most. When we procrastinate, we are communicating what is truly important to us. Not only that, but we are assuming that we'll always have another chance to do the right thing. But, not one of us is guaranteed tomorrow.

If you hear the voice of God today, you better respond today because not one of us is promised tomorrow. Not only that but there is no guarantee you will hear that same voice later. But if we hear the voice of God and respond, we show that we believe God is right. His Word is true. His way is always best even if it might involve a difficult response on our part.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Have you been putting off getting serious about your spiritual life? If so, what is one practice that you need to integrate into your life this week instead of waiting?

Because Christians are supposed to warn each other every day (Hebrews 3:13), how can our group help encourage one another to move into action?

What are some practical ways you can remind yourself that there is no promise of tomorrow?

How do you think these practices will help you pursue immediate obedience?

PRAYER

Pray and thank God for the moments you have been given up to this point. Commit yourself again to making the most of the opportunities that will come your way. Ask for the wisdom and insight to hear the voice of God this week and the courage to put action to what you hear.

COMMENTARY

| EPHESIANS 5:15-17

5:15. A single verb form in Greek is translated by the phrase pay careful attention. Its basic meaning in the original was “see” or “look at.” Often it was used in the sense of “consider” or “pay attention to” or “see to it.” This general exhortation covers all the particular instructions that follow. 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 (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.

5:16. Wise people make the most of the time. The noun translated time refers primarily to the opportunities or occasions that come our way. 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. Paul did not mean that his times were necessarily worse than other times. Though we may sometimes feel this way, our times are no more difficult a time in which to live a good Christian life than those of earlier generations. Until Jesus returns, spiritual forces of evil will be furiously at work in the world (see Eph. 6:12). All times are challenging for living as a follower of Jesus. Thus believers should beware of our natural tendency to waste away time.

5:17. A second sign of wisdom is commitment to the Lord’s will. It is a special mark of being foolish (which is essentially the same as “unwise” from v. 15) not to take into account what God has already made clear as His intentions and commands for living. Here are a few New Testament teachings that are specifically stated as the will of God for believers:

- To give thanks in all things (1 Thess. 5:18)
- To do good and thus put to silence one’s persecutors (1 Pet. 2:15)
- To abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thess. 4:3)

These are aspects of what some Bible students call God’s “general will”—applicable to every believer. But what about His “particular will” for specific persons or congregations? (Whom shall I marry? Whom should we call as our next pastor?) Certainly there is such a particular will of God. For example, Paul referred to his call to become an apostle as God’s

will (see Eph. 1:1). When we believers have fully committed ourselves to following God's general will for all Christians—what is plainly revealed in the Scriptures—only then may we ask with confidence for His guidance as to His particular will for our lives. We may not find this revelation in “chapter and verse.” We will find, however, that there are Scripture principles that guide us. Furthermore, after careful thought, prayer, and seeking counsel of mature believers, we can discern with confidence God's will for a particular situation.