



grow groups



Week 5: Your OPPORTUNITIES Are On Loan Ephesians 5:15-20

GOAL: To recognize that every minute is a moment to be used to glorify God...so make the most of it.

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Invest in your own spiritual life by participating in the daily Growth Guide readings. (This will also prepare you to lead the question about it in your group again this week.)
- ☐ Reach out individually to anyone who did not attend last week. Let them know that you missed them and would love to see them this week.
- ☐ Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- ☐ If you haven't already, plan your Grow Group Pair-Up by connecting with the leaders of your paired group.
- ☐ Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members (please include their names and contact info in the meeting notes section). Help new members register for your group using the QR code in your room or at vrbc.net/grow.

PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, we come before you today with open hearts, seeking to recognize that every minute of our lives is an opportunity to glorify you. Thank you for the gift of time, for the purpose you have given us, and for the chance to walk in wisdom through your guidance. Lord, as we dive into your Word, help us to be mindful of how we are living. Teach us to walk carefully, not aimlessly or carelessly, but with intention and purpose. Open our hearts and minds to understand your will and align our lives with it. Fill us with your Spirit, that we may be led by you in all that we do. Thank you, Father, for this time. We surrender this lesson and our lives into your hands. Amen.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

CONNECT & COORDINATE

We will maintain the same rhythm each week this semester:

1. Welcome your group. Repeat introductions if there are any new people.
2. Coordinate any logistics (group socials, snacks, Grow Group Pair-Up, etc).
3. Check in with your group and gather prayer requests. Consider using the following questions:
 - Where did you see God at work this week?
 - Where do you need God in the week ahead?
4. Pray for the requests shared and for God to lead your time together today.

Reminder to leaders: *This Sunday, we're celebrating the Building for the Better house dedication! Plan for your Grow Group to finish by 11:45 AM and head to the south parking lot for the dedication ceremony at noon. We have adjusted the curriculum to fit the reduced time available.*

DISCUSS

Leader's Note: *To fully grasp the significance of Ephesians 5:15-20, we need to view it in light of the larger context of Paul's letter. Throughout Ephesians 4 and 5, Paul has been urging believers to live in a way that reflects their new identity in Christ. He repeatedly contrasts the old way of life—marked by sin, selfishness, and spiritual darkness—with the new life believers are called to live in Christ, a life characterized by righteousness, wisdom, and the Spirit's presence.*

Paul's teaching in this passage builds upon the foundation he laid earlier in Ephesians 4:22-24, where he instructs believers to "put off your old self" and "put on the new self" created to be like God in righteousness and holiness. This isn't just about external behavior but about a complete transformation from the inside out. It's about shedding the influences, habits, and attitudes of the world and instead embracing a life that reflects God's wisdom and truth.

This theme continues into Ephesians 5:1-14, where Paul calls believers to imitate God, walk in love, and live as children of light rather than engaging in deeds of darkness. He emphasizes the importance of living differently from the world, avoiding immoral and foolish behaviors, and instead walking in the light of Christ and seeing every opportunity as a chance to be used by God to glorify him.

- What is something that stood out from Pastor John's Sermon this week?

Leader's Note: *You can keep this brief and don't feel obligated to spend much time exploring each person's answer. This is meant to get people thinking back to the Sermon before you begin your conversation.*

Read Ephesians 5:15-17.

- In verse 15, Paul instructs us to "Be very careful" and to live wisely in our daily lives. What does this mean and why is it important?

Leader's Note: *The Greek word used in verse 15 for "careful" conveys the idea of precision and accuracy. Paul emphasizes the need for exactness in how we live our lives. The word translated as "live" in this verse can also mean "walk," reinforcing the idea of intentionally navigating life. Paul's warning is essentially: "See that you walk carefully, with great intention and purpose." In contrast, walking carelessly means living without thought, direction, or guidance. As one pastor put it, "Don't stumble through life; don't just drift through life." We cannot leave our lives to chance—we must make wise decisions and actively seek God's will.*

So, how does a believer gain wisdom? Proverbs 13:20 teaches that walking with the wise leads to wisdom. James 1:5 assures us that God grants wisdom to those who ask for it. Colossians 2:3 declares that all treasures of wisdom are found in Jesus. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:24-27 that the foolish build their lives on sand (the ways of the world) but the wise build on the solid foundation of God's Word.

By applying these principles to our lives, we follow Paul's command in verse 16 to make the most of the time that God has given us. We won't squander opportunities but will walk with purpose and intention.

When Paul says, "the days are evil," he is reminding us that we live in a fallen world filled with sin, moral corruption, and opposition to God's truth. He urges believers to be wise and intentional, recognizing that worldly distractions and temptations can pull them away from God's will.

However, when we align our lives with these truths, we gain clarity. We see beyond the distractions of this world and focus on Jesus and his ways. We recognize the needs of others and respond with Christ's love. In the struggles in our marriages, we see the needs of our spouse rather than just our own pain. We understand that fleeting worldly desires are not worth the cost of being pulled away from a connection with Christ. By walking carefully and wisely, we make the most of every opportunity, living a life that reflects Christ in all we do.

- In verse 17, Paul contrasts foolishness with understanding the Lord's will. How can we better understand and follow God's will?

Leader's Note: *We discover God's will as he transforms our minds (Romans 12:1-2). This transformation is a process that happens over time and is dependent on knowing him personally. In order to understand God's will for our lives, we must first deepen our relationship with him. Knowing God involves more than just intellectual knowledge—it is a relational experience. As we grow in our*

understanding of who God is, his will becomes clearer to us. This transformation takes place through consistent engagement with God's Word, prayer, meditation, and worship. The more we immerse ourselves in these spiritual practices, the more we align our hearts and minds with God's desires for us.

When we think about God's will, we often associate it with significant life decisions—choosing a career, deciding where to live, or determining whom to marry. While these are important aspects of life, Paul's focus here is on something deeper and more foundational. He is not primarily speaking about the specific decisions we make, but about God's revealed will—what he has already made known to us in Scripture.

In Romans 6:13 (NLT), Paul calls us to “give yourselves completely to God.” This is not a partial commitment, but a full surrender of our lives to him. Similarly, in Deuteronomy 10:12 (NIV), we read, “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul?” God desires all of us—not just a part of us, but our entire being, our whole life, dedicated to him. Doing God's will means understanding that he does not want a compartmentalized relationship with us. He wants our hearts, our minds, our actions, and our decisions to be completely his. And God's will is not just something we seek in moments of decision-making; it is a continual, ongoing understanding of how we are to live as his followers.

You might ask, why should we surrender ourselves completely to God and pursue spiritual growth? Why prioritize God above everything else, even when it means letting go of good things in our lives? Paul answers this in Romans 12:1, where he urges us to present our bodies as living sacrifices. He makes it clear that anything less than complete surrender is living foolishly. To live for ourselves, to pursue our own desires and plans without regard to God's will, is to waste the life he has given us.

Jesus is the ultimate example of surrender. He demonstrated perfect obedience to God's will when he left the glory of heaven, took on human form, and humbled himself to the point of death on a cross for our sins. He endured unimaginable suffering so that we might be reconciled to God, and he rose again so that we could experience the fullness of God's power, love, and eternal life. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice to show us what it looks like to surrender fully to God's will. He gave up everything for us—his comfort, his status, his life—so that we could have new life in Him.

As 2 Corinthians 5:15 reminds us, “He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.” If we claim to follow Christ, our lives should no longer be centered on our own ambitions or desires. We are called to live for him, to reflect his love and his purposes in every area of our lives so that we can seize every opportunity to glorify him.

Read Ephesians 5:18-20.

- In verse 18, Paul presents another contrast in the way we can live our lives. What is he trying to teach us by comparing being “drunk on wine” with being “filled with the Spirit”?

Leader’s Note: *In Ephesians 5:18, Paul issues two direct commands: “Do not get drunk with wine” and “Be filled with the Spirit.” Through this contrast, Paul presents two distinct ways of living—two different sources of influence that shape our hearts, minds, and actions.*

Paul is not simply addressing the issue of alcohol consumption; rather, he is pointing to a larger principle—what we allow to control and influence us will ultimately shape our behavior. Being “drunk with wine” is just one example of how people can surrender themselves to an influence that leads to reckless and immoral living. The Greek word for “debauchery” carries the idea of wastefulness, lack of self-control, and reckless abandon. It describes a lifestyle that is out of alignment with God’s wisdom—a life driven by impulsive desires instead of godly discernment.

While Paul specifically mentions alcohol, the principle applies to anything that takes control over us and leads us away from God’s design for our lives. This could include unhealthy habits, addictions, materialism, the pursuit of pleasure, or even being consumed by stress, fear, or the opinions of others. Anything that masters us apart from the Spirit of God can lead to spiritual emptiness, poor decision-making, and a wasted life.

In contrast to being controlled by external, worldly influences, Paul commands believers to “be filled with the Spirit.” This phrase is key to understanding how we are meant to live as followers of Christ. The Greek verb “be filled” is in the present tense, meaning it is not a one-time event but a continuous process. We are to keep on being filled with the Spirit. It is not something we receive once and forget about; it requires an ongoing, daily dependence on God. Just as a sailboat must constantly adjust its sails to be propelled by the wind, we must continually yield to the Spirit’s leading in every area of life. This verb is also in the passive voice, meaning we do not fill ourselves—we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us. We cannot manufacture spiritual power by our own efforts. Instead, we must create space for God to work in us through prayer, worship, studying Scripture, and obedience to His will.

Paul does not leave us wondering what a Spirit-filled life looks like. In Ephesians 5:19-20, he describes the natural results of being filled with the Spirit: Joyful Worship – “Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.” A life filled with the Spirit overflows with joy, encouragement, and worship that honors God and edifies others. Heartfelt Gratitude – “Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything.” A Spirit-filled person is marked by gratitude, recognizing that all good things come from God, regardless of circumstances. Mutual Encouragement – Spirit-filled believers uplift and strengthen one another in faith, fostering a community of unity and love.

God’s command to “be filled with the Spirit” is an invitation to experience the fullness of life God intends for us. Instead of being controlled by fleeting pleasures or destructive influences, we are called to live under the power of the Holy Spirit, who transforms our hearts, renews our minds, and guides our steps. And to see every minute as an opportunity to draw closer to him.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

- Would anyone like to share what they wrote on the Challenge JotForm?

Leader's Note: Remember, sharing can be difficult. How we respond to what people share is just really important. Remember to show empathy and care for each person. If they are sharing something difficult, acknowledge their difficulty and thank them for trusting your group. Ultimately, our response should reflect Christ's love, patience, and wisdom. People are not just looking for solutions; they are looking for someone who cares.

PRAY

- Break up into groups of 3 or 4. Think about these questions: In what areas of your life do you need to be more intentional about walking wisely, understanding God's will, or being filled with the Spirit? In what areas of your life do you need to let God turn your minutes into moments to be used by him? Share those things with your group.
 1. Pray for the wisdom to walk carefully and intentionally in every aspect of life, making choices that align with God's truth.
 2. Pray for a continual filling of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to guide thoughts, words, and actions.
 3. Ask God to help redeem your time, turning ordinary moments into opportunities to serve and glorify Him.