

## **Ephesians 5:15-20 — High Impact Living**

**May 4, 2014**

Good morning CrossWinds. Have you noticed the lives of Christians turn out differently? Some men become great fathers and husbands. Some women become amazing mothers and wives. Some Christians rise to a position of influence at work and in the community, while others fly level.

Some Christians live a life of much greater impact than others. Part of this is due to personality and gifting, but not all of it. Why do some Christians live a life of great impact, while others miss it? Today, we will discover the answer.

As a church, we are studying our way through the book of Ephesians. The first half of the book of Ephesians told us that God blessed us beyond our wildest dreams through Jesus. Through Jesus, we are the most blessed beings in the entire universe. The second half of Ephesians discusses how Christians live differently than the rest of the world. We don't live a Christian's life to save ourselves but we live a Christian life out of gratitude to God for saving us.

For the last few weeks, Paul focused on contrasting between right living and wrong living. This morning, we transition to the grays. We are not talking about right and wrong living but wise and foolish living. In life, not all choices are matters of right and wrong. Some choices are foolish even though they aren't sinful.

For example, it is not sinful to wait to study for your final exam until the night before the test. However, it is foolish. This morning we will say that the wisdom of our choices connects to the impact of our lives.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise... Ephesians 5:15 (ESV)

The word *carefully* means to look at something with your eyes and study it. Paul told us to seriously reflect on something. What are we to reflect on? Our walks. Last week, we learned our walk is a Hebrew way of saying our lives. We are to seriously reflect on our lives and see if we are making wise or foolish choices.

Leadership and planning books say to take a weekend once a year to get away and to examine life, to think about big goals, to evaluate your family, to reflect on how you are loving your spouse and raising your children. They tell you to examine the present and plan for the future. Don't just react to it. The thinking and planning they talk about is very biblical. This is exactly what Paul was telling us to do. Where is my money going? Where is my time going? In 10 years, is this where I want my life to be? Am I making wise decisions or foolish decisions? This can be tricky.

The way we define wisdom and the way the Bible defines wisdom is very different. We define wisdom as success. We define it as enlarging IRA. In human wisdom, everything orbits around me. When the Bible talks about wisdom, it is orbiting my life around God and wisdom is based on God becoming bigger in my life not me becoming bigger.

Wise living involves enlarging God, not me. When we understand that, it enables us to live a high impact life for Jesus.

The other thing we need to know is biblical wisdom is available to everyone in spite of their intellect and education. God has given some people an

amazing intellect. They can process math, logic and language with great clarity. I take my hat off to them. Education is a great asset. It gives the background and training needed for success. Biblical wisdom is not smarts or education. *It is the ability to apply God's truth to everyday living.* If you are like me, you have run across people who are incredibly smart but they just didn't apply it to life.

The reason wisdom is not based on intellect or education is because God is the giver of wisdom. We seek God to get it.

Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Psalm 51:6 (ESV)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. James 1:5 (ESV)

Don't trick yourself into thinking you are not smart enough or educated enough to live a wise life. Biblical wisdom is a gift from God.

Paul gave us four areas of our lives that we need to examine to see if we are living wisely.

### **1. Am I making the best use of my time?**

...making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:16 (ESV)

Everything wants a piece of our time. Work demands more than eight hours a day. Our kids need our time. Our spouses need our time. Coaching a sport needs our time. The church needs our time. Our bills need our time. Everything wants a piece of us. If you are like me, you find yourself split in so many different directions that it is hard to get anything accomplished.

Paul told the Ephesians, who also lived in a busy culture, they needed to consistently examine where their time was going. There are many opportunities

but not all opportunities are things we should put our time into. When it comes to making the most of my time, start with a goal and work backward.

### **Do I have a goal?**

Let me talk to young men. What is God calling you to do with your life? Do you hope to eventually get married? The Bible says marriage is a good goal. It is not good for a man to be alone. Do you want to provide well for your family or survive on minimum wage? It is good to have a goal of providing for your family. Do you want to have kids? Do you want to be a good father? Those are good goals.

Now take your goal and work backward. Do you want to provide well for your family? That probably means you need a college education. What if you don't know your major? That is OK. Keep moving and praying. If you change your major, that is OK. At least you crossed one major off the list.

If your goal is to marry a good Christian woman, work backward. Don't start dating ladies who don't love Jesus. The best place to look for ladies who love Jesus is not a tailgate party at a football game. It is a church. That is where the right kind of ladies to achieve your goal are usually found. This is why it is a good idea for young men to go to church.

Do you want to be a good father? It is never too early to read books on parenting, even if you are in college and unmarried. It is a good idea to find a husband and wife that are good parents and hang out with them and watch them closely. Learn what you can. Take good mental notes. I know some of you are thinking this is nuts. "Parenting? I haven't even graduated from high school. I

haven't found a girl. Shouldn't I think about this 12 years down the road?" Think about your goal. If your goal is to be a good parent, don't start working on it after you have children and you are making mistakes. If your goal is to be an amazing spouse, don't start working on it after you are married and trying to recover from a marital wipeout. Work on it now.

### **What is distracting me from my goal?**

It is only when you know where you are going that you can cut things out of your life that aren't taking you there. For example, video games? There is nothing sinful about most video games. The problem is they can be an incredible waste of time. They can be a real distraction from your goals.

This may surprise you, but in the days of the Apple II and floppy discs, I was an incredible video game junkie. Castle Wolfenstein, Asteroids, Pong... I had it all. Those were the days when monitors had only one color. My computer monitor was orange. As an only child, I would come home from school and play on the computer for hours. I loved it. Getting homework done was a chore. I didn't spend much time with my friends because I wanted the high score on my video game. I had a whole box of pirated game discs.

One day in high school I looked at my life and I realized I wasn't going anywhere. It really hit me when I saw the old Commodore 64 computer commercial. The guy was in a job interview and all he had listed on his resume was the high scores of his video games.

That was me! I was wasting my time going no place. Almost overnight, video games lost their appeal. I tried to read more books. I tried to do more homework. I tried to lift more weights and work harder in wrestling.

What is distracting you? Texting? Facebook? Twitter? I encourage you to set priorities and then put blocks of time in your day to make sure you meet them.

### **Am I doing too much?**

I once heard Mark Driscoll give a talk on time management. He said everyone has a different size plate in his or her life. Some people have a saucer from a tea cup. Some people have a turkey platter. The size of your plate determines your capacity for work. Some people get a truck load of work done. Other people get work done but they take much longer to get it done.

A problem can be setting your life pace by somebody who is able to put more on their plate than you are. This is one of my problems. I tend to do too much. When it is my day off, I usually have 12 things on my list. Cindy just laughs because she knows that it is humanly impossible for me to accomplish more than six of them. I end up stressed because I cannot get everything done that I want to get done. I start staying up late and getting up early. After getting five hours of sleep a night multiple nights in a row, I end up completely useless because I am literally a walking zombie because my plate is too full. One of my recent goals is to set fewer goals and get more sleep. I am more productive when I cut back and focus on the things I know God is calling me to focus on.

## Am I lazy?

As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed. Proverbs 26:14 (ESV)

This is the opposite of the person who is doing to much. This is a person who has no goals. They have no sense that each of us is given a limited amount of time. Every day we are spending time that we will never get back once it is gone. You will never be in high school again. Don't be lazy and waste your time while you are there. Laziness happens when we don't realize that our goal is to bring God glory with our lives and in our work. One of the ways God wants us to glorify him is through our work. Doing our best at work honors God.

This doesn't mean we should do nothing but work. Look at Jesus. When Jesus went to the cross, he said to his father, "I have completed the work you gave me to do." Jesus got everything accomplished his heavenly father set before him. He did most of it in only three years. Did he work hard and get up early to pray and sometimes stay up all night to pray? Yes. He also took one day off a week called the Sabbath. He also went to parties. He also went to people's house for dinner. Jesus had a social life. Having a social life and resting was part of God's will for Jesus' life and it is part of God's will for our lives.

Jesus wasn't married, but if he was, I am sure he would have made time for his wife. Jesus didn't have children, but if he did, I am sure he would make time for his kids. Was Jesus doing too much? No. The key is that Jesus had a goal. To that end, he cut other things out of his life that distracted from that goal.

I think this is the key for us. What is my goal? How are we to make Jesus large from our lives? Build everything around those goals. Put on the calendar what needs to be there to accomplish our goal.

## 2. Am I trying to discern God's will?

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.  
Ephesians 5:17 (ESV)

We are supposed to try to understand God's will. Some translations use the word *discern*. This Greek word means to take all the pieces and think about how they connect together. It is the word used to describe the assembling of a puzzle. You take all the disconnected piece of information and you try to assemble them into a coherent picture.

Assembling the pieces of a puzzle takes time. It takes patience. It takes hard work. It is the same way with trying to understand God's will for our lives. At times in my life, I literally prayed for God to write his will on the wall with his finger like he wrote on the wall for Belshazzar in the book of Daniel. So far, no supernatural hand has shown up. I keep following the directions in this verse, and that means reading the Bible then trying to put the pieces together. I keep thinking about them, praying about them, putting them together and applying them to my life.

This verse says that God's will in our lives is something we discover by putting together the pieces of the Bible. It is typically not something God drops into our laps with a supernatural revelation.

I get concerned when people try to discern God's will for their lives in a random way where they don't think about it. You hear stories of people opening



their Bible to a random passages, dropping their finger on the page, reading six words and calling that God's word for the day. They don't think about it. They don't pray about it. They don't try to assemble it in relationship to other parts of the Bible.

When I hear that, I always think of the guy who opened his Bible and put his finger in the text to find God's word for the day. One day he did this and his finger landed on the words that said, "Judas hung himself." He didn't like that word for the day so he opened the Bible to another place and put his finger in the Bible. This time it said, "Go and do likewise." Randomness is not the way we find God's will.

Since God's will is discovered through all of the Bible and it is about putting together all of the pieces, not just looking at one piece, this should give us a new angle on our personal Bible study. I was always told to read a chapter of the Bible and write down what God was teaching me from it. The problem is that I would read a chapter and I wouldn't have anything to write down. I learned the Bible but frequently nothing hit me like a bolt of lightning from it.

Months later, or even years later, when I am reading the Bible just because God wants me doing it faithfully, God takes parts of the Bible I read years before that I got nothing out of and he connects it to another part of the Bible I am thinking about today. I remember the Bible saying something in the Old Testament and in the New Testament on the same thing. God starts assembling pieces of his word in my mind and revealing his will by putting pieces

together. God's will for our lives isn't simply found in one piece of the Bible but it is found by putting together all the pieces of the Bible.

For example, what is God's will for us in marriage? It starts in Genesis with Adam and Eve with one man and one woman. The devastation of adultery is seen in adultery with David. The devastation of polygamy is seen in Solomon. A summary of God's will for our marriages is found in Ephesians 5 and we start studying that next week. We don't just need Ephesians 5. We need what the Bible says on all of marriage, not just one of the piece of it. We have to work to see how they fit together.

### **What does it mean to be foolish?**

The word for fool here was used by Jesus to describe the Pharisees who thought all God cared about was their external religion, not their internal heart. It was used by Jesus in Luke 12:20 to describe the rich, successful farmer who thought all his success was given for himself, not to care for others or to lay up treasure in heaven for eternal reward. In 1 Corinthians 15:36, Paul described a fool as someone who thinks death is the end of existence.

A fool is someone who grabs sound bites of Scripture as God's will for his life and doesn't do the work of connecting it with the rest of Scripture.

### **How do I discern God's unrevealed will for my life?**

Discerning God's will is not just assembling the different pieces of God's Word to get a good picture but there are daily questions we have when we try to find God's will. What college should I go to? Who should I marry? What career

should I have? What car should I drive? Should I go into debt? How can I be wise and discern God's will on these?

The first thing we need to do when it comes to answering these questions is commit ourselves to God's *revealed will* as you try to discover his *unrevealed will*. What do we know is God's will for our lives? God's will is that we would come to know our Bibles and that we would pray. Let's start with that. God's revealed will is that we would not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. That cuts down on dating prospects. God's revealed will is that I wouldn't lie, cheat, steal, and that my words would build others up. God's revealed will is that I would love God above all things. That is his revealed will.

When I don't know God's unrevealed will for my life, begin by committing myself to God's revealed will. As we spend time with God and spend time in obedience to his word, he changes the shape of our heart. God will place in our hearts his unrevealed will for our lives. What God wants us to do with our lives become the desires in our hearts. All you do is follow your desires when you are walking in step with his revealed will.

[Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4 \(ESV\)](#)

Most of us are struggling to discover God's unrevealed will because we aren't obedient to God's already revealed will. Read your Bible. Pray. Ask God to place the desires he has for their lives into their heart. He will.

### **Am I listening to those I spiritually respect?**

We are not designed to follow God in isolation. God created us for community. We are created to be knit together. We belong together. Christians grow in community, not in isolation.

When you are trying to discern God's will for life, it is good to talk to those we spiritually respect and ask for their wisdom. If you spiritually respect your parents, ask them for their wisdom. Ask your pastor or your youth pastor for his wisdom. If you are in an Iron Man group, ask your Iron Men who know you best.

I had a strange transition into student ministry more than 20 years ago. I was in seminary and I was one of the few white guys in class. Most of the students were Korean and half my height. One Korean guy next to me in class was working on his second degree. He was a dentist and a graduate of Harvard dental school. He had a full-time dental practice, a wife, and kids plus he was taking seminary courses. He was an overachiever for Jesus. With all of his obligations, he kept falling behind in Greek, so I tutored him at night. He paid me by pulling my wisdom teeth for free. God has a sense of humor when it came to providing free dental work.

At the time, I tutored him, I was a total introvert and had no interest in ministry. God used this little Korean dentist who kept telling me I should be a youth pastor. I eventually listened to him and that was the next 10 years of my life. God uses those we spiritually respect to help us discern his will for our lives.

That being said, don't listen to the advice of everybody. Sometimes listening to your friends for God's will rather than listening God is easy, but it is

dangerous. Just listening to friends doesn't take the places of reading our Bible. It doesn't take the place of the hard work of prayer and trying to depend on God. I believe Satan will bring people into our lives that aren't walking in step with the spirit of God to give us bad advice and attempt to lead us astray. If you are just listening to your friends and not listening to God, it will bring disaster.

### 3. What is influencing me?

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart... Ephesians 5:18–19 (ESV)

Be aware of what is influencing you. Paul talked about wine. The city of Ephesus was located in the heart of wine country. There was even a god of wine drinking in the city called Bacchus. There were coins in Ephesus with the emblem of the vine on them because drinking and partying was popular in this wealthy city.

Drinking in the ancient world was not what it is today. The distillation process was not invented until the 18th century so the proof of the wine was much lower than modern liquor. Wine was drank because the alcohol in the juice killed bacteria. It took a lot of drinking to get a good buzz. You were floating your back teeth by the time you couldn't walk straight.

Drinking is not sinful. Paul wrote to Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach.

(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments). 1 Timothy 5:23 (ESV)

Timothy, the young pastor in Ephesus, the city of the heavy drinkers, was apparently avoiding wine altogether. Because of this, he suffered from dysentery.

If you have traveled overseas to places like Mexico and drank the water, you know exactly what Timothy suffered from. Paul said, “Take a little wine for your stomach. Kill off those little critters that make you nauseous.”

Jesus drank wine. We need to remember the wine Jesus drank was roughly the equivalent of having a Mountain Dew today. It was a flavored drink that was purified with slight fermentation so it had a low amount of alcohol. It was not Jack Daniels. It was not Wild Turkey. The distillation process to make that kind of hard liquor wasn't invented.

Even with light alcohol, if you drink enough of it, it begins to control you. You become a different person. You are now under the influence of the bottle.

Paul's point was simply that we are to watch what influences us because it will change us. It will change us into a different person. This is not just true of alcohol but it is true with everything else in life. We are influenced by the movies we watch. We are influenced by the books we read. Romance novels influence a lady's choices. They are not just private fantasies. The novel is not just a story, it is an influence. Day time soap operas are an influence. The way we see marriages in a soap opera influences real life marriage. Magazines are an influence. Television is an influence. I know a number of you will tell me that you are completely independent and are not influenced by the books you read and the television shows you watch and the commercials you see.

When you tell me that you are not influenced by those things it tells me you are completely blind to how they influence your life. If we are not influenced

by what we see on television and what we find in a magazine, why would advertisers spend millions of dollars for them?

Let me prove to you how influential advertising is on us. Let's try this. See if you can complete the jingle. "I am stuck on Band-Aid..." "because Band-Aid's stuck on me." That commercial is 24 years old and you still remember it. Let's try another. "The best part of waking up is..." "Folgers in your cup." Everything we let into our lives is an influence in our lives.

If you are getting married and your parents had a bad marriage, you need to find somebody who has a good marriage and hang out with them so you can be influenced by them. Watch how they handle their kids. Watch how they fight. Nobody unlocks the gun cabinet. Let them be a good influence on you.

One of the powerful influences in our life is music. What we listen to worms its way into our psyche and influences us. In college, I had mostly Christian albums. This was pre-iTunes. This was pre-Internet. I remember going to the store and buying CDs. I bought a CD by Def Leopard called Hysteria. I really liked the band's music. I liked to play it loud. The words of the music were raunchy. I remember using the same rationale my friends did about listening to the raunchy music. We said, "I listen to the music but I don't listen to the words. They don't influence me." Thinking I was smart, I was defying all rules of advertising. One day I was praying about listening to Def Leopard because God hadn't given me peace in my heart about listening to the music and ignoring the words. I asked God to take away my desire to listen to Def Leopard if it wasn't pleasing to him. Shortly after that I forgot about the album for almost a

month. Weeks later I realized I was no longer listening to Def Leopard. I put the CD in the player and listened to the music with fresh ears. God really convicted me about the words being wrong and I threw it out.

Paul told us to think about what we are influenced by. We are influenced by everything. Rather than being influenced by alcohol, we want to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The way that happens is we read God's Word. We pray. We go to church. We are part of a Life Group. We stay in community.

One of the great ways to be influenced by the Spirit of God is music. Paul told us to sing songs, hymns and spiritual songs in our hearts and to one another. This is one of the great things about corporate worship. We sing together. We sing about God. God takes the music and he uses the melody to weave God honoring Scripture into our head and the word of God is woven into the fabric of our brains through songs. Worship songs stick like advertising jingles in our brain. They will be used by the Holy Spirit to influence us for the rest of our lives.

This is why corporate worship is such an important part of what we do as a church. You will find yourself humming the words of the song you sang on Sunday morning throughout the week. If the song is good, if it is God honoring, Christ exalting and if it is Bible based, the Holy Spirit will use it to influence your life to please God.

It is just wise to be under the influence of the Spirit, to be singing in your heart God honoring songs, not Def Leopard.



Some of you will say, “I like hard rock. I can’t go to the gym and exercise to praise choruses.” I completely understand. When I am on the treadmill, I am listening to Skillet. I am listening to Pillar. I am not listening to Guns N’ Roses because I want to be influenced by the Holy Spirit and the words that weave themselves into my psyche.

This is also one of the great things of being in an Iron Man group. Iron Men are small groups of men in the church that get together to hold each other accountable for Bible reading and for memorizing one verse a week. They keep meditating on the verse so they know it by memory. These are men who want to be under the influence of God’s Word. It works.

#### 4. Am I thankful?

...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... Ephesians 5:20 (ESV)

A few weeks ago, we talked about our language. God’s desire for our lives is not a profane mouth. It is not crude joking. It is not Christian profanity. It is thanksgiving.

Here we learn it is not just a matter of right and wrong but it is a matter of wisdom and foolishness to not be thankful. God’s will for our lives is that we are always thankful. When we gripe and whine, we reinforce our own negative attitudes. In addition, did you ever notice that nobody wants to be around you when you are a whiner?

Who are the people you admire? My guess is they are the least gripey, whiney people out there. As I look back on the men I was most influenced by, it is the ones who love God that always have a positive attitude in the face of tough

circumstances. They are solution-centered men, not problem-centered men. They are not sarcastic. They are not whipping off crude jokes. They are incredibly positive people through Jesus. I am drawn to those kind of people and I know you are too. It is just plain wise to give thanks at all times in all circumstances. It honors Jesus.

## Conclusion

Do you want to live a high impact life? Do you want your life to just pass by? Or are you in love with Christ and want your life to make an maximum impact for him? If you want to live a high impact life for God, don't just seek to avoid sin, pursue wisdom. Pursue Godly wisdom. Examine your life and ask these questions:

1. **How am I spending my time?** Do I have a goal? Am I cutting things out of my life so I can get there?
2. **Am I trying to discern God's will?** Am I doing the hard work of trying to know my Bible and trying to put the pieces together?
3. **Am I seeking to be influenced by the Spirit of God or by the sinful culture of the world?**
4. **Am I thankful?**



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