

Intro. There are over 40 words that appear in the thesaurus for the word careless. None of them have to do with the joy of being worry free or without a care in the world.

Not being careful is common among us whether it is in the near miss in a driving incident, the cut finger slicing vegetables, the defensive reaction, the unkind word or the broken dish . . . ‘I was being careless’ is a common line for explaining the behavior of a human type person. We are forced to acknowledge at least occasionally if not regularly that the task of staying on task is challenging for several reasons. Perhaps that explains why we have so many words in our language at our disposal to tell a truth about us and our behavior. For reasons ranging from weakness to wickedness, we do not pay attention well and are easily distracted from that which is good, right and true. We are not shy on words to use to describe us.

Carelessness is a huge issue in marriages, parent–child relationships and work relationships. When we become sloppy or casual about living what we believe in these settings, all kinds of unfortunate consequences begin piling up. The same is true of our fellowship and unity as a church family. Being neglectful or insensitive about what we believe God is doing in our lives together leads to unsatisfying individualism. The urgent appeal of our scripture text this morning is to keep a close watch on the gospel new life principles by which you regulate your life.

Knowing that we need encouragement and reminders to remain attentive to the core truths of the gospel in our lives, Ephesians 5:15-18 intentionally points us to three contrasts:

Look carefully then how you walk . . .

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| 15 | Not as unwise | but as wise |
| 17 | Do not be foolish | but understand what the will of the Lord is |
| 18 | Do not get drunk with wine | but be filled with the Spirit |

In many ways verse 15 is simply a summary appeal of the message of 4:1 that is unpacked through chapters 4-6, walk worthy of your calling in Christ. Your calling is that which Christ has accomplished in your life of giving you a new life, hope, mind and future. Don’t be careless with your calling. Live it out in your everyday life and relationships.

Paying attention to the gospel in your life involves setting your heart and mind on God’s will and calling on him for the enablement to live it. There are three core values that these verses teach us to pay close attention to in our lives and relationships.

Living the gospel carefully and accurately means paying attention to these values:

1. Your assignment to impact those without Christ. 15-16

The mention of the evil days in v16 and the parallel passage in Col. 4:5 lead us to understand that the application of these truths involve those who are outside of Christ. Note first the negative side of the contrast.

<u>Do not live as unwise.</u>	Disconnecting life from God’s mystery in Christ. Living as if God is not building a people for his name in Christ.
Cmp 4:17-19	darkness, alienation, ignorance, hardness . . . careless!
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<u>Live as wise.</u>	Understanding of God and his ways that are skillfully applied to life.
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Cmp. God’s wisdom as mystery in 1:8, 17 and 3;10

Wisdom is seen in buying up opportunities – redeem the ‘kairos’

Urgency provided by the character of the times in which we live.

2. Your purpose to reflect Christ. 17

Too often we limit understanding the will of God to terms of personal guidance or knowing future plans.

Ephesians 1-3 has described in breathtaking beauty and wonder what the will of God is for your life. The child of God has no reason to doubt what God is doing or wants to do in their life. Pay careful attention to this value taught in this contrast.

Do not be foolish. Careless, lacks understanding, refuses to acknowledge God
Cmp Prov. 14:26; 21:20

But understand what the will of the Lord is. Grasp, thoughtful effort to comprehend and connect
The will of the Lord for you includes . . .

- 1:5 purpose of his will - becoming fully adopted sons of God
- 1:9 mystery of his will - knowing that all things come together in and under Christ.
- 1:11 counsel of his will – all things to the praise of his glory.

The will of the Lord for you is that his great grace and mercy is seen in your life – for his glory.

3. Your dependence on the Holy Spirit. 18

Note the third contrast of ‘do not do this, but do this’ is directed at your relationship with the Holy Spirit and his direct influence in your life. Ephesians and other scripture indicate that your relationship with the Holy Spirit can be described in terms of what happened at conversion and what continues after conversion.

At conversion – indwelt and sealed by the HS 1:13-14

After conversion – access to the Father, transformed, empowered, grieve 2:18, 22; 3:16; 4:30

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- 1. Your assignment to impact those without Christ. 15-16
- 2. Your purpose to reflect Christ. 17
- 3. Your dependence on the Holy Spirit. 18

Note the contrast begins again with a negative caution that may reflect specific behaviors of the Ephesian church, address behaviors familiar to them from their culture or simply set up a helpful contrast to teach the principle of influence or control.

Do not be drunk with wine. Drunkenness and Spirit influence compared in Acts 2

Do not be intoxicated, under the influence of alcohol.

Debauchery means uncontrolled, wasteful, purposeless, reckless . . . all opposite of careful.

As drunkenness controls a person’s behavior into wasteful conduct . . .

But be filled with the Spirit. Keep on being filled with the Spirit.

Does ‘with’ mean means (instrument) or content? Ex. – fill the bucket with the hose.

The command is to set your heart/submit life to the Holy Spirit in a continuing way as the means or instrument of how your life is intoxicated/influenced by the fullness of God and his transforming you into the image of his Son Jesus.

The command is not to fill up your life with the Holy Spirit as some separate guide, presence or influence. But rather to cooperate with the Spirit as he does his job of magnifying the fullness of God and Christ in your life.

1:22-23 – Christ’s fullness/supremacy is for the benefit of the church – his people.

3:19 – God’s fullness is for you to enjoy as expressed in his love for you in Christ.

4:13 – you are to grow into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The Holy Spirit magnifies and energizes in you the truths of Christ’s supreme authority and God’s endless love so that your behavior takes on the glow of the supernatural mystery that is in fact central to your new gospel identity.

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Summary and application . . .

Stop being careless, thoughtless, casual and sloppy about living out the mind boggling truth of who you are in Christ. Do not live disconnected, careless and reckless lives.

Accurately live out your faith by paying careful attention to your assignment in an evil world, your purpose of reflecting God’s glory in a world that does not acknowledge God and depending on the Spirit while others live recklessly.

Two specific keys to careful, attentive and intentional living . . .

1. The indwelling word. Col. 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . .

2. Abiding prayer. Acts 4:23-31

They were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Take Aways

1. Identify and acknowledge the ways you are careless or sloppy in your living out your faith.
2. Review and renew your commitment to the core values of the gospel which direct your behavior. Your assignment to serve the gospel, your purpose of reflecting God's glory and your dependence on God's Spirit to enable you.
3. Commit to grow and change in your attention to the word of God and prayer in your life.