

Let me share some pearls of wisdom...

The only normal people are the ones that you don't know very well.” —Alfred Adler

“What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul.” —Yiddish Proverb

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A smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks.” —Charles Gordy

“If you think you are too small to be effective,
you have never been in the dark with a mosquito.” —Betty Reese

“If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.” – Anonymous

“If you lend someone \$25 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.” - Anonymous
“Whether you think you can or think you can't, you are right.” —Henry Ford

Think about the pearls of wisdom that you have heard over the years and the ones that have given guidance to your life. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians he encourages them to live their lives with wisdom. I think Paul would give us the same encouragement, live lives filled with wisdom, if he were sent us a letter, text message or an e-mail. As we have seen with the small sampling that I shared there are many pearls of wisdom. Therefore, it is wonderful that Paul provides definition for what living life with wisdom might be for those of us attempting to live in the spirit of Jesus. Paul's pearls of wisdom for our consideration include:

Making the most of our time
Being filled with the spirit
Making melody to the Lord in our hearts
Giving thanks to God at all times

Make the most of your time

If you are a United Methodist this is a part of your DNA. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement in England in the mid-1700's took this instruction of Paul to heart for himself and those who felt a call to leadership. Wesley's keen interest on the wise use of time is highlighted every year at Annual Conferences around the world during the ordination service for United Methodist clergy. Each candidate publicly answers 19 historic questions with “I do” including two that are related to use of time. Question 17 asks the candidates for ordained ministry “Are you determined to employ all your time for the work of God?” Related to this is Question 19 that has two sub-points, “Will you observe the following directions? (a) Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary. (b) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. ...”

Some might say that John Wesley closely observed the spirit of Paul guidance in his letter to the Ephesians regarding the use of time. Others might say that John Wesley had a bit of an obsessive-compulsive make up to his personality. I think it is a little of both and instructive for us.

John Wesley travelled widely, generally on horseback, preaching two or three times each day. Scholars note that Wesley rode 250,000 miles ... and preached more than 40,000 sermons. He formed Methodist societies, opened chapels, examined and commissioned preachers, administered aid charities, prescribed for the sick, helped to pioneer new methods of treatment for mental illness, superintended schools and orphanages and published his sermons.

That is a good use of time. To get that all accomplished he certainly didn't "trifle away" his time. Yet, hearing the rest of the story regarding Wesley we come to understand a more holistic understanding of using our time wisely.

Though Wesley favored celibacy to the marital bond, he married at the age of 48 to a widow, Mary Vazeille, described as "a well-to-do widow and mother of four children." The couple had no children. Vazeille left him 15 years later. John Singleton writes: "By 1758 she had left him – unable to cope, it is said, with the competition for his time and devotion presented by the ever-burgeoning Methodist movement. Molly, as she was known, was to return and leave him again on several occasions before their final separation." Wesley wryly reported in his journal, "I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her, I will not recall her." That is a sad but instructive tale. Wise use of time does include the vocation of our calling. In fact, our work eats up a lion's share of our waking day during our years of employment. Yet, making the most of our time (as the Apostle Paul writes) also includes quality time with family, friends and time for refreshment and renewal.

Be filled with the spirit

What fills you with the spirit of God? Another way to ask that question, what fills you with energy and zest for all you have to do as well as all you get to do in life. What energizes you? A good night's sleep will energize us. God made us like batteries in that we wear down after about 16 hours and most of us need to be recharged for 6-8 hours. What fills you with the spirit? Worship, what we are doing now, reconnects us with our energy source, God our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Worship, prayer, reading passages of the Bible and other spiritual practices will fill us. Being energized and filled with the spirit is a critical aspect of wise living. What energizes you? Hobbies can do just that. For some it can be gardening, for others quilting or playing bridge, or for you it may be singing in a band or a choir, and for many of us this fall it will be cheering on the Cornhuskers with family and friends.

I am most energized when I finish a morning run dripping with sweat, walk into the bathroom, strip down, stand on the scale and see three numbers that affirm that hard work does pay off. At that moment I am filled with the spirit and ready for the day. What fills you with the spirit? What energizes you? You are wise to do whatever that may be on a regular basis because it will pay dividends in the rest of your life.

Make melody to the Lord in your hearts

Wisdom Paul declares is singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among ourselves, that is, making melody to the Lord in our hearts. We do that as we gather for worship each week and as these songs go with us we are making melody to the Lord each and every day. The songs we carry in our hearts give definition to the events that visit our lives. I invite you to join me in a wonderful camp song that oftentimes resides in my heart and give definition to the happenings that visit my daily schedule.

I've got peace like a river
I've got love like an ocean
I've got joy like a fountain
I've got peace, love and joy like a river

Give thanks to God at all times

Paul writes many wonderful words of inspiration and wisdom that have uplifted and provided guidance for Christians for nearly 2,000 years. Yet, it is his actions that speak even louder than the words he writes. Paul writes wonderful words of encouragement to Ephesians as well as the Philippians, Colossians and his friend Philemon while he is sitting in prison in Rome awaiting his trial. Paul gives thanks in good times and more importantly he give thanks to God in the midst of challenges. He gives thanks when he is in Jerusalem spending time with the twelve disciples and the original followers of Jesus. He gives thanks when he travels throughout Turkey, Greece and Italy visiting new towns to share the good news of Christ and visits old friends

at gatherings of believers that he established. He gives thanks for the good times. Yet, what Paul writes is that we are wise to give thanks to God at all times. Paul practices what he preaches. He sings hymns while in jail and tells other prisoners and the jailors about Jesus Christ. We see that he writes letters to encourage new congregations of faith during his confinement. He finds that he has plenty of time during incarceration for prayer and he relishes this private time of communion with God.

Although Paul did not have the language that we possess he understood that it is wise to give thanks to God at all times because the endorphins in our brain are fully activated when we express sincere thanks in word, song or prayer. As you know endorphins are those “feel good” cells in our brain that make us happy and filled with energy and therefore is it wise to “give thanks to God at all times.”

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he encourages them to live their lives with wisdom. Then he goes on in our lesson from Ephesians 5:15-20 to provide a definition for what living life with wisdom might be for those of us attempting to live in the spirit of Jesus. Paul’s pearls of wisdom for our consideration include:

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Let me close with some other pearls of wisdom...

“Give 100%, except when donating blood”— Anonymous

“Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must be overcome first.” – Anonymous

“If you want to leave footprints in the sands of time, don’t drag your feet.” — Anonymous