

Speaker 1: [00:14](#) Hello and welcome to this episode of the St Andrew's Enfield podcast with me, Steve Griffiths. Today we're going to be thinking about wisdom and how we can live life wisely. I guess we'd all like to be more wise, wouldn't we? I know I certainly wouldn't make as many stupid mistakes as I do in my life if I had a little bit more wisdom and there is something really attractive about wisdom, isn't there? When we see it in other people, we are naturally drawn to wise people; people whose calm and measured way of living, uh, the way they make good life decisions, brings a sense of tranquility into our world. And if you're anything like me, then maybe you too crave a little bit more wisdom so that you can live life in such a way that you absolutely fulfill your potential in all things and you make a positive impact in the world. So today we're going to be thinking a little bit about that. We're going to be thinking about a passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians in the New Testament to guide our thinking. Uh, and specifically Ephesians Chapter Five Verses 15 to 20, and hopefully by the end of this podcast we will have four practical steps that we need to take if we want to develop wisdom in our lives.

Speaker 1: [01:50](#) Churches are full of candles, aren't they? They're so beautiful. They really add to a deep sense of worship, I think. And, uh, I'm sure that when we all look at a candle in church, we all have exactly the same thoughts. Uh, it probably goes something like this. We see the candle and we say to ourselves, what an interesting collection of hydrocarbons. We think about the liquid wax and marvel at the science of the capillary action, drawing it up the candle wick. We're drawn in by the four separate regions of the flame as we reflect on the relationship between hydrogen and oxygen in the burning process, and we meditate together on the convection current drawing the flame upward. That's right, isn't it? Is that what we think when we see a candle burning in church? No, of course it isn't! We see a candle and we are just drawn into the beauty of the flame,

Speaker 1: [02:48](#) the wonder of the life of the candle. We don't scientifically analyze it, we just watch it and what we see creates in us an emotional response and when people see our lives as Christians, they don't analyse our belief systems. They don't try to rationalize our mind processes and try to work out what makes us think the way we do or what makes us believe the things we believe. Instead, people just watch our lives and they watch to see if what we say in terms of the Gospel is matched by the way we live. Our lives are like a candle. Jesus said that himself; that we are to be lights, lighting up the world. And just as we enjoy watching a candle without any scientific analysis so people watch our lives to see if the flame of life is real or not. And

that's why it's so important to try to live our lives in such a way that we are honouring to God and honouring to the profession of faith that we make as Christians.

- Speaker 1: [04:11](#) People watch us to see if being a Christian really does make a difference to our lives. And if people can see a difference, they will be drawn to God for themselves. But if people don't see a difference, they won't think the Christian faith is worth exploring at all. So your life and my life is like a candle to the world. And that's what Paul is saying in his letter to the Ephesians. And he starts off with a really stark reminder of the responsibility we have as Christians. He says this, "Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people, but as wise." At the heart of living life as a Christian is the need to live a wise life. I wonder what you think about when you think of wisdom? Maybe you think of the Dalai Lama, a spiritual, holy man whose silence speaks louder than words. Or maybe you think of Mother Teresa who was, for many people, the embodiment of compassion, whose care for others was a beacon of light in our world.
- Speaker 1: [05:26](#) Or maybe you think of someone quite unknown to the rest of the world; just an ordinary Christian who was part of your life in the past or is part of your life today whose life of prayerful serenity has served as such an example to you. For many of us, when we think about wisdom, we think about an unattainable quality. Other people are wise. It's certainly not something I could achieve for myself. Wisdom is a quality in others to be admired, but seemingly beyond my own grasp. But in this letter to the Ephesians, Paul disputes that view and he sees wisdom as the ordinary way of living the Christian life. He says, "Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people, but as wise." We are called to a life of wisdom. But what does that mean? How do we live wise lives? Well, as I just mentioned, Paul gives four steps here to living a wise life.
- Speaker 2: [06:47](#) And the first step
- Speaker 1: [06:52](#) that Paul gives to living a wise life is to live life as a gift from God. Life is a gift. It's as simple as that. And in verse 16 of this passage from Ephesians, Paul says, "Make the most of the time." Now that is an excellent motto to live by, isn't it? That'd be a great thing to have written on your tombstone, wouldn't it? "He made the most of the time." That is the life to which we are called. As Jesus says, we are called to have life in all its fullness and making the most of our time is the first step to living a wise life. If you look at a gravestone, you'll, you'll read the name of the person and the dates they lived. Joe Bloggs,

1946 to 2018 or something like that. And in between the two dates is a dash: 1946 - 2018.

Speaker 1: [07:55](#) Have you ever considered what is represented by that little dash? Because the dash represents a life that has been lived. The dates are not particularly important. Joe Bloggs was born in 1946, but it could have been 1942 or 1953. It doesn't really matter. Joe Bloggs died in 2018, but it, it could have been 2015 or 2012. It doesn't really matter. What matters is the dash between the dates, the dash that represents all that Joe Bloggs did in life; the relationships he formed, the work he undertook, the good things, the bad things in his life, all his joys, all his sorrows. The dash between the dates is what really counts. And one day your life and my life will be represented in its entirety by a little dash between two dates. When that day comes, I wonder what your dash will represent? Will you have followed Paul's advice in this Bible reading? Will you have made the most of the time? Life is a gift and one day it will be gone. Only the dash will remain. What will your dash say to the world? So how to live a wise life? Firstly, we have to make the most of the time.

Speaker 1: [09:41](#) Secondly, to live a wise life, we need to work hard to get to know God. In verse 17, Paul says this, he says, "Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." If life is a gift, then God is a gift giver and he has given you the gift of life for a purpose. Well, what is that purpose? That is for you to find out and the wise life is hallmarked by the search for meaning. And wisdom, you know, is hard work. It isn't given to us on a plate. We need to work at it, and so we need to persevere in prayer and reading the Scriptures and sitting silently waiting on God and taking a few risks as well in order to discern what God's will for our lives might be. I know when I first entered the priesthood, I wasn't absolutely sure it was what God wanted, but I had a hunch that it might be the case.

Speaker 1: [10:42](#) So I offered myself to the church and I said, "I'm here if you want me." It was a risk for me to do that. But through taking the risk, God's purpose for my life became clear. And so it is with each one of us. It doesn't mean that we're all destined to become priests. I hope some of you may do, uh, but all of us do have a destiny to be lived out. All of us have a place in the purposes of God and the wise life is hallmarked by the search for that place in God's purposes. And what happens when we find it? What happens when we find our purpose in life? Well we begin to shine light lights in the world as we've been destined by God to do. Perhaps you already know your purpose in life. Perhaps you're still seeking it. The church is a community of love. It's a community of friends where we support one

another as we search for our own personal meaning. Each one of us has a destiny. Each one of us has a life of purpose to be lived, so be wise and seek out your destiny.

Speaker 2: [12:02](#)

Thirdly,

Speaker 1: [12:03](#)

if we want to live a wise life, uh, we need to let our faith transform how we live. In verse 18 of this passage, Paul says, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." We know when these New Testament letters were written, the writers were responding to particular problems that existed in the churches to which they wrote. So it seems that the church in Ephesus had a problem with people getting drunk too much. So the principle that we draw out from this passage is that if we are to develop in wisdom by treating life as a gift from God and discerning his purpose for our lives, then this will inevitably impact on how we behave. Now for these Christians in Ephesus seemed that they needed to drink a little less, uh, but for you and me, it might be that or it might be something completely different.

Speaker 1: [13:07](#)

In reality, we, we all have a conscience and we know the areas of our lives that we haven't fully submitted to God, don't we? We know those behaviours that we have, those thought patterns that we've developed that really are a bit inappropriate and in contradiction to our calling as a Christian. Well, wisdom is worked out as we try to submit these aspects of our lives to God. And it's not easy to do that, of course. We will fail time and time again and I know that I have certain habits and certain thought patterns that I've been struggling for years to overcome. And even now, more than 35 years after becoming a Christian, I sometimes seem no closer to being free from these than I was on Day One. But the wise life is not one where we allow ourselves to feel defeated. Instead, we will keep trying to overcome. We will keep trying to honour God by the way we live. Yes, we will fail. Yes, we will struggle, but we keep trying and we don't give up hope.

Speaker 1: [14:36](#)

So, how do we live the wise life? Firstly, we see life as a gift. Secondly, we try to discern God's purpose for our lives. And thirdly, we allow our faith to transform how we think and how we behave. And then finally, uh, in the wise life, we commit ourselves fully to the church. In Verse Nineteen, Paul says this, he says, "Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts." Now, here is a call for us to participate regularly in corporate worship together. The pursuit of wisdom is not something that any one of us can do on our own. We need each

other. We need each other's support. We need each other's encouragement. We need each other's love if we are to develop in living a wise life. Now, there are some people who say that you don't need to come to church to be a Christian.

Speaker 1: [15:45](#) Uh, but actually, you know, I fundamentally disagree with that. Um, I think absolutely fundamentally that weekly worship at least is essential for a healthy Christian life because unless we develop in fellowship with one another, our faith will weaken. There's a story told of two men. You might know this one. There's a story of two men who were sitting in front of an open fire one evening talking about the Christian faith. And one of them said, "I don't think you need to go to church to be a Christian". And the other man didn't say anything at all. And after a minute or two, he lent forward and he took the tongs by the fireplace. And he reached into the fire and took one of the burning red coals out of the fire and placed it on its own, on the hearth. And the two men said nothing.

Speaker 1: [16:41](#) They just sat and they watched as this red coal sitting on its own, outside of the fire, transformed from a, a burning hot coal into a cold, dark coal, uh, sitting on its own. The fire and the heat soon went out of the coal and neither man needed to say anything. That metaphor was obvious, that if we don't come to church regularly and warm ourselves with the passion of fellowship with others, uh, the heat and the fire of our faith will soon go out. Perhaps there has been a time in your life when you stopped coming to church. You found it quite difficult to miss one week. You felt a bit guilty to miss the second week, but it got a bit easier to miss church on week three. And by weeks four and five, uh, you had got out of the habit of coming to church.

Speaker 1: [17:40](#) And then it actually gets harder to return than it is to stay away. And perhaps during that period of absence, the flame of your faith died down and you grew colder in your love for God. The wise life is lived in Christian community because quite simply we need each other. So in conclusion then, as we come towards the end of this podcast, Paul tells us that wisdom is not reserved for the very holy people. It's not just the Dalai Lama or the Mother Teresa's of this world who are called to be wise. Instead, wisdom is the ordinary Christian life. Wisdom is for ordinary Christians like me and ordinary Christians like you. Paul says, "Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people, but as wise". And how do we live that wise life? In these four ways: by treating life as a gift from God, by discovering our destiny, God's purpose for our lives, by allowing our faith to transform how we

think and how we behave, and crucially, by committing ourselves to regular attendance and participation at church.

- Speaker 1: [19:03](#) If we follow these four steps, we will know wisdom. Somebody once wrote, "Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living. The other helps you make a life". And Jesus said, "I have come so that you may have life in all its fullness". So I urge you to be wise and to choose life. Choose life in all its fullness, lived in a relationship with Jesus Christ. So thank you for listening to this podcast. I hope that it's given you something to think about, something to pray about and may challenge your approach to life a little more so that we can grow together in wisdom. If there's any issues that have come up from this or if you want to continue the conversation, please do feel free to email me at steve.griffiths@london.anglican.org.
- Speaker 1: [20:14](#) Check out our church website standrewsenfield.com. The Facebook page St Andrew's Enfield. Please do subscribe to these podcasts and of course tell other people about them as well so that we can continue to grow as a community of wisdom, a community that is learning more about God's activity in our lives and in his beautiful world. So wherever you are, whatever you're doing, I hope that the rest of the day is really good for you, uh, that you feel God's blessing and peace in your hearts today. So thanks for listening and yeah, have a great day with God.
- Speaker 2: [20:55](#) Bye.