

Encouraged

with Paul's letter to the Ephesians

'So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10)'



Handouts to help you read & understand –
for personal Bible study, reading the Bible with a friend or with a group

13th Session **THEME: Equipped to live wisely (I)**

1. Start with prayer. Then look at this icebreaker question. 10 minutes to get started

Have you recently experienced a situation – or are you currently experiencing a situation – that requires wisdom? Be silent for a few moments. Feel free to share (or not to share) a bit about your dilemmas and the difficulties you face(d). What helps you?

2. Read Ephesians 5 : 15-21 twice; today we focus on 15-18 30 minutes to understand the passage

Look again at verses 15 - 16 The reason for the exhortation

In these verses the apostle gives a strong exhortation to see how you can walk wisely (KJV).

➔ Modern translations connect the adverb 'carefully' to the verb 'look'. Ancient translations connect it to the verb 'walk'. This has to do with a difference in the original manuscripts. The vast majority of the manuscripts connects it with 'walk'. When a new – very ancient - manuscript was discovered (Papyrus 46), New Testament scholars were very enthusiastic about it and began to adapt translations to the text of this manuscript. It is the question though, whether the quality of this manuscript is really so good, that we should change what we have in the majority of the manuscripts.

- What – according to the preceding verses (5:1-14) – is the reason for this strong exhortation?
- What – according to verse 16 – is another reason for this strong exhortation?
- Do these verses give you some insight concerning what you were thinking of at the Icebreaker question?

Look again at verse 17 The content of the exhortation

- Read Psalm 14:1-3. What is foolishness, according to these verses?
- Read Ephesians 4:17-19. How do Psalm 14 and these verses help you to explain the word 'foolish' in 5:17?
- Read Ephesians 5:10. A Christian's focus should change. What is the change? (look also at Ephesians 2:3)
- Read Ephesians 5:1-2. What – according to these verses was the focus of Christ when he was on earth?
- Do these verses give you some insight concerning what you were thinking of at the Icebreaker question?

Look again at verse 18 The way to respond to this exhortation

- What, or whom – according to verse 18 – do we need to respond properly to this exhortation?
- Why would this verse contain a contrast between filling with wine and filling by the Spirit?
- If you have enough time: what do verses 19-21 have to do with verse 18?

3. Apply and end with prayer. 15 minutes to make it personal and to pray

Read the passage once more, after a short prayer that the Spirit may reveal to everyone wherein this passage has a personal application for everyone. After the prayer and the reading, be silent for some minutes. Then share and end with prayer.

4. Digging deeper

Read I Corinthians 1:18-25. What you consider as foolishness & weakness, and as wisdom & power, depends largely on whether you are looking with the eyes of this (perishing) world, or with eyes enlightened by the Spirit. See also I Corinthians 2.

Read Psalm 1, 2 and 3. The Psalms are the songs of God's anointed King (Messiah) to be sung by him and by and with his people. The world considers this man who meditates on the law of the Lord, this anointed king (2:6) as foolish and with hatred and enmity. By praying and singing these words, given directly and purely by the Spirit of God¹, both the anointed King and his people (both of Old and New Testament times) are equipped and strengthened to persevere on this narrow way, that does not seem to be a happy and blessed way, but yes, they are blessed indeed. (see also Matthew 5:1-11).

¹ See II Samuel 23:1-2, Acts 1:16, Acts 4:25, Hebrews 3:7