

If you have a bible or bible app, turn to Ephesians Chapter 5

As you know, we're in a series called "Kingdom Family"

- ▶ We've been studying through Paul's letter to the Ephesians Church, examining each verse very very carefully.
- ▶ Today is actually going to be our last Sunday in this series for a little bit...
 - ▶ Next Sunday we'll be starting a mini-series leading up to Easter...
- ▶ The title of our sermon today is **"WASTED"**
- ▶ Typically in this series we've been teaching from the New Living Translation, but today I'm going to be teaching from the New American Standard Bible.
- ▶ Starting in v15

Ephesians 5:15-18 (NASB)

¹⁵ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ **And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit...**

PRAY

In 1972, a man named Arthur Fletcher coined a phrase that would ultimately embed itself into the cultural consciousness of America...

- ▶ Arthur Fletcher was a well-known civil rights activist and politician...
- ▶ In 1972 he was appointed as the Executive Director of the UNCF...
 - ▶ If you're unfamiliar: UNCF – awards scholarships to African-American students across the US.
- ▶ In order to drum up support and funding for these scholarships, Arthur Fletcher partnered with the ad agency Young and Rubicam to develop a new slogan for the organization that would appear in print ads and tv commercials across the nation.
- ▶ That phrase was: "The mind is a terrible thing to waste."
- ▶ This phrase has been recognized as one of the most effective advertising slogans of all time, and was a pivotal resource in fueling the UNCF for decades to come.

We've learned so far that the first section of Ephesians 5 (v1-20) is all about the resources of the Kingdom...and how we use them *for* the Kingdom (both in the Church, and on the Earth).

- ▶ Verse 2: How we use the resource of Love.

- We have been given an extravagant, lavish, and other-worldly kind of love through the sacrifice of Jesus.
- Paul exhorts ²Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.
- Verse 3: How we spend our affections.
 - The resource of our affection is not to be used in service to idols, but rather to worship God.
- Verse 4: All about how we spend our words.
 - Dom: "You will speak 7,000 words every day. How are you going to use them for the Kingdom?"
- Verse 8-14: The resource of light.
 - Billy reminded us: For those who are in Christ, Christ also dwells in us, and therefore His light shines both in us and through us.
 - The call of the Christian life is to awake, arise, and radiate (shine) the light of Christ into the darkness.
 - Light is a resource that the Christian is to use in order to expose what lies in the darkness...
- Last Week – v15-17: The resource of our time.
 - We are to redeem (buy back) the time, because the days are evil.
 - Our time is like currency...we are only given so much, so how are we going to invest it?
- In many ways, Ephesians Chapter 5 is about the raw materials of the Christian life.

This morning we are going to look at one more resource of the Christian.

- Quick disclaimer...primary thrust of this text, (and our teaching) is not about alcohol.
- I'm sure some of you might be hoping for a 5 point didactic, in-depth sermon on whether or not the Christian should drink alcohol.
 - Sermon / Lazo / Alcohol and the Christian / Carp Website

But we do need to talk about the issue of alcohol...because Paul addresses it, and because it's important.

- The issue of alcohol is really sensitive in the Church...and sadly, it's one of the most divisive issues in the Church.
- People literally leave churches because of prejudices toward alcohol.
- The opposite of a Kingdom Family is a Kingdom divided.
- So often the enemy declares war on Kingdom family by sowing division over issues that the people of God were never meant to divide over.
- And alcohol is certainly one of those issues.
- We need to acknowledge the sensitivity of alcohol, and more importantly we need to understand alcohol in light of the Word of God.

So before we go any further, I just want to make a couple of points about the issue of alcohol as it pertains to scripture...

First, the Bible is clear that alcohol is not inherently sinful or evil.

- A glass of wine sitting on a table by itself is not going to start manifesting demons.
- A closer look at scripture reveals that the opposite is actually true!
 - Wine (the only kind of alcohol in the Bible) is actually a sign of God's blessing.
 - **Psalm 104:14-15 (NASB)**
¹⁴ He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, ¹⁵ And wine which makes man's heart glad...
- If alcohol was inherently sinful or evil, Jesus would not have inaugurated his public ministry by turning water into wine!
 - Remember John Chapter 2?
 - Jesus and his crew are at a wedding party in Cana and the wine runs out? Jesus, in his first miracle EVER, blesses the guests...with WINE.
 - ~~And not just any wine...he makes the GOOD wine.~~
 - ~~So good in fact that the headwaiter is astonished that it was kept until the end.~~
 - ~~He's like, "wait, usually they stop bringing out the good wine once everyone has had a little bit. But you saved the good stuff for the end!"~~

The Bible is also clear that the act of consuming alcohol is not inherently sinful or evil.

- **Ecclesiastes 9:7 (NASB)**
Go then, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works.
- In the same way that Jesus inaugurates His ministry with wine, He also inaugurates His new covenant with wine.
 - In the presence of His closest friends (the disciples), Jesus breaks bread and pours out wine and he implores them, "When you eat this bread, and when you drink this wine, remember me."
 - Here's what that means:
 - The literal way that the Christian is supposed to commemorate, celebrate, and remember the life Jesus is with bread...and wine.

Scripture reveals that wine (or alcohol) is actually more sacred than it is sinful.

- That might come as a shock to some of you...
 - Some of you: "whoa, whoa, hold on a second..."

- Because maybe your whole Christian life you were taught that drinking of any kind is a sin.
- But that's not the picture that the Bible paints about alcohol.

However, the truth is that any sacred thing can easily become a sinful thing when it is abused.

- Perhaps none more so than Alcohol.
- And the Bible speaks just as much about the abuse of alcohol as it does the blessing of alcohol.
- For every story in the Bible about the beauty of wine there is a warning about the brokenness that wine brings about when it is abused.
- And unfortunately, there are many of us in this room today who have a similar story of how the abuse of alcohol has destroyed our own life or the life of someone we love.
- That's real. And the Bible recognizes that.

Paul calls this abuse of alcohol "drunkenness" or "getting drunk".

- He says: "don't get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the spirit"

One of the key rhetorical devices that Paul has been using throughout his letter to the Ephesians is contrast (or comparison).

- This section of Ephesians is all about effective Kingdom living.
- In order to show the church what an effective kingdom life looks like, Paul is juxtaposing life in the world with life in the Kingdom.
- Example: v4 – "Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God" (v4)
 - Paraphrase: You used to use words foolishly, but as member's of God's family, be intentional about using your words to give thanks to God.
- In verse 11, Paul says "Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them" (v11)
 - He's saying: Don't participate in the things of Darkness like you used to! Because of what Jesus has done you now have light burning inside of you! Now use that light to expose the things in the dark...
- In verse 15, He uses contrast again: "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise" (v15)
 - In other words: Once you made decisions without wisdom, but God has now given you heavenly wisdom to guide the decisions of your life.
- Do you see the contrast here?

And that's exactly what he's doing in verse 18.

- Let's put it back up.
 - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit (v18)"
- He's juxtaposing the experience of being drunk and being filled.
 - Being drunk with wine. Being filled with the Spirit.

Paul is not randomly choosing drunkenness to contrast life in the spirit.

- He's not saying, "don't steal...but be filled with the spirit"
- He's not saying, "don't cheat on your spouse...but be filled with the spirit"
- He's not saying, "don't kill people...instead be filled with the spirit"
- None of those things accurately convey the point Paul is trying to make.
- He's saying "Don't get drunk...but be filled with the spirit" And he's saying it for a very specific reason.

Because being drunk with alcohol and being filled with the spirit are both things that directly impact the mind.

- Both experiences have a deep and direct impact on the human psyche—which exists in the mind.
- Both being drunk and being filled with the spirit have the power to dramatically alter the kind of person that we are.
- If you grew up with an alcoholic parent or relative then you know this all too well.
 - Drunkenness can make a kind person cruel.
 - It can make a gentle person violent.
 - It can make a honest person lie.
 - It can make a clean person vulgar.
 - The list goes on and on...
- This is the kind of stranglehold that drunkenness has on the mind and the personality.

But how exactly does drunkenness alter the mind?

- Physiologically speaking, alcohol suppresses the activity of your pre-frontal cortex.
- The pre-frontal cortex is the place in the brain that is responsible for what is known as executive function.
 - Executive function encompasses things like: *decision-making*, self and social awareness, and the expression of our personality.
 - Executive function is also the means by which we determine good and bad, better and best, and the future consequences of our current actions.
- To look at it with a spiritual lens the pre-frontal cortex is the physical place in your brain where you apply wisdom to your life.

When abused, alcohol impairs the ability of the pre-frontal cortex to regulate executive function.

- This is exactly why a drunk person thinks that they can jump off of a second-story balcony onto a 4 foot trampoline.
 - They have no ability to process the reality of the consequences that might happen if they do that.
- Have you ever heard alcohol referred to as "liquid courage"? This is why!
 - Only it doesn't make you courageous at all. It just makes your brain dumb.
 - Dumb enough to do things that you would *never* do under normal circumstances.
- Compromising decisions
- This why someone who is buzzed thinks that they can get behind the wheel of a vehicle.
 - Some of us in this room have lost someone that we love because another person thought that they could drive under the influence.
- People who are drunk actually think they can do anything because they've lost their ability to rationally apply conventional and practical wisdom to their situation.

At this point I can tell that there's a big pink (or green) elephant in the room. What about marijuana?

- How does weed factor in to all of this?
- Scientifically speaking, marijuana affects your pre-frontal cortex in the same way that alcohol does.
- In fact, research shows that marijuana, when used regularly, can actually have permanently-suppressive effects on that part of your brain...

THE POINT: Getting drunk or high so deeply deadens and suppresses our ability to process reality, that we cease to look or function anything like our normal selves.

- Very literally we lose our minds when intoxicated, and when we lose our minds, we lose ourselves.
 - This is one of the reasons that people get drunk and high in the first place!
 - Often people think that somehow alcohol or weed will free them to become someone else.
 - But it really just suppresses who they truly are.

In 1990, Dr. Andrew Newberg, a pioneer in the field of neurotheology, began to study the physiological impact of spiritual practices on the human brain.

- He measured the neurological activity of people who regularly practiced things like prayer, meditation, and worship.

- The practices of someone who is "filled with the spirit"
- And what he discovered was that when people engaged in these spiritual practices, there was a dramatic INCREASE in the neurological activity of a specific part of the brain.
- Can you guess where?
- THE PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX! You can't make this stuff up!

This is why Paul is contrasting being drunk (with wine) and being filled with the spirit!

- The pursuit of drunkenness DIMINISHES our capacity for wisdom, but the pursuit of the things of the Spirit actually EXPANDS our capacity for wisdom!
- Where drunkenness suppresses our ability to process the reality of life, the Spirit awakens our ability see the reality of the kingdom.

And *this* right here is what I believe to be the heartbeat of what Paul is trying to communicate in our passage.

- Paul isn't just saying "don't get drunk..."
 - If all we get out of this passage is "don't get drunk" then we've totally missed it.
- That's not where this passage is pointing.
- Paul is calling the Church to be awakened to what King Jesus is doing, and how He is moving, both in the family of God and in the world.
 - He is calling the Christian to be spiritually sober-minded about the things of the kingdom.
 - To borrow a millennial phrase, He's calling us to be "woke" to what God is doing in the world
- And We cannot be awakened to what is happening in the Kingdom if we are put to sleep by the things outside of it.

In our passage, Paul summarizes idea by using the word "dissipation"

- **Ephesians 5:18**
¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation,
- What exactly is dissipation?
- Webster's dictionary defines dissipation as "the squandering of money, energy, or resources."
 - To summarize: Dissipation synonymous with wastefulness.
 - A wasting of resources for the pursuit of something lesser.

The human brain is by far the most complex organ in existence.

- The blood vessels in your brain are over 100,000 miles in length
 - That would wrap the earth about 4 times

- ▶ There are over 100 Billion neurons present in your brain.
 - ▶ If the neurons in your brain were dollars, you would be wealthier than two-thirds of the countries on earth.
- ▶ The signals that those neurons send travel at over 170 miles an hour - the speed of an average bullet train.
- ▶ And God, in his sovereignty and love wove all of it together in the most unique way possible.
 - ▶ King David beautifully captured God's craftsmanship in Psalm 139
 - ▶ **Psalm 139:13-15 (NIV)**
¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- ▶ In all of human history there has never been a mind quite like yours.
 - ▶ There has never been anyone who thinks the exact same way that you think or processes the exact way that you process.
 - ▶ God created your mind to be perfectly unique.
- ▶ When He formed you in your mother's womb, he fashioned your mind to be able to think creatively and analytically.
 - ▶ He gave you the ability to solve problems that no one else can solve.
 - ▶ He gave you the ability to see things that no one else can see.
- ▶ God gave you a left brain and a right brain and he smacked them together inside your head so that you could use your mind for His kingdom.
 - ▶ So that you could use your mind to give him glory.

Christian, your mind is a resource—and it was meant to be put to the plow for the sake of the Glory of God on earth.

- ▶ Your mind was meant to create beautiful works of art that proclaim His goodness to all who see it.
- ▶ Your mind was meant to provide godly counsel and wisdom to those who have lost their way.
- ▶ Your mind was meant to dream up ways to fight injustice, end poverty, preach the Gospel, reach the Nations, worship the King and usher in His kingdom here on earth.
- ▶ That's what your mind was meant for!
- ▶ And Paul is saying "don't waste it"

There is a reason that getting drunk is often referred to as getting "wasted". Because that is exactly what it is. It's a waste.

- ▶ A mind given over to the pursuit of drunkenness and intoxication is a mind wasted.

- And Paul is saying:
 - Don't waste the resource of your mind by suppressing it with things like alcohol.
 - There's too much at stake! The spiritual implications are far too great to waste our minds on lesser things.

Maybe you've been listening to this sermon, and you're like "I don't even have a problem with alcohol. I don't even like alcohol."

- You might not have a problem with alcohol, but you drown the pain of life by working 90 hours a week.
- You might not binge drink for hours at a dive bar, but you binge watch Netflix for hours on your living room couch.
- You might not intoxicate your body with liquor, but you inebriate your soul with expensive clothes.
- You know what that thing is in your life.
- It's that thing that at the end of a long day, makes you go "ugh, I just need a _____."

The truth: it is entirely possible to get "drunk" on things that aren't called alcohol.

- We can easily let our minds become wasted on seeming innocuous things that have no value or purpose for the kingdom of God.
- And if we are called to be kingdom kids, living in a kingdom family for the kingdom of God on earth, we cannot let this happen.
- Why?

If a vessel has become drunk, that means...it has become empty.

- This is the great irony of drunkenness.
- When you surrender your mind to things like alcohol, or substance abuse, or addictive patterns, or mindless pursuits, or endless work, or Netflix—whatever it is in your life that you "drink" will ultimately end up drinking you.
- The lesser things that you consume will always end up consuming you.
- And inevitably, they will leave you empty, with nothing left to pour out for the Kingdom.

Arthur Fletcher (who I mentioned) was well-acquainted with this idea.

- Several years before he coined the phrase "The mind is a terrible thing to waste," his wife Mary was incorrectly diagnosed with a mental illness and was prescribed heavy psychotic drugs.
- One by one, the drugs consumed her mind, until one day, she lost it, and decided to take her life by jumping from a bridge.
- "The mind is a terrible thing to waste."

- ▶ When Arthur Fletcher penned those words, he knew full well what it meant for a mind to be wasted.

There are many of us in this room today who have allowed our minds to be consumed and wasted by the substances of this life—both literal and figurative.

- ▶ Maybe that's you. Maybe today you find yourself in that place.
- ▶ Maybe today you've grown tired of being wasted by alcohol, or Netflix, or social media or work or whatever it is that you've given your mind to.
- ▶ If that's you then the apostle Paul has a good and glorious instruction for you (and this is the contrast): "be filled with the Spirit".

Because the spirit of God doesn't drink you up. He fills you up.

- ▶ **The Holy Spirit doesn't waste your mind. The Holy Spirit regenerates your mind. (Titus 3:5)**
- ▶ **The Holy Spirit doesn't hold your mind captive. The Holy Spirit sets your mind free. (2 Cor. 3:17-18)**
- ▶ **The Holy Spirit doesn't rob your mind of your self-control. The Holy Spirit bears in your mind the fruit of self-control. (Gal 5:23)**
- ▶ The Holy Spirit doesn't blur your mind to the reality of this world, but sharpens your mind to the reality of the sovereignty, the supremacy, the authority, the mercy, and the glory of the person of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit reveals to us the Savior who is working in us.

- ▶ Paul would exhort the romans to "**be transformed by the renewing of your mind**".
- ▶ The Spirit renews our minds (Eph 4:23) to the redemptive work that Jesus is already doing inside of us.
 - ▶ He's redeeming the way we.
 - ▶ He's is redeeming the way we speak.
 - ▶ He's is redeeming our affections
 - ▶ He's is redeeming our time.
 - ▶ And he is redeeming our minds.
- ▶ Why? Why does the spirit reveal the work of Jesus in us?
- ▶ So that the Kingdom of God might be revealed through us.

If that's true, then we need more than a one-time dose of the Spirit.

- ▶ When Paul says "be filled with the Spirit", the word he uses for "filled" invokes a certain kind of continuousness.

- ▶ Verse 18 reads like this: "Don't get drunk with wine, but continually be being filled with the spirit"
- ▶ The Bible says that when a person receive Jesus for the first time, there is a radical invasion of the Holy Spirit into the soul of the person who believes.
 - ▶ This is why those who get saved are often just like "Oh my god this is crazy"
 - ▶ Because the Spirit has entered them and is revealing Jesus to them!
 - ▶ This is one of the most beautiful things about salvation!
- ▶ But without proper attention the effects of that initial filling can quickly wane.

Although they have opposite effects, the Holy Spirit is actually quite similar to a glass of wine. Or a beer.

- ▶ You fill yourself with the Spirit in the same way that you would get drunk.
 - ▶ That sounds crazy, but think about it.
- ▶ If you want to experience more of the effect of alcohol, what do you do? You drink more.
 - ▶ You have another glass of wine, or another beer, or another martini.
- ▶ If you want to experience more of the effect of the Holy Spirit, what do you do?
 - ▶ You drink more of it.
 - ▶ You immerse yourself in it.
 - ▶ You drink and you drink and you drink until you become full of the things of God.

When you surrender your mind (and your life) to the Spirit—when you allow your mind to be renewed, regenerated, transformed, and led by the Spirit of the living God that is at work in you, you will be filled up to overflowing.

- ▶ Your life will become so full of passion and purpose that the Kingdom of God will spill and ooze out of you into your home, your neighborhood your job, your community.
- ▶ When you surrender your mind to Him, the Spirit will begin to align your thoughts, your conscience, your desires, your decisions with the heart of the Father and the person of Jesus.
- ▶ All that you might now live a life for the glory of His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

The mind is a terrible thing to waste. And your mind was meant for the kingdom. Don't waste it upon that which suppress the things of this life but be awakened to the one who gives life and life abundant.

PRAY

Today God is pouring something out. And it's not alcohol. God is pouring out His spirit.

- ▶ And He says "Come. Drink of Me."

- Be filled with my love.
- Be filled with my holiness.
- Be filled with my glory.
- Be filled with my presence.

The second set of worship is a time and a space to do that.

- The carpets are available
- If you're struggling today with alcohol, or addiction, or if you just need someone to lead you to experience the Holy spirit, the prayer team is here.
- At the beginning of the sermon I mentioned the way that we remember and celebrate the life and sacrifice Jesus...with bread and wine.

Before we enter into worship I want to address something really important.

- There are some of you in the room today who are seriously struggling with addiction to alcohol or other substances.
 - It might not be full-blown alcoholism or drug abuse, but its starting to take hold of your life. And it's affecting your relationships, your family, your job. It's starting to consume you.
- I believe that God wants to heal addictions today.
 - I believe that God wants to regenerate minds today.
 - I believe that God wants to rewire connections in your brain and reverse addictive patterns right now in the name of Jesus.
- If that's you, then please...come forward. There are some people up here (that I know personally) who have fought the battle with addiction, and by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, they've won.
 - They would love nothing more than to pray with you and walk with you and lead you to some next steps.

Church let's not leave this place today without first drinking deeply and freely of the Holy Spirit.

Exhortation:

- The kingdom of God can't break out into the world unless the spirit breaks out in the people of God.
- When people are so filled up with the spirit that it starts bursting out of them.

Benediction:

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom [l]every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the [m]saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.