



Mid-Week Checkpoint

Week of July 18, 2021

In only five verses of scripture, Paul addresses wisdom, being filled with the Holy Spirit, music, and giving thanks. That's a lot to process; in fact, this is a two-page Checkpoint!

Wisdom: In Ephesians 5:15-17, Paul tells us to be careful how we live – “not as unwise people but as wise.”

- Who are some of the wise people in your life? What makes them wise?
- Wise people in Scripture include (and are not limited to) Abraham, Elijah, Solomon, David, Esther, Jeremiah, the Marys (Jesus's mother, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany), and Martha. What makes these people stand out?

Wise people typically imitate Christ in their behaviors and choices. They know and follow the instructions found in Scripture. They spend time with wise people and learn from them. They think about their actions. They ask for God's directions and make careful decisions.

- What concrete steps can you take to grow in wisdom?

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 5:18 instructs us to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- Various creeds refer to the Holy Spirit as the “giver of life” (John 6:63) and “the divine presence in our lives.” The gospel of John describes God as spirit (John 4:24) and says that God is love (1 John 4:8).
- The Holy Spirit has been with us from the beginning, but Pentecost was a unique experience when a large body of people experienced the Spirit's power.
- The Holy Spirit is present today. Jesus describes it as an inner presence (John 14:19-20). Paul describes the Spirit dwelling within us. Because of that, we have a unique opportunity to serve as God's hands, eyes, and ears on earth.
- Spiritual practices like reading scripture, prayer, and spending time in silence can help us be more open to the Holy Spirit.
- Describe some ways you could create more time/space in your life for these (or other) spiritual practices.

Music: Ephesians 5:19 encourages us to “sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are *all* sung in the praise of God.

- A *psalm* is a sacred song or poem used in worship. The Book of Psalms in the Christian Bible includes 150 poems that were usually accompanied by stringed instruments (lutes, harps, psalters, etc.) and percussion (drums, cymbals, etc.). In modern times, many psalms have been set to music so people can sing along in worship.
- A *hymn* is a song of praise or thanksgiving to God. It is much like a poem that has been adapted for singing in a religious service. A hymn’s structure is more like classical music and has four-part harmony.
- *Spiritual songs* are often inspired by the Holy Spirit and may be more spontaneous. They include praise or worship songs that might be influenced by different cultures and music. Today’s spiritual songs could include contemporary Christian songs, spirituals, or music from Iona, Taizé, etc.
- Why would Paul encourage us to use so many different styles of music when we worship?

Thanks: Paul instructs us to give thanks to God “at all times and for everything.”

- Is this easy or challenging for you? Why?

Questions for All Ages –

What are you thankful for this week?

Prayer – Lord, show us how to grow in wisdom and how recognize the Holy Spirit at work in us and around us. Help us joyfully sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as we offer praise and thanksgiving to you. Amen.