Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *When Substances Take Over.*

**Introduction:** A friend was biking with world-class cyclists. The group was ascending a steep grade, and my friend began to lag behind. One of the professional cyclists came alongside him, placing his hand on my friend’s back to give him an added propulsion to catch the rest of the group. Together they caught up due to the help of the cyclist.

Some cyclists use illegal drugs and steroids to enhance their performance. Just as some people use drugs and medications to improve and endure the rigors of life, Christians have a better alternative. The Holy Spirit’s power is needed, coming alongside us, just as the cyclist came alongside my friend, to provide the strength and endurance we need to face life’s challenges.

Paul, writing to the Ephesians, identified what the Holy Spirit’s power will do for us. The Holy Spirit will empower us to:

1. **Live wisely. (v. 15a)**
   Wisdom does not merely mean knowledge. Knowledge is information. Wisdom, on the other hand, refers to skill. A simple definition of wisdom is the practical application of knowledge so we can enjoy life at its best. God gives us the wisdom to equip us, to enable us to live as we ought to live. Paul does not take us to church, but rather to our places of business, our homes, and our school as he instructs us that God’s will for us is to live in a way that is pleasing to God.

   Wisdom is a better investment than silver or gold because she never fails to pay interest. Wisdom pays. So, live by it.

2. **Redeem time. (v. 16)**
   “Making the most of the time” is translated in the KJV as “redeem the time.” The verb denotes intensive activity, a snapping up of all the opportunities which are available. Paul is reminding us that time is precious and priceless. God wills that his people take time very seriously.

   A bank motto gave this advice: "Take care of the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves." That statement could be reworded to say, "Take care of the minutes and the days will take care of themselves."

   Therefore, live each day to the fullest. Squeeze all the life we can out of the present. Redeem the time given.

3. **Execute God’s will. (v. 17)**
   Everyone wants to know God’s will. What if God has already given you his will? Many people get hung up on the 5-10 percent of God’s will they do not know—like where to go to school, whom to marry, which job to take—which theologians refer to as the
specific will of God. Sometimes, we forget about the 90-95 percent of God’s will that we already know. (It is recorded in black and white in the Bible.) Theologians refer to this as God’s general will, because it applies to all believers.

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand God’s will as recorded in the Bible. As we study and apply scripture, the Spirit gives insight and understanding on how to put it into practice. And, the Holy Spirit comes alongside us to help us live it out each day.

4. Be filled with the spirit. (v. 18)
The direct parallel drawn between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit reveals that the issue is control. A person under the influence of wine experiences altered behavior. Likewise, the filling of the Holy Spirit produces a change in behavior, resulting in, as Paul mentioned, “singing” (v. 19), “giving thanks” (v. 20), and “submitting” (v. 21).

God desires that we are under the control and influence of God’s Spirit. The filling of the Spirit isn’t an optional part of the Christian life. Every Christian is to be filled with the Spirit all of the time. If we aren’t, we are out of God’s will.

To “be filled” means that the filling of the Spirit is a work of God, not man. Being filled with the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean we have more of the Spirit, it means the Spirit has more of us. It doesn’t happen all at once any more than one gets drunk all at once. Being filled with the Spirit happens as we continually choose to live under his influence.

Conclusion: The key to living wisely, redeeming the time, executing God’s will, and being filled with the Spirit is one of contact. Consider the elevated trains that run through downtown Chicago. Those trains run on three rails, two for the wheels and one for the electricity. The electricity is always there, but the train doesn’t move unless there is contact with the third rail. Touch that rail and the train moves, pull away from the rail, and it stops.

The third rail is like the Holy Spirit. His power is always available without a shortage or a brownout. But sometimes we live out of contact with his power. When that happens, our lives simply stop working the way God intended.

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