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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**January 1, 2017**

**New Year's 2017**

**Ephesians 5:15-16**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just again, we thank you for the gift that you are descended from on high, the gift that were it not for your Holy Spirit, we would have no chance of grasping or understanding. And along with that gift you've given us your word and your Spirit to help us interpret that word. And this morning, Lord, we want to spend the very first day of this new year opening your word, interpreting it by the power of your Holy Spirit and using it to permanently affect our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, welcome to the very first day of 2017. This is my 67th year of being able to welcome in the new year, and every single year they just seem to go by faster and faster. As you get older, you recognize that, I'm sure. And this morning what I want to look at is probably one of the most appropriate scriptures for the first day of 2017, and it's amazing that Fred and I didn't consult on this, but it's the very scripture that we read, one of the scriptures that we read this morning. It's *Ephesians 5:15-16* which says: *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,*

*making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.* Now there are three different commands in this scripture and together they make up a terrific New Year's resolution. It says first, watch how you walk; secondly, make the very best use of your time; and third, understand that the days are evil.

First God says look carefully how you walk. The King James says it this way, it says: *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.* A while back I gave an illustration of what it's like to walk circumspectly, and that is looking carefully how it is you walk. I'd like to return to that. The picture is this: In some cities, folks have a way of discouraging birds and other animals and particularly people from sitting on their stone walls. And the way they do that is they embed sharp pieces of glass in the concrete at the very top. Someone was observing a cat walking down this -- this wall just lined with these very sharp pieces of glass, and the cat got to the point where it was literally stopped and looking around examining where it was going to put its foot next, because if it didn't watch out, it was going to experience some pain. Well, that's the kind of picture I want us to get here of what being circumspect is all about. God calls us to look very carefully as we walk, not as the unwise but as the wise, not as fools, but as wise.

And so we ask, all right, what is exactly a fool? Well, you know, the scripture has an awful lot to say about fools. It speaks about how they think, it speaks about how they act but there's one quality that seems to stand out more than all the others in the life of a fool and it seems to define what a fool is, and it's in *Psalm 53:1*, it says this, it says: *The fool says in his heart "There is no God."* And so according to God, the essence of foolishness is looking around at the abundance of evidence to the contrary and concluding there must not be any God. God calls that person a fool. We call him an atheist. There's also a sub type of atheist, one that is much more prevalent in evangelical circles. This is a person that we would call a practical atheist. Now this is a person who would never in a million years deny that there is a God, and in fact, he may extol all of the virtues of God, he may have extensive knowledge of God, who God is, how God operates, he may even know the scriptures quite well. After all that's a source of any knowledge that we have about God, it's just that all of that knowledge, well, it seldom makes the 18-inch distance from the head to the heart. And practically this person, in spite of everything he claims, well, he lives like an atheist. He may even be a Christian. My prayer is that God is speaking to him this morning through this message. And that God is saying to him, I want you to turn your life around, I mean, after all, we're looking at new year's resolutions and we're trying to look carefully how we walk

and we're trying to walk wisely. And so the wisest way to do that right from the start is by accessing the wisdom that God has given to us in his word. See, the scripture is the language that God uses to communicate its wisdom to us. And the more you read scripture, the more you memorize, the more you take it in, the more wisdom you're going to find that you possess. God tells us repeatedly, he says, my ways are not your ways. He's telling us he doesn't think like us. And the Bible gives us insight as to how God thinks and often times it's not at all the way us humans think. And it's always better and it's always deeper and it's always wiser and this is the perfect day to begin or renew a daily contact with scripture. Just think of God's word as the master program and just think of each verse of each book as a file that you download into your spiritual hard drive. And that's really what it's all about. That's the source of the knowledge that God's Holy Spirit draws on to give you wisdom. I mean you can't learn a foreign language without studying its vocabulary and the Bible is the vocabulary that God uses to speak to us. So the more limited your understanding of the Bible, the more limited your vocabulary in learning how God speaks. Well, the more scripture you're familiar with, the easier it is for the Holy Spirit to connect the dots between scriptures to give you insight into what it means to live not as the unwise but the wise.

Now for years, I've used one of those through the Bible in one year bibles, and I highly recommend just getting started. Today's the very first day of the year. Great time to start. In fact you can even download stuff if you don't have one of those handy, you can just -- there's a ton of programs on the net that would give you the ability to just start today. I confess when you're going through the Bible that way, sometimes you're going to come across material that you just can't imagine any use for, you come across skin regulations in Leviticus or these gigantic genealogies of the patriarchs, but God says in *2 Timothy 3:16* that: *All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Well practically speaking, I can tell you this, that when I am looking for God's wisdom on any particular issue, I have to tell you, I often hear God speaking to me and he doesn't speak audibly, he speaks scripturally. I mean as I'm praying through an issue, many times a particular scripture or scriptures that bear on that exact issue will come into my mind. That's God's Holy Spirit communicating to me through his word. And the more scripture I have command of, the easier it is for God to communicate. It's not magic but it is supernatural. And it takes effort and it takes discipline to read and to memorize scripture, but the reward, the

reward is you have God's own wisdom. I mean, that should be plenty.

Now there's another aspect to God's wisdom that is -- really it's almost magical. It's another way of gaining God's wisdom and there's really no secret to it at all. It's simply asking. It's just asking God for his wisdom because God says if we simply ask, he will give it. And it never ceases to amaze me that folks don't do this every day. I mean, there's not a day that goes by that I don't ask God for wisdom repeatedly. And I promise you, he gives it repeatedly and I know why he does, and it's real simple, it's because I ask. I mean God says: *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.* You see, God wants us walking, not as the unwise but as the wise. But that also means we have to start asking ourselves some hard questions. And the very first hard question that we need to ask ourselves this morning kind of refers to what I've alluded to before. And that's this, the question is this, it's: Am I a practical atheist? I want to poke around a little bit just to see how a practical atheist might look at life and see if we might be a little closer to that picture than we might be comfortable with. I mean, you might think that a practical atheist would never, never be here at church, but I would say that's exactly where you can expect to find him. You see, a

practical atheist believes practically that God lives inside buildings known as churches. He believes that you get up on Sundays mornings and then you go to meet with God for an hour or two and then you get to go home and pretty much forget about him for the rest of the week. You see, when a practical atheist comes to church to meet God, he has certain expectations. He expects to be uplifted in worship by song, uplifted by prayer, by scripture reading, and hopefully by a message that leaves him feeling better than when he came into church -- this one's probably not going to be one of those -- but if everything works out well, he feels uplifted and is -- as if he has met God. And so what happens is he can then feel safe in putting him, that is, God away until next week. Understand, I'm not trying to be some kind of hectoring scold here. I'm trying to address the sin nature that still lies in every single one of us and what it wants is God on our terms and not on his, and it's nothing new. I mean, we see it in the Old Testament as well. Many of the Jews in the Old Testament were practical atheists, they just didn't know it. I mean this is exactly what they did with the temple of old. They turned it into a place where you could go to get a little bit of God and then you could go home for the week satisfied that you're good to go. See, after the temple was rebuilt and reestablished, God's people began to use it as a place to go to to take care of their God business. And during the week they felt free to oppress the poor and the

sojourner or the widow or even to worship false gods so long as they made sure that they checked in with God each week at the temple. And God would have none of it. I want you to picture the prophet Jeremiah and he's standing outside of the temple. This is *Jeremiah 7:1-4*. It says: *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'*"

Now picture what's going on here. Jeremiah is standing outside the temple and all of these folks are coming in and they're thinking this is the temple of the LORD, this is the temple of the LORD, this is the temple of the LORD. This is where God lives. So all I have to do is go in there and get my God fix. The problem is in the Old Testament the temple is where God lived. Well, it's true that God had consented to dwell in the temple, but he had no desire whatsoever to be relegated there like some oversized good luck charm or talisman, something that folks could kind of check in with to make sure their lives were working right. See, God's expectation was that he would be a part of the lives of his people

when they wake up, when they lie down, and everywhere in between. And furthermore, God expected his people to reflect him in their lives particularly outside of the temple. But you know, outside of the temple God was largely forgotten because that's what practical atheists do. But God is merciful and this is what he said through his prophet in *Jeremiah 7:5*, he said: *"For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail."* See, God's addressing the practical atheists of the Old Testament who somehow managed to let the temple and their religious practices take the place of a genuine relationship with God. Here's the hard question we need to ask ourself this morning. We ask -- we have to ask ourselves: Am I not doing the very same thing?

I'll never forget the time I saw this atheist, a genuine atheist on a TV show. I forget what it was, it was PBS and it was one of those kind of religion shows and it was -- he was mocking the pastor and the church and the congregation, and basically what he said of the pastor was, you know, he says, you get paid here because you basically provide a service. People come into this

place and they're wanting some kind of a connection with God and they're wanting to know they're okay with God and what you do is you provide them with a couple of songs and a pep talk. You know, they can go home afterwards feeling like they've met with God when really they haven't, and so everybody gets their money's worth, he said. He said, they get to pretend that they've meet with God and you get to pretend that you've led them. I go back to that original definition of an atheist and say is this a fool just ranting? Or is there an element of truth in what he's saying?

Let me get as practical as I possibly can without sounding like a legalist. Let me just put it this way. If the only time you think about God during the course of a week is on Sunday morning during services, you are for all intents and purposes a practical atheist. And God wants that to stop. And what God was saying to the prophet Jeremiah is that he's not pleased with a people who prefer merely a place of worship and a form of worship over a genuine relationship that infiltrates and affects every single part of their lives including and especially the way they relate to their fellow man. Folks back in Jeremiah's day thought they could lead spiritually indifferent lives so long as they did their religious duty. And believe me, that thinking persists today. You know, if you think that you can lead a life of practical atheism which reduces God to four songs and a pep talk once a week, now if you think that

somehow participating in those two hours a week can cover up the fact that God is not invited to the other 166 hours that a week consists of, and therefore you're free to do whatever it is that God hates, like taking advantage of others and making anything other than God the main focus of your life 'cause that's what worshiping false gods is, well then for all practical purposes you are a practical atheist.

Author David Bowden puts it well, he says this, he says: "God's presence cannot be seen as a license for sin. Meeting with God on Sunday should not entitle us to live however we want, but should transform us to live however he wants. We are not safe from God's justice just because we go to church. Singing enthusiastically at church does not allow us to speak angrily with others at home. Taking notes during the sermon does not open the door for us to cook the books at our job. Putting a generous check in the offering plate does not give us the right to cheat on our taxes. Closing our eyes tightly during prayer does not make it okay for us to open them to look at pornography. Assuming God's presence at church must not give us a holy excuse to do whatever we want." So my first question to us this New Year's morning is this: Is God speaking to you about the difference between living a life as the wise and not as the unwise particularly when it comes to my life outside of this building? Think about that.

Secondly, God says we are to redeem the time. Now, you might be thinking, okay, does that mean that God expects you to be holy Joe 24/7, that there's no room whatever for me to simply to be me and I'm supposed to be some super spiritual person who has his eyes on heaven and his hands constantly collapsed in prayer and he's mumbling pious platitudes in King James English? Is that what God's after? Is that what God is looking for? Is that what God's saying the best use of time is? Because he tells us the best use -- use the best use of time because the days are evil. Well, does he expect us to put on sandwich signs, you know those, "Repent! The end is near" type of signs? Is that the best use of our time? Oh, when you consider that these words were written over 2,000 years ago and when these were written, when these words were written, Paul fully understood that folks back then really understood that the end was immediately near. There was a whole bunch of folks that thought that Christ had returned already and that they had missed it, so Paul had to comfort them by explaining the timetable of Christ's return and it wasn't that time then and it hasn't been that time yet. But make no mistake about it, I firmly believe God could come this afternoon. Or not or not for 50 or 500 or 50,000 years. See, it is none of our call. But the question that still deserves to be asked particularly with the wise use of time is this, it relates directly to it. The question is: If you knew that the world was going to end tomorrow, what would

you do today? I mean how would you then redeem the time? And if your answer involves a radical change from what you are already doing, then it suggests that what you are already doing somehow or other needs to be different. I mean, if you knew Monday at 5:00 o'clock that the second coming would begin, how would it affect your last 24 hours on earth? Would you be calling up all of your unsaved friends? Would you be out on the street maybe passing out tracts? Would you be shouting from the rooftops? I mean, if your friends and your loved ones haven't heard already from you the simple facts of the gospel, that man is alienated from God by sin, that God came to this earth in the body of Jesus Christ, that he lived among us perfectly, and that he laid down his life for us on the cross so that by faith in Christ we could have his righteousness and not our own and stand before God now worthy of heaven? If they haven't heard that gospel from you at all, maybe it's because you are living as a practical atheist, as someone whose relationship with God consists of right here, right now, Sunday morning and no more.

So what would you do with your last day on earth? Well, the answer attributed to Martin Luther is as good an answer as you could get. He said, if I knew the world was ending tomorrow, I would still plant a tree today. See, Luther was a man who had his priorities in order and he understood what was the best use of his time. He

understood that if it was God glorifying to plant a tree on any old Monday, then it's also God glorifying to plant a tree on the last Monday. God has an even better way of putting it. He says this in *1 Corinthians 10:31*, he says: *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.* Paul describes eating and drinking. Luther describes planting a tree. And there are many, many people who think these are the last things that you would do that could be ascribed to God's glory. And in their mindset wise use of the last 24 hours on planet earth would be doing exclusively religious things. Perhaps thinking the best place by far to be is in church and the best activity to be in the middle of would be praying or singing hymns or better yet, giving alms. But that's how practical atheists think, because God has his own place and his own time and that's in church on Sunday morning. That's where you want to be, right? And if you can't make it to church, just think of something religious to do. But you know, we don't have to guess what God expects us to be doing. We don't have to wonder what God expects us to be doing in order to redeem the time that we are not spending in church because we already have an excellent example of what God expects, and he gave it to us. Jesus actually describes what must be rated as one of the best things to ever be caught doing when he comes back, and it doesn't even look remotely religious. This is *Matthew 24:44-47*. Jesus says: *"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour*

*when you do not expect him. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions."*

See what Jesus is doing here? What he's doing, he's describing someone simply doing his job, doing it well, doing it faithfully as if God is present in his life for every bit of his life. For this person it's God first, whether he lies down, whether he gets up, whether he's serving dinner. And from what I can tell, this person's not even in church. I mean he's not singing hymns, he's not praying. He's doing something far more prosaic. He's cooking and serving food to his fellow servants. He is literally glorifying God through eating and drinking.

So we ask, okay, then what is the best use of our time? Well, for that I want to go back to this ongoing contest that I have with Steve Weingartner as to what is the worst use of time. You've heard me discuss this before. Steve couldn't understand how I could spend three hours watching a football game and I couldn't understand how he could spend three hours sitting in the woods waiting for a turkey to be stupid enough to walk by so he could

shoot it. And so we saw each other's use of time pretty much as useless. And Steve at one point actually tried to figure out how to watch a football game. And he told me how annoying it was to watch this silly game of grown adults trying to push a ball back and forth across a field and he could not believe that people could spend three hours watching such a complete waste of time. Of course I said, well, Steve, you just spent yesterday sitting in one spot for three hours in the cold and the rain waiting and hoping for a wild turkey to be stupid enough to walk into your pathway long enough for you to shoot it, and of course you realize you could have gone to Shop Rite and in five minutes and 15 bucks, you'd have a turkey, and yet you spent most of that time frozen and staring and wasn't that a complete waste of time? And at least I was warm and dry. Well, Steve and I still carry on this debate. What is a greater waste of time, watching football or watching for a turkey? But here's the ultimate answer. The ultimate answer is this. It's not that hunting turkeys is better than watching football or feeding people like the servant did is better than sitting in church. It's that in the end, whether you're watching sports or hunting turkeys or feeding people or curing cancer or bringing about world peace, in the end, makes very little difference. I mean ten thousand years from now the only thing that would have mattered is this: Did this glorify God? I mean ten thousand years from now I guarantee you nobody's going to care who

won the Super Bowl and nobody's going to care whether or not Steve got a turkey or even how effectively you or anyone else for that matter promoted world peace because time will wipe out even that effort as well. I mean, ten thousand years from now today, this very day will be ten thousand years in the past. And people would have cared as much about our peace efforts today as we care about what peacemakers there were during the Cro-Magnon days. I mean, do you care? Does anybody care? You see, time has a way of making a mockery of virtually anything that anyone does, whether it's good, bad, or indifferent. I mean we know Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived and we know that he had everything this world could possibly give an individual in terms of wisdom and wealth and fame and power. We also know that the curse of his wisdom was realizing that time was going to turn every single thing he did into a big, fat nothing. He said in *Ecclesiastes 1:2: Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.* Mr. Trump would do well to learn the lesson now that Solomon learned too late, and that is the fact that everything from the noble to the ignoble ultimately turns to the very same dust. Time ultimately wipes away everything anyone can do including the very remembrance of what efforts they made. In verse 11 it says: *There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.* You see, Solomon was a great builder and a great leader but he lamented the

fact that everything he ever built would eventually be turned over to someone he had no control over whatsoever. And he realized that the control that he had over his own destiny was fleeting and that it was slipping through his fingers and that eventually somebody who cared very little or not at all about him and his legacy would be in charge of all that he had dedicated his life to. We see this unfolding right before our eyes with President Obama and President -- President Elect Trump. We see these things happening before our eyes. Solomon saw his kingdom become ultimately meaningless. He understood that time doesn't care if efforts are poured into a grand palace or a park or a person or a cause; in the end it will be no different than anything else, it will just be a pile of dust. We say, well, we're not -- I'm not Solomon, I don't have those grand kingdoms that are going to fall into disrepair. I mean, we have far more humble achievements than Solomon, we have a home, a spouse, a wife, kids, a job, but time still goes by. And they grow up and we get old and we die. And soon we, like Solomon, are completely and ultimately forgotten. Solomon found that utterly depressing. I'm sure you do, too.

You know, when my dad was dying, I used to go down to visit him at his house at the Jersey shore and occasionally I'd go down to the post office to pick up his mail. And every time I'd go in there, the folks there, they knew him very well and everybody wanted to

know, how's dad, how's my dad was doing, what's going on. And they wanted to know all the different details of what was going on in his life and I'd share with them what the latest news was. And then a few years after he died, I happened to be down there and I had to go to the same post office. And there was a whole different set of people that were in there, people who no doubt had no idea who my dad was and therefore couldn't care less. I came out of that and I thought of *Psalm 103* which says: *As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.* My dad was a very well known, highly respected man. I saw the wind pass over my dad and he was gone and the place knew him no more. That's as depressing as it gets. But there's a "but" to that fact. There's an answer that completely reverses the hopelessness of simply existing in time and it's found in the very next verse of *Psalm 103*. This is *Psalm 103:17*, it says: *But -- and it's an incredibly important "but" -- it says: But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.* See, that verse takes us from absolute despair to incredible hope.

As we approach this new year looking carefully how we walk, not as unwise but as wise, we can't help but realize that everything we do

in life falls into either of two categories: It's either vanity of vanities or it is everlasting to everlasting. And here's the wonderful part: We get to make that choice. We get to decide. Our choice is to redeem the time or not. And the bottom line is this, everything you do that is rooted in the kingdom of God will have eternity stamped all over it, and everything you do that is not eternal will wind up being a complete and utter vanity. If that sounds on the surface like I'm saying only the holy Joe, churchy, super spiritual stuff is worthwhile and all the other stuff is just vanity, you have to remember that God sees it much more like Martin Luther saw it. And Luther saw himself planting a tree the day before the world would come to an end. Does that sound super churchy? I mean shouldn't Luther have been giving out tracts and singing hymns and attending church services? You see, if you're still stuck thinking that way, you are missing out on living in the joy of the kingdom of God. What do you think *1 Corinthians 10:31* means? *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.* I mean there's nothing churchy or super spiritual about eating and drinking. They're parts of the everyday details of living. Admittedly they're often times a fun and a joyous part but they're just a regular part of living. And the faithful servant who Jesus commended was engaged in that very same thing when Jesus basically said that's what I'm talking about. He said: *"Who then is the faithful and wise*

*servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the property time?"* Could something so prosaic as providing hamburgers and sodas while they're still hot and fresh be the kind of thing that Jesus delights in commending? Well if you're doing it for God's glory, yes, of course. Jesus sums it all up very nicely in *Matthew 6:33* where he says: *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

So how do we *look carefully then how we walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of time because the days are evil?* We seek the kingdom first. Remember that image of the cat walking down that wall and he's got three feet down, he's got one paw up and he's looking, he's trying to figure out where he's going to place his very next step. God says a wise person considers his steps with that level of care. And what he's looking for in the very next step is a place to glorify God and advance the kingdom, no matter what it is he's doing. I mean it could be singing in church, you could be at a football game, it could be hunting wild turkeys. St. Augustine once said this, summing it all up, he said: "Love God and do whatever you please: For the soul trained in love to God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved."

And finally our scripture adds this last thought, it says: *Look*

*carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.* Well, the days in which that scripture were written were full of evil, and it's 2,000 years later and that evil hasn't gone away. It's still here. I say this often, I say, Satan has a game plan for every single person, every place, and every time and he's got one for each of us right here and right now. And our task this year is to use the wisdom that God has given us to discern the game plan before -- before it becomes invisible. You see, Satan wants you foolish, ignorant, and blind. What he really wants you to do is to be living the life of a practical atheist thinking that you're doing fine, 'cause his plans survive and thrive in darkness but they wither and shrivel in the light. That's why God wants us to walk wisely in that light discerning the time and discerning our enemy. When Paul was addressing this same Corinthian church, he spoke about the need for forgive for this exact reason. He said this in *2 Corinthians 2:10*. He said: *If you forgive anyone, I do too. I have done this so that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his schemes.* By God's grace neither are we.

So let me give you some formal New Year's resolutions for Grace. First, we watch how we walk. We do that by asking ourselves some hard questions. Have I been living as a practical atheist? Does

my relationship with Jesus Christ extend beyond Sunday morning? Am I willing to step up my accountability by getting more involved with God's word, God's people, God's church? Secondly, we make the very best use of our time, and we do that by recognizing that everything that glorifies God is of lasting value and everything else is not. And third, we understand that the days are evil. And we understand that by using the wisdom that God gives us to discern the enemy's game plan for our lives and then by using His grace to resist it. *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.* Let's pray.

*Father, this is a brand new day, it's a brand new start. This is day one of 2017 and we want to start this day in a new direction. We want to start this day committed to doing it right, to walking not as the unwise but as wise. Father, give us the ability through the wisdom that you alone can supply through your word and through simply by asking that we would have the wisdom to make the best use of the time and the wisdom to discern the plans of the enemy before they go invisible and we don't even see them. Give us that grace, that peace, that power and that wisdom, we pray in Jesus' name.* Amen.