

## **Avoiding the Pitfalls of the Young Adult Life**

**NOTE:** As we lead this discussion, it's important that we don't come across as judgmental sounding or the typical "don't drink, don't have sex" in college because this is the message they have probably heard from other adults for years in high school. **It's important to make sure they feel comfortable participating in discussing this topic and to not shut out. As adults, we may have experienced a "wild" college life and want to teach this material in a way that could be overly passionate because we don't want students to make the same mistakes that we made – this typically pushes many students toward a defensive posture and eventually shutting down discussion.** Be aware of bringing up your past decisions during your college years as they can be viewed in an almost "glorified way" to a student who can begin to believe that if you made these mistakes and turned out okay now, then they can do the same. Be careful about how you lead this lesson.

Welcome to Week 9 of the Grad Experience. **Each week as we look at specific topics that are extremely present in your world today. Our goal is for you to spend some time discussing in a safe place, so you ask questions and develop a stronger viewpoint on each of them.** Even if they are not present in your high school right now, they will eventually be present on a college campus, workforce, or military ... or just in the general culture of the world you live in.

**Our goal** isn't for you to leave here each week with a definitive answer to some of life's tough questions when it comes to living life after high school, but to get you at least **thinking about the topic and determining how that connects with whatever faith you claim to have.**

Last week we looked at the idea of injustice in this world and how we work toward righting wrongs and also trust that God will ultimately bring justice to all the injustice in the world some day when Jesus comes back to establish His eternal Kingdom.

This week we are going to get a little practical and start talking about the young adult life ... once you are out of the house and "living on your own" so to speak. **How do you make wise choices and avoid some common pitfalls that many students your age fall into?** The idea is to learn the wisdom now to make the best choices so you won't have to experience the same pain so many who have gone before you have.

### **WISDOM**

**How would you define wisdom? You've heard this word probably countless times throughout your middle school and high school years at church. What would you say is a good PRACTICAL definition of wisdom?**

- The basic definition of wisdom is "**having good judgment.**" I like to define it as "**making the right decision at the right time.**"

**What's the difference between KNOWING WISDOM and APPLYING WISDOM? (is there?)**

- Not only having wisdom but knowing how to apply it to your life is so important, especially during your early years after graduating.
- Wisdom is the essential factor that can keep you from falling into the destructive pitfalls of the "young adult experience."
- It's one thing to KNOW wise information – but until that wise information is *applied* in circumstances, all it still is, is information and not necessarily wisdom. Wisdom requires more than just knowing – it requires an action.

Have someone read:

*<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then **how you walk**, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> **making the best use of the time**, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. – Ephesians 5:15-17*

Notice the “action” words. You don’t just know wise things; you **walk** in wisdom.

**Since we’re talking about “pitfalls” of the young adult experience, what are some pitfalls you associate with the college/young adult experience part of life? (Have someone list them on the board. Encourage the students to be honest.)**

*Not all students will see rushing Greek life, partying, or the freedom to drink responsibly as pitfalls. This is important to discuss because this is where the wisdom of the Holy Spirit comes into play. Be careful not to just downgrade Greek life – although there are tempting situations, there are students who have successfully navigated it as a Christian. At the same time, be careful not to glorify it either. **Balance and pursuing living righteous in front of others is key.** Also remember that the young adult life ISN’T JUST COLLEGE. Many students pursue careers, military, etc. instead of going to college.*

**What’s the one thing you are looking forward to about life after moving out of the house?**

- For many students it will be a sense of freedom (or less restriction).
- **What does freedom for you look like for a young adult AFTER high school compared to now?**

This time in your life can often be viewed by many your age, as a time without rules.

- Sometimes many think it’s a time in life where you’re supposed to explore or experience wild fun without restrictions or consequences. **What are your thoughts? Yes or no or in between?**

Show this word on the screen: **BOUNDARIES.**

**Ask: When you see this word, what comes to mind? Negative or positive thoughts? Why?**

Let me share with you a statement and you give me your thoughts:

**“When you don’t have clear and firm boundaries, you can’t experience true freedom.”**

- **What do you think about this? True or not? Why?**
- **Do boundaries create freedom? Or How can boundaries create freedom?**

**How can (or does) wisdom connect with boundaries?**

**What about this newfound freedom we have as young adults? Are boundaries still necessary? Why or why not?**

- **Where does wisdom come into play in these new circumstances of life?**

**“Without wisdom we can mistake any newfound freedom as an opportunity to live without boundaries.” AGREE OR DISAGREE**

- Living beyond wise boundaries can (and most often does) result in unwanted mistakes, consequences of sin, and dealing with heartache and pain.
- All of which can ultimately lead to baggage that you could potentially carry with you for the rest of your life.

**Using wisdom helps us understand the benefit of living in freedom *with* healthy boundaries.**

**It may seem counterintuitive, but wisdom points us to setting the right kind of boundaries that lead toward a better life of making smart (wise) decisions.**

- **EXAMPLE:** It's like driving a boat. There are obvious boundaries with where you can and cannot go when driving a boat. You can drive it as fast as you want in open water and make sudden turns, if you so desire. There's a lot of freedom in driving a boat, but there is always one place you cannot drive it... on land! If you desire to drive the boat onto land, only destruction would happen. Why? **Because you would be leaving the boundaries for which it was created.**

Listen to what scripture says ... (read or have a student read)

*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only **do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another.** – Galatians 5:13*

**What do you believe Paul is saying in this verse?**

- God has given us boundaries for our lives in His Word. If we follow His Word and set our boundaries based on the guidelines and parameters from what He tells us, we can experience true freedom.
- **They are there for our protection and guidance, not to oppress us.**
  - **But how do you respond to people who say that the Bible is just a bunch of rules that keep life from being exciting?**
- **How can we experience true freedom by setting boundaries based on God's Word?**

There always seem to be stories of students who grew up in "good Christian" homes, attended church, and were involved in the student ministry; yet also suffered the pitfalls of the young adult experience and ended up making regrettable decisions.

- That's because church attendance, or LifeGroup attendance, does not necessarily equate to a spiritual life change through a relationship with Christ or even discipleship to the point where you are already growing spiritually on your own BEFORE you leave the home.

**What is the difference between these two questions (Or is there a difference? Why or why not?):**

- **What is the right thing to do?**
- **What is the wise thing to do?**

**This is a simple illustration, but sometimes knowing what is the right thing and knowing the wisest thing may seem to conflict with each other (or at least need more thinking before action). Think about simply crossing a crosswalk on the street.**

- **[SHOW PIC]** Just about everyone *knows* that cars *must* yield to pedestrians when they are using a **crosswalk** and the crosswalk light is showing the white crossing icon. Wisdom, however, would say that you still better use caution, looking both ways before you step off the curb in case there is a driver not paying attention.
  - The "right" thing to do is cross when the light tells you to do so.
  - The "wise" thing to do is to cross when you see the light and don't see any cars coming at full speed!

**Can you think of an example where there's a difference between having knowledge about something (even knowledge of the right thing to do) and using wisdom before acting in the young adult life?**

*Allow students to discuss.*

**EXAMPLE (YOU MAY WANT TO USE A DIFFERENT – EVEN MORE COMPLEX EXAMPLE THAN THE ONE BELOW. JUST FYI.)**

**You get invited to hang out with friends on Thursday night, but you have a test you know you need to study for that is early Friday morning.**

- **What's the difference between knowledge and wisdom in this situation?**
- **What benefit might you receive from practicing wisdom rather than just knowledge in this situation?**
- **Is it simply that "black and white" when it comes to these situations? WHY OR WHY NOT? EXPLAIN.**

Choices like this can seem straightforward, but sometimes we face more complicated dilemmas and don't always know the wise response. Other times we know the wise response, but we choose not to live wisely.

**Knowing the right thing to do and applying wisdom before doing the right thing are different. How would you explain this last statement I just made?**

- Part of making wise decisions, requires us step back and evaluate a given situation and ask ourselves whether a choice will bring good and blessing to our lives/others or bring potential heartache and pain. THIS IS EASY TO SAY, BUT MUCH HARDER TO DO IN THE MOMENT WITH YOUR FRIENDS.

## **Applying Wisdom**

**How do we actually apply the wisdom needed to live a godly life?**

*James 1:5 says, "Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him."*

- **We can't discern the wisdom of God if we aren't asking for it, learning the wisdom of God from His Word, and experiencing listening to the Holy Spirit's presence in our life.**
  - That's why we've said for years, over and over, that it is imperative for you to connect with God's Word consistently.

We are unable to live out spiritual wisdom apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit intervening in our lives.

- One of the most practical gifts the Holy Spirit brings into your life following salvation is *conviction*. **How would you define or describe conviction?**
  - When you feel a sense of heaviness or discomfort within you when you're faced with a situation that requires spiritual wisdom, you need to listen to that "still small voice." It can be like a flashing caution sign in your life, blinking and shining brightly, warning you of possible danger or hurt ahead.
  - **Do we ever ignore "conviction" in our hearts by blaming others for possibly pointing out wisdom needed in our lives?**
    - **How do we keep from living this way without blaming others for "judging" us, when they might simply be pointing out a need for wisdom in our decisions?**

Now let's quickly apply wisdom to an area of our lives that will be incredibly important in the coming years ahead for each of you.

Let me share with you a statement and you tell me what your thoughts are about it.  
Agree/disagree, etc.?

**“Who we let into our lives will affect what comes out of it.”**

**Without being specific to people or even situations, how have friendships affected your own life in a positive or negative way? (TALK ABOUT EACH)**

This statement could be both “who or what” we let into our lives.

- The people we spend time with.
- Those we follow and allow to influence us on social media.
- The movies, YouTube, TikToks, music you listen to/watch all affect and influence what comes out of our lives.

Many of you are going to go to new areas and be placed in situations where you will have a need to make new friends.

**What are the criteria you use to determine who you want as a friend?** (a few examples below)

- What do they stand for?
- What do they value?
- What positive things can they bring to my life?
- How can we benefit each other?

Questions like these (and many more) need wisdom applied to them as you look at things like Greek life, student life in general, work colleagues, or how you spend your social life.

- **Being missional in a difficult social area of young adult life is a valid reason to interact with these social circumstances, but they are incredibly difficult to navigate.**
- **Do we avoid them at all costs? Why or why not?**

**What does this passage of scripture have to do with this line of thinking?**

*15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 **Abstain from every form of evil.** – 1 Thessalonians 5:15-21*

**How do we “abstain from every form of evil” and still be a light to those in the darkness? How do we do this without allowing the evil to influence us?**

**Does this put us in a paradox? What do we do? Run away from all evil? Only have Christian friends? Live missionally in the party scene? What are your thoughts?**

- How can you balance being a light to those in darkness with making sure you are not allowing others to influence you in negative ways?

Remember: **Who you surround yourself with, will affect who you become.**

Here's some WISE advice:

**Look for people who share the same values and convictions as you do. And surround yourself with these people.**

- Let me preface this with some Christlike values and convictions.
- Also ... in your younger years, it's best to be missional IN GROUPS around difficult circumstances. Don't go at it alone.

**Three things we want to encourage you to think about and apply to your life before you graduate (and to continue after you graduate.):**

### 1. Desire Wisdom

- **You pursue what you desire.** You will never gain what you don't desire. (Growing in your faith isn't accidental. It takes intentionality.)
  - Important truth, but be careful not to come off as "judgmental": People who say *"I just wanted to have these four years to myself and to live it up while I'm in college, but I will straighten up after college and get my life right,"* are really saying *"I have my own desires over God's desires for me. I'm pursuing the world's desires and not Christlikeness."*

### 2. Know the Word of God

- You've heard it said 1000 times: "You become like the people you hang out with." So, if you want to become like Christ you must hang out with Christ, in His Word.
- Many students don't live out the wisdom of the Word because they simply don't know the wisdom of the Word.
- **KNOWING the Word is being OBEDIENT to the Word.** Don't spend time in the Word of God without allowing it to change you.
- **Biblically speaking, KNOWING is putting your trust in something that changes your actions.** Example: Knowing a chair can hold your weight is different than actually sitting in the chair and trusting that knowledge.
  - **Having knowledge of the Word and not acting on that knowledge is not really knowing the Word.**

### 3. Pursue a Consistent Prayer Life

Going to the Lord consistently in prayer is the single greatest thing you can do as a believer. Throughout Scripture, He promises that IF we seek Him with all our heart, we WILL find Him. (Jeremiah 29:13)

- He doesn't promise to give us everything we ask for, but everything we ask for "as we seek Him with all our heart."
  - The "seeking Him with all our heart" process is actually very important. **When you spend time with the Lord, you move beyond the desires of self and selfish ambitions, and you begin to pray for God's activity in your life.**
- God wants to give us the best, and He knows that the best He can give us is Himself—or things that will make us more like Him. This means when we are praying for things that will ultimately lead us away from Him, we shouldn't be too surprised when God answers with a "no".
- **When you are praying for wisdom to avoid pitfalls, you drastically decrease your likelihood of falling into one of them.**

## Prayer Requests.