

The world we live in today, especially in this area, is increasingly busy and full of distraction. However, some of the ideas that come from the technology industry may be beneficial if applied to our spiritual lives. For my doctoral thesis, I endeavored to weave the design concepts used in the technology industry into our walk with God. The concept of design thinking is illustrated by the story of Doug Dietz, an MRI designer and engineer who won much acclaim for his machine. In terms of functionality the MRI was elegant, but when children went into the MRI they were terrified. Doug realized he needed to look at design from a human-centered perspective rather than only a functional or technological perspective. Design thinking means looking beyond the problem that needs solving, in order to meet people's genuine needs. To apply this to our spiritual lives, we must take this idea even further and shift our focus on God. We shouldn't see spirituality in a merely practical or measurable way, as if we were developing our own self-improvement plan. Rather, we should always maintain a focus on what God says, and what He wants for us. In our spiritual lives, God should be our focus.

The thesis of Ephesians 5 is v. 15, which tells us to live not as unwise, but as wise. Being unwise is summarized in v. 17-18 as being foolish and drunk on wine. In other words, being unwise is simply not using our mental faculties completely, or becoming intoxicated in any way that restricts our faculties. However, there is more involved in being wise. Verses 16-20 say that to be wise we must make the most of every opportunity, understand God's will, be filled with the Spirit, use our mouths to edify each other and praise God, and thank God for everything. We can define wisdom as a combination of knowledge, experience, understanding of human nature, and understanding of God's character. We must embrace wisdom, but it's not easy. Foolishness is always the path of least resistance.

So how do we apply this to our lives? It's hard to be wise, and the busyness of life makes it so much harder. We are tired and stressed, and that's considered normal nowadays. This takes a toll on our spiritual lives, and often our busyness becomes an excuse to spend less time with God. Henri Nouwen wrote that the paradox of our time is that we are busy and bored at the same

time. The things we are busy with are not life-giving, but rather they are draining. We are filled with that which does not fulfill us. We must break out of this pointless rat race.

By applying spiritual design thinking, we may have a clearer path forward. The first step is the empathy stage, where we place our focus on God, listen to Him and find out what He wants. The next step is to define, to discern His will for us. We must tune into His voice. We must see how God is working in our midst by looking for His positive activity around us. Don't focus on the negative, but look at where God is working for good and build off this work. The next step is to ideate. For us, this doesn't mean we come up with creative ideas, but rather we must get rid of those bad ideas that lead to destruction. We must walk with the Spirit and not go astray. The next step is to prototype. We have to understand that prototypes are not the finished product. They are for testing and even breaking. Likewise we must also expect to fail on this journey. Don't stop trying because you are afraid to fail. The next step is to test, to take the step of faith and trust in God. Some of us are naturally risk averse. But to be wise, we must have faith and courage. And finally, we learn from experience and return back to the first step. Spiritual growth doesn't stop. We must keep growing and enduring to the end.

The most important step is the first one, focusing on God. We must put aside the things that are not of God and think about the things of God (Philippians 4:8). It's not easy, especially when we are busy. But when we are being filled with the Spirit, encouraging each other, and thanking God (vv. 18-20), it gives us a fighting chance by putting us in the right posture. It's not easy, but we must pursue wisdom (Proverbs 4:7). Going back to the story of Doug Dietz, when he focused on the human needs by adding child-friendly decoration to the machine and room to make it an adventure for the kids, it made a huge difference. The number of children that had to be sedated for the scan decreased dramatically. Likewise when we shift our focus on God and what He wants, it will make a huge difference. There is no secret to spirituality. There are no new tricks. Though we are busy, we must spend time with God, read His word, pray, and have fellowship with one another. Are you listening to God and placing Him as the highest priority?