

Living As Light

Ephesians 5:8-14

We have been reading from the NLT but today its NASB for clarity in today's passage:

Ephesians 5:7-14 (NASB)

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9 for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth, 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. 14 For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

In our study of Ephesians for the last 18 months we have seen that our identity changes when we are adopted into God's family, and this changed identity also changes our desires and actions.

We are Kingdom Kids—there is a fundamental shift in what we think about and care about.

Today, Paul describes this shift using the stark contrast between LIGHT and DARK.

- Light and dark cannot coexist—there is no darkness in light.
- **Jesus IS LIGHT and if we are in Jesus, we shine His LIGHT—Jesus shines in & through us.**
 - **We SHINE the light of Jesus through our lives and words & actions.**
 - **As the light of Jesus shines, it exposes darkness and reveals sin.**

As Paul describes our NEW IDENTITY in Jesus, he contrasts LIGHT and DARK challenging us to live IN our identity in Christ—to live IN the light, AS light.

- And he tells us to WATCH OUT FOR and EXPOSE people who claim to be in the light but whose life remains a picture of darkness:

Ephesians 5:8-11—for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them

This ties in DIRECTLY with what Dom taught last week—Here's what that means:

- "Don't be fooled by those who say they are God's Children but who don't act like it."
- "Don't join in with people who self-identify as Christians but whose divisive words and secretive, sinful lifestyle identify them otherwise."

BE CAREFUL how you live—You were once DARK but are now LIGHT, so WALK IN THE LIGHT!

- YES this means our language and sexuality and divisive tendencies will all change—Brian and Dom have preached on those passages the last few weeks...
- But it ALSO means that the way we speak and listen and feel toward others changes too.

Here's the amazing Gospel promise that Paul has repeated—The Gospel CHANGES us!!

- Changed people walk & live differently than they once did—here Paul is using the imagery of light and darkness.—But what does he mean that we "ARE LIGHT"?

In scripture LIGHT is significant because light originates FROM God and points humanity back TO God—the FIRST and LAST things God speaks in the Bible have to do with light.

- God created light and separated it from darkness.
 - **Genesis 1:3-4—God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.**
- God communicated with Abraham using the vast light of the stars.
- God called Israel out of Egypt and led them with LIGHT.

- God's promise to Israel through the prophet Isaiah was that there is coming a GREAT LIGHT.

Isaiah 9:2 (NLT)

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.

For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.

- Zechariah prophesied about the the birth of Jesus as:

Luke 1:78-79 (NLT)

Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace."

- Jesus self-identified as the LIGHT that Isaiah had promised—more than 20 times:
 - **John 8:12—Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."**
- The Apostle Paul experienced God's supernatural light when he was BLINDED by the glory of God when he met Jesus, and Saul became PAUL and was COMPLETELY changed!
 - Not only was Saul's name changed to Paul, but the Paul BECAME light—and we study the fruit of his new identity today as scripture!
 - God uses the writing of a murderer to communicate to His church throughout the rest of time!
- The Apostle Paul refers to the work of the Gospel as a transfer from darkness into the light:
 - **2 Corinthians 4:6—For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**
- And again in our text today:
 - **Ephesians 5: 8-9—For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.**
- Finally, in one of the last verses of the last book of the Bible Jesus calls Himself this:
 - **Revelation 22:16—I am the bright morning star."**

From beginning to end, the Bible makes it CLEAR that Jesus IS light

- *and John tells us that our new life is lived IN this light.*

How do we LIVE in this light? Paul says in vs10 that we:

Ephesians 5:10 Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.

Greek word used for "determine" is DOKIMAZO—"to test and discern"

- We are to test and discern what pleases God... HOW?? CAREFULLY!

So how can we *carefully* test and *carefully* discern what pleases God?

1. Living IN the Light

2. Living as Light

1. Living IN the Light

There are 2 ways that we live IN the light:

- Live in the light of God's WORD—following the leading of scripture.
- Live in the light of the LIVING WORD—following the leading of Jesus and imitating Him.

God gave us His Word to give us LIGHT to guide us as we live in the darkness of the world—AND—God gave us Jesus, the LIVING WORD to know and imitate and follow:

John 1:1-5

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created

except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

The Bible is like a lamp that guides us in this dark world:

Psalm 119:103-105

How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life. Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

The Word of God is like a surgical tool that performs surgery on us:

Hebrews 14:12

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

The Word teaches us right & wrong and corrects our thinking and equips us for doing good:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

1. Living IN the Light

- Live in the light of God's WORD—following the leading of scripture.
- Live in the light of the LIVING WORD—following the leading of Jesus and imitating Him.
 - *As we do this—leaning into scripture and imitating Jesus—the Holy Spirit helps us to carefully discern what is pleasing to God.*

The second way we can carefully discern what is pleasing to God is to be a people who are:

2. Living as Light—Spirit-empowered followers of Jesus—the LIVING WORD of God.

Let's look at HOW Paul words this passage

Ephesians 5:8-10—for you **were formerly darkness**, [not “IN DARKNESS, but you WERE darkness!] but **now you are Light** in the Lord; [not IN the light, but now you ARE Light!] walk as children of Light, for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth[...]

This is some RICH imagery of the contrast between darkness and light...

- Darkness represents evil, error and ignorance.
- Light representing truth and righteousness.

And Paul doesn't say that you were once IN darkness and you are now IN light.

****Although that is ALSO true!****

He says that you were once darkness but now you ARE light in the Lord!

- We ARE darkness before knowing Jesus
- We BECOME light once we come to know Jesus and follow Him

This reality that we ARE dark and then BECOME light is VERY powerful language...

It's true we all once lived IN darkness, and it's also true that as we follow Jesus we do live IN the light.

- But this isn't the WHOLE story.
 - Living IN darkness or IN light is simply describing the environment that we live in.
 - Paul is saying that as we follow Jesus we don't just live IN the light—we ARE light!

Jesus changes US. Not only does Jesus change our environment, but he changes our identity.

Jesus promised this would happen:

Matthew 6:14-16

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Christian, your life not only lived in the light, your life in Jesus now IS light!

- This is a **RADICAL** transformation of people—not just a drastic change in our environment.
- **You ARE light—set apart—set on a hill!**
 - Wherever YOU go, JESUS is more obvious.
 - Wherever YOU invest your time and talent, JESUS’ light shines!
 - When I’m trying to love my neighbor by listening to her talk about her cats, the light of Jesus is hopefully shining out of my attitude and kindness and words.
- **Because we are LIGHT, we now impact the climate, the spiritual environment around us...**
 - the light of Jesus radiates from our lives and shines into the world and into the people and into the relationships all around us.
 - people will experience JESUS as we love them with the love of Jesus.
- **YOU are not Jesus, but you are IN Jesus and Jesus is IN YOU, so His light SHINES in you and THROUGH you!!**
- You will sometimes do amazing things—sometimes say amazing things.
- Or maybe you’re like me and do & say ordinary things, but the love of Jesus—the LIGHT—will shine out for you.

Paul is saying that we are now TOTALLY different than you once were because we are LIGHT!

- Light is **TOTALLY** set apart from darkness.
- Light radiates in dark places.
- Light is easily identified whereas darkness is murky and hidden and unclear.
- Light provides opportunity for people in darkness to see.

In fact Paul says that the fruit of the light is goodness, righteousness and truth.

As we live in the dark world, our lives will shine like a light—identifying us and helping others.

Ephesians 5:9, 11

9 for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth [...]

11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness [...]

Every life bears fruit.

- If you are around someone enough you will start to see the fruit of their life.

The fruit of the Light is ALL goodness and ALL righteousness and ALL truth.

I don’t care WHO you are, you canNOT pull off “ALL goodness, righteousness and truth” on your own!

- Only God can produce that fruit in your life!
- Only God can change you and empower you to be like Him.
- We should not expect people to change things in their life that only God can change.
- In the same way, we should not try to change things in our life that only God can change.

As we live IN the light and we live AS light, and we bear the fruit of light—all goodness, righteousness and truth.

There is a direct correlation between WHERE we live, HOW we live and the FRUIT of our life.

If you want a tree to bear fruit, you plant it where it will have plenty of sunlight.

- If you plant a tree in a dark place—in a barn—it will produce little, bad fruit.

- If you plant a tree in a light place—out in the open—it will produce abundant, good fruit.

This is what Paul is saying:

Ephesians 5:9-13

for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

This metaphor of LIGHT is painting a vivid picture of the way we live in the Family of God.

- There is OPENNESS, TRANSPARENCY, HONESTY as we life life together.
- We live TOGETHER—out in the OPEN—not in closed off, compartmentalized, secret places...
- We enjoy the FREEDOM of not having hidden sins or dark corners that we keep others away from.

This new love for living openly in the light—it inevitably creates a posture toward the sin and secrecy and darkness that we witness and experience in others...

- It is impossible to enjoy the freedom and joy and peace of living in the Light while people around us are still slave-chained to the restless misery and secrecy of habitual sin and darkness.
- Just like light cannot tolerate the presence of darkness, a person living AS LIGHT cannot coexist with people claiming to be light but living AS DARK—living in secret darkness.
 - **Light and dark cannot—DO NOT coexist—One will change the other.**
 - Either the light will EXPOSE the dark places and bring GOODNESS and FREEDOM and TRUTH to those living in secret dark places, or the darkness will spread as the light grows dim among the growing cloud of dark places that have been allowed to flourish in secret.

REMEMBER—this letter to the Ephesian Church was written TO Christians ABOUT Christians.

We are not to adopt an attitude of condemnation of non-Christians.

- Dom talked about this last week—We are called to be WITH sinning non-Christians.
- Jesus modeled this for us!
- He met Zacchaeus and invited Himself over to Zacchaeus' house
 - he didn't jump into a monologue about the evils of greed and the deceitfulness of being a 1st Century tax collector.
 - Jesus met Zacchaeus in public and initiated a relationship—friendship.
 - Zacchaeus was singled out by Jesus for the purpose of introducing him to the love of God.

We are to LOVE and initiate relationship and PRIORITIZE relationship with non-Christians!

- THAT'S how we introduce an outsider to the love of God.

But someone pretending to live on the “inside”—claiming to BE LIGHT—that's different.

- Paul says to “take no part” in their lifestyle—separate yourself from their secret compartments.
- He says to “EXPOSE” them.

How do you EXPOSE something that is in the dark?—SHINE A LIGHT ON IT!

- At first glance this may seem like legalistic sin-sniffing, but it really is not.
- Paul is revealing a double-value in exposing dark places in other Christians—look:

Ephesians 5:13— But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light for everything that becomes visible is light.

First, when darkness is exposed by the light it becomes VISIBLE.

- It is ALWAYS GOOD to expose evil and shine a light on it so it can be identified.
- Darkness hides the horrible reality of evil, but LIGHT exposes it for what it really is.

We tend to fear the dark—most kids have this fear.

- *Backpacking with neighbors—tough guys by day and scared children by night...*

- This is a fear of the unknown—they don't SEE what they're afraid of...
- How do we counter fear of the dark while camping? LIGHT
- BUT the brighter the light the more is revealed...

Our fear is not REALLY a fear of darkness... I think we fear the dark because we know that the darkness allows danger to be close to us without us knowing.

This metaphor is helpful for us to understand as we read our passage today.

- Paul is saying LIGHT exposes the darkness around it, and we, living as light, will expose darkness.
- We should NEVER ignore or tolerate or permit darkness and hidden evil to lurk in God's family.

Sometimes this "exposing of dark deeds" may be done directly and sometimes it will happen indirectly.

- We are NOT the "sin police".
- Often our very obedience to God will be a testimony against hidden darkness.
- Refusing to be dishonest with finances or taxes may be all that is required to rebuke selfishness and dishonesty in some people.
- Truthfulness that costs us is very uncomfortable and weighty for a dishonest person to bear when they are used to bending truth to suit their interests.
- We may simply expose dark deeds around us indirectly—by radiating the love and goodness of Jesus.

Sometimes simply our good behavior and positive attitude are more powerful than our words.

- As we live above reproach—living openly above the possibility of criticism—people take notice.

Philippians 2:14-16a (NASB)

Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life

Exposing darkness is often a passive thing—the light of Jesus shines from us and illuminates dark places and dark deeds...

Sometimes we directly expose dark deeds in the church.

- This sounds harsh, but there is real kindness in it when done in love.

Darkness and hidden sin has ZERO benefit for anyone.

- God's Kingdom Family is supposed to shine as a light!
 - We produce good, vibrant, healthy, nourishing, appealing fruit as we enjoy Jesus together.
 - The hidden things done in secret—deeds of darkness—are unfruitful, unproductive, unappealing and barren, yielding NO benefit to anyone.
 - We are to take NO part in them.
 - We are to EXPOSE them.
 - *Greek is elegchō—to bring to light or reveal.*
 - We bring the dark things into the light in order to reveal them for what they truly are.
 - We help bring the unseen out of the darkness and into the light where it can be seen.
 - Dark deeds are unmasked and identified and dealt with when they are brought into the light.

Remember there is a double-value in this exposing of darkness:

Ephesians 5:13— But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light *for everything that becomes visible is light.*

The second value that we see in exposing dark things to the light is that light actually transforms—REDEEMS—evil, hidden, dark places into LIGHT places.

- The first stage of shining light on dark areas in others helps others see the true nature of the darkness that they are harboring in their life.
- AND shining light on dark areas actually TRANSFORMS the dark hidden areas—the destructive sin—into beautiful, Jesus-exalting, Jesus-imaging, fruit-bearing LIGHT!

This “EXPOSING” darkness in others can sound negative, or judgmental and even condemning...

- This is hard work that needs to be done in LIGHT—in love, with grace, with truth...
- This hard work is the hard work of being family—to rightly identify who is family and who is not.

When your little sister is dating some opportunistic loser what do you do? —You kill him.

- Just kidding (maybe)...

You EXPOSE HIM for what he is.

- BEFORE he works his way into the family like a worm works it's way into a dog's intestines...
- You expose him BEFORE people become OK with him being around...
- He works in secret—in darkness...
- He doesn't belong there!
- He brings pain and awkwardness and distrust.
- Dad's like, hey Billy get that guy OUT OF HERE!
- He kills fellowship and peace...
- He brings hardship to the Father's family.
- He brings BAD REPUTATION to the Father's name.
- He brings DIVISIVENESS and DISTRUST and DISCHORD and DIVORCE to the family

That guy needs to be EXPOSED so he can either be changed by the love of the Father and rightly adopted into the family and welcomed in as a participant in the family, or He needs the BOOT—to LEAVE.

- **NOT exposing dark deeds will NEVER help the family.**

This is why it is important to see Paul's intentional wording in our text:

- We don't just live IN the light, we ARE LIGHT!!
 - The moon just a massive rock—on it's own it is a cold, dark place.
 - But when exposed to the sun the moon BECOMES LIGHT.
 - We follow the path of the moon.
 - We gauge our calendar on the visible moon.
 - We can hike and feel confident in the woods under the light of the moon.

Like the moon we BECOME LIGHT when we live IN the light.

- The kingdom of God is not simply a light place where people live.
- The Kingdom of God is a light place where people are TRANSFORMED.
- The Kingdom of God is made up of people who live IN the light AND are transformed by the light to live as light.

We like to say that the Kingdom of God is wherever the King is reigning

- That's what makes Christian fellowship so good—the KING is the KING here!
- We invite and enjoy the presence of the KING together as His family.
- We CHOOSE to live in the light and to live AS light, and we get to do this TOGETHER.

And so someone living in darkness and trying to masquerade as a Christian might choose to visit the light of Christian worship, but unless they are TRANSFORMED by Jesus they remain in darkness.

Unless they are transformed by the light they will bring shame and discredit to the Family of God.

- Unless those living in darkness are brought into the light they will bring confusion into the church.
- Unless the lost who are trying to act like light are identified and exposed for what they actually are, darkness will spread and remain in the Kingdom Family of God.

This is why Paul says it is SHAMEFUL to allow it to remain—darkness spreads like a virus!

- But Paul shares a second reason we are to expose darkness and darkened lifestyles in the church—he says they need to be brought to spiritual life because they are actually DEAD.

Ephesians 5:14

For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

In quoting this ancient hymn, Paul is graphically detailing our true condition apart from Jesus.

- We are asleep—dead—in darkness—in need of RESCUE.
- People living apart from the light need to be BROUGHT INTO the light!
- How will they know they’re in darkness unless we expose the darkness?

Paul says it is shameful for God’s family to live AS light to allow people to pretend to be in the light as they suffer and sleep in the grave of a life lived in darkness.

- People living in darkness need to be SAVED!
- The dead need to be supernaturally called to life!
- The darkened minds need to be brought into the LIGHT OF LIFE!
- How will the world know their DARK condition apart from Jesus unless we LIVE AS LIGHT?
- How will lost and hopeless people find the LIGHT of Jesus unless we live as light?
- How will broken people stuck in darkness ever see the evil in the dark unless we live as light?

Jesus said that He is the light of the world—the morning star—declaring the dawn of a new Kingdom!

- We are the children of God living IN THE LIGHT!!... our nourishment is from the light that gives life.
 - Live in the light of God’s WORD—following the leading of scripture.
 - Live in the light of the LIVING WORD—following the leading of Jesus and imitating Him.
 - *As we do this—leaning into scripture and imitating Jesus—the Holy Spirit helps us to carefully discern what is pleasing to God.*
- And we live AS the light—in our identity as Kingdom Kids
 - we bear the fruit of the light, pursuing goodness, righteousness, and truth.
- We expose darkness that might be lurking among God’s Kingdom Family.
 - We lovingly expose imposters before they bring DIVISIVENESS, DISTRUST, DISCHORD and DIVORCE to the family
- We call the dead to LIFE in Jesus!
 - Our hope is found in Jesus and our hope for the lost is found in Jesus.
 - Jesus is the center of everything—the reason for everything—the purpose behind everything.
 - We make sure the King is the King wherever we are.

Some of us here today maybe need to respond to that final charge to WAKE UP!!

- Maybe you’re not trusting and following Jesus and today is the day the Lord is calling you to WAKE UP!
- Maybe you’re a Christian but you’ve fallen asleep and the Lord is calling you BACK awake!
 - WAKE UP and walk in the light of life!!
 - Jesus has come and is calling us to be free to receive and know the love of God.

We pray for God’s Kingdom to come here on earth as it is in heaven...