

## Living in the Light

A book was written by a man named **Neil Alexander** about the letter to the Ephesian church. It was entitled, “**The Epistle for Today.**” As we read the ancient letter to the church in Ephesus, **you can see that if you** live in, you could easily substitute us for them.

**Paul doesn’t start with what they shouldn’t do.** In the **previous section**, he lists what to do or to incorporate into your life as a Christ follower. (4:25-5:2) Here’s what Paul says at the beginning of chapter 4...

Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. <sup>2</sup>Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. <sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. Ephesians 4:1-3

**To summarize**, they are to be **humble, gentle, patient**, with one another and make every effort to keep unity. **That is the foundation for the next section** which we are reading that...This section 5:3-14 is **what to avoid**.

**Verses 1 and 2** are actually a **part of the section** that talks about what they should do. This is one of those chapter breaks that doesn’t really fit. Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. <sup>2</sup>Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. Those are the do’s, now for the don’ts. <sup>3</sup>Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God’s people. <sup>4</sup>Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. <sup>5</sup>You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshipping the things of this world.

**Chapter 4 has the virtue, chapter 5 has the vice.** We could dig into each of these and define them more clearly in our present culture, but I think that would be **missing the forest for the trees**.

**What is behind each of these is a belief that God is not actually good and that he is holding out** on us, not wanting us to experience everything that might seem good or pleasurable. **It’s like Adam and Eve** not believing that what God had given them was enough and that he was holding out the **knowledge of good and evil**. Satan cleverly **planted in their minds this idea** that God was withholding something good for himself.

After the list of sins, **Paul says that they need to be thankful to God.** In other words, **recognize that he is good!** We have the **capacity to be “humble, patient...” when we know that God is good**, and he has provided what we need. And that begins with an intimate relationship with him. Everything falls apart and **we are susceptible to these vices when we don’t think God is actually good**.

<sup>6</sup>Don’t be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. <sup>7</sup>Don’t participate in the things these people do. Paul’s wording seems to **indicate**

**that he is not referring to anything that he knows** about in the church. If he had, **he would have been more direct.** Not that these sins couldn't be found in the church. It is about those around them who may come to believe later. <sup>8</sup> For **once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!** <sup>9</sup> For **this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.** <sup>10</sup> Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But their **evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them,** <sup>14</sup> for **the light makes everything visible.** This is why it is said,

“Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” Ephesians 5:1-14

**The image of who God is, as light runs through the Bible.** God is described in terms of light, and fire which would have been the primary means of light **once the sun went down.**

**From the very beginning, God created light in the darkness as a way of bringing order to the chaos by creating this world.**

If you were here last week, we told the **story of Moses going into the tabernacle** to be in God's presence and receive his message to His people. After leaving God's presence, **his face would radiate or glow.** God's goodness would remain on his face. The idea of God's presence is like the sun.

**A good home study, or for a bridge group,** might be to look up all the passages that speak of **God as light.** For our purposes, **here are a couple** of them. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” **has made this light shine in our hearts** so we could know the **glory of God** that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6 **It begins with creation.** This connects with **Moses and the glory of God** showing on his face.

**God's glory is light in the darkness.** Now straight from **Jesus: Jesus** spoke to the people once more and said, “**I am the light of the world.** If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because **you will have the light that leads to life.**” John 8:12

**So how does the image help us** from the words of Paul live like we are in the light. **The answer lies in what light accomplishes. Because what light does is an example of what God does if we walk in the light of Jesus.**

Light shining **inward** exposes and cleans. This is where **we allow the light to shine on us.**

**When you turn the light on as you walk into a room,** then you **can tell how dirty a room is.** In the darkness you can **pick a few things up** and think to yourself, “**That looks pretty good.**” You would be wrong. **What you can see seems good enough,** but that is because it isn't complete. **It isn't reality. We imagine the room is clean because that makes things easier for us.**

**When I was a young youth pastor,** I was playing basketball one evening with some boys in our youth group. **Jeremy, or J-Rock** as he called himself, swatted at the ball as I was preparing to grab it. His hand hit me in the eye causing my contact to shatter in my eye. These were **primitive times**

**when I wore hard lenses.** We had to **suffer for the freedom from glasses.** Usually when you get poked in the eye the contact **squirts out.** This was a perfectly placed blow.

**The second most dangerous thing was that J-Rock had to drive me** to the nearby hospital ER. Thinking that **I might have a real problem,** the ER Dr. **fished out the shards** of contact that were floating around on my eyeball. Then he put a dropper of some sort of **solution with dye** in it. Then I held my eye open as the light shined an **infrared** light onto my eye.

**The purpose of the light was to illuminate any small cuts** in my eyeball that would otherwise be hiding. **The light exposed what was wrong so that it could be fixed.** The ER Dr. wasn't looking for cuts so he could say, **"Wow, that's too bad, you have some damage"** so that he could **sound smart** for using this **diagnostic technique.** He did it so that the next step would be how to heal those cuts.

**God protected me that day** because the light discovered no damage. And, fortunately for me, **I was able to drive myself home.**

Let's look at verse 10-14 again. <sup>10</sup>Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; **instead, expose them.** <sup>12</sup>It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. <sup>13</sup>But their **evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them,** <sup>14</sup>for **the light makes everything visible.**

**The light exposes evil deeds for what they are, not what they might appear to be. And that starts with you and me before we turn the light outward.** They might not **appear to be a big deal until** the light shines on them. Once they are visible we are to **take no part** in these things. We are even to **take no part in exposing them.** Before you get ahead of yourself, **this is not about being self-righteous** and going about pointing out everyone's sin and flaws.

**That brings us to an even deeper exposure the light brings.** The light exposes the **evil intentions behind the evil deeds.** This is **to be an encouragement** that God's light in the darkness can **help us see what evil is up to, its strategy** for bringing about destruction. But we will get to evil out there later.

**The light of Jesus can expose our intentions or motivations even when it's something that we aren't aware of.** We've practiced **the well-traveled path of self-deception** believing that our motives are good and not selfish.

But if we are living in the **light,** as God is in the **light,** then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of **Jesus,** his Son, cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

**God's light will expose evil deeds so that the blood of Jesus can clean up what has become visible.**

In this section the **focus is on language, greed, and sexual sin.** This is also not an **exhaustive list** of sins. We don't **have to work hard to look for evidence that these three** areas are a problem today. **Social media** and the political climate have allowed us to **believe that we can say or post anything** we want and **it's ok because we believe it.** Greedy people **gobbling up resources,** so

that some don't get much or withhold help. And **sex, there are no boundaries** for that expression. Well, there are in the Bible, but those have been viewed as **outdated and even bigoted**.

**Did you notice** the strange thing that just happened? **Paul makes being exposed a good thing**. We think of a **tabloid magazine exposing some movie star** or politicians' tawdry affairs. **We think being exposed by the light is negative because we believe that being vulnerable, exposed, will bring humiliation and shame**. But God's light **exposes to clean away the dirt** or, in my case, to **heal any wounds on my eye**.

**The real question is do you trust God enough to allow yourself to be exposed by the light of Jesus?** Or are you **continuing to hide, like Adam and Eve** did in the garden, because they were ashamed of their nakedness.

**To be exposed by light is positive for one other reason**. Those on the outside get to be exposed to **what the light is doing in their neighbors' lives**. **Something is exposed that is good that now is seen as desirable**. Exposed can also mean **convinced**. That makes for enlightenment. **People can see that God is really, truly good by being exposed to someone who is being transformed into his image**. But more about that later.

The light not only **exposes, but it transforms or cleans**. That is when it shines inward into our hearts and minds. **Let's turn the flashlight outward**. Light shining **outward** gives clarity and direction.

**One of the most useful aspects of having a smartphone** is that you always have a flashlight. You don't need to **keep one and hope that it has good batteries** in it or that it's charged up when you need it.

**If you are walking through the woods** at night, you can better see the **contour of the trail and any impediments or dangers** that could cause you to fall or ones that could attack you.

**Would it make any sense to not use that light if you have it?** "Only **cowards or wimps need a light to walk through the woods at night** without a light. Just watch me." That would be absurd, ridiculous. **You would be that fool who stumbled over a cliff with a flashlight in his pocket**.

**One morning I came down the stairs** to eat breakfast and begin my day. Looking into the living room I saw a dark sock laying on the floor. Lillebit can find a sock anywhere. She can even tip over clothes hampers to find and destroy a perfectly good sock. Well, **I didn't have my contacts in and I didn't turn on the living room light**.

**Angerly, I bent over to pick up the dark rolled up sock** muttering about how I can't believe this dog keeps doing this. When I put my hand on it, it was **warm and mushy**, not like a cotton or wool sock. It was a different thing that Lilly did, that I couldn't believe she was still doing.

**Once the light allows you to see it for what it is, it has nothing to do with it**. This is Paul's message. **Trust the light** of Jesus to give you **clarity on what the enemy wants to use** to destroy you and your usefulness to the kingdom.

**When you can see what the path looks like, you are better equipped to plot the right course or direction.** “It’s this way, not that way.” Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness...

“Carefully determine” =find out, put to the test, examine, or discern. **Whatever passes the test is “approved”** NIV or “pleases the Lord.”

**Look back at chapter 4** as a lens to **determine if it is of God or not.** Does it look or **sound like any of those attributes** Paul encourages them to adopt? **You could do the same with the fruit of the spirit.** Does this **promote, “love, joy, peace, patience...”**

**Why fruit of the spirit?** It’s clear with a proper understanding of the word translated...**“worthless deeds”** If you have the ability to **look at this verse in the NIV** what does it say? **It calls them “fruitless” ; they do not produce what God desires.**

**This is not a call to separate themselves off from the world because then the light cannot shine in darkness.** It is more that when you do not participate you are, by definition, confronting the darkness with light. **This does not encourage yelling at the culture because it is wrong.** Your behavior and **attitude and love confront the evil deeds** will demonstrate that you speak for God.

**We are to be ambassadors and bridge builders,** not people who build **walls and dig moles** to keep the world from **contaminating us.**

**An ambassador is of no use to the one she represents if she gets embroiled in local foolishness.**

We have looked at **what light accomplishes shining it within, and outward.** But there is **something else that light does.** If it is shined into the **right kind of surface** it reflects. Light **reflected** brings about the Kingdom of God and restoration.

**The kingdom of God is the restoration of God’s loving authority over all things.** It is happening **now and continues into eternity.** **Let’s repeat that phrase together.** “On earth as it is in heaven.”

This is what Paul is saying back in verse 8-10. <sup>8</sup> For **once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord.** (NIV says **“you are the light of the Lord.”**) So **live as people of light!** <sup>9</sup> For **this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.**<sup>10</sup> Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.

**This is a positive way to say, “don’t grieve the Holy Spirit.”** You have the light, now stop acting like **it’s just for you to keep warm.** Now, **don’t resist** what the Holy Spirit wants to do in other people because you are reflecting Jesus’ light by loving like Jesus.

That brings us to how the light helps us stop resisting and start reflecting...The light wakes you. **Light has a way of getting us out of a slumber.**

**This science tidbit is from our staff scientist, Deb Yats.** She said that your **body and brain are best woken up by the gradual growth of light.** I have **no plan to research** this because I have the utmost trust in Deb.

**We have what is called a “Sun Rise clock” that starts light growing stronger to help us wake up.** This gradually increases the light in our bedroom to **more naturally wake us up.** It seems to work for Robin, **but I like to toss a towel over it** and keep sleeping. **Also, a rooster is “natural”** but that is really a primitive alarm clock. And your neighbors will hate you.

That brings us to our last verse, 14. “Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” Ephesians 5:14

**What then are we to do once the light wakes us up?** And do this, understanding the present time: **The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber,** because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup>**The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.** So let us put aside the **deeds of darkness** and put on the **armor of light.** <sup>13</sup>Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in **carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.** <sup>14</sup>**Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,** and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh. Romans 13:11-14

**Is Jesus’ bride, his church, falling asleep at the wheel?** His light is shining right now saying to us, **“Wake up!”**

**Today’s title is “Walking in the light.” If we are going to do that then we need to begin by...Stepping into the Light.**

We are going to practice that today by having...A time of confession and repentance.

**I want to ask you to step into a time of confession and repentance.** First get in a posture that helps you open yourself to the light shining into your life. **Remember it is a good thing to be exposed by Jesus’ light** because it is for the purpose of cleaning and healing. **If you want to come forward and sit or kneel** at the prayer benches or kneel where you are. **Another way is to unfold your arms and open your hands upward** ready to receive from God.

**I’m going to guide us through some questions.**

1. Confess a sin of commission or omission.

Something I’ve done or not done.

1. Confess any habitual pattern or addiction.
2. Who is affected other than me?
3. How my self-focus and self-absorption cause me to “miss the mark”?
4. Redirect your attention toward praying for others.

**Confession is not a time to wallow, it is** a time to let the light shine inward to expose and clean followed by allowing it to direct me to others.

Practice vulnerability with a trusted brother or sister in Christ.