

Ephesians: Living in Sync with Reality
Part 12: Leave the Light On

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Ephesians 5:7-20

What happens when Christ shines on you?

1. We Are Light

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” – **Ephesians 5:8**

“For he [God the Father] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought you into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”
– **Colossians 1:13-14.**

2. We Learn to Discern

“...and find out what pleases the Lord.” – **Ephesians 5:10**

“*Find out*” translates *dokimazo*. This word means “put to the test”, “examine”, or “discern.” The life of the Christian is a life of “thinking,” of considering, or “working out” what pleases God and then doing that.

This is the same words as in Philippians 1:10. Paul’s prayer for “smart love.” Listen to that text: “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to *discern [dokimazo]* what is best and be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...” – **Philippians 1:9-10**

Paul says our love is to be thoughtful, that we discern what is “best” not just good or good enough, but best. But how do we know what is best?

- We need to learn to ‘read’ these situations in light of Jesus’ own pattern of life, especially in how he gives himself for us death on the cross. This becomes the “lens” through which we discern what pleases God.
- We have the Scriptures which tell us what Jesus is like; that give us Jesus’ teaching, and the instructions in the letters of the New Testament.
- We have the presence of the Spirit, speaking to our hearts. Helping illuminate how to embody the “Jesus-way” in each situation, even each *messy* situation.
- We have the wisdom of the wise – of the community of faith, both now and in history.

Discerning' means we have to trust and follow what God is calling us to, even if it doesn't seem the most obvious way.

3. We Leave the Light On

Listen to what Jesus says to us, to his people:

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." – **Matthew 5:14-16**

We are the light that Jesus has left on in the world.

We are distinct *from* the world *for* the sake of the world. – *Tim Keller*

The missional goal:

"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness," says Paul, "but rather expose them."

"But everything exposed by the light becomes visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light." – **Ephesians 5:11; 13.**

What's the point? The goal? That the dark of the darkness is exposed so that it would give way to the light!

How does that work in the real world?

"How can we show distinction without also displaying a holier-than-thou attitude? How can we avoid participation in sin without being reactionary, prudish, and judgmental?"

– *Klyne Snodgrass*

Attitudes and actions: Paul has already insisted these are part of living in sync with our new life in Christ – the call for "humility, gentleness, and patient love." (**Ephesians 4:2**).

4. We, Together, are Filled with the Spirit for Wise Witness

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ **speaking** to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. **Sing[ing]** and **mak[ing] music** from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always **giving thanks** to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Submitting to one another** out of reverence for Christ." – **Ephesians 5:15-21**

“Be filled with the Spirit...”

- Allow the Holy Spirit to be the controlling factor in your life, in your decisions.
- The communal aspect of the Spirit-filled life:
 - The whole community, living as “light”, with the Spirit’s power at the center of our life. “Speaking, singing, making music, giving thanks, submitting to one another.”
 - Being filled with the Spirit, leads to lives of praise and mutual looking out for the best interests of each other. And being the light, leads more and more people to the light of Christ.

Life Group Discussion and Reflection

Open Up

Fear of the dark, or nyctophobia, is very common in children and, in varying degrees, in adults. Were you ever afraid of the dark? If so, why do you think that was? Did you ever have a “night-light” or way to help manage that? Why does that help?

Dig In

Read Ephesians 5:7-14.

1. Paul uses the image of “light” and “dark” as a metaphor for the spiritual condition and the moral implications. Paul gives us the strong identity statement that believers “were” darkness and “are” now light. How have you seen that to be true in your own story?
2. How does God’s work of grace, making you light, motivate you to *want* to live as children of the light?
3. Look again at v.10. Paul emphasizes the need for “finding out” or “discerning” what pleases the Lord. What are the main resources God has given us for this discerning process (if needed, see the notes above for more ideas)? Which do you gravitate toward? Which do you need to give more emphasis to?
4. Paul instructs us essentially to “leave the light on”, to have “nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness but expose them.” (v.11). Why is this instruction so important for believers? What’s at stake?
5. **Read Ephesians 5:15-21.** Where are the areas of life that you specifically need to be “very careful about how you live – not as unwise but as wise”?
6. In what ways might you need to make the most of “every opportunity” to shine the light of Christ in your current context?
7. Being “filled with the Spirit” has implications that put us in close proximity with each other, and in a way of relating that builds us up in Jesus (5:9-21). How have you found these features working together to build us up together?

Prayer: We are instructed in Ephesians 5:20 to give thanks to the Lord always. Take some time to thank him for his gracious work of making us to be “light”. Give thanks for the many ways that God is at work in and around us. Pray for those things you discussed in your study – where you are learning to grow and be a light.