

# Walking in light, love and wisdom

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[0:00] So this is Ephesians 5, verse 1. This is God's word. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children,! And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us! As a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But among you, there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure, no immoral, impure, or greedy person, such a person is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Live as children of light, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. And find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

[1:29] It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

That is why it is said, Wake up, sleeper! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Be very careful then how you live, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs.

From the Spirit, sing and make music from your heart to the Lord. Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Almighty God, we do thank you for your word, the Bible, and that this is the way, the way that you've ordained and planned to speak to us, your people, today. And so I pray that you'd bless us, even in the reading of your word, that you'd move our hearts, and Lord, even as we now think about aspects of what it means for us, for our lives, we pray that you'd centre our affections on Jesus, that you'd move our hearts, and that you'd teach us, and correct us, perhaps, on the things that maybe we've got wrong, or the way that we've lived, not in accordance with you.

[2:59] Bless us and teach us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So similar to the kids, it's 2 a.m.

You wake up lying in bed, you need the bathroom, here's a different example. Bleary-eyed, you stumble out and fumble in the dark to make your way there. You need to be quiet, so no one else wakes up, and you don't want to turn the light on, for that reason.

Plus, you don't want to wake up too much either, because then it's a nightmare, getting back to sleep. But then the irritating thing happens, in an attempt at stealth, in the dark, you stub your toe. And at 2 a.m., that is enough to make your blood boil. Especially if it's something that someone else has left, in your path. It's a silly example, I know, but in that instance, we believe that keeping the light off is in everyone's best interests, but what is it that's caused the problem?

It's the darkness. Light makes danger visible, but darkness conceals it. And there are a lot more, perhaps you might say, dangerous things that happen in the dark, than stubbing your toe.

[4:19] Most people, if they're up to no good, will do it at night, or in the shadows. Not so they don't stub their toe, but so that they don't get caught. Equally, people will avoid doing things at night.

You know, some people say, I wouldn't go for a walk in the dark, because it's unsafe. This morning, we're not thinking about physical darkness at night, or if there's a power cut.

But when people, we're thinking about spiritual darkness. When people live in spiritual darkness, when people walk in disobedience to God's good plan for their lives, and when they do that, and they have no idea that they're living that way.

The reason that people live and that kind of, you know, have no idea is because they think no one cares how I live, and they think that no one's watching.

That it's just kind of unaware, just getting on with your life. But Paul, actually, he isn't writing to those people. He isn't writing to people who live like that.

[5:25] He's writing to the church. He's writing to the believers in Ephesus about how they should walk, or how they might live, you could say.

Over the last few weeks, and I mention it every week so that it sticks, the kind of phrase that keeps coming, we come back to in Ephesians all the time, is about how we walk. We've seen it several times, how we walk, how we walk.

Same in today's passage. The headline verse, right at the beginning of chapter four, he says, I urge you to live. That word for live is actually the word walk. You can flick over and look. It says, I urge you to walk, to live a life, to walk in a way that is worthy of the calling you've received.

In Ephesus, people outside the church walked in darkness. It was, you know, real obvious darkness. It was the home of the, of the kind of the pagan worship.

There's a goddess called Artemis. They had a big temple there. The kind of the main hub of kind of, you know, dark magic and home of kind of spiritual idolatry.

[6:34] And so the whole culture in and around Ephesus was filled with this cultish, demonic, often highly sexualized pagan rituals. Today, in the 21st century, the outworking of sin looks different to that than it does to Ephesus.

We're not surrounded by it in the same way. But it might look different, but actually the trademarks are still in place. It's still at its heart, the same core thing.

It's, it's spiritual darkness. And the message to the Ephesian church is to, as you, for people who've, especially who've, who've once were darkness, you'll see that later in verse eight.

It says, you were once in that place with them, but now you've been brought into the light. Now that you're, now that you've been brought out from darkness into the light, now you need to walk differently. You need to live differently as a believer.

You need to walk, and there's three times he uses walk. You need to walk in love. You need to walk in the light. And you need to walk in wisdom. Those are three things. The problem we have is that spiritual darkness, you know, in Ephesus it was obvious, but the problem we have is that sometimes spiritual darknesses, living that way is not always obvious.

[7:51] That kind of language sounds quite intense, doesn't it? Spiritual darkness. And the reason we don't always notice what it looks like is that actually it's more ordinary than we realize.

we are all influenced by the culture we live in, and sometimes we don't realize, we don't see, and living, and actually living as light would actually make us stand out.

The danger is kind of compromising, you might say, going soft on what is dark than exposing it. But this is kind of where I want us to go today, and today's passage is really challenging for believers. It's really challenging because what it's teaching us as Christians who want to walk in the light is that actually we're called to not have even a hint of it, to not partner with it at all, but rather walk in love, light, and wisdom to expose it.

Walk in love, light, and wisdom to expose it. Our principle then, as we jump into the passage, the principle is this, that our walk as God's children is to imitate our Heavenly Father.

[9:04] Our walk as God's children is to imitate our Heavenly Father. You see with me, in verse 1, what does he say? He says, follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children.

A better word, I think, perhaps than following an example is to imitate, to copy, and we're to copy as children. Now that is not a strange idea, is it, that children copy their parents?

People notice how similar children are to their parents, how, not just, you know, obviously how they look, but, you know, how they behave, mannerisms, what frustrates, and even down to kind of their sense of humour.

The reason parents want to be good role models and have other adults in their lives is so that, that what and who they imitate kind of leads and guides them to be, you know, become well-rounded adults who are not obnoxious or lazy or unkind, but who know the value of work, think of others in a good way and contribute to society.

So that's what we want to happen. Unfortunately, children also pick up our bad habits and traits. That's why the phrase exists, which I don't think is, it's not a good one, but I probably have used it. [10:26] Do as I say, not as I do. But that actually is impossible for a child. We say that, but actually, the child learns by, they see what the parent or the adult does and they copy them.

Because that's what they see and that's what they do. Paul writes that we as God's children are to imitate him. Imitate, it means that we're imitating our heavenly father.

And right here, we get one of the most, we actually looked at it on Thursday in one of our midweek groups, we get one of the most beautiful aspects of becoming a follower of Jesus. We're adopted in a new spiritual family where a new relationship begins between the believer and God becomes our father.

And as adopted children, what that means is that we have the same standing before the living God as Jesus himself. Just think of how God the father, what he thinks of Jesus and what he thinks of Jesus is exactly what he thinks of anyone who follows him, any of his children.

Everything that God gives to his son, he gives to every believer. But likewise, Jesus only does what his father tells him.

[11:50] Jesus says so himself in John's gospel. He says, I do the will of the father. And so, when we see Jesus doing the will of the father, it is, we are then to live like that, to imitate, to imitate our heavenly father.

When adoption happens in our world, we have friends that have adopted children, some, and some actually, we've got one family in London, they have five of their own children and then they adopted two more.

We've got a big family. But actually, it's a great example because what you see is they don't treat the two adopted children any differently to the other five.

That would be awful, wouldn't it? The two adopted children receive exactly the same love and care.

That is a picture of, God the father doesn't treat us differently to how he treats Jesus Christ.

That is what the relationship really that actually here, right here, is the one that's teaching us how we walk. Knowing we're adopted by a heavenly father shapes how we walk.

[13:05] We don't choose, you know, children don't choose their family. But what happens is, you know, actually it doesn't matter how you behave, you will always, we will always be part of the family that you're born into.

Same with a spiritual family. Once you're adopted into God's family, that is your identity forever. You can't change it. You belong to him and he to you.

It is a status that doesn't change. We can't become more of a child or less of a child with how we behave. With Angus, I have this, I have this little mantra.

Well, I try to say most nights, I have to try not to get emotional, but I say to him, Angus, if you're good, do I love you more?

And he says, no. Then I say, Angus, if you've done something you shouldn't have, do I love you less? And he says, no. And then I say, how much do I love you?

[14:12] And he says, the same all the time. And I say, and who loves you the most with a love that never changes? And he says, God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. When I call to imitate to follow God's example, we walk as children who are dearly loved, with a love that doesn't go up and down depending on how God feels, but it is constant and never changes.

The place where we see that love expressed is in the gospel. This is the gospel, which we're going to move to kind of the second point is that Jesus imitated his Father walking in love, giving himself up for us.

In Paul, in verse two, Paul writes, and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The love of Jesus Christ in giving himself is the model for how we're supposed to love others, how we walk in love. It's the high point. The gospel really is, the cross is, it's the high point, the fullest demonstration of love coming from the character of what God is like.

You know, this isn't just, we might think that this is just the character of Jesus, but we believe in a triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all together.

[15:41] The cross wasn't just Jesus' plan, but it was the plan of the triune God planned before time. So we see the love of Jesus, we also see the heart of the Father.

Father. So we see when we see the cross, we see the love of Jesus dying for us, we see the heart of the Father for us, and it is more than just a model of how to live.

Yes, we need to live lives that reflect the cross, but look at the second half of the verse. And he gave it, he loved us, and he gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice.

The language here, it's lifted straight from the Jewish sacrificial system. When it says Jesus gave up, when we think of giving something up, we think like the past few, like last three weeks I've given up chocolate.

But like, it doesn't mean like he gave something up that was bad for him. He didn't give up a way of life that was sinless, he was perfectly sin, sinful, he was perfectly sinless.

[16:46] No, it means that he offered himself, he gave up his life as the payment for sins. That is the extent of his love. It knows no bounds, it knows no limits. He loves to the utmost.

If someone is willing to die for you so that you don't, to offer up their own body, there is only one explanation. It is done because of, that is the most powerful demonstration of love that there is.

sacrifice. I said it's lifted from the sacrificial system where we've got two words. We've got the offering which we've said and we've got the word sacrifice.

sacrifice. It's looking back, it's echoing that an animal was offered by a priest and sacrificed who would die in place of the Israelites.

At the cross, instead of an animal, Jesus is that sacrifice. That's why he's referred to as the Lamb of God. At any time, he could have stepped down from the cross but he offered himself.

[17:49] He wasn't offered by someone else. He offered himself and so he is both priest and offering and in doing so, he became the means by which we're forgiven.

The full payment has been made. The full debt is cancelled. If you want to know what love is, what it looks like for someone who, for someone who walked in love his entire life, this was the end point of a life walked in love.

It's love in its purest form. It's where we look to and see love not as an abstract concept but in action for you and for me. This is the means by which we're forgiven and the means by which we become God's children.

He takes us in and in exchange gives us his standing and we receive his sonship. We become dearly loved children. You know, this is, when we really take that on board, the adoption and the kind of exchange at the cross, the permanent status that we have of God's children, this is really what's going to rewire your heart around kind of the problem that's going to come at us.

Because what it means is that, you know, if that status as a child of God is permanent and will never change, it means that instead of needing people's approval, instead of needing people's approval, and we all want that, instead of needing that, we have the approval of the only opinion that actually matters.

[19:22] You know, the only opinion that actually matters is the one of your heavenly Father who created you, who loves you as his beloved, dear child, and that love never changes, all because of what Jesus has done in your place.

When you put it like that at this moment right now, you might be thinking, why would we ever be tempted to live differently? This is just great. The gospel is such good news. The reality is we are like a bucket full of holes and the truth easily drips out.

We need it topping up, but it drips out just slowly, but bit by bit, which is why we're going to move to kind of our problem. This is the problem for us as believers and the problem in the Ephesian church, the problem is that we're tempted to compromise our walk surrounded by the world.

In many ways, if you heard that from last week, it's a bit similar, but the emphasis here is slightly different. The emphasis is the temptation to compromise. You see what Paul writes in verse 3.

Look with me. He says, but among you there must not even be a hint. He goes on to list many different sins, but he says not even a hint. Even if you detect, get any whiff of kind of sin or darkness, be ready for it and be on alert.

[20:49] Make sure you, you know, if you know that a power cut is coming, if darkness is on its way, what do you do? You get prepared, you get the candles in. He's like, there's got to be not a hint of this.

Now, when you read this, not a hint, you think, oh, he's going to talk about like some horrible, like really extreme sin that like we'd all be shocked at.

Don't go anywhere near that. What's striking is actually what comes is kind of very ordinary kind of temptations that day to day we wouldn't blink at.

Look what I, look at, I'm going to pick one out in verse 4. I'm just going to go in on this one. He says, there shouldn't be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking because it's out of place.

Now, you picture this scene, you're at work and the banter descends to joking that is kind of, you know, get a group of lads together or a group of people and it just, it started off kind of funny but then it just descends and it just ends up a bit tasteless and a bit crass.

[22:04] Or you're out for a drink with friends and the chat becomes gossipy. It's just putting people down who aren't there and it's kind of greedy for the limelight of putting people down. Or you hear people kind of talking about, you know, dodgy deals and cutting corners in the way that they do stuff and you want to find out more.

When we hear those things and it's kind of everyday, there is the temptation, isn't there, that when you hear the joke that's just slightly inappropriate, you don't want to seem awkward so you kind of laugh anyway.

you know that dodgy deals are legal but you nod along and we say to ourselves well, you know, it's kind of assholes them, it's harmless, it's not hurting it's just a bit of banter, I don't want to get things to get all awkward between us in the office.

Here, what we read is a different story. we struggle to respond to that because we actually fear that if we don't, we fear their reaction.

It'll make it weird in the office, it'll spoil the atmosphere in the group and we don't want to be labelled as that type of Christian, the sin police. Verse 7 couldn't be any clearer.

[23:28] It says, do not be partners with them. Now that doesn't mean that you can't hang out and go for a beer and have a nice relationship.

That's not what it's saying. It's saying that that behaviour is totally out of kin with walking as imitating your father. In verse 4 it says, it's a little phrase but it means a lot, it says it's out of place.

The place is really important because as God's people where God uses this imagery of kind of a temple language, the church. As God's people, God dwells in us by his spirit.

We are the place where God lives. The church is the living temple. So kind of even just laughing nervously along and nodding, it's out of place. It wouldn't happen in the temple of God.

It shouldn't happen in the church of God. The world tries to frame this as innocent, doing nobody any harm. But the reality is it's not loving, it's unwise and it's dangerous, walking in the dark, partnering with it.

[24:39] In verse 5 we see the consequences and this is why it says, that's why the therefore comes in verse 7. It says people who are walking that way, that's their life pattern, who don't think twice about it, it says they have no inheritance.

It says God's wrath is coming upon them. That's terrifying language. It's terrifying and it's there for the church to know as a warning for those who don't want to change, you want to make darkness their home.

In the same way you can stub your toe because you don't want to walk with the light on, spiritually if we walk and even just compromise without thinking about our walk, without giving it a second thought then, even in ways that we're not even aware of, here's the one thing I want to be clear, you won't stop being a daily love child, that won't change, that's your status, but you will be walking and living in a manner that's not like a child.

Does that make sense? You won't stop it, but you're not living like one. It's still rebellion from how your father calls you to walk and more than that, Jesus has to die for that.

So the question then is, I know that's really challenging stuff in there, how do we respond as dearly loved children? Which brings us kind of a final point, our response, we get to walk filled with the spirit as children of love, light and wisdom.

[26:13] The response that we have as people of God is not natural. in verse 18 there is this command that on first read it does sound kind of strange.

Look at me in verse 18 it says, end of verse 18, it says instead be filled with the spirit. It's strange because we know, even from the book of Ephesians that for anyone who puts their trust in Jesus, salvation, what happens when you get eternal life is that the spirit of God comes and lives in every believer in his fullness when you're saved.

And so there's a strange question isn't there? If we have the fullness of God, the spirit living in us, why do we need to be told be filled? We're already filled, why do we need to say be filled? This is what that verse means. It means we have the spirit but being filled is actually when we consciously live in alignment with the spirit within us when we're becoming more like Jesus. The spirit filling every part of our lives so that we walk like Jesus Christ. And what we see is the whole passage comes full circle because as we become more like Jesus, we imitate our father. [27 : 34] And as we walk as children, children of love, light and wisdom, verse 19 tells us what this looks like. it looks like speaking to one another, speaking to another psalms, the truth, hymns and songs from the spirit, sing and make music to your heart to the Lord, giving thanks to God in everything.

Have you noticed that this is just another angle of speaking the truth in love to grow to maturity, to become the fullness of Christ? we speak the truth, we sing in psalms, the walk is actually a walk of worship, that is the way to walk in love, light and wisdom.

And when we do all that, we won't be partnering with darkness. Instead of nodding and laughing, our lives will expose it to bring it out into the light. So that others know with gentleness and wisdom. Now, I've got to say, that doesn't always, when we say about exposing it, it doesn't mean we have to do everything with a confrontation. It just means, you know, if you, to get it kind of practical, if there is that coarse joking, it doesn't mean, it means maybe moving away when there's that kind of joking going on.

It means if there is somebody gossiping, just not engaging. It means gently, maybe telling, you know, you'd rather not talk about that right now. And why? Because in our hearts there is a song to Jesus.

[29 : 05] we are the temple of God full of light in a dark world. That is who we are.

We speak the truth in love. We speak to another with psalms, hymns and songs from the spirit. We make music in our hearts, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything.

Wake up, sleep, arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. As we come in for landing, to walk in the light is to walk in the love of Christ, which is to walk wisely.

Walking and speaking with a worshipful heart, to walk offering ourselves as Christ offered himself for us. We don't have to stumble through a dark hallway anymore in the shadows. Jesus has turned the lights on in our hearts with his love and wisdom.

He offered himself for all the times that even though we are adopted children, we've forgotten and we've compromised and we've walked as if we weren't. It's a massive temptation. I know it's hard.

[30 : 11] It's the day-to-day reality of living in our world, but Jesus calls us to be light. He calls us to live with wisdom and to be filled with his spirit, which means to be filled with the light of Jesus.

Let me pray. Amen. Almighty God, sometimes we come to your word and it challenges, it really does.

And as we reflect upon the way that we've walked as children of God, we recognise that there are times when we do compromise and we thank you that we can know that your forgiveness is always there for us.

We thank you that you never, as adopted children, that status is totally secure, that you'll always be our father and that when we've messed up you don't love us any less.

You love us exactly the same because your steadfast love is consistent and sure and true that we can rely on. And we can call out to you as our father and ask for help.

[31 : 18] But I do pray that you would equip us and help us in our workplace to be light in the Lord. Equip us where there is behaviour or things that we normally, even just ordinary ways that we don't even realise, help us to live a life of godly integrity, of light that shows what that danger looks like.

And so we just commit it into your hands and we thank you that you give us your spirit, you've filled us with your spirit to empower us to live as your children. We ask for this in his name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.