

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture on **PSG page 150** and ask **Question #1: When have you been afraid of the dark?**

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life** on **PSG page 151**, to the introduction that reminds us that, like moths, people are attracted to light.

SAY: "Today we will look at the benefits of living as children of light."

Reinforce **The Point** on **PSG page 151: Shine the light of Christ.**

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to illuminate us by His Word so that we can clearly see to walk in the light. Ask Him to show us the dangers of walking in darkness.

SESSION 6 I AM A LIGHT



The Point

Shine the light of Christ.

The Bible Meets Life

Sin and darkness abound in our world. It always has, but our culture has become more open and blatant about sin. Worse, our society is increasingly embracing and endorsing sin, no longer even

calling it sin. But sin is still sin. When we come to Christ, the Light of the world, and live as light, we present a sharp and inviting contrast to the darkness of sin.

The Passage

Ephesians 5:8-14

The Setting

Paul wrote Ephesians (Eph. 1:1) while he was imprisoned (3:1; 6:20), probably in Rome. Many scholars believe Paul wrote this letter intending for it to go primarily to the church in Ephesus (1:1). Others believe Paul intended the letter to circulate generally among several churches, one of which was in Ephesus. Either way, Paul wrote to encourage Christians in their calling to shine the light of Christ in the darkness.

Ephesians 5:8-10

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light—

9 for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth—

10 testing what is pleasing to the Lord.

1 ▶ **Verse 8.** In the verses that precede Ephesians 5:8-14, Paul warned against sin in view of the wrath of God that is “coming on the disobedient” (Eph. 5:6). Impending wrath is a compelling reason not to be partners in disobedience. Another compelling reason is that believers are children of light. Partnership in disobedience contradicts who we are!

Paul turned to the theme of **light** in contrast to **darkness** in Ephesians 5:8. Paul, of course, referred to spiritual light and darkness. Spiritually, darkness and disobedience go together. Light and disobedience do not.

Believers are to live consistently with something dramatic that has happened to them. Every believer in Christ has experienced a transformation from darkness to light. Paul wrote straightforwardly and strikingly that **you were once darkness**. We might have expected Paul to have written that believers were once *in* darkness. Such a statement would be true. Paul’s point here, however, is not only that believers were once in dark surroundings or circumstances or even in a realm of dark influences. His point is that believers themselves were expressions of spiritual darkness. Apart from Christ, people are not only in darkness, darkness is in them. It defines them.

Earlier, Paul described unbelievers as “darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts” (4:18). The picture of unbelief is dark indeed.

Thankfully, believers are no longer identified with darkness. Though you were darkness, **now you are light**. Note the tense change: “you *were* ... now you *are*.” In going from the past tense to the present tense, we’ve experienced a dramatic change. The difference in us is like the difference between night and day! Darkness no longer defines us. Darkness has given way to radiance!

In Ephesians, Paul gave us other dramatic pictures of salvation as well. He wrote that “God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses” (2:4-5).

STUDY THE BIBLE Ephesians 5:8-10



10 minutes

SUMMARIZE: Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on page 152.

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 5:8-10.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 1** to explain the theme of light in contrast to darkness:

- *In the past you were darkness.*
- *Now you are light.*
- *You are light in the Lord.*
- *Live as children of light.*

DISCUSS: Question #2
(PSG, p. 152): What are some words that describe your life before you came to know Christ?

GUIDE: Refer group members to **DIGGING DEEPER** on **PSG page 153** for further insight on the imagery of **Darkness and Light** and how they represent our lives before and after we came to Christ.

SAY: “It is of crucial importance that we recognize the order of Paul’s reasoning in Ephesians. What God has done comes first. What we are to do follows. God has made us alive in Christ. He has saved us. He has transformed us from darkness to light. Now that God has acted, we are to live obediently.”

Paul also declared, “You were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (vv. 12-13). To synthesize these images, Christians have gone from death to life, from being foreigners to citizens, and from darkness to light. ◀

Are such images too dramatic for expressing what has happened to us in receiving salvation? Someone might think, “My conversion was not dramatic at all. I knew it was the right decision to believe in Christ as my Savior, so I did. It was that simple.” Frankly, a simple human decision is not the whole story. Paul’s images of dramatic transformation convey that conversion to Christ is a wonderful and supernatural work. Whatever our sins were, only the cross could answer for them. Whatever our age and circumstances, we were darkness and, now, we are light. A great Savior rescued and transformed helpless sinners. That is dramatic.

How did this transformation take place? The essential answer is: **in the Lord**. It was the Lord’s work. By His work, we are united with the light of the world (John 8:12) and in relationship with the “Father of lights” (Jas. 1:17).

This reflects that salvation is fully by grace. Paul wrote, “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). We have not transformed ourselves from darkness to light. God has done it. Paul also wrote, “God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

After describing this transformation, Paul commanded his readers to **live as children of light**. Paul’s logic is simple: This is who you are, so live like it. If you are children of light, then live as children of light.

It is of crucial importance that we recognize the order of Paul’s reasoning in Ephesians. What God has done comes first. What we are to do follows. God has made us alive in Christ. He has saved us. He has transformed us from darkness to light. Now that God has acted, we are to live obediently. Theologians refer to this order as moving from the indicative to the imperative. The indicative refers to the fact of what God has done for us, the imperative to God’s command to us. This means that our obedience to God is grounded in what God has already done for us. God’s work precedes His people’s work. Christian living depends on

grace. It also means that God demands that believers actively obey Him. He gives commands and we are responsible for obeying them. Obedience is not automatic. We are to obey actively and intentionally.

Verse 9. To explain the obedient lifestyle, Paul blended the metaphors of **light** and **fruit**. Certain things come forth from light the way that fruit comes forth from a vine or tree. Jesus said that “every good tree produces good fruit” (Matt. 7:17). He also said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me” (John 15:5). Paul wrote of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and the fruit of righteousness (Phil. 1:11).

2 ▶ We can readily grasp the idea of **the fruit of the light**. We are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14) because the light of Christ illumines us. The fruit that our lives produce is to express Christ’s light. Such fruit **consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth**. “Goodness” refers to kindness and generosity. “Righteousness” in this case refers to right living. “Truth” means moral integrity. Darkness, on the other hand, is associated with hard-heartedness (Eph. 4:18). Children of light will not be hard-hearted toward goodness, righteousness, and truth. There is a fundamental, ethical distinction between light and darkness. The difference is between good and evil living, right and wrong behavior and attitudes. ◀

3 ▶ **Verse 10.** As children of light, how are we to pursue fruitfulness? One key answer to that question is by **testing what is pleasing to the Lord**. That is, we are to assess carefully what is pleasing to the Lord. We are to examine our courses of action. We are to discern, learn, and find out what pleases the Lord. Elsewhere, Paul encouraged us to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2). We are called to seek out actively the will of God by faith and clarify our understanding of it.

A large part of “testing what is pleasing to the Lord” is learning and searching the Scriptures for the guidance that they hold. Often, the will of God in a matter is plainly stated in Scripture. In these cases, Scripture’s “training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16) is direct and straightforward. In other cases, the Bible does not give explicit direction that matches a decision in front of us but still gives guidance. God helps us see what pleases Him as we pray and as we seek wisdom from other Christians. We have the promise that our prayerful search for wisdom will not be in vain

GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG page 153**, to the following bullet points:

- *Live lives full “of all goodness, righteousness and truth.”*
- *Test “what is pleasing to the Lord.”*

Ask volunteers to read the following passages from **PSG page 154**:

- *Romans 12:2*
- *Matthew 5:14-16*
- *James 4:4*

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 2** to provide more insight into idea of “the fruit of the light.”

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 3** to explain what “testing what is pleasing to the Lord” means.

DISCUSS: Question #3 (PSG, p. 155): What does living in the light look like?

(Alternate: What are some ways we can be light in the darkness?)

TRANSITION: “In the next verses we discover how to expose the fruitless works of the darkness.”

STUDY THE BIBLE

Ephesians 5:11-14



10 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 5:11-14.

GUIDE: Refer group members to the author’s comments on **PSG page 156** about how our nation is drifting away from the biblical principles. We are moving away from light and drifting toward the darkness.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 4** on this page and page 157 to show the contrast between verse 9, “the fruit of the light” and verse 11, “the fruitless works of darkness.” In this passage we are commanded:

1. *Don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness.*
2. *But instead, expose the works of darkness.*

(Jas. 1:5). Our Shepherd will lead us “along the right paths for his name’s sake” (Ps. 23:3). As God shows us what is pleasing to Him, we are to walk in obedience. ◀

Ephesians 5:11-14

11 Don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them.

12 For it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret.

13 Everything exposed by the light is made visible,

14 for what makes everything visible is light. Therefore it is said: “Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Verse 11. Christians have become light, but live in a world that remains dark. We struggle with what Paul would call “this darkness” (Eph. 6:12). How are we to relate to the darkness of the world? Two commands answer this question.

4 ▶ The first command is **don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness**. In Ephesians 5:7, Paul instructed believers not to be partners with the disobedient. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul wrote, “Don’t become partners with those who do not believe. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness?” This is not a prohibition of friendships with unbelievers (see 1 Cor. 5:9-10). Jesus Himself was known as a friend of sinners (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). We are not, however, to be in partnerships with unbelievers in the sense of participating in the “works of darkness.”

The works of darkness are “fruitless” in that they do not produce good. Sin may promise great things, but it fails to deliver anything of lasting and real value. Examples of this are plentiful. A child may see disrespect and dishonesty toward his or her parents as the path to freedom but discover that it is the path to pain and more restrictions. A Christian high school student may be enamored with the popularity of a clique of his or her peers, even though the popularity

was bought with dishonesty and crudeness. Over time, the student likewise becomes dishonest and crude and loses the respect of people who matter to him.

Sin promises a fuller life. Instead, it delivers death. As James wrote, “after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death” (Jas. 1:15). How do children of light relate to a dark world? First, “don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness.” ◀

5 ▶ The second command is to **expose** the works of darkness. If a bright light shines in a room that has long been dark and unattended, many things may show. There may be dirt and trash. Roaches and rodents may have moved into the space. Shining the light makes the character and condition of the space clearly visible.

We can expose darkness by boldly shining the light of Christ. Goodness, righteousness, and truth are in stark contrast to selfishness, moral impurity, greed, and deception. Chastity has a distinct beauty that sensuality cannot match. In Philippians 2:14-15 Paul challenged believers to be “children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world.”

Of course, not all people will applaud us for boldly shining the light of Christ. Some will see the distinction between themselves and the children of light and resent the light. They will criticize the light to try to justify their own darkness. Others, however, will be attracted to the light. Our highest hope and intent in exposing darkness is to bring people into the light of Christ. What Christ has done for you, He can and will do for others. You were a sinner in need of a Savior. Those who are now darkness may also see their need and find deliverance in Christ their Savior.

We need to emphasize that smug pride should not motivate us. Our goal is not to establish our personal superiority over others. Our goal in exposure of the works of darkness is conversion. We shine light so that some will see its beauty and come to the Light of the world. ◀

6 ▶ Verse 12. There is a strong common sense reason not to participate in the works of darkness: **for it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret.** The evil character of the deeds is confirmed when people do the deeds in guarded secrecy. If something would be genuinely shameful to speak of publicly, it is shameful to do or say privately.

Perhaps you have seen a dog take a piece of forbidden food and sneak behind the furniture to hide while he eats it. He wants to avoid the scolding he thinks he would receive if

DISCUSS: Question #4
(PSG, p. 157): **In what ways can we expose the darkness?**

SAY: “We can expose the darkness by boldly shining the light of Christ.”

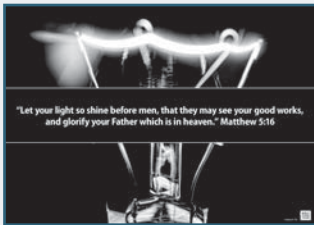
SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 5** to explain how light exposes darkness.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 6** on this page and page 158 to explain why that which is shameful veils itself in secrecy.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Ask group members to share the titles of TV news shows that feature an exposé format. (Examples might include *60 Minutes*, *48 Hours*, and so forth.) These shows bring to light things which typically are illegal and are hidden—done in secret. That’s exactly what the light does from a spiritual perspective: it shines light into the dark, hidden things and brings them to light.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 7** on this page and page 159 to explain how light makes everything visible and exposes what was hiding in the darkness.

LEADER PACK: Display **Item 11: Light** to show a variety of lights and how they function when displayed. Ask group members to share the purpose of the lights shown.



GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG page 157**, to the words of the children's song, "This Little Light of Mine." We may have sung these words as children, but we should live them as adults.

discovered. The scene can be comical and might even make it onto social media.

Sadly, full grown men and women secretly try to hide profoundly shameful behaviors. A married man or woman may pursue romantic and sexual adventure outside of marriage. Secrecy is important to them because they would be ashamed for their deeds to be known. Some people have been devastated by shame when a secret pornography habit has come to light.

The point is not that privacy is bad. It can be healthy. We do not desire an audience for some perfectly wholesome behaviors. If, however, we are seeking secrecy because we would be ashamed for people to know of our words and behaviors, we need to separate ourselves from those words and behaviors.

Ask yourself, "How would I feel if what I'm considering doing or saying were broadcast publicly? Would I be comfortable if my behaviors were known?" Paul's reasoning seems to be along these lines: if you would be ashamed to speak of something, don't participate in it! ◀

7 ▶ Verses 13-14. After all, secret things will eventually be known. **Everything exposed by the light is made visible, for what makes everything visible is light.** People who live away from city lights see an illustration of this on most mornings. Before dawn, the world is covered in darkness. A person may look out over the landscape, but objects and animals are not visible. After the sun rises, the features and occupants of the land are in plain view in the light.

Light shines now in the lives of believers. The light of Christ puts purity and love on display in us. This light is in sharp contrast with the works of darkness and can disclose the true character of those works.

Light will shine on every life in the coming judgment. Things that are secret now will be exposed. When the Lord comes, He "will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5).

Believers as well as unbelievers need to take heed. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Unbelievers need to know that all evil will eventually, inevitably be exposed. Every person's true character will come into full and clear view before the judgment seat. "For nothing is concealed that won't be revealed, and nothing

hidden that won't be made known and brought to light" (Luke 8:17). It is far better to welcome the light of Christ fully into our hearts and minds now than to wait for the exposure that is coming in judgment.

To that end, Paul concluded with a powerful exhortation. **Therefore it is said: Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.** "It is said" may be Paul's way of introducing his own combination of various Old Testament verses. Isaiah 60:1 reads, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord shines over you." Paul may have been blending that verse with Isaiah 9:2 and 26:19 and showing that the fulfillment of these promises is in Christ. On the other hand, Paul may have been quoting or paraphrasing a first-century hymn or poem. We do not know with certainty Paul's source for this saying. We do know the meaning of it. Paul was directing and inviting all people to Christ.

Unbelievers have come to the time to wake up from their spiritual comas and rise from spiritual death by God's power. It is time for them to look fully in the face of Jesus and have His saving light shine upon them. Does someone who will attend your Bible study group this week need to hear this invitation to life and light in Christ?

Believers need to guard against falling into a slothful, neglectful slumber. Be alert. You have responsibility in this world. You've risen from a dark grave; don't return to it. Don't flirt with the works of darkness that lead to shame. Christ has shone on you and will now shine His glorious light through you as a child of light! ◀

DISCUSS: Question #5
(PSG, p. 158): How can we avoid becoming desensitized to darkness?

(Alternate: What are some examples of "fruitless works of darkness" that exist in our community?)

DO: Encourage group members to take a few minutes to complete the activity "**You Are the Light of the World**" on **PSG page 158**. Encourage volunteers to share ways they will shine the light of Jesus in places they go this week.

LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point:**
Shine the light of Christ.

REVIEW: Review **Live It Out** (PSG, p. 159); (see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

WRAP IT UP

GUIDE: Remind group members of the drastic change that happened in their lives when they were brought out of darkness into the light. Challenge group members to live as children of light. Allow the light to do its work of exposing the darkness in their own lives. Then let the light shine in the darkness wherever they go.

PRAY: "Father, thank you for making us light. Embolden us to shine Your light in the darkness where we live."

LIVE IT OUT

How will you shine the light of Jesus this week?

- ▶ **Pray.** Ask the Lord to expose any darkness in your life and agree to see sin the same way God see it. Choose to repent from that darkness and pursue the light of Christ.
- ▶ **Write a Note.** Someone you know is going through a dark season in life. Write a personal, hand-written note this week, encouraging the person in the Lord Jesus.
- ▶ **Serve.** In every community you can find opportunities to serve and shine the light of Christ in dark corners. Find a place in your community where you can shine His light brightly this week.



BIBLICAL
ILLUSTRATOR



Interior of one of the hillside houses in Ephesus

Paul's imagery of light and darkness is thoroughly Jewish. Significantly, a light of revelation from heaven stopped him—a Pharisee determined to persecute Christians—dead in his tracks (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13). Further, Paul identified his mission as a commission to lead Israel to be a light for the Gentiles (13:47; 26:23). Paul put an ironic twist to Israel's assigned task of being light to the blind in Romans 2:19. The God who as Creator spoke light out of the darkness shines in the hearts of believers with the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). Paul contrasted righteousness and lawlessness as

light and darkness (6:14), and he saw Satan as a deceiving angel of light (11:14). Satan deceives, Paul said, because the god of this world blinds the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see God's light of salvation in Christ (4:4). The mere presence of light instantly banishes even the darkest darkness. Paul made clear this incompatibility of righteousness and immorality most especially in Ephesians 5:1-21.

Light is more than just good. Light is life. This life comes directly from God and reflects His fundamental character. Darkness is more than just gloom. Darkness is death. This death comes directly from sin and reflects evil's fundamental character. These biblical currents flow into the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. New Testament writers such as Paul used this language to insist that immorality of any type is incompatible with the Christian life.

The excerpt above is from the article "Paul's Use of Light and Darkness" (Winter 2011-12), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Jesus is the light of the world, who shines in the darkness and makes it possible for those who believe to become children of light.

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, "Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All," on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.



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