

Small Group Guide: Walking in the Light

Ephesians 5:1-14 | Des Moines Gospel Chapel

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question:

Share about a time when you forgot something important about yourself (your keys, your phone, an appointment). How did that forgetfulness affect your actions that day?

Sermon Summary (5 minutes)

Paul contrasts living in darkness versus walking in the light. The core message: What you are determines what you do. Christians have been transformed from darkness to light, and this new identity should align with how we live. When we forget who we are in Christ, we participate in darkness through greed, lust, and empty arguments. But when Christ's love becomes visible to us, our identity becomes clear, love becomes discernible, and we walk in gratitude.

Key Takeaways

1. Identity shapes activity - You are light in the Lord; therefore, walk as children of light
2. Love and holiness are inseparable - Walking in love and walking in light mean the same thing
3. Greed fuels darkness - Lust and other sins stem from wanting what we don't have
4. Jesus makes God visible - His self-giving love reveals both God's character and our true identity
5. Gratitude flows from remembering - Remembering who we are in Christ produces thankfulness

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text (15 minutes)

1. Read Ephesians 5:1-2. What does it mean to be "imitators of God"? How does verse 2 define what that looks like practically?
2. Read verses 8-11. Paul says we *were* darkness but now *are* light. What's the difference between being "in darkness" and being "darkness itself"? Why does this distinction matter?

3. How does Paul connect love and light throughout this passage? Why are they synonyms for him?
4. Personal Reflection (20 minutes)
5. The sermon mentioned "empty arguments" that deceive us (verse 6). What are some empty arguments our culture uses to justify darkness—whether about sexuality, money, success, or relationships?
6. The pastor said, "When we forget who we are, love becomes indiscernible." Can you think of a time when you forgot your identity in Christ and it affected your ability to love well?
7. Verse 4 mentions "obscene and foolish talking or crude joking." Why do you think Paul includes speech patterns alongside sexual sin and greed? What does our speech reveal about what's happening in our hearts?
8. Going Deeper (15 minutes)
6. The sermon contrasted greed (self-gratifying) with gratitude (self-giving). Where do you see greed showing up in your own life—even in subtle ways? (Consider: social media, shopping, relationships, career ambitions)
7. Read verse 14: "Get up, sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." What does it look like practically to "wake up" to your identity in Christ? What areas of your life might still be "asleep"?
8. The coworker story illustrated someone whose presence exposed darkness without saying a word. How can we be that kind of light without being judgmental or self-righteous?

Practical Application (15 minutes)

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Gratitude Inventory

- Each day, write down 5 specific things you're grateful for
- At the end of the week, reflect: How did cultivating gratitude affect your desires and attitudes?

Option 2: Identity Reminder

- Set 3 daily phone reminders with these truths:
- "I was once darkness, but now I am light in the Lord"

- "I am a dearly loved child of God"
- "Nothing about me surprises God—He loves me completely"
- When the reminder goes off, pause and let that truth sink in

Option 3: Expose the Darkness

- Identify one area where you've been participating in darkness (greed, lust, harsh speech, etc.)
- Confess it to one trusted person this week
- Ask them to pray for you and check in on you

Option 4: Practice Self Giving Love

- Identify someone in your life who needs love this week
- Do something sacrificial for them that costs you time, comfort, or resources
- Reflect: How did giving rather than taking change your heart?

Accountability Question:

Who will you share your commitment with, and when will you check in with them?

Prayer Time (10 minutes)

Prayer Prompts:

Confession: Ask God to reveal areas where you've forgotten your identity and participated in darkness

Gratitude: Thank God for specific ways Jesus has made the Father visible to you

Intercession: Pray for group members struggling with specific areas of darkness (sexual sin, greed, harsh speech, etc.)

Vision: Ask God to help you walk in the light this week in practical ways

Closing Prayer Focus:

Pray Ephesians 5:8 over each other: "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."

Additional Resources

For those struggling with sexual sin/pornography: Consider resources like Covenant Eyes, Pure Desire Ministries, or speaking with a pastor/counselor

For deeper study: Read through Ephesians 4-6 this week, noting every time Paul contrasts the "old self" with the "new self"

Recommended reading: *The Meaning of Marriage* by Tim Keller (for understanding selfgiving love in relationships)

Leader Notes

Be sensitive: Sexual sin, abuse, and trauma are likely present in your group. Create a safe space for honesty without pressure to share details publicly

Emphasize grace: The goal is not shame but healing and transformation

Model vulnerability: If appropriate, share your own struggles with forgetting your identity in Christ

Follow up: Check in with group members during the week, especially those who shared struggles