

Walk in Love and Light

Topic

God's love and light

Theme

Love and light characterize those who follow Christ.

Desired Response

The learners will let God's love shine through their lives.

Materials

- Visuals 23, 24.
- Inflated balloon.
- Pin.

Scripture Focus

Ephesians 5:1–17

Summary

Paul urged the Ephesian believers to walk in love, following the example of the Lord Jesus. As they walked in love, they would shine the light of God's love to a lost world darkened by sin.

Outline

I. Walk in Love (Eph. 5:1–7)

- A. Follow Christ's sacrificial example (5:1, 2)
- B. Resist the world's sinful expressions (5:3, 4)
 1. Immoral behavior (5:3)
 2. Covetous desires (5:3)
 3. Sinful speech (5:4)
- C. Consider God's coming wrath (5:5–7)

II. Walk in Light (Eph. 5:8–17)

- A. Recognize your light (5:8)
- B. Depend on the Spirit (5:9, 10)
- C. Shine brightly to expose sin (5:11–14)
- D. Buy up opportunities to shine (5:15–17)

Memory Verses

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. . . . For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:2, 8).

GETTING STARTED

The Language of Love

Ask learners who know a foreign language to write, “I love you,” in that language on the whiteboard. Consider having a few extra ways ready to add to their list.

There are many ways to say, “I love you,” but showing genuine love is the same in every language.

ASK: What proof of genuine love have you seen recently in a relationship? (Q1)

ASK: How do you show genuine love to others? (Q2)

Paul commanded the Ephesians to walk in love and light, using Christ as their example and the Holy Spirit as their power source. His reasons for walking in love and light should challenge us to wake up and consider our own walks.

Love and Light

Draw a heart and a light bulb on the board.

ASK: What are some qualities of love? (Record learners’ answers under the heart.)

ASK: What are some qualities of light? (Record learners’ answers under the light bulb.)

ASK: How might love and light form a vital connection? *When believers love people, they show the light of the gospel to those people.* (Record learners’ answers between the two pictures.)

Paul wrote about the love and light connection. God expects all believers to walk in both love and light.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

God saved us not only from eternal Hell but also from a sinful life. By His grace, He has given us a new way of living as well as a new dynamic for living. How well we live depends on how well we obey the exhortations of His Word. In Ephesians 5 Paul exhorted the Ephesian Christians to walk in love and light.

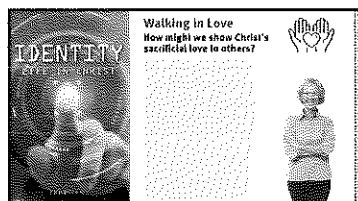
I. Walk in Love (Eph. 5:1–7)

A. Follow Christ’s sacrificial example (5:1, 2)

Paul challenged the Ephesians—and us—to be followers of God (Eph. 5:1). “Followers” means “imitators.” Just as a child learns to walk by imitating a parent, so we learn to walk spiritually by imitating our Heavenly Father. “Dear children” can be rendered “children of love.” God is love. As His children, we, too, should be loving individuals.

“Walk in love,” Paul wrote in verse 2. The Greek word for “love” in this verse refers to the highest form of love. God produces this love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). We are responsible to walk continually in this divine love, to practice this love in our lives.

Paul cited our Lord as an example of this superlative love. Jesus’ substitutionary death provided indisputable and dynamic proof of His love. “Christ . . . hath given himself for us” (Eph. 5:2). When Christ offered Himself for our sins, He won God’s full approval. The sweet aroma meant God accepted the sacrifice and found it satisfactory.



DISPLAY: Visual 23—Walking in Love. **ASK:** How might we show Christ’s sacrificial love to others? (Q3) *Willingly give them your time; give up your resources to meet their needs; don’t give up on them; love those others deem unlovable.*

B. Resist the world’s sinful expressions (5:3, 4)

God is by nature love (1 John 4:8), and “in him is no darkness at all” (1:5). Since we are members of God’s family and are summoned to imitate Him, we ought to shun darkness.

Paul characterized several evils as “darkness.” They fall into three categories: immorality, covetousness, and sins of the tongue.

1. Immoral behavior (5:3)

Paul instructed, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you” (Eph. 5:3). “Fornication” refers to every kind of illicit sex. The English word “pornography” comes from the Greek word translated “fornication” in verse 3. “Uncleanness” is a general term for moral uncleanness. It includes reading filthy literature, looking at obscene photographs or videos, and doing any other indecent activities.

ASK: How concerned is the immoral person with the needs of others? (Q4)
Not at all. The immoral person focuses on self.

2. Covetous desires (5:3)

“Covetousness” (5:3) identifies an unholy desire for more wealth or possessions, particularly an unholy desire for something that belongs to another person. Immorality and covetousness often interplay. Paul wrote that God’s people should not give anyone the impression they might be involved in such vile deeds.

ASK: How concerned is the covetous person with the needs of others? (Q5)
Not at all. The covetous person obsesses getting what belongs to someone else.

ASK: Is a rich person less likely to be covetous than a poor person? Why or why not? (Q6) *Covetousness is a problem of the heart, and no number of things can solve the heart’s sinful desire to get more and more. The rich can be just as covetous as or even more covetous than the poor.*

Paul warned the Ephesians to not let fornication, uncleanness, and covetous-

ness be named among them (5:3). In other words, the Ephesian believers had no reason to even talk about such sins, because the sins were not to be a part of their lives. “Saints” are to be set apart for God’s use. Believers who mix sin into their lives are hampering God’s ability to use them.

3. Sinful speech (5:4)

In verse 4 Paul condemned sins of the tongue. He wrote, “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting.” “Filthiness” is obscenity. Coarse, vulgar talk is a way of life for some unbelievers, but Christians should not use such language.

“Foolish talking” is empty, silly talk. “Jesting” is witty speech that jokes about sin. Joking about sin does not suit members of God’s family. Although a decent sense of humor can help lift sagging spirits and defuse potentially explosive situations, frivolity and idle talk are inappropriate.

ASK: How do Paul’s instructions in verse 4 relate to the forms of entertainment we choose? (Q7) *Voluntarily subjecting ourselves to vulgar language in forms of entertainment is to approve of it and to violate God’s clear commands.*

The best way to guard against using our tongues in sinful ways is to purposefully use them in God-honoring ways. Perhaps the noblest use of language is to thank God for Who He is and for what He has given us (5:4). Thanksgiving pleases God and benefits one’s spiritual life.

ASK: What truths about God does our consistent thankfulness reveal to unbelievers? (Q8) *That He can be trusted and relied upon for peace in the midst of strife.*

C. Consider God’s coming wrath (5:5–7)

The phrase, “for this ye know” (5:5), means either “you know for certain” or “be well aware of this.” Either way, we must conclude that all sinners listed in verse 5 are under God’s wrath. They have no future inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ. For this sobering reason, believers must resist the world’s sinful expressions. A believer living like the world and hiding Christ’s love robs the lost of an opportunity to know and trust Christ.

Verse 6 warns us not to be deceived by morally bankrupt, self-centered schemers. “Let no man deceive you with vain words,” Paul wrote. Vain words are empty, truthless words. Some who participate in the sins Paul listed try to gloss over them, hoping to make them appear harmless and innocent. “There’s nothing wrong with a little fun,” they may say. Or they claim that everybody has the right to decide for him- or herself what is right or wrong. We must not give into such empty talk, for “it is a fearful thing [for unbelievers] to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).

In Ephesians 5:7 Paul emphasized the connection between the coming wrath of God on unbelievers (5:6) and believers’ lives. This verse forms a hinge in the passage and is perhaps one of the most important verses for believers to understand.

ASK: Why should knowing that the wrath of God is coming on unbelievers motivate us to be different from them? (Q9) *God has chosen to use us as His witness and testimony in this world.*

II. Walk in Light (Eph. 5:8–17)

A. Recognize your light (5:8)

In verse 8 Paul explained why believers must not participate with the wicked in their sinful pursuits. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord,” he wrote. In their unsaved life, the Ephesians had been trapped in darkness. But God rescued them, making them not only enlightened but also light itself. The phrase “in the Lord” shows their union with Christ made them become light.

We are to “walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8), meaning we are to direct our behavior as children of light.

B. Depend on the Spirit (5:9, 10)

Walking in the light takes the power of the Holy Spirit. As we learn to depend on Him, we will see “goodness and righteousness and truth” in our lives (5:9). “Goodness” is showing love to others. “Righteousness” refers to our character from God’s perspective. Other people will see our righteous character in our actions. “Truth” shows in our lives as genuineness and honesty. All three of these fruits of the Spirit will shine forth from our lives like beams against the backdrop of a darkened world. The more we depend on the Spirit, the more brightly our light shines, and the more we become acquainted with what is acceptable to the Lord (5:10).

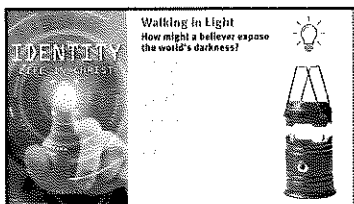
ASK: When was the last time someone noticed goodness, righteousness, or truth in your life? (Q10)

C. Shine brightly to expose sin (5:11–14)

Paul continued, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (5:11). Instead of passively letting moral and spiritual darkness spread, we must reprove the unfruitful works of darkness. This command obligates us to rebuke, expose, correct, and bring under conviction those who advance evil causes.

Notice the contrast between fruitfulness in verse 9 and unfruitfulness in verse 11. Living for Christ is productive; living for the Devil is unproductive. Living for Christ shines the light of the love that lies at the core of the gospel; living for the Devil hides the light of the gospel and makes the believer’s life unfruitful.

READ: Ephesians 5:12, 13. **ASK:** When have you been tempted to blend in with the world and keep your light dim? (Q11)



DISPLAY: Visual 24—Walking in Light. **ASK:** How might a believer expose the world’s darkness? (Q12) *By standing up for truth; by sharing the gospel; by praising God publicly; by showing others love; by refusing to go along with the world; by being honest in all things.*

Why should we reprove these evil things? Because “it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” (5:12). Many unbelievers practice “secret” sins that are so abominable that they are unfit topics of conversation for

the children of light. In other words, the world is a lot darker than we might even imagine. The lost are desperate for love and light.

Paul called upon reprobated offenders to repent, and he offered a promise to those who would heed the call. He wrote, “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (5:14). Paul was challenging those believers who were still living in sin to wake up to reality. Their choices were hampering the cause of Christ. Believers who live like they are still dead in their sins won’t shine for Christ.

D. Buy up opportunities to shine (5:15–17)

Paul knew that life slips by quickly and that it is sinful to waste time. So he exhorted us to conduct ourselves carefully, “not as fools, but as wise” (5:15). A fool believes his way is right. He ignores the counsel of the wise and directs his own life (Prov. 12:15).

Paul urged us to “[redeem] the time” (5:16). In the original language, the word for “time” refers to a critical period of time, or a special opportunity. “Redeem” means “to buy up.” We are to buy up every opportunity and seize every moment for the Lord.

OBJECT LESSON: Show the learners an inflated balloon. Suggest that the air inside the balloon represents the time we have left on earth to serve the Lord. We know that under normal circumstances, the balloon will gradually deflate but that something could happen to deflate it immediately. Stick a straight pin into the balloon and observe how quickly the air escapes. Explain that life is fragile and that something might happen to suddenly take away our time to shine the light of the gospel by loving others. We should, therefore, seize every opportunity that comes to us.

Paul called the days he lived in “evil.” Nothing has changed. Evil continues to march forward, led by Satan. He never rests nor takes a day off. We shouldn’t either.

Because time is precious and opportunities are fleeting, Paul continued, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (5:17). To make the best use of time, we must know God’s will. To know God’s will, we must know God’s Word.

If we fail to accomplish God’s will, we will end our lives with nothing lasting to show for our presence on earth. How much better it is to serve God and thereby accomplish something eternal! Do not put off until tomorrow what God wants you to do today.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Use the following activities to challenge your learners to shine the light of the gospel by loving others.

Reflection

ASK: How aware have you been of the connection between the love you show and the light you shine? (Q13)

Redeeming the Time

ASK: Who in your life desperately needs to see the light of the gospel? (Q14)

ASK: How will you love that person this week as a demonstration of God's love for him or her? (Q15) Commit to praying that your life would be a consistent stream of love toward the people they have identified and that those people would see the light of the gospel in both their words and deeds. (Q16)

Memory Verses

Encourage your learners to memorize Ephesians 5:2 and 8. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.