

## INTRODUCTION

We have been talking about walking in love what true love is compared with counterfeit love and how Christians ought to be expressing their love to one another. I heard about a man who was driving home from work one day and he was not the kind of husband who often expressed his love to his wife, but he happened to be listening to someone on the radio like James Dobson or Gary Smalley who was talking about the importance of telling your wife every day that you love her. He decided he would try it so he pulled up, got out of his car, walked into the kitchen and his wife was standing there at the sink. He walked up to her, spun her around, took her in his arms and put a Hollywood kiss right on her lips. When he came up for air, he held her at arm's length and said, “Honey, I love you and you are a wonderful wife!” She burst into tears. He said, “What’s wrong, honey?” She said, “It’s been a terrible day, an awful, terrible day! The car wouldn’t start this morning the kids have been fussing and fighting all day the washing machine overflowed and now to top it all off you have to come home drunk!” As Christians we ought to express our love to everyone around us. We’re going to see not only does a Christian walk in love, but he walks in the light and that’s what this passage is about today. “Open Your Eyes to the Light.”

Ephesians 5:8-14. “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. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’”

In the Bible, righteousness and goodness and even the very nature of God are characterized by light and the nature of sin and the devil is characterized by darkness. That is why in John, chapter 8, Jesus could stand up and say, “I am the light of the world.” Interestingly, Jesus spoke those words during the Feast of Tabernacles. During the Feast of Tabernacles, the Jewish people constructed three gigantic candelabra right on the Temple Mount. They were so big, they had to build ladders just to climb to the top of them. At the top was a platform or a bowl that held sixty-five liters (17.176 gallons) of oil. Priests would climb up and fill all of these bowls with oil and then at sunset, set fire to them and it was the brightest light Jerusalem saw all year long. This was to commemorate the time when the children of Israel were in the wilderness and God had sent a pillar of fire to direct them and lead them to the Promised Land. It was a great time of celebration. We are told the priests would dance and sing in front of these great giant candelabra all night long. It not only illuminated the Temple Mount, but lit the entire city of Jerusalem. It was in this setting the next morning, when Jesus stood in front of these smoldering candelabra with the smell of burned oil still in the air, in front of the light that had been extinguished and that was so temporary. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” meaning not an artificial light that is extinguished or burns out. “I am the eternal light of the world.” We know what he meant by that. He was saying, “I am goodness, I am purity, I am love, I am life itself. I am the light of the world.”

But then he said in his Sermon on the Mount “*You* are the light of the world.” Sometimes

Christians scratch their heads and say, “Wait a minute. Jesus is perfect purity, perfect holiness. I can understand him saying, ‘I am the light of the world.’ but what does he mean when he says that *we* are the light of the world?” It can be compared to the sun and the moon. The sun produces its own light, but the moon is a dark object, even though the moon shines in the sky. The moon shines because it is simply reflecting the light of the sun. The sun radiates light, the moon reflects light. When Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” He meant radiates goodness, holiness, purity—he produces it. Like the moon, we only reflect that light.

Did you look at the moon this week? I did. It’s almost a new moon, meaning it looked almost like a sliver of a fingernail you would clip off, just a sliver of light. At other times it’s a full moon, so huge that it’s bright enough to read by at midnight. That describes our lives, because there are times when we don’t very strongly reflect the light that is the goodness of Jesus. There are other times that like a full moon we reflect it and we shine wherever we are. That’s what Paul is saying in this passage of scripture. He said, “You are the children of light so start living like it.”

## **I. LIGHT EXHIBITS OUR FRUIT**

What does it mean that we are to reflect this light? Let’s learn three things about this light that we are to reflect. Number one, light exhibits our fruit. You can’t have growth without light and you can’t have fruit without growth. We call that process *photosynthesis*. When I was in the eighth grade, I did a science project about photosynthesis. I took a green plant and I cut out some circular pieces of construction paper that light could not penetrate and I took these circular pieces of construction paper and put it on the green leaves of a plant. I left it there for three weeks. Of course, you know what happened. When I took the circles of paper off, the part of the leaf that did not receive light was white and dead because plants need light to grow. There can be no growth there can be no fruit without light.

### **1. How we act: Goodness**

### **2. What we are: Righteousness**

This is talking about fruit in our lives. It says in verse 9 that “the fruit of the Christian life is goodness, righteousness and truth.” First of all, how we act—that’s goodness. What we are—that’s righteousness. What we speak—that is truth. What does it mean to be good? It just means the opposite of being evil. Sometimes we talk about a person’s “dark side,” which means they have sort of an “evil side” to them. Christians ought to always be displaying our bright side, the goodness that is ours as Christians. You don’t act good to become a Christian; you act good and you produce goodness because you are a Christian. Righteousness that’s what we are. The Bible says if you are a Christian if you have truly been born again God looks at you and says, “You are righteous.” He doesn’t say, “You are self-righteous.” The Bible says when Jesus died he took our sin upon himself and he became sin and he gave to us the righteousness of God. Right now if you are a believer, God the Father looks at you through the filter of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and God says, “You are righteous.” Sometimes you may not feel righteous you may fail, you may stumble, you may sin, but God says, “You are righteous.”

### **3. What we speak: Truth**

Then, number three truth. That not only means we speak honesty, it means we speak the truth. In other words, we are not afraid to tell people the truth about God, heaven and hell. You may be saying, “I have a hard time being good and being righteous and being truthful.” The key is that we are only to *reflect* that. Jesus is goodness; Jesus is righteousness; Jesus is the truth. All we have to do is reflect that light. If you want to be goodness, if you want to be righteousness, if you want to be truth, just get close to the light.

I heard about a man who returned from a business trip in France. His wife collected intricate little matchboxes. He bought her a very expensive matchbox in France that was advertised to glow in the dark. So he brought it home unwrapped the present and he said, “Honey, this matchbox glows in the dark. Let’s try it out.” So they turned off all the lights looked at the matchbox and it didn’t glow. This made him very angry, because he had paid a lot of money for it and he thought he had been sold a bill of goods false advertising. He said, “I’m going to send this back; it doesn’t work.” They turned it over and noticed some words in French. Since neither of them could read nor speak French, they took it down to the local college and asked an instructor to translate the words for them. He said, “If you want me to shine in the darkness, you must keep me close to the light.” Very simple instructions, “You must keep me near the light.” We’ve all had these little things that glow in the dark. You put them near a light and let them absorb light and then when it is dark, they shine but because that matchbox had been wrapped up in a box, it didn’t shine.

There’s a great spiritual principle there. If you want to have the fruit of goodness, righteousness and truth in your life, the way to do it is get close to the light! Spend time next to the Light, because he is goodness he is righteousness he is truth. That’s why it’s important to have a quiet time. That’s why it’s very important every day for you to spend personal quality time with God in prayer and Bible study. That’s why you need to come to church and have a Bible study group to be a part of be involved in discipleship because you are exposing yourself to the light and the only way that you and I can shine out there in the darkness is if we stay close to the light who is Jesus.

When Moses went up on Mount Sinai and God gave him the Ten Commandments, He was not only revealing truth to him, he was revealing himself to Moses. The Bible says Moses got to see the glory of God. He had a personal encounter with God. When Moses came off the mountain, his face was literally shining with the Shekinah glory of God. It was shining so brightly, the Old Testament says they had to put a veil over his face. Can’t you imagine trying to go to sleep at night? Moses’ wife said, “Honey, turn off that light.” and Moses said, “The light’s not on, it’s just my face.” “Cover that thing up.” He was literally glowing from having been in the presence of God. That can happen spiritually to you. As you spend time with the light, the Lord Jesus Christ, the fruit of the light will be in your life and light exhibits our fruit.

## II. LIGHT EXPOSES SIN

Number two. Light exposes sin. Verse 11 says, “and have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” In the Bible, sin is characterized by darkness. That’s why the devil is called the “Prince of Darkness.” That’s why Paul is going to say in Ephesians 6,

“We’re fighting against spiritual wickedness in high places and the rulers of the darkness of this age.” The Bible warns Christians not to have anything to do with these “fruitless deeds of darkness.” Fruit doesn’t grow in the dark. Christians cannot grow if we continue to walk in the darkness and commit these acts of sin.

## 1. Continually refuse to sin

First, we must continually refuse to sin. You and I are tempted every day of our lives. Have you discovered that once you become a Christian, you are not free from temptation? The temptation is always there. In fact, the Bible says Jesus Christ himself was tempted in every way we are—yet he didn’t sin. “Are you telling me that Jesus was tempted sexually?” Yes, he was, but he didn’t sin. “Are you telling me Jesus was tempted to steal or to embezzle or to cheat?” Yes, he was, but he didn’t sin. “Are you telling me Jesus was tempted to be angry and bitter and unforgiving?” Yes, he was, but he did not sin. *Every* temptation you and I have ever faced, Jesus faced—but he refused to walk in darkness. We need to walk in the light and refuse temptation, refuse to sin. Just say “No” to sin.

One of the problems today is we have gotten used to the darkness. A few years ago Cindy and I were going to a matinee on a Friday afternoon and we walked out of the bright summer sunshine into a movie theater and the movie hadn’t started yet. There were very few lights around the walls (it was an older theater). We walked in and I couldn’t see a thing, neither could she. We were groping our way down the aisle and finally we found a row we hoped nobody was sitting on. We fumbled our way down that row and finally came to a seat and I sat down right in the lap of a lady who was sitting there. I said, “Ma’am, I am sorry please forgive me.” I apologized profusely. I stumbled down a couple more seats and felt in the seat itself and there was nobody there so we sat down. We sat there and in a matter of moments, our eyes adjusted. The movie still had not started but suddenly we could see people, we could see seats that were occupied and seats that were not occupied. Our eyes had adjusted to the darkness. The sad, tragic truth is many Christians today have grown accustomed to the spiritual and the moral darkness. We have gotten used to it and the things that used to amaze us now only amuse us. The things that used to upset us morally and spiritually in America now we just say, “Ho-hum. That’s just the way things are going these days.” We’ve gotten used to the darkness. As Christians, we should continue to hold up the light and refuse to sin.

Our services are broadcast all over East Texas and many inmates in the prisons watch us. I get letters from them all the time. I received a letter recently from an inmate serving a very long prison term in Huntsville, Texas. As I read his letter, I learned several things. First, he is a very educated, intelligent man, who at one time was a very active Christian. He said he was sitting in church with his family just like he sees Green Acres Baptist Church family members sitting together, yet he gave into sin. He wrote: “Pastor, can I ask you to share a word for me with the people of your church? I know that they are under tremendous pressure to experiment with drugs and alcohol to be sexually immoral and other sins. Please tell them to resist at all costs! The temptation to be involved with these things only leads to misery. The pleasures of sin no matter how enticing or seemingly satisfying, lead only to much grief and heartache for themselves and their loved ones. My prayer is that not one of them would ever have to endure the tragedy associated with this place.”

That’s from a man behind bars who was a Christian, who at one time was sitting where you sit, but he just didn’t say “No” to sin and he’s warning you today “At all costs resist sin!” We must continually refuse to sin.

## **2. Continually renounce sin**

Number two. We must continually renounce sin because light exposes sin. That means we must call sin SIN! If you have the moral fortitude and the courage to call something a sin, you’ll be declared to be intolerant, narrow-minded and a bigot. Today in America, the attitude of total tolerance is in vogue. In fact, I saw a bumper sticker the other day that I think describes the spirit of our age, “The only thing I cannot tolerate is intolerance!”

There is a movement in America today that says let’s tolerate any kind of behavior you live the way you want to live, and I won’t tell you that you are wrong or you are right. I’ll live the way I want to live and you don’t tell me whether I am wrong or right. Any group of people who refuse to call sin SIN is magnified and exemplified. Several weeks ago I happened to tune in one of these talk shows that was praising and honoring a man who claims to be a pastor of a group of people that claims to be a church. He said that the thing that makes his church so popular because people are flocking to it he says, “We never mention the word SIN. We tell our people they can live any way they want. God still loves them and they can love God.” This man was being honored because this church has a nationwide movement. Do you know what they are trying to do? And this program was praising them for this. Their goal is to place a condom in every Gideon Bible in every hotel in America. That’s their goal and the program was honoring this group of people for that. When somebody like Green Acres Baptist Church stands up and says, “God loves homosexuals but homosexuality is a sin.” They call us intolerant bigots. When we stand up and say “Abortion is a sin,” we are called narrow-minded. You can be so broad-minded that your brain falls out! God’s word calls sin SIN! Light exposes sin and as Christians we must let our light shine so sin is exposed for what it is: SIN.

Do you know where streetlights came from? Benjamin Franklin went outside his office in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and thought it would be a good idea to have a light burning there all night long, so he lit a lantern outside his office. He did not go on a campaign and put streetlights on every street in Philadelphia to have streetlights all across America; he just faithfully lit his lantern every night. But when he lit his lantern every night, others saw it and thought it was a good idea. Before long every street in Philadelphia had a streetlight. Today you go across America and just about every street in America has a streetlight simply because one man said, “I just want to light up where I live.”

That’s good advice to us. All we need to do is just be light in the world and that in itself renounces sin. You don’t have to go out and point your finger in somebody’s face and say, “You dirty, rotten sinner!” Just be light. Do you remember when Jesus went to the home of Zacchaeus, who was a notorious sinner, Jesus did not sit down at the table with him and say, “Before we eat, Zacchaeus, we have to get one thing straight. Zacchaeus, you are a dirty, rotten, cheating, conniving sinner. You’ve stolen from the people in your tax district. What are you going to do about it?” Jesus was light, goodness, righteousness, truth, and just being exposed to the light,

Zacchaeus saw what was wrong with his life and he said, “Lord, I’m a changed man. I’m going to pay back everything I’ve stolen four times!” That’s all you need to do is be light and you’ll shine for Jesus.

### **III. LIGHT EXCITES THE SLEEPERS**

The third thing: Light excites those who are sleeping. In other words, light causes sleeping people to wake up! We are talking about spiritual slumber here, but I know there may be some of you who are actually asleep right now, because that’s what some people use church for just an opportunity to come and take a little nap

A pastor friend of mine in Kentucky says this actually happened one Sunday night in their church. Every Sunday a man went to sleep as soon as the preacher got up to preach. It was a dark Sunday evening, and as the preacher was preaching, there was a power outage and all the lights went out. The pastor said, “I can’t preach because the sound system is not working and I can’t see my notes so I think the power will come back on in a few moments. Let’s just sit here quietly and meditate. So they were all sitting there quietly in darkness and suddenly this old boy woke up. He couldn’t see a thing, but he knew he was sitting in church. He could feel his wife sitting beside him and just assumed what happened and he jumped up, turned to his wife and blurted out, “@#\$\$ Wilma, they’ve turned off the lights and left us here all alone!” At that precise moment the lights came back on.

#### **1. Christians, WAKE UP to the times!**

You had better be careful when you go to sleep in church, but this is not talking about literal slumber, it’s talking about spiritual slumber. Look at Romans 13:11: “And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Light causes you to wake up. Christian, wake up to the times. Get aware of what’s happening. That’s what he says in Romans 13:11. “Understanding the present time.” I’m convinced there are thousands of slumbering Christians who really don’t know what’s going on spiritually around them. Here’s one example: Men, do you really understand what God is doing in America right now? Just one of the things he is doing out of many things is through PromiseKeepers. This summer, 700,000 men from around America will get together and will recommit themselves to keep their promises to God, promises to their families promises to their churches. That’s one thing God is doing, but there are a host of Christian men that are just totally asleep to that. You are not aware of what’s going on. God is moving and you’d better get in on it. They are like Rip Van Winkle who slept for forty years. When he went to sleep, King George was on the throne and when he woke up there was an American Republic. He woke up and stumbled into the pub and said, “Where’s King George’s picture? Why can’t things be like they used to be?” He didn’t know things had changed. There are some people who are asleep and are unaware of what God is doing right now. Christians wake up to the movement of God in this world.

#### **2. Families, WAKE UP to the warfare!**

Number two. Families, wake up to the warfare. You are under attack! Christian families are under attack by the devil. A week from tonight at our “I Love America” celebration I’m going to talk about how Satan has intentionally tried to destroy families in America. I believe with all my heart that Satan would rather divide your family than even to divide this church. Sure, churches split up but when a church splits up, you go over here and you have church A and over there you have church B and oftentimes they go on and reach people for Christ, but when *families* break up, when marriages break up, all you have is tragedy and disaster and hurting people. Satan would rather drive a wedge between husbands and wives and destroy you than he would destroy this church. I believe the devil would rather destroy your family than destroy our nation, because the basic unit of our nation, the basic unit of our churches are Christian families. Families, if you don’t know you are under attack, you will be blind-sided.

I remember living in south Alabama just north of Pensacola Naval Air Station, Eglin Air Force Base, Tyndall Air Force Base in the early 1960s. During the Cuban missile crisis everybody in south Alabama knew we were one of the targets of those missiles in Cuba. We built bomb shelters and had Civil Defense drills, there was even a siren in our town that sounded the alarm for practice alerts. I wish today there would be somebody in America who would sound the alarm! Sound the alert! Christian families are under attack and it is warfare. You had better wake up to that, families and if you don’t know that, you are asleep.

### **3. Churches, WAKE UP to the urgency!**

Number three. Churches wake up to the urgency! Green Acres Baptist Church wake up! I wish I had an alarm clock in this pulpit that could jangle right now. Green Acres Baptist Church wake up! I tell you the need and the urgency out there has never been greater. You say, “What’s the rush, Brother David? Why the urgency?” I’ll tell you why. Jesus Christ is coming back and I believe He is coming back soon. I believe that with all my heart. Why the urgency? Lost people are out there dying. Why the urgency? Jesus Christ could come back at any moment. I say this as your pastor and I say it with love, but I say it with a broken heart. I tell you Green Acres Baptist Church we ought to be baptizing 500 people every year. A church this size we really should and it breaks my heart that in the forty-year history of this church, in one year the best we have ever done is about half of that. I tell you we must refocus and redirect our thoughts and our desires and get outside the walls of this building and take our lights into dark schools, dark neighborhoods, dark families and say to them, “This is the light of Jesus. Let it shine! Let it shine!” We need to wake up to that. You say, “I’m not a preacher. I’m not a teacher. I can’t preach like Billy Graham. What can I do?” I’ll tell you what you can do. You can just let your light shine. You can reflect the light of Jesus. New Song has this great little song that says:

Light your world  
Let the love of God shine through  
In the little things you do.

Light your world  
And though your light may be  
Reaching only two or three

Light your world!

You don't understand the power of a little bit of light. When Cindy and I were in Kentucky, we took a group of young people to Mammoth Cave, one of the largest known caverns in America. They call it “The Cathedral Room” and the guide compared it in size to the Astrodome in Houston. They had electric lights down there of course, but he told us to sit down on seats and we did and then he said, “Get ready. I'm going to turn out the lights.” They turned out the lights and I want to tell you I have never seen such darkness before. It was as if you could feel the darkness engulfing you. I waved my hand in front of my eyes and I couldn't even see any motion. I could feel the breeze, but I couldn't see a thing. It was so dark I couldn't see anything around me. Then he said, “Now watch this!” and he struck a match and lit a single candle. That one candle lit that huge cavern! One single candle drove all the darkness out of that great room.

My friend that's what God wants you to do. That's what God wants me to do Just let our light shine for Jesus!

## OUTLINE

### I. LIGHT EXHIBITS OUR FRUIT

1. How we act: Goodness
2. What we are: Righteousness
3. What we speak: Truth

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”  
*John 15:8*

### II. LIGHT EXPOSES SIN

1. Continually refuse to sin
2. Continually renounce sin

### III. LIGHT EXCITES THE SLEEPERS

“And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” *Romans 13:11-12*

1. Christians, WAKE UP to the times!
2. Families, WAKE UP to the warfare!
3. Churches, WAKE UP to the urgency!



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes