

L O V E

l n c o r r u p t i b l e

Introduction:

Identity determines destination. If you are a *fitness aficionado* then you can't help but find yourself at the gym or on the trail. However, that identity can change to *couch potato* or *workaholic*; either way, you are not finding yourself at the gym anymore. Every person is born with the identity of being spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1) or as our passage this week says, "you were darkness." (Ephesians 5:8) But in Christ Jesus we have a change of identity. A new believer goes from *being* darkness to *being* light. The core identity of a person is the primary influence of the type of fruit a person will yield.

This Week's Main Focus:

Christians have an entirely new identity.

Wisdom and the Spirit are essential for walking in this new identity.

The main headline for Ephesians 5:1-21 is that Christians should be "imitators of God." This passage structures how to imitate God by expounding on three different ways we should "walk." The first occurrence, in verse two, summarizes God's character. We are to walk in love because God is love (1 John 4:8). The next section, verses 3-14, look at the difference in how people "walk" depending on their identity as being darkness or light. Verse eight specifically commands that we should "walk as children of the light" and expose lingering dark behaviors when we see them in the church. The last section, verses 15-21, are introduced with the command to "look carefully how we walk." Our natural tendency will be to drift back into our old pattern of darkness. This section identifies the two essentials for maintaining a walk that imitates God: wisdom and the Spirit.

Two challenges may emerge during your study. The first is in verse 11: whose sinful behavior is meant to be exposed, those inside the church or outside the church? Theologians (real and armchair) have landed on both sides of this discussion. The evidence tends to point in favor of this activity taking place within the Christian community, primarily because the context of this passage is exhortation to believers. The second is in verse 17: how do I know if I understand the will of God? Think about God's will as a path more than a doorway. God has a general will that is made evident in the Bible (our passage this week gives a specific view of what it looks like) and a specific will. God's specific will is often circumstantial applications of his general will for our lives.

This week we will examine what an identity centered on Christ looks like and discuss how we can help one another walk in this new identity.

This Week's:

- Scripture Passage: [Ephesians 5:1-21](#)
- RightNow Media Video: [Session 7](#)

RightNow Media Video Recap:

1) In the video, Pastor J.D. says the key to surviving and thriving in the Christian life is to drive the gospel deep into your life. What habits and disciplines help to drive the gospel deep into our lives? How can your group engage in them together?

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Bible Study Question: (Read Ephesians 5:1-21)

2) This passage explores the importance of identity, either as a follower of Christ or as one who does not follow Christ. Make a list from verses 1-14 that describe the identity of a Christ follower versus a non-Christian follower.

3) Christians have transformed from darkness to light. In reference to verse 6, what are some wrong and deceitful teachings that can lead Christians to live immoral lifestyles, not characterized by “walking as children of light?”

4) Taking question #3 a step further, what are things that *you* believe, and therefore base actions on, that are more in line with our fallen culture than in line with following Christ?

5) What is it about a person identified with “thanksgiving” that naturally contrast to behaviors such as sexual immorality, greed, obscene behavior and dirty jokes?

6) What three contrasts does Paul use in verses 15-21 to help believers “watch carefully how you walk?”

7) What are the four out workings of “thanksgiving” (v 4) from verses 19-21?

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Group Application Questions:

8) Paul makes it clear that a Christian's identity is characterized by light, thankfulness, and purity. He also makes it clear that when darkness creeps in, we are to expose it. How can your group help expose darkness in each other's lives?

9) This passage points out that the keys to living a life that imitates God, according to one's new identity in Christ, are wisdom and the Spirit. Get into groups of 3-4. Have each person share how they regularly seek to grow in wisdom and be filled with the Spirit.

Prayer:

- Ephesians 5:20 commands us to "give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- In your groups of 3-4, take turns thanking God for everything he has done for giving you new life in Jesus Christ.