



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-14*

“Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children,<sup>2</sup> & walk in love, as Christ also loved us & gave himself for us, a sacrificial & fragrant offering to God...<sup>8</sup> *You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light* —<sup>9</sup> for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, & truth—<sup>10</sup> testing what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup> Everything exposed by the light is made visible, <sup>14</sup> for what makes everything visible is light. Therefore it is said: ‘*Get up, sleeper, & rise up from the dead, & Christ will shine on you.*’” (Eph. 5:1-2, 8-14 CSB)

### SUMMARY:

New Testament directives can sound like they are demanding the impossible, e.g. ‘Be imitators of God.’ But such directives are always based on what God has done for us. Technically, this is ‘the indicative-imperative relation.’ Some suggest the slogan—‘Be what you are.’ But that neglects our new creation status. It’s better rendered: “*Become (in Christ) what you already are in Christ.*” You’re God’s ‘beloved child,’ which equips you to ‘imitate your Father.’ We are loved by God, so we can ‘walk in love.’ We are ‘light in the Lord,’ so we can ‘walk as children of light.’ This week we examine what that means. It’s not asking for the impossible; it’s not an unattainable ideal. Paul gives practical pointers. Plus we will consider the puzzling saying: “*Awake, sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*”

#### 1. The Indicative-Imperative Key —“God’s done this, so you should do that”

- a. Indicative—‘indicates’ what God has done for us; Imperative—what we’re directed to do (e.g., Gal. 5:25)
  - a. Example Gal. 5:25: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:25 CSB)

- "God's Spirit has given us life [indicative], & so we should follow the Spirit [imperative]." (Gal. 5:25 CEV)

b. The Indicative & Imperative Key Summarized

- The 'indicative-imperative' relationship can be expressed like this:

a. "God has done this, therefore you should do that."

b. "What Christ has done is the basis for what the believer must do." –James Dunn

- "The indicative is the necessary presupposition & starting point for the imperative. *What Christ has done is the basis for what the believer must do...* The most common way of expressing the imperative is... '*Become what you are.*'... '*Become what you are becoming*' is probably necessary... [to] catch the already-not yet [aspect]... Or, perhaps better still: '*Work out what God has worked in you.*' [James D. G. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 630-631]

- **A Christian distinctive:** "In every other religion the indicative flows from the imperative. Which means: 'Because I do, therefore I am accepted... Because I do this, therefore I'm a child of God.' But *only in Christianity does the imperative flow from the indicative.* 'Because I am in Christ all these things [are mine], therefore I obey.' Exactly the opposite." –Tim Keller

c. "Be what you are," or, "Become what you are" [or better...] "Become in Christ what you are in Christ"

- "Paul's use of the... 'indicative-imperative'... [is] summed up as the command to '*be what you are.*' Those who are 'in Christ' must behave accordingly. How should they behave towards fellow-Christians? They must remember that they are one body in Christ (Rom. 12.3-8). What kind of behavior is appropriate for Christians? They must 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. 13.14)... In [Paul's] appeals... there's a logical link... suggest[ing] that the ethical conclusion is inevitable. Since Christ behaved in a certain way in order to bring salvation to Paul's readers, how can they not imitate him in that particular respect? To behave... another way would be to deny the truth of the gospel. Being in Christ means sharing his righteousness: and that means, not simply his status before God... but his moral righteousness. The command to '*be what you are*' is a command to be conformed to the image of Christ." [Morna D. Hooker, "*Interchange in Christ & Ethics*," JSNT, V. 25, p. 5]
- "Paul's exhortations to the church – his ethics... his doctrine of the Christian life – can be summed up by the epigram: "*become what you are.*" Putting it that way is helpful in its pointed-ness. However, it also carries the decidedly unhelpful liability of suggesting a form of personal autonomy or self-assertion, and in fact equivalent expressions... [appear] in [Greek] philosophy, like Stoicism. So, then, it's important always to take this epigram & read it, at least implicitly, with an all-encompassing Christological gloss: *become in Christ what you are in Christ.*" [Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "*Pauline Parenthesis*," Reformed Faith & Practice (Sept. 2016) p.]

d. '*Being precedes act*'—our actions flow from our being

- "I am, therefore I do"... What God has done for me (indicative) always comes before what I must do (imperative)." –K. Sande
- "The indicative/imperative connection can be understood in terms of *our actions flowing from our being* ('*Being precedes act*'), but [it's] more complex than that. The indicative speaks of [what's] been accomplished by God in & through Christ... The new age that dawned with Christ's resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit... The Spirit, himself... is the link between the indicative & the imperative of Christian reality & existence. He is at once an element of the former and a constituent part of the latter." [Michael Parsons, "*Being Precedes Act: Indicative & Imperative in Paul...*," EQ, 88:2 p 127]

e. *Indicative... points to a new reality... the imperative... a new behavior*

- Scholars distinguish "the indicative of salvation—what God has done for the believer, and the moral imperative—the believer's response to God's gift in Christ... The indicative is *not an ideal*, but a reality that requires an appropriate response [from] the believer... The popular expression 'become what you are' is inadequate since it overlooks [the fact] that what God demands, he also effects... The imperative is not an ethical ideal by which Paul challenges believers to do what's ultimately impossible... *The indicative... points to a new reality, so the imperative points to a new behavior... possible because believers live [as] a new humanity... created in Christ...* The imperative is rooted in the indicative of salvation that's truly altered the life of believers so... they're empowered to live... pleasing to God" [Frank J. Matera, *Romans*, pp. 161-163]

f. Every *imperative of Scripture* (what we are called... to do for God) rests on the *indicative* (who we are in relation to God)

## 2. The Indicative-Imperative Key in Ephesians 5 (Eph. 5:1-2a)

a. Imitate God & Walk in Love (Eph. 5:1-2a)

- "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; & walk in love, just as Christ also loved you [aorist, active, 'past tense'] & gave Himself up for us..." (Eph. 5:1-2a)
- "There are times when the imperative precedes the indicative in a given letter, paragraph, or sentence. In such cases, the imperative is being given first, however, it is still based on an indicative that precedes

it in reality [i.e., logically]. Here's an example: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; & walk in love, just as Christ also loved you..." (Eph. 5:1-2a).

- This passage is in the imperative portion of...Ephesus, but in this sentence Paul refers back to indicative groundwork he laid in the first 3 chapters. He gives the Ephesians two commands/imperatives- 'imitate God as beloved children' & 'walk in love'. But he then draws these imperatives back to their indicative source, 'just as Christ also loved you & gave Himself up for us'. So, even where Paul begins with an imperative he is always thinking back to the indicative that precedes it. This is significant because it is a reminder that *God is always the source, always the one who initiates*. Every time we are commanded to love we should remember that God loved us first, an act which gave us the ability & urgency to love one another. God initiates, we are changed & respond. This is the significance of the indicative/imperative relationship. Regardless of which one is stated first or even if we state them independently, they are intimately related to one another & the indicative always precedes the imperative in reality [logically], even if not in our writing/speech." –Israel Steinmetz

b. God's salvation—the "*great indicative for the imperative*" of imitating God (Eph. [\[1\]](#):1)

- "God's salvation becomes *the great 'indicative'* in Paul's thought. God...has acted in Christ on behalf of sinful mankind &... poured out the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those 'in Christ.'...This *great indicative provided the basis for the 'imperative'* indissolubly linked to it. Believers are now to live in keeping with the salvation they've received...They already can 'live a new life' (Rom. 6:4)...*Paul's imperatives... admonish [believers to] live...as those who are 'in Christ'...*[This is] the imitation of Christ or *the imitation of God* after the pattern of Christ (Eph. 4:32-5:2)." [Stanley J. Grenz, *Moral Quest*, pp. 119-120]

### 3. Once Darkness, now Light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8)

a. God created Light (Gen. 1:3)

- [\[1\]](#) *That light shines in the darkness*, & yet the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:1-2, 4-5)
- "Jesus said: 'I am the *light of the world*. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life'." (Jn. 8:12) **Note:** Jesus is the *light of the world*. [He] fulfills OT promises of the coming of the 'light' of salvation. ESV C. Paul's 'Damascus Road' Experience (Acts 26:12-16)
- "I was traveling to Damascus...with authority & a commission from the chief priests. <sup>13</sup> ...While on the road at noon, I saw a *light from heaven brighter than the sun*, shining around me & those...with me. <sup>14</sup> We all fell to the ground, & I heard a voice speaking to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?...' <sup>15</sup> "I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "...The Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you're persecuting. <sup>16</sup> But get up & stand on your feet. For *I have appeared to you* for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant & a witness of what you have seen & will see of me." (Acts 26:12-16)
- While traveling to Damascus to arrest any Christians...Saul encountered the risen Christ &, blinded by a dazzling light, he was led into the city to await further instructions...Though Paul was ultimately blinded by the bright light, he indicates... that he actually saw the risen Christ on this occasion. [This] is significant not only because of Saul's conversion but also
- "In the beginning God created the heavens & the earth... <sup>3</sup> ...God said, '*Let there be light*,' & there was *light*." (Gen. 1:1, 3)

b. Jesus—the Light of the World' (John 1:4-5; 8:12)

- "In the beginning was the Word... <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning...<sup>4</sup> In him was life, & that life was *the light of men*. because it shows that he would've known of the resurrection from direct experience of Jesus [1 Cor. 15:8-9] & thus could ...appreciate why this was a key part of the Christian message. ESV
  - "What Paul experienced...near Damascus was, he says, a 'revelation,' in which he was granted a vision of the risen Jesus. He was now convinced that Jesus was indeed 'Lord,' the agent through whom God would rule the world, & that in Jesus' death & resurrection God had begun to save the world...Paul underwent a fundamental reorientation of his life & loyalties. [His conversion was] the start of a new relationship to God...[It] revolutionized his moral and theological coordinates. If his persecution of the Church, which he thought 100% right, was in fact, 100% wrong, and if God revealed Christ & called Paul *despite* such a fundamental sin, it was clear that God's grace was not given on the basis of human worth...[And], if God's favor was given *without respect for worth*, it was not limited, Paul came to see, by any ethnic criteria. It could be experienced by non-Jews, whom Paul considered out-&-out sinners..." [John M. G. Barclay, *Paul: Brief History*, 7-8]

- c. Our Experience—God shined in our Hearts (2 Cor. 3:16-18; 4:6); We are 'Children of Light' (1 Thess. 5:4-6; Eph. 5:8)
- a. God shined in our Hearts (2 Cor. 4:6)
- "Whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, & where the Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> *We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit... God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.*" (2 Cor. 3:16-18; 4:6) **Note:** When a person turns to the Lord in faith, the veil of separation from God and incomprehension of him brought about by a hardened heart is removed [2 Cor. 3:16]. Paul uses the provision of light in Gen. 1:3 to picture conversion as the dawning of the new creation amid this fallen world. '*God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ*' [2 Cor. 4:6]. To know the glory of Christ is to encounter the life-transforming glory of God. ESV
- b. Transferred out of darkness into Light (Col. 1:12-14)
- God "the Father...enabled you to *share in the saints' inheritance in the light*. <sup>13</sup> He...*rescued us from the domain of darkness & transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves*. <sup>14</sup> In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:12-14) **Note:** God rescued his OT people from slavery in Egypt...he has delivered the [NT believers] now from the domain of darkness, from the realm of Satan & powers of evil [into the light,] the kingdom of his beloved Son. ESV
- c. We are 'Children of Light' (Col. 1:12-14; Eph. 5:8)
- <sup>4</sup> But you, brothers & sisters, are not in the dark... <sup>5</sup> For *you are all children of light & children of the day*. We do not belong to the night or the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not sleep, like the rest, but let us stay awake & be self-controlled." (1 Thess. 5:4-6) **Note:** *children of light*. This phrase is used in the NT of those who belong to the realm of God and his salvation (Col. 1:13). Because Jesus is 'the light of the world' (John 8:12), Christians are 'children of the light;...[They] are also called to live a godly life as people who 'belong to the day.' ESV
  - "You were once darkness, but *now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*" (Eph. 5:8)
- d. We are (collectively) the 'Light of the World' (Mt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:15-16; Rev. 1:20)
- Jesus said: "*You [pl.] are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden...Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works & give glory to your Father in heaven.*" (Mt. 5:14-16)
  - "You [pl.] are to *shine among them like lights in the world, clinging on to the word of life...*" (Phil. 2:15-16) o "The 7 stars are the messengers of the 7 churches, & the 7 lamp-stands are the 7 churches." (Rev. 1:20b)

#### 4. The Indicative-Imperative Key in Eph. 5 (Continued) (Eph. 5:8-14)

- o Eph 5:8 Summary Verse "You were once darkness, but now *you are light* in the Lord. *Walk as children of light*." (Eph. 5:8)
  - o "Eph. 5:8...provides an effective summary of the whole letter, [&]...Paul's theology. In addition to...ethical instruction, this verse has the 'formerly-now' contrast, the idea of being 'in the Lord,' and the blend [of] the indicative & the imperative... Eph. 5:8 is a marvelous summary of... Ephesians & of Paul's theology...But...it's [also] shocking...We don't expect the bare statement '*you are light in the Lord*'. No text is a strong in its explanation of conversion." [K. Snodgrass, *Eph*, pp 267, 271]
- a. You are Light; Walk as Children of Light (Eph. 5:8)
- "Paul describes [their former condition] not simply as people who have strayed into darkness, but they themselves are [retrospective: 'were'] darkness (Eph. 2:3; 5:6)." [J. Lunde, J. Dunne, "*Paul's use of Isaiah in Eph. 5:14*," JETS 55/1, p. 99]
  - "The imperative is...a call to live out what the Gospel says is true. The Christian life is always a call to *be who God says we are*. A life of faith...takes God at his word... 'You are light in the Lord'...is a statement about what people are *in Christ*. It is only in the Lord that they are light...To have the light of Christ shine on us is to be transformed into what he is...to take on his nature. The indicative states what is true: Christians are light in the Lord." [K. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, pp. 271, 277]
  - "The indicative points to the Christian's status in Christ—who we are—while the imperative declares how we ought to live. This pattern is illustrated in several texts...*The indicative is the basis for the imperative*. So...in Eph. 5:8: 'For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light'...The...tension between the 'now' & the 'not yet' appears here, for the indicative is [made] certain by...Christ's work on the cross [you are light in the Lord], yet, the *imperative is not fulfilled automatically*, immediately, or completely in this life [You still need to 'Walk as children of light']"

...Believers are *being* conformed to...Christ [Rom. 8:28] as we 'await the redemption of our bodies...' [Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30] " [Ken Magnuson, *Invitation to Christian Ethics*, p. 140]

b. A Literary Pattern—the “Chiasm” [~sandwich]—symmetry which highlights the center, e.g. Eph. 5:8-11a

- **8** You were once **darkness**, but now you are light o in the Lord.
- Walk as children of light — goodness,
- **9** for the fruit of the light consists of all righteousness
- **10** testing [try to discern] what is pleasing & truth— o to the Lord.
- **11** Don't participate in the fruitless works of **darkness**,
  - a. The Chiasm's "overall structural balance revolving around the distinct central component of the overall unit, a recognition of chiasmic structure leads the interpreter properly to appreciate *the pivotal function & the emphatic importance of that central thought unit*...Due to 'its central focus, [the] chiasm accentuates the main idea or theme the writer is concerned to convey to his readers'." [Brad McCoy, *Chiasmus: Important...Device...in Biblical Literature*, p. 10]
  - b. **Note** the KJV, ESV, & NIV translations put Eph. 5:9 into a parenthesis, which suggests it is of secondary importance!
  - c. "The triple in the center [–"all that's good, right, & true" (Eph. 5:9b RSV)–] is also a literary pattern. There are many such triples in the epistles of Paul...In Eph. 5:8-11...the sentence is interrupted by the central line which carries a triple." [Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 201]

c. Shine as Lights in the world, holding to the Word of Life (Phil. 2:15-16)

- "Among [a crooked/perverted generation] you *shine like stars* in the world, *by holding firm to the word of life*." (2:15-16) o "You [pl.] are to *shine* among them *like lights in the world, clinging on to the word of life*..." (Phil. 2:15-16)
- Older translations: "*holding forth*..." Amp. Trans.: "holding out & offering to everyone the word of life" (Phil. 2:16)
- T. Wright: "I see it as 'clinging to,' 'holding fast to,' rather than 'holding forth,' which would have the implication that the church was to present the word of life (presumably, the word of the gospel) to the surrounding world...[But,] this would then be the only passage where Paul says that sort of thing...[Yet,] the evidence about [the Greek term] *epecho*... points towards 'clinging to'...Paul is concerned about the public perception of the church...[as a] community, [that they would be] people whose lives shed light... in the dark & twisted world." [N. T. Wright, *Interpreting Paul*, pp. 184-185]
- The believers' "lives are to embody before the watching world the signs of the new creation, including kindness, generosity, abstention from anger & malice, &...sexual purity (...in marriage or in celibacy). This...way of life, of community, was more or less unknown in the ancient world. [Thus,] the church was, for Paul, the sign & symbol of the new covenant & new creation." [N. T. Wright, *Interpreting Paul*, 183]

## 5. Not living out who you are in Christ? –“Awake Sleeper...” (Eph. 5:14)

- o "Therefore it is said: 'Awake, sleeper, & rise up from the dead, & Christ will shine on you'." (Eph. 5:14)

a. The Source of this Quote (Eph. 5:14; Is. 26:19, 60:1-3)

- The "two main interpret[ive options are]: [1.] that Paul is quoting or paraphrasing an OT passage (usually Isa 60:1), or [2.] ...Paul is quoting an early Christian hymn. The best answer is that Paul is interpreting & paraphrasing an OT passage in light of the...new covenant era." [Garrett Black, "*Exposing the Darkness...Eph. 5:11*," RTS (Spring 2020) p. 7]
- "Therefore it is said: 'Awake, sleeper, & rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'." (Eph. 5:14) o "Your *dead* will live; their bodies will *rise*. *Awake* & sing, you who dwell in the dust! [~'dead']" (Is. 26:19a)
- "*Arise, shine*, for your light has come, & the glory of *the Lord shines over you*."<sup>2</sup> For look, darkness will cover the earth, & total darkness the peoples; but the *Lord will shine over you*, & his glory will appear over you. Nations will come to *your light*, & kings to your shining brightness." (Is. 60:1-3)

b. Practical Applications

- a. Being awake, aware

- “Waking up spiritually is not just...participating in...efforts of world-wide importance...It is walking through our lives wide awake. It is rising ready where we are, being willing to do something with what we have. It is seeing people around us...& meeting their need. For some of us, that means being a better spouse and parent, a kinder neighbor, a more engaged church member. It means seeing the world more with God's ever-awake eyes & being Jesus' hands & feet wherever we go. It means looking actively, daily, for practical ways to help people...” [Christine Caine, *Undaunted: Daring to Do what God calls you to Do*, p. ]

b. Restoring Compromised Believers

- “The main emphasis in the present context is...the restoration of Christians who were co-partners with the unfruitful works of darkness [Eph. 5:7, 11], it may...be a hymn of repentance & encouragement sung...by earlier believers...Some believers have become co-participants with the unfruitful works of darkness & need to be restored...[It takes] a decision of the will [to] change one's 'walking,' away from sinful action towards actions pleasing to God.” [Hoehner, *Eph.*, p. 687]

c. Believers' exposing 'works of darkness' needs Christ's shining (Eph. 5:11-14) o “Don't participate in...works of darkness, but instead *expose them*.” (Eph. 5:11)

- “Everything exposed by the light is made visible...*Christ will shine on you*” (Eph. 5:13, 14b)
- Ephesians “distinguishes between the act of exposing [Eph. 5:11b] & the process of illumination [Eph. 5:13, 14b]. The former is done by the believers (5:11) while Christ is the agent of the latter (5:14b). In fact the former [i.e., believers' exposing] is *only meaningful* if supplemented by the latter [Christ's shining]...for something to be exposed properly this will...occur in the domain of Christ...[Success requires that] what is shameful is being exposed by those who are in Christ and *at the same time shone upon by Christ*, the light.” [T. Moritz, *Profound Mystery: Use of OT in Eph.*, p. 114]