

# The Gospel-Fueled Life

Ephesians 5:1-14

Here we come to the third and fourth “**therefore, live**” in Ephesians. Paul is applying the gospel to every part of life. We saw in chapter four how the gospel must be applied to our relationships. We have been united with Christ, adopted into His family and are now a part of the One Body of Christ. We were saved by grace, so our relationships should be filled with grace.

## Grace-Filled Relationships

- Connect Compassionately
- Forgive Freely
- Pursue Progress

As those who have been **infinitely loved**, we must love one another by connecting compassionately. As those who have been **completely forgiven**, we must be quick to forgive one another. And as those who have been **declared righteous** in Christ, we must grow up into His righteousness, pursuing progress toward maturity in the Lord.

Our relationships should be filled up and overflowing with the love and grace of Jesus. And our minds should be filled up with the truth and grace of Jesus.

## The Spirit-Filled Mind

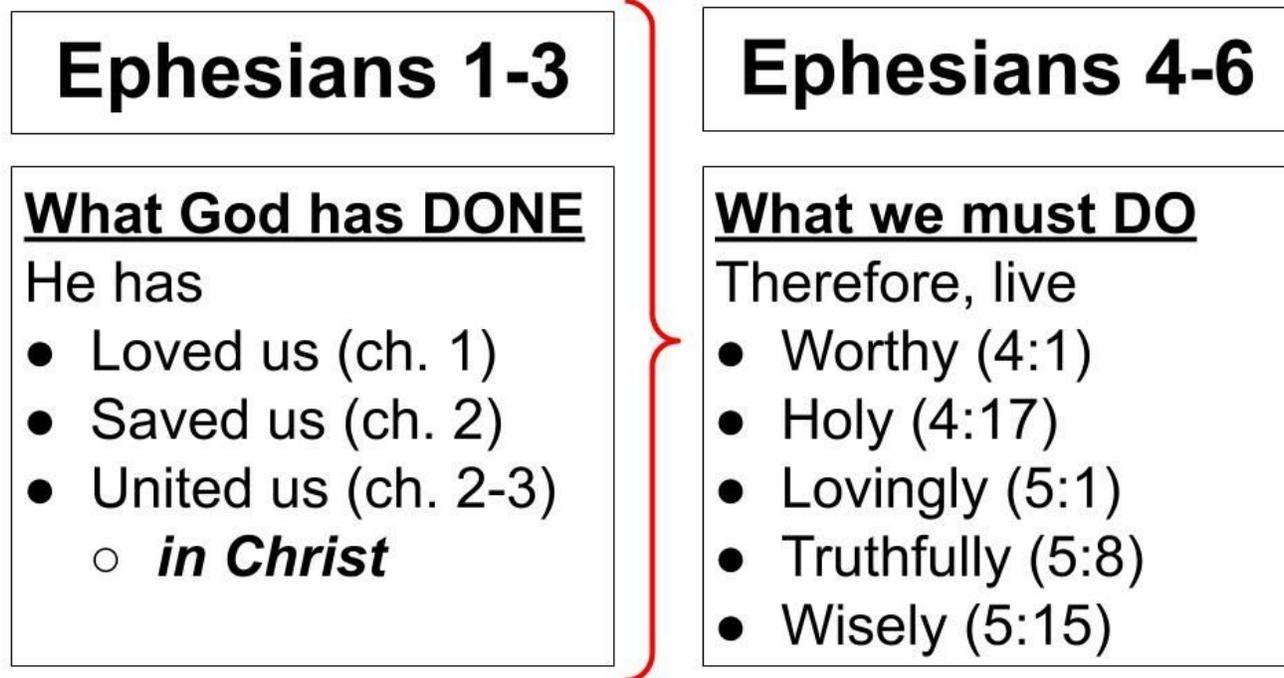
- Actively Fight Sin
- Actively Fill our minds with Truth
- Actively Follow the ways of Jesus

Ephesians four calls believers to “**put off the old self**” and “**put on the new self.**” As those who have been forgiven and set free from sin, we must not continue to live as we used to live when we were blind to the truth, dead in our sins, hard-hearted to the Spirit and slaves to our own desires. That is who we WERE, but now IN CHRIST, we are loved, alive, united, powerful and purposeful new creations.

We have to know our old ways of thinking and acting so we can **actively fight** against them. We must **actively seek the renewal of our minds** by remembering the gospel, believing the gospel, FEASTING on the truth of all God has done for us in Christ, focusing

on the truth, studying God's Word. And we must **actively obey** the truth we know - walking in the ways of Jesus.

That is the summary so far:



Based on all God has done for us in Christ, Paul says, ***“THEREFORE, live” differently***. Live worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Live in holiness as those who have been transformed by the gospel, not falling back into the ways of the world. Today we come to the third and fourth exhortation to live lovingly and truthfully. Next week we will grow in wisdom as we apply the gospel to marriage.

***The order here is so important.*** FIRST we see what God has DONE. THEN we see what we must DO. This is not a religion of works that you must live worthy, holy, lovingly and truthfully in order to earn God's love and acceptance. This is the Gospel of grace - that God has already done all the work of your salvation. The work is finished! Jesus paid it all. He loved us, adopting us into His family; He saved us, raising us to new life with Him; He united us with Himself and with His body.

**THEREFORE** - because of all He has done - we live for Him. We give everything for the One who gave everything for us. We live in response to the gospel. That is our fuel.

Every exhortation is attached to a gospel motivation. That continues in chapter five.

## **The Gospel-Fueled Life**

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.” Ephesians 5:1-2

**Why must we imitate God?** Because we ALREADY ARE His children. Not so that we can become His children - but as those who have been adopted freely into His family. **Why must we walk in love?** Not to earn the forgiveness of Jesus, but because we already have the fullness of that grace. He gave Himself up for us in the ultimate act of love - the only appropriate response is to give ourselves to Him by walking in love, following His example.

Here is our summary for the message today

As beloved children of God, washed in the precious blood of Jesus and transformed into holy priests of the Lord...

## **Be imitators of God**

*Reflecting the Love of Jesus*

*Reflecting the Light of Jesus*

The main command here is in verse 1 - **“Be imitators of God.”** The two expressions of that are to **walk in love** and **walk as children of light**. In Christ we ARE loved and we ARE light, therefore we should reflect the love and light of Jesus in our daily lives.

Again, it doesn't say “Be imitators of God IN ORDER TO BECOME beloved children of God.” It says, “Be imitators of God AS beloved children.” Christian believer, you already HAVE the favor of God. You already belong to Him as a beloved son or daughter in His family. God is your Father and nothing can ever change that relationship. **Nothing you do can make Him love you more.** Nothing you do can make Him love you less. God has loved us INFINITELY in Jesus.

**We ARE beloved children** - so we should live like our Father in heaven - we should represent the family as members of God's family. How often have you heard this from your parents or said this to your children?

***You're an Anderson!*** That means something! ***You represent the family.*** In our house, of course, it means "You're a pastor's kid," so there are higher expectations. Your Dad is a Pastor, so you can't just do whatever you want and live like a miscreant. You need to live like your Dad, or better yet - like your MOM! Represent the family!

This is what Paul is saying here. **GOD is your Father.** Imitate Him. Represent Him. Your Dad is not some New York Mafia leader where the expectation is that you will lie, cheat and kill. Your Father is the holy, loving God of heaven - the Good Shepherd - the Righteous King. He is the One we must imitate. His example is the one we must follow. You're a part of the family of God - now live that way!

***You are no longer a child of the world*** - living in darkness, a slave to your passions - you are a child of God - born again and growing into a temple of the Holy Spirit, filled with the righteousness of Christ, free from the controlling power of sin! So live in that new life!

This is the **GOSPEL-FUELED LIFE.** As beloved children of God, washed in the precious blood of Jesus and transformed into holy priests of the Lord... BE imitators of God! Reflect the love of Jesus and the light of Jesus!

Let's look at those two expressions of a life patterned after God, not the world. First:

### **Reflect the Love of Jesus**

- By **Serving** others sacrificially

***"Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*** Eph. 5:2

***What does it mean to reflect the love of Jesus?*** It means a life of sacrificial service. That is how Jesus loved us - he laid down His life for us. The way of Jesus is the way of the cross - the downward path of ***humility, service, suffering and sacrifice.*** If you want a life of increasing earthly comforts, don't follow Jesus. That is not His way. The way of Jesus is the way of sacrificial service.

**Think of how Jesus loved YOU by serving YOU.** He could have come in judgment, as your conquering King. He had every right to come on a white horse leading the armies of heaven, with the sword of justice in His hand to demand that every knee bow before Him.

***But instead He came as a helpless baby***, taking on every weakness of a human body and ultimately going to the cross with that fully human body - enduring the fullest extent of human suffering imaginable, on top of the unimaginable agony of hell itself as He drank the cup of the wrath of God, mixed full strength.

***Jesus served you by humbly taking the lowest place*** - the place of the humblest servant. He did not demand that YOU serve Him, but instead your Lord and King knelt to wash your feet. More than that, He shed His blood to wash your SOUL.

Jesus gave up everything for you and for me.

- **He gave up His position** of highest glory in heaven for a place of total anonymity as the son of a carpenter.
- **He gave up the comforts** and joys of heaven to live a very normal human life as part of a simple, rustic, poor Jewish family.
- **He gave up the unfettered exercise of His divinity** - allowing His sovereign knowledge and power to be limited, for a time, by His fully human body - so in the mystery of the incarnation the Almighty Creator FOR whom all things were made and THROUGH whom all things were made had to learn how to walk, how to talk; He had to learn Bible verses that His own Spirit had inspired the prophets to write... He had to submit to His parents... He had to learn how to swing a hammer; how to build a chair and table.
- Jesus **gave up His life**. In the most humiliating and painful way, Jesus submitted to the most gruesome torture and execution. At any moment He could have summoned twelve legions of angels - or simply spoken a word of command to vaporize His enemies.
- And in the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus **gave up His perfect fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit**. This was the height of Jesus' suffering. The very fabric of the Triune God was ripped apart as the curtain in the Temple was torn in two. God the Father poured the entirety of His righteous fury upon God the Son. The full weight of your sin and mine rained down on Jesus on the cross, like the fire and sulfur that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah. That's why darkness covered the earth. That's why the earth shook and thunder rolled. The harmony, life and love of the Godhead from which all of creation sprang was broken in those moments that Jesus hung on the cross.

**That is what Jesus' love looks like**. Not just "sacrificial service" in the sense that He volunteered a few hours at the local community center with troubled teens. Not "humble

service” in the sense of washing a few toilets in the local homeless shelter. Those are nice acts of service and, for all we know, Jesus did a million little things like that in his 33 years of human life.

For Jesus, sacrificial service meant that **he gave up EVERYTHING**. He never married. He never had kids. He did not have a upwardly mobile career path. He did not get rich and famous. He never owned his own home. As far as we know, until he set out in his preaching ministry, he always lived with his mother.

Jesus gave up everything. His entire life was a gift to you and to me. He held nothing back.

**THAT is the love that lives in us**. That is the grace by which we are saved. That is the path we are called to follow. “Walk in love.” What kind of love? The kind that lays down its life. The kind that gives up its rights. The kind that expects nothing in return.

What did Jesus get for His infinite sacrifice?

- Yes, a few disciples worshiped Him.
- ***But most of the world rejected Him***. Most of the Jews - supposedly the “people of God,” - rejected Him, calling for His crucifixion.
- It took decades and generations for Christianity to spread and become a recognized world religion.

So Jesus gave up everything and what He got for His trouble was a ragtag band of fearful, confused disciples. Yes, He knew that little band would change the world - but think of this - in the 33 years of Jesus’ earthly life, **He got just about NOTHING** for all of His sacrificial service.

- No earthly comforts.
- No financial return.
- No recognition.
- No marriage.
- No family.

That is what Jesus’ love is like - self-giving, self-sacrificing, others-focused, unconditional love.

Do we walk in THAT kind of love?

### ***How much of our love expects a RETURN?***

- How much of your loving service to your **husband or wife** is so that you will get some kind of loving service back from him or her?
- How much of your loving service to your **kids** is in the hopes of getting some kind of return?
- How much of your loving service to others **in the church** is calculated to get some kind of return on that friendship?
- How much of your loving service **in the community** is to get something in return, even if it's just the good feeling that comes from serving others, or a boost to your reputation?

The issue Paul attacks aggressively in verses 3-6 is sexual impurity, but it applies to **everything that contaminates our love** - everything that comes from selfishness. And so much of our "love" is tainted by selfishness - by the expectation of getting something in return.

The next time you do an act of service - pause. Think about it.

- WHY am I cleaning this bathroom?
- Why am I folding this laundry or doing these dishes?
- Why am I helping my neighbor fix his car?
- Why am I taking my wife out on a date?
- Why am I sending my son money?

Search your heart and really consider how much of what we call LOVING SERVICE is ***actually SELF-SERVICE***, expecting a return on our investment. I'm afraid an awful lot of it...

That's not the way Jesus loved. His love was totally uncontaminated by even the slightest hint of selfish ambition. Listen to the strength of these next few verses. Feel the force of them.

### **Reflect the Love of Jesus**

**"But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints." Ephesians 5:3**

***What is sexual immorality?*** It is simply **selfishness** applied to relationships. It is a lack of contentment with your own husband or wife or singleness that leads you to COVET something God has not given you. You desire it. You LUST after it. Our desires kindle from little sparks of selfish desire into the flames of all consuming passion - and whole families are decimated, whole ministries burn down.

Praise be to God, Jesus did not love like that. There was not the slightest HINT of selfishness to contaminate any part of Jesus' life and ministry. He was tempted in every way as we are - He had every opportunity to give in to selfishness, to covet what others had and seek after it. In fact, he had every RIGHT to seek comfort and recognition. But ***Jesus gave up ALL OF HIS RIGHTS*** and submitted His self-interest entirely to the Father's will and to the common good.

### **Reflect the Love of Jesus**

***“Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.” Ephesians 5:4***

From immoral relationships into crude language. ***How much of our TALK is tainted by selfishness?*** By a desire to draw attention to ourselves... to get a laugh at someone else's expense...

I used to say I had the **spiritual gift of sarcasm**. That was a major growth area of my past and I wish I could say I'm totally over it. But as a professional TALKER I have to admit that a lot of what I say is very tainted by my own self-interest. Even my CLEAN talk that avoids bad language and tasteless jokes is largely self-interested to protect my reputation.

How much of your speech is totally for the love of other people? And how much of what you say is simply because YOU want to say it? Verse 5 is the knock-out punch here.

### **Reflect the Love of Jesus**

***“For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” Eph. 5:5***

Could you say that a little more strongly, Paul? No. ***This is the strongest possible language.*** Christians are those who imitate God. We walk in love - Christ-like,

self-sacrificing love. We do not USE people for own pleasure - we LOVE people for their own good, as Jesus did.

A person who regularly USES other people to indulge his or her own passions is NOT a Christian. They do not follow Jesus. **You cannot follow Jesus and USE people**. That runs exactly counter to the way of Jesus. ***You cannot follow Jesus and be a slave to your passions and desires***. That is what it means to covet - you desire things you should not have - your neighbor's house, your neighbor's lake house, your neighbor's car, your neighbor's boat, your neighbor's WIFE, your neighbor's children, your neighbor's job...

If you are devoted to your own sexual desires, your own financial desires, your own vocational desires - ANY of your own desires - hear this - you are NOT a follower of Christ. You cannot live in unrestrained commitment to what YOU want and pretend to call Jesus your Lord. It just doesn't fit. **If your ultimate commitment is to yourself** - your dreams, your desires, your plans, your comforts - ***then you are not committed to Jesus*** and His dreams, His desires, His plans, His ways, His glory, His kingdom. You are not a follower of Jesus, you are an idolater - a worshiper of other gods.

Is it possible for someone to THINK they are a Christian and NOT BE ONE? Yah-huh. Not just possible - inevitable that many will be in that position. This is the power of the deceitful human heart. We are so good at fooling ourselves. Hypocrisy is rampant. It is not hard to LOOK like a good church-going, tax-paying American. But inside ***many church-going Americans are slaves to their own passions and desires***.

- This might manifest in secret addictions to **pornography**, alcohol or drugs.
- But it may manifest in **over-work**.
- It may manifest in **over-buying** - extending yourself more in home, lifestyle, entertainment and vacation.
- It may manifest in **over-worship of the family**. One of the favorite idols of our culture is FAMILY. As if you can do whatever you want FOR YOUR kids and that can't be idolatry. Ha! So many American families worship their kids, kneeling at the altar of sports, education, and career success. But it's for OUR KIDS so we feel righteous about it.

Brothers, sisters - that is not WHO WE ARE! We are not FIRST Americans, we are FIRST of all Christians. ***Our ultimate allegiance is to Jesus and His kingdom*** not to ourselves, not to our kids, not to our jobs - to JESUS. We imitate God our Father by reflecting the love of Jesus. Here is our summary so far:

As beloved children of God, washed in the precious blood of Jesus and transformed into holy priests of the Lord...

### **Be imitators of God**

*Reflecting the Love of Jesus - by Serving others sacrificially*

*Reflecting the Light of Jesus*

We've already touched on holiness as an expression of Jesus' love. And it just makes sense that **true love has to be holy** - it has to be uncontaminated by selfishness and sin. This means our love for God and our love for one another must be a HOLY LOVE.

We cannot reflect the LOVE of Jesus without also reflecting the LIGHT of Jesus. They are intimately interconnected!

Again, **feel the Gospel Fuel for this**. I am not saying - Paul is not saying - Love better, Live better, or else! He is not saying, "Just do it," morality. Just be better!

He's saying, "you ARE beloved, adopted children of God! You have been washed in the blood of Jesus, made new in Christ! You have been transformed into a royal priesthood, a holy nation!" ***Stop living like your old selfish, worldly self and live like the new person you are in Christ!*** Stop living and loving in your old ways and start living like a member of the family of God. Be like your new heavenly Father, not your old earthly Father.

### **Reflect the Light of Jesus**

- By Protecting the Purity of God's holy people

*"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Ephesians 5:6*

How does Paul motivate the believers to live holy lives? Mainly by appealing to their IDENTITY. Remember who you ARE. Don't be deceived by the empty words of worldly people around you - they are sons of disobedience; children destined for God's wrath. That is who you WERE - you have a new identity now in Christ. Remember who you ARE.

This is very Mufassa to Simba - ***"Remember WHO YOU ARE."***



Simba the Warthog



Simba the Lion King

Remember how Simba was goofing around with Pumba and Timon - acting like a literal pig when he was actually the crown prince of the whole Savannah? He needed that reminder to “be who you are,” and so do we.

We are not earthly warthogs - ***we are spiritual princes and princesses in the Kingdom of God!*** Brother, sister - remember who you are!

- Verse 1 says we are beloved children.
- Verse 2 says we have been bought with the precious blood of Christ.
- Verse 3 says we are SAINTS - holy ones in Christ.
- Verse 4 says that crude talk is out of place for those who should be marked by gratitude for all God has done for us.
- Verse 5 says we have a spiritual inheritance in the kingdom of God - why would we devote ourselves to the impure temptations of this world?
- Verse 8 says “You WERE darkness, but now you are LIGHT in the Lord.”

### **Reflect the Light of Jesus**

- By Protecting the Purity of God’s holy people

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” Ephesians 5:6

The Lion King illustration also proves this point - that ***bad company corrupts good character***. It is very possible to be deceived by empty words. Even for Christians. If you spend most of your time with worldly people who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, it is very possible that they will corrupt you.

One of the saddest examples of this for me recently has been **Rhett and Link** of Good Mythical Morning.



The Bentley Brothers



GMM Rhett and Link

Ten years ago Rhett and Link were singing for Jesus as part of What's in the Bible - introducing books of the Bible with clever music and rhymes. They were the Fabulous Bentley Brothers!

But over the last ten years, after becoming globally recognized "internetainers" through their YouTube Channel, Good Mythical Morning, ***both Rhett and Link came out in January as agnostics***, denying any faith in Jesus.

How did two **Cru ministry leaders** walk away from their childhood faith in Jesus? It's complicated - but I believe a big part of the answer was **the company they chose to keep**. Instead of continuing a relationship with godly people like Phil Vischer, they invested themselves in the Hollywood realm and built alliances with famous influencers - many of whom were vocal supporters of the LGBTQ agenda.

As Rhett and Link grew in global fame, it became more and more costly to affiliate with the “narrow” views of Christianity. And their loyalty slowly shifted from Jesus to the world. They were like the proverbial frog in the kettle - they didn’t notice the slow change in their hearts and minds over time - ***their faith was slowly poisoned by the empty words of worldly wisdom.*** And they did not feed themselves on the cure that comes in God’s Word and godly fellowship.

Listen to the warning of verse 6:

### **Reflect the Light of Jesus**

- By Protecting the Purity of God’s holy people

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” Ephesians 5:6

Rhett and Link represent the danger of inching closer and closer to the brink called the world. They let their hearts bond with worldly people. And so they were deceived with empty words and traded the truth of God for the hollow message of agnosticism.

Our young people are in a similarly dangerous position. If you spend most of your time with non-believers, you will slowly see your heart shift to line up with theirs. Be very careful! Protect your own purity - and protect the purity of those you love by ***maintaining strong relationships in the church. Don’t drift.*** That is the first move toward danger. Don’t get disconnected.

Stay close with other believers.

### **Reflect the Light of Jesus**

- By Protecting the Purity of God’s holy people

“Therefore do not be partners with them, for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” Ephesians 5:8

**Do not become PARTNERS** with the sons of disobedience. Don’t share your heart and life primarily with non-believers. Certainly do not MARRY someone who does not passionately follow Jesus. One of the greatest heartbreaks I have seen has been believers who married non-believers and had to wait years, even decades for that person to come to Jesus. That is avoidable misery, young people!

It very much applies to romantic relationships, but it ***applies to all of our friendships***. Paul isn't saying that we should have no friendships with non-believers. But the warning here is not to become PARTNERS with them. Don't develop a close association. Don't bind yourself together with those whose worldview is fundamentally opposed to ours. And be sure your primary bonds, your closest connections are with people who do share your same core convictions.

It is our job to reflect the love and the LIGHT of Jesus. ***Your light will be obscured if all of your friends are lost in darkness***. As your Mom told you - it's way more likely that bad kids will drag you down than that you will lift them up. Your first priority in protecting purity in the church is to ***protect YOUR OWN purity***.

My favorite story from Pastor Colin was when one of his sons came to ask if he could go to a **high school party**. Colin and his wife looked at each other and shook their heads - "Doesn't sound like a good idea." Their son protested, "Why? Don't you trust me?"

Colin immediately responded, ***"Of course I don't trust you!"*** I love that. He went on, "I wouldn't trust myself in a situation like that!"

Why would you put yourself in a situation surrounded by temptation?

And the corresponding application is not to put those around you in compromising positions. We need to protect one another.

### **Reflect the Light of Jesus**

- By Protecting the Purity of God's holy people

***"Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)." Eph. 5:9***

We need to ***focus on what is good, right and true*** - to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things. And we need to help each other focus on the Lord.

- Who in your life is drawing you closer to Jesus?
- Who are you helping to draw closer to Jesus?

Hopefully you immediately think of the people in your **Community Group**. Hopefully you have an accountability partner, a mentor and a mentee. We all need a mentor ahead of us, a disciple behind us and a partner beside us.

Are you walking in the light of Jesus? Are you sharing that light with the people around you?

### **Reflect the Light of Jesus**

- By Protecting the Purity of God's holy people

“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.” Eph. 5:11

One of the great blessings of Christian fellowship is having people around us with **different blindspots**. And it is our job to lovingly help one another to see those blindspots - those places where compromise has crept in. Not developing a legalistic culture of judging each other. There's a fine line here. But knowing each other well enough to call out compromise. And trusting each other enough to share our struggles and invite people in.

Look at verse 14 as we close for today:

### **Reflect the Light of Jesus**

- By Protecting the Purity of God's holy people

“Therefore it says, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’” Eph. 5:14

When we risk honesty with a brother or sister, it opens the door to revival. **Keeping our struggles and sins SECRET enables them to grow and spread, like a fungus**. Mold loves the dark but dies quickly in the light. Get the fungus of your sin out of the darkness and into the light of Jesus' redeeming grace.

Don't struggle alone in secret. **Sin works like an anaesthetic** - it numbs you - it lulls us into complacency - it hides itself, especially from you. This is the power of human pride. We are experts at denial and deflection. At least I know for sure that **YOU ARE**. I'm pretty sure I've got that one handled...

**But revival begins with confession** - admitting you have a problem and need help to change. Brokenness is the doorway to a new beginning - a fresh experience of the love and grace of Jesus.

AWAKE, O Sleeper! Rise from the dead! ***Come out of the darkness and into the light of Jesus.*** Let the holy, glorious light of Christ shine into the dark corners of your life. This starts between you and the Lord. But it doesn't end there. You need a brother or sister beside you. You need to open up and share what you're really struggling with.

Let's gather now around the Lord's Table.