

## THE CANDLE IN THE CAVE

25<sup>th</sup> in a Series on Ephesians called, "Messages to the Misfits"

**Ephesians 5:3-14**

I have been a true fan boy of all the manned spacecraft missions our country has launched going all the way back to the Mercury program. This year I read a number of articles that came out marking the 50th anniversary of the first landing of human beings on the moon. To my surprise a couple of them revealed things I'd never heard before. One of those was the fact that all of the astronauts that walked on the moon reported that moon dust had a very distinct scent. When they got back into their spacecraft some of the dust came with them and they could smell it very clearly. But on the airless moon that dust had never been exposed to oxygen. In the spacecraft when they pressured it again after their excursions on the moon the dust was exposed to oxygen for the first time. It gradually lost its aroma. So to this day only 12 men have ever smelled that distinctive smell.

When I read that it made me think of Christians. Yes, I know, I'm a pastor so everything has some spiritual connection. But Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2 that we have an aroma, a distinctive scent. The problem for us is that it is very easy as we are exposed more and more to our culture to have that distinctive scent begin to fade. Today we will look at Ephesians 5:3-14 and this passage speaks to maintaining that aroma.

### STEER CLEAR OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Paul was teaching the Ephesians what it means to follow Jesus in a distinctly unchristian world. Those first century new believers had no background and little idea what it is like to live the new life in Christ so Paul was telling them some specifics about ways they should live. This new life was radically different than their old lives, and nowhere was this more apparent than in their sexuality.

He said there shouldn't be "even a hint of sexual immorality" in their lives. He mentions greed, but in this case it wasn't what we typically think of as greed. This wasn't about money, it was about more of what he was talking about, which was sex. He had in mind the hyper sexuality that existed around them in that culture. He also cautioned them about the way they talked, warning against crude and offensive language. The main point here is this passage is about seriously elevating one's sexual morality.

Paul taught that going all the way back to Genesis 2, God said that sex was good, created by him to bless humans, but that he intended it for the relationship between a husband and wife. Jesus affirmed this standard. Paul was telling them that sex was to be enjoyed fully, but only in the context of marriage, and that all other sexual activity was to be avoided. The term translated "sexual immorality" was a general term for all sex outside of marriage.

Water is a very good thing. In fact, life wouldn't exist without it. One of my favorite stories is about a guy who gets lost in a trackless desert. After a couple of days under a merciless sun, with no water in the blazing heat he is seriously dehydrated and he won't last much longer. But when he somehow trudges over yet another sand dune he is shocked and overjoyed at what he sees. Wonder of wonders, there is a man walking in his direction carrying a case. He staggers to the man and says, "Please, sir, Do you have any water you could share with me?" The man answers, "I'm very sorry, but I don't have any water." Then opening his case he says, "However, I am a tie salesman and I have here a very nice selection of the latest ties. Would you like to buy a tie?" In frustration the suffering man answers, "Are you serious right now? I'm literally dying of thirst. I need water desperately. Why would I want a tie in the middle of the desert?" In disgust he shakes his head and continues on his stumbling way. After another hour he is barely able to put one foot in front of the other. He knows if he doesn't get water soon it's all over. He feels like giving up, but decides to try to make it over one more dune. He struggles to the top he looks down and can't believe his eyes. There is a building there with people entering! He fears he is hallucinating, but as he staggers toward the building it doesn't disappear. It really is there. It turns out to be a restaurant. Perfect! With his final reserves of energy he lurches to the door begging, "Water, water." But just inside the front door he is met by a well-dressed man, clearly an employee, who says to him, "I'm sorry sir, gentlemen are not permitted without a tie."

Okay, that was a joke, but it points out how utterly dependent we are on water for our survival. So it is a wonderful thing. But last year our old dishwasher leaked water. It wasn't for very long and it wasn't all that much. But when water, a good thing, an essential thing, goes where it isn't supposed to be, it can become damaging. It took more than \$7,000 to repair the damage to our house done by water in the wrong place. It can even be deadly as the people of the Abaco Islands found out this past week, experiencing the wrath of Hurricane Dorian. Paul said sex is like that, a tremendously good thing, that in the wrong place becomes damaging and even deadly.

Today such a standard is seen in our culture as archaic, oppressive, draconian and unhealthy. It is regarded by most people in our culture as laughable, if it weren't so sad. It would be helpful for us to remember that in Paul's day that standard was shocking. It would mostly have been met with stunned disbelief, for their culture was more committed to the "sexual revolution" than ours.

Dr. Scot McKnight in his book, *A Fellowship Of Differents*, talks about walking through the streets of the ruins of ancient Pompeii. He said, "It is not an exaggeration to say that the city was swamped with erotic images." Explicit pornography was everywhere. This was not uncommon. He said in the Roman Empire there was a "total lack of sexual inhibition." It was

assumed that especially men, but women as well, would have sex with spouses for procreation, but they would also engage in recreational sex of all kinds with whomever they wanted.

Ephesus was the home of the temple of Artemis, one of the then Seven Wonders of the World. Artemis was considered, among other things, a goddess of fertility. So hundreds of prostitutes worked at the temple, and worship involved going and availing oneself of one of them. This was religion, so it wasn't just accepted, it was encouraged. ...I suspect it wasn't all that hard to get people to go to "church" in Ephesus... But you can see that in their culture, participating in sex with temple prostitutes was actually applauded, thus the idea that sex should be confined to marriage would have been astounding to them. It would have sounded more absurd to them than it does to people in our culture today. In case you've been living under a rock somewhere, let me tell you that in our culture, Paul's standard is seen by the majority as totally ridiculous and certainly unnecessarily strict.

Yet Paul didn't back off even an inch back then, nor does he today. He said no immoral person has an inheritance in the kingdom of God. He didn't mean that if a person ever failed in keeping this standard they've lost their shot at God's kingdom forever. He meant that no one who blows off this standard and lives in ongoing violation of it is going to be in God's kingdom. David failed famously on this very point. There have been many others who have as well. God forgives. But if you approach life saying, "I don't care what God says, I'm doing it my way," you are giving evidence that you do not have the Spirit of God in you.

## REALIZE THE WORLD DECEIVES

Paul did not mince words in these verses. Notice verse 6. "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient." That's stern stuff. Paul says the world's approach to sexuality is, in fact, deceiving. The words are empty, because they never fulfill what they promise. In fact, what they actually lead to is hurt, regret, loss, brokenness, despair, disease and the unraveling of relationships and of society. In verse 11 he talks about the world and its sexuality as "the fruitless deeds of darkness." It is a futile lifestyle that never produces the fruit of fullness and happiness that it dangles before us. In fact, Paul says, it brings God's wrath on us. That sounds like God is angry and he's going to smack you down if you ever violate his commands regarding sexuality. Man, that's some old time religion right there. Next stop, hellfire and brimstone. You have sex with that person and you're going to burn in hell. Except that's not what Paul was saying.

How does the wrath of God come on those who disobey him? Let's remember Romans 1:18 where Paul said, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all godlessness and wickedness of people." What is the tense of verb he used? It is present tense. He didn't say "the wrath of God will be revealed." He's not talking about this happening at some point in the future. He said God's wrath is being revealed right his minute. It's happening right now. It's a

present tense, ongoing thing. Well I don't see God smacking anyone down instantly for disobeying his standards here, so how is his wrath being poured out? You will see it in verses 24, 26 and 28. God gives them over to freely pursuing their disobedience. He lets them taunt his standards with all their might. Verse 28 spells it out clearly. "Just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done." In other words, God pours out his wrath on people by saying, "All right, you want to do it your way instead of mine? Go right ahead. Indulge, but know that you will experience the consequences of those rebellious choices. I told you not to do them precisely because I knew what inevitably happens when you do them. So now I'm going to let you dive right in with all your might, and you'll experience all the horror of your choices."

When I was in college I knew a guy who had been competing in the javelin throw, a track and field event. He was on the staff of a Christian on-campus ministry and he worked on my campus. Though he no longer competed at the intercollegiate level, he still tried to keep up his skill. One late afternoon I and a buddy had gone to the football field to do some running. My friend was out on the field practicing, throwing his javelin. I thought this was very cool. It was like a throwback to the days of Spartacus, throwing a spear. We chatted with our friend and asked him if we could try. He said, "Sure. Would you like me to show you how?" Both of us thought this was unnecessary. Hey, I play baseball. I know how to throw stuff. I don't need anyone to teach me how to throw something. What I didn't know is that there is a technique to properly throwing a javelin. Wisely, our spear throwing friend did not insist on teaching us the right way to do it. He knew we weren't interested in learning. So he poured out his wrath on us. He gave us over to doing it our way. The results were pitiful. I was lucky I didn't throw the thing straight down into my foot. But I couldn't believe how short the distance I threw it turned out to be. It was humbling. After experiencing the consequences of our pride we both said, "Hey, uh, exactly how do you do this?" We were willing to listen at that point. We learned the right way to throw a javelin. The results weren't impressive. No one tried to sign me up for the Olympic team. But it was better than we had done. At least we no longer looked like kooks, ineptitude in motion. That's how God deals with us. Go ahead. I warned you, but if you insist, have your own way. When you've experience the pain of the inevitable consequences, maybe you'll be ready to listen and do it my way.

Our culture believes that sex is the key component to life. But it also believes even more firmly, that it is not just sex, but total freedom with regard to sex, that brings life. There must be no restrictions on sexual expression, they think. Each person must be autonomous, totally free to pursue sexual desire and expression whenever, however and with whomever he or she wants. To limit sexual desire and expression is not just bad, it is inhumane, cruel, even deadly.

In their book *How Shall We Now Live*, Nancy Pearcey and the late Charles Colson wrote, “For many modern thinkers, sexuality has become the basis for an entire worldview, the source of ultimate meaning and healing, a means of redemption.” They quote one scholar who said, “All the intellectual and cultural breakthroughs of modernity were in some way or other linked to the sexual desires their progenitors knew to be illicit but which they chose nonetheless. Their theories were ultimately rationalizations of the choices they knew to be wrong.”

A big influence in shaping the current thinking of our culture was Margaret Sanger, who founded what became Planned Parenthood, and who wrote in the first half of the 20th century. Ironically, she opposed abortion! But in her book, *The Pivot of Civilization*, drawing ideas from Sigmund Freud, she contended that sexual restraint injures our health and dulls the intellect. She claimed the release of sexual energy was **the only method** by which one could find “inner peace and security.” Only with total freedom from any sexual restraint can we find peace. She wrote that through sex, “mankind may attain the great spiritual illumination that will transform the world.” But this could only happen if we removed the prohibitions by Christianity on some sexual activity. She claimed that if we could gain total sexual freedom, remove all restraints, then most of the larger evils of human society would disappear.

So the mantra of our society has been that sex is perhaps the most important element of life, but somewhat paradoxically that it is a purely physical drive, really no different than our desire for food. It is a pleasurable physical act with no other significance. But it is absolutely essential that we have the freedom to indulge in it however we desire. Happiness, peace, even personal identity and security, freedom, are all found in unrestrained sexuality.

That’s the message. But we must ask how that is working out. We all know about the deluge of sexually transmitted diseases that are at epidemic proportions in our country, about the horrible blight of abortions, about the waves of divorce and broken families that have resulted from this bankrupt philosophy. Those factors alone should give people serious doubts. But there are some other devastating effects of it as well. Consider the case of Margaret Sanger, who lived out her philosophy with no constraints on her sexuality. She never found the peace and security she promised with her approach. She ended up obsessed with astrology and psychics in her futile attempts to find peace and hope, and worse, she became addicted to drugs.

Dr. Miriam Grossman is a brilliant doctor, a psychiatrist who worked for more than 10 years at UCLA counseling students. She got to the place where she couldn’t take it anymore. She published a book titled, *Unprotected*, in which she took on the group think of the university culture that preaches to students that they should wear sunscreen and not eat fast food, but covers up the devastating consequences of the sexual promiscuity that it condones and even promotes. She saw a constant stream of students whose lives were ruined by the hook-up culture of free sex. In the book she details the wreckage she saw on a daily basis and issues a

cry to put a stop to it. The philosophy of our culture isn't bring peace and joy, it's destroying people.

Laura Sessions Stepp, a journalist with the Washington Post, wrote a book titled, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose At Both*. In it she details the tragic emotional and relational consequences of promiscuity in the lives of nine young women. Buying our culture's message did not bring them peace and happiness; it brought them nothing but heartache, regret and sorrow. In an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, Meghan Cox Gordon wrote, "the sexual revolution did not make us whole by liberating our true...selves, but taught us to carve precious little bits off ourselves, wasting away our capacity for lasting marriage and deep sexual bonding."

Our society is in the middle of a huge experiment in social engineering based in part on the dubious theory that casting off all sexual restraint is essential for true human fulfillment and peace. It involves discarding truths that people have known and followed for centuries. It is unraveling the bonds of family that have been the basis of society throughout history. Unfortunately, the results of this massive experiment won't be fully known for many decades, perhaps even for a century. But we should listen to Hosea 8:7. Israel was in a big experiment too, having decided to break the bonds that tied them to their God. In that verse, God says, "they have sown the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind." They planted something powerful, the wind, and they were going to reap something frighteningly destructive. To reap a whirlwind is to experience the effects of a tornado. Though the harvest has not come in fully, we are already experiencing in our culture some of the effects of this experiment. It is resulting in anger, depression at epidemic levels, loss of civility, and disturbing, frightening violence. Our society is threatening to unravel. We are just beginning to experience the whirlwind.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:18, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually sins against his own body." He claims that when we violate God's plan for sex we are doing damage to ourselves. We hurt our own souls. We severely harm our ability to have genuine intimacy, which is a deep need of every human heart. Our culture is telling us empty, deceitful words that lead us to disobey God and end up with desolation.

God designed sex to be glorious. But he designed it to be a package deal. It provides intense pleasure, but it also is intended to create a family and to provide intimacy between a man and woman that nothing else approaches. Our culture wants to break off two parts of the package and only have the physical pleasure part. In so doing it actually drains it of its real power and lessens it. God wants us to experience sex at the highest level, and to do so with no regret with only joy and freedom. But to have that happen we have to follow God's direction and

commands. To violate it is to damage one of the greatest gifts God has given us, to injure our own souls and fill ourselves with regret.

Here are a couple of data points, a couple of research study results to remember. A large study done in Canada a few years ago looked at people who had uncommitted, casual sex. What it found is that 72% of the men and 78% of the women ended up with feelings of regret. Meanwhile, a survey of sexuality conducted jointly by the State University of New York at Stony Brook and the University of Chicago, considered by many as the most authoritative study ever done on sexuality, found that of all sexually active people, the most physically pleased and emotionally satisfied were married couples. The study concluded “married sex beats all else.”

## REMEMBER YOU ARE LIGHT

Verse 8 says something startling. “You are light in the Lord. Live as children of the Lord.” The Ephesians Christians were not spiritual giants, nor were they noteworthy people. Paul earlier had reminded the Christians in Corinth that they were not considered wise by the world, they weren’t influential or powerful, they were nobodies and nothings. The same was mostly true in Ephesus. Yet Paul said to them, “You are light in the Lord.” You are what the world needs, because everyone wants enlightenment. You have it! You are the “woken” people of this world!

He did not come up with that idea on his own. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus said to his followers, “You are the light of the world.” We’ve heard that many times and unfortunately as a result we don’t notice what an outrageous, shocking statement that was. Jesus was talking to people who for the most part were uneducated, poor, powerless people. They were considered mostly unworthy by the religious establishment. To these humble, unimportant, struggling people Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.” In other words, you are what the world around you needs. To them that was one of the most absurd things they’d ever hear. It was almost laughable. How could they possibly be the light of the world?

This world is a dark world. Darkness speaks to us of ignorance, fear, evil, lost-ness. People live in constant fear, fear of being discovered as a fake, fear of rejection, fear of some unknown disaster, ultimately fear of death. As millennials today say, they have FOMO (fear of missing out). They keep putting their hope in things that can never deliver, keep getting diverted down empty rabbit trails, keep longing for hope, and peace and meaning and not finding it no matter what they do. We have had some members of our church move away recently to Alaska. The first thing that sounds unappealing to me about that is how cold it’s going to get. They are in for a long, cold winter. But then it hits me that there’s something that might be harder to take than the cold. It’s the darkness. There are going to be days in the winter where daylight only makes a short appearance. Sunrise will be at around 10:15 AM, and sunset a little after 3:30

PM. That would be hard, but imagine being in Barrow, Alaska. Beginning around the middle of November that town will go through a period of 67 days with *no* daylight! Imagine if there were never any sunlight. Imagine what it would be like to live your whole life in darkness. That would be awful. It would be beyond depressing. Paul tells us that is how the world is. It is in unrelenting, never-yielding darkness. What it needs most desperately, is light. Paul said to the Ephesians and to us, “You’re it! You’re the light they need so badly!”

That’s a bit hard to believe. We come to faith in Christ because we know we are imperfect, fallen people. In the biblical term we know there is sin, failure in us. We know we need forgiveness. We find that forgiveness in Christ, but having found it we seek to live this new life and continue to find ourselves falling short. There is an all too apparent gap between what we know we should be and what we actually are. So it doesn’t feel like we are the light of the world. We are generally more prone to say, “I am kind of a mess. I disappoint myself. How could I possibly be what the world needs? How could I be the light this dark world needs?”

Yet Paul insisted that you, yes, you, humble Christian, are the light. He got that from Jesus Himself who said you are the light of the world. In what sense are we, fallible as we are, the light of the world? You know God. You know he exists, you know who he is, and you know that through Christ he loves you and has adopted you as his child. Jesus said in John 8:12 that he is the light of the world. It is *him in you* that provides the light the world needs so badly! What we need to remember is that humans were created by God and for God. They are created to live in close relationship to him. The deepest spiritual, emotional and psychological need of every human being is to live in God’s presence and love. The root problem of every human is for our broken relationship with God to be healed and restored. We have an enemy who has crafted this world’s system that tells us the exact opposite. He says our greatest need is to be free of God. Ever since Eden people have been believing that lie. And when they do, it creates a massive hole right in the core of their soul. They keep trying everything they can think of to fill that hole, but nothing will ever do it. Just by the fact that you know God, that you know you are his child, that you walk with him, you are the light this world needs. You are not perfect, you may mess up with distressing regularity; but because of God’s grace, you have what the world needs *most of all*.

You know the truth. You know that there are lots of people in this world who are spouting empty words that deceive people and that results in them experiencing the wrath of God in the form of consequences of their choices as we have just seen. You can now see through the lies. You can know that all the pursuit of unrestrained sex, or of money, or position or power in the world can never bring healing to the human soul. You know that disobeying God in the pursuit of autonomy and freedom will always end in disaster.



I'm a bit of a nerd who likes to check out the box scores of major league games, but especially the Padres. I usually do that in the morning looking at the newspaper on line, typically using my iPad. But it is not uncommon for the page with the box scores to load very slowly, sometimes not fully at all. So the little numbers in the box scores are blurry. If I squint real hard I can sort of make a guess at what a given number is. What's really cool is when I'm trying to make out what those little numbers are, frustrated at being unable to see them, when suddenly the page fully loads and it instantly becomes crisp and clear. I can see it easily. In a sense, that is what happens to us in Christ. We are looking at the world, trying to make sense of what's going on and it's all blurry. We're frustrated by our inability to make any sense of it, but suddenly Christ enters our lives and the whole thing becomes crisp and clear. Oh, I see what's going on. Now I get it. The whole world needs that, and you have it, in Christ.

You have peace. You are at peace with God, at peace with who you are as a beloved child of God, and at peace with what is going on in your world because you know God is sovereign and what he supplies is enough. The world is dying for peace. It would give anything to have it. Anything except submission to God, that is. But you've submitted to him, and you have what they all want.

You have hope. You know your destiny is secure. You do not need to fear anything, not even death, because for you to die is gain. You have grace and love. You understand that you are not loved by God because you deserve it, but because he has given you unlimited grace in Jesus Christ. Because of that you can relate to undeserving, unloving people with that same grace and love. The world is dying for that kind of grace.

A Christian guy I knew years ago once confided in me his frustration with himself. He had some friends who lived in a different city who had some financial gains that they then used to invest in real estate. They made some savvy moves, everything went their way and they were making a killing. They were on their way to building a financial empire as they bought more and more real estate. He thought he was missing out because he lacked the knowledge, the resources and mostly the guts to take the chances they did and hit it big like they were. He just plodded along, working, paying his bills, going nowhere financially and he felt like he was losing out, being left in the dust. But then the recession came along. Real estate cratered, and his friends' financial empire began to unravel. They tried desperately to stop the bleeding, but nothing worked. When the dust settled they had lost everything and were literally left with nothing. This is where the guy was disgusted with himself. He said he had told no one else this – and he didn't like to admit it – but he felt a satisfaction that bordered on glee at their fall. His reaction actually caused him a bit of doubt in his faith. He said, "I tell myself and other people about the Jesus stuff, but inside, the real me is happy at the misfortune of friends. There's nothing good about that. It's ugly, and it feels like I'm just pretending to be a godly person, covering up what's really inside. I feel like a hypocrite."

You probably have heard that voice accusing you of being a fake, of being as dark as anyone else inside. I will tell you what I told that guy. In Christ, you have a new heart. It is a heart that beats for God. That heart longs to glorify God, to obey him, to be full of compassion and grace for others. *That heart is who you really are.* It is who you will be for eternity. I asked him, “At the core of who you are, what do you want for your friends? Are you really happy this misfortune has befallen them?” He thought about it and said, “Actually, no, I’m not happy. I really do want good for them.” I then pointed out that he had failed to notice his own disgust at his selfish response. That disgust was itself evidence of his new heart, a heart that wants to be large and full of grace, rather than small and selfish.

It’s funny that we tend to think the ugly thought we have is the real person we are, rather than the revulsion that we experience over that ugly thought. In his book, *Waking the Dead*, John Eldridge wrote, “the enemy knows how vital the heart is, even if we do not, and all his forces are fixed upon its destruction. For if he can disable or deaden your heart, then he has effectively foiled the plan of God...By taking out your heart, the enemy takes out *you*.” The enemy wants to pound you with the idea that you are phony, you do not have a heart for God, a new heart, and that you are the farthest thing from the light of the world. You and I need to believe that what God says is true. We are new in Christ, we have his Spirit in us, and as we live in the truth of that we become the light of the world.

Paul goes on to say that we need to expose the deeds of darkness. That smacks of us becoming spiritual muckrakers, going around pointing out all the darkness in other people. It sounds like we’re supposed to be judgmental prophets thundering away at all the sin we sin in the world and in people around us. For most of us that is an extremely unappealing prospect. Fortunately I don’t think that’s what Paul meant. *How does light expose what’s in the darkness? It doesn’t accuse it of things. It doesn’t preach at it. It doesn’t condemn it. It just...shines.* Light just does what light does. It shines and that automatically reveals what’s there.

I read an account by a guy of a time when he was young and with his family they visited Mammoth Caves in Kentucky. This is the longest cave system in the world, with 400 miles underground explored. His story reminded me something I experienced as a boy. He said his family took a guided tour of the caves that lasted a couple of hours. At one point the guide took the tour group into one large cavern. He had them all sit down, then they turned out all the lights. It was total darkness. When I was young our family went on a similar tour of Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico, and they did the same thing. I remember the blackness being so thick you could almost feel it. I waved my hand in front of my face, inches away, and could not see a thing. There was zero light, and the feeling was creepy, oppressive. However, this guy back in Mammoth Caves said the guide did something they did not do on our tour. He said, “Now

watch this.” Then he lit a single small candle. The light of that one small candle seemed to fill the entire chamber with light, and it was a big relief.

We are not supposed to go around accusing and condemning everyone of their darkness. All we need to do is just be light, let that light of Christ shine.

## APPLICATION

### KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE LIGHT

It is easy for us to forget the truth about who we are, or just not believe it. 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, “For God, who said let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.” It took the power of God, the power of creation itself, to make God’s light shine in us. But he used that power to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in Christ.

*Whatever our failings and foibles may be (and we all have our share of them), we have this light in us, and it is the light that every human being needs.* We are not perfect, but we have the light within us. Never ever forget this, and never doubt it.

### LIVE AS A CHILD OF THE LIGHT

There are two main imperatives in these verses. The first is let no one deceive you. Do not fall prey to the lies. Look out for what “everyone believes” and for “everybody is doing it.” Yes, the majority probably are doing it, and they are also missing out on real life. They are spoiling some of God’s greatest gifts, and they are searching for peace, joy and hope because they don’t have it.

*Let’s not fall prey to the illusion.* The second imperative in these verses is to live as children of the light. That means the driving motive of your life is to live to please the Lord. Don’t get sucked in by the deceitful words of the enemy or the dark and dying world around us. Live in the truth. Live at peace because our God is real, he loves us, and will provide for us. Let’s follow him with all our hearts.

When I was still single I spent a summer at Purdue University in training for a ministry I worked for at the time. Our first Sunday there I went with friends to the First Baptist Church of Lafayette, Indiana. It was an impressive edifice, but it was mostly empty and the service spoke loudly of a dead church. The next Sunday was a total contrast. We went to Second Baptist Church of Lafayette. It was a primarily black church in a far from impressive edifice. The service began with the choir coming into the building down the center aisle singing a lively, rocking version of, “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” This passage calls us to live out that song. Yes, your light may be little, but just let it shine, and in the darkness of this world it will shine brightly like the candle in that cave.