



Eph 5:11–14

Read, the passage below...

Ask the Lord to open your eyes, that you may behold wonderful things from His Word (Ps 119:18), and that you would receive His Word with humility—putting it into practice in your daily life (Jas 1:21–22).

Passage:¹

- 11 ^aDo not **participate** in the unfruitful ^bdeeds of ^cdarkness, but instead even ^{1d}**expose** them;
- 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are **done** by them in secret.
- 13 But all things become visible ^awhen they are ¹**exposed** by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.
- 14 For this reason ¹it **says**,
- ^a**Awake, sleeper,**
 And **arise** from ^bthe dead,
 And Christ ^cwill **shine** on you.”

MSBNASB B

Ephesians 5:11

5:11 Do not participate in ... darkness. Paul’s instruction is plain and direct: Christians are to faithfully live in righteousness and purity and have nothing at all to do with the evil ways and works of Satan and the world. The two ways of living are unalterably opposed to each other and mutually exclusive. Cf. [1Co 5:9–11](#); [2Co 6:14–18](#); [2Th 3:6, 14](#). **instead ... expose them.** The Christian’s responsibility does not stop with his own rejection of evil. He is also responsible for exposing and opposing darkness wherever it is found, especially when it is found in the church. See notes on [Mt 18:15–17](#); [Gal 6:1, 2](#).

5:12 disgraceful even to speak. Some sins are so despicable that they should be sealed off from direct contact and not even mentioned, much less discussed, except in order to contradict and oppose them. Merely talking about them can be morally and spiritually corruptive. Positive proclamation of the pure truth in the light of the Word exposes all evil (cf. [Pr 6:23](#); [2Ti 3:16](#)).

5:13 everything that becomes visible is light. This phrase should probably be part of v. 14, and is better translated, “for it is light that makes everything visible.” The pure and illuminating light of God’s Word exposes all the secrets of sin.

5:14 Using this quotation from [Is 60:1](#), Paul extended an invitation for salvation to the unsaved, in order that they may be transformed from children of darkness into children of God’s holy light (cf. [Pr 4:18](#)). These words may have been part of an early church Easter hymn used as an invitation to unbelievers. They express a capsule view of the gospel. Cf. the invitations in [Is 55:1–3, 6, 7](#) and in [Jas 4:6–10](#).

Context:

5:11 essentially repeat the command from [v7](#). He Paul reiterates his immediately preceding instruction and supplies further motivation for obedience.

For more information regarding the immediate context of these verses, please refer to the “context section” in the notes from the previous study.

¹ Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Comments taken from MacArthur, John F., Jr. *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006).



Exploring the Text:

As you answer the following questions, please take the time to read all the **cross references** at the end of the questions. These are provided to enrich your study experience.

1. How can we protect ourselves so that we "do participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness?" (cf. **2Cor 6:14, Rev 18:4**)

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2. How should we view the answer to question 1, in light of **1Cor 5:9-10** and the fact that Jesus spent so much time in the presence of worldly people that he was commonly called "a friend of sinners?"

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3. Practically, what does it look like to expose deeds of darkness in the lives of unbelievers? In what attitude should this be done. (cf. **Jn 16:7-15; Matt 5:14-16; Phil 2:14-18; 1Pet 3:15**)

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4. Practically, what does it look like to expose deeds of darkness in the lives of believers? In what attitude should this be done. (cf. **Matt 18:15-20; 1Cor 13:4-7; Gal 6:1-3; 1Thess 5:14-15**)

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5. Even though a harsh, unloving tone is never appropriate when we expose the deeds of darkness, under what circumstances might it be merited to take a firmer tone, as we expose these deeds of darkness? Why was it that the Pharisees were always the recipients of the sharpest side of Jesus' tongue? (**Luke 3:7-8; Jn 8:39-44**)

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6. When do we direct our efforts of “exposing deeds of darkness” towards the person committing those deeds, and when do we turn our attentions to those who might witness or be affected by such deeds? (Rom 16:17; Titus 1:9–11, 3:1–11; 2Thess 3:6, 14–15; 1Tim 5:20)

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7. What is the difference between Paul instruction, in 5:3, that some sins “must not even be named among you,” and 5:12, where he says that some sins we should not “even to speak of?”

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8. Name at least three sins (feel free to list more) that we should we be careful to avoid as we expose the deeds of darkness. One of the sins to avoid is where the devil’s name comes from. 😬 (cf. Matt 18:15–16; Eph 5:12; Pr 18:8, 17)

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9. Verse 13 could be a reference to one of two events. What are those two events? (Jn 3:16–21, 1Cor 4:5; Col 1:13)

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10. How are we to understand the invitation that is extended in v14? Whom is Paul addressing? What is he telling them to do?

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11. Paul very frequently quotes from the prophet Isaiah. Eph 5:14 is likely alluding to the thoughts that Isaiah expresses in passages like Isa 26:19, 51:17, 52:1, 60:1. Go read all those passage in their context. What event is Isaiah referring to? How does Paul’s invitation compare, relate to, and differ from what Isaiah was talking about?

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12. Bonus Question: Why is there this difference between Isaiah and Paul? Is this a contradiction, or misapplication of the OT?

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For Further Reflection:

13. How do you respond to the darkness around you? Are you joyful and thankful for the saving and transforming work that He has performed in you? Are you primarily frustrated with the unchristian behaviour of unbelievers? Or do you reach out with sorrowful compassion to those whose only hope is the light of the saving Gospel of Christ Jesus?

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Suggestion for Prayer:

Spend some time in prayer, asking God to give you increased compassion for the lost, and for opportunities to point them to the true Light who has come into the world to drive away the darkness of sin and death.

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