



SESSION 6

I AM A LIGHT

▶ **The Point**

Shine the light of Christ.

▶ **The Passage**

Ephesians 5:8-14

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Ever wondered why a moth is attracted to a light? If so, you're not alone. Scientists have long pondered this, but they don't know either. At least, they don't know for sure. They've come up with several hypotheses, but they end up poking holes in each one. So, we'll just keep wondering—while the moths keep flying to the light.

Interestingly, people are also attracted to light. We'd rather enter a well-lit room than one that's dark. We'd rather walk the dog during the daytime than after dark. When we do go out at night, we prefer evenings with a full moon. We even consider it romantic. Perhaps over the last century, we've gradually taken light for granted. Flip a switch and we have light. Our ever-present smartphones have lights that outshine any flashlight. If we choose to do so, we can be in perpetual light.

People also continue to be drawn to the light of Christ. But how do they see His light? They see His light through His followers. We, the people of God who make up His church, are the light of Christ.

▶ **The Setting**

Paul wrote Ephesians while he was imprisoned (see 3:1; 6:20), probably in Rome. Many scholars believe Paul wrote this letter intending for it to go primarily to the church in Ephesus. (See 1:1.) Others believe Paul intended the letter to circulate generally among several churches, one of which was in Ephesus. Either way, Paul wrote to encourage Christians in their calling to shine the light of Christ in the darkness.

What does the Bible say?

Unfruitful (v. 11)—One of the tests to determine whether something is of darkness or light is to see whether it produces fruit; that is, to see whether it results in anything useful or helpful for God’s kingdom.

Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),

¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,

¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 117 of the PSG: **“When have you seen someone light up a room?”**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Capitalize on the way this session emphasizes light by bringing several strings of Christmas lights to decorate your meeting space with colorful lights. You may also want to bring lamps, battery-powered candles, and other non-flammable sources of light to create a visual object lesson of our

responsibility to shine the light of Christ in a dark world.

Note: If your meeting space cannot accommodate additional lights, ask group members to look in their purses, pockets, and around the room to find sources of light. These could include flashlights, watches, smartphones, compacts, and more.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 118 of the PSG. Introduce the truth that we are the light of Christ by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 118 of the PSG: **“Shine the light of Christ.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by praising God for the ways in which His light has penetrated the darkness of this world. Pray that you and your group members will feel a greater sense of responsibility to shine the light of Christ as you engage His Word together throughout this session.

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

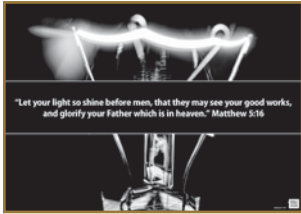


15 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

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ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What are some ways your life has changed after encountering Christ?

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Ephesians 5:8-10

⁸ For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

READ: Ephesians 5:8-10 on page 119 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 11**, "Light," as a continuing reminder of this session's primary theme. Ask group members to brainstorm different "good works" that produce light for God's kingdom.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 119 of the PSG: **"What are some words that describe your life before you encountered Christ?"**

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read the bullet list on pages 119-120 of the PSG in order to see Paul's two main suggestions for how to live as children of light.

Note: You can also use the Commentary material for verse 9 to further explain the "fruit of light" lifted up by Paul throughout this passage.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 120 of the PSG: **"How do we actively test what is pleasing to the Lord and what is not?"**

Note: The key word for this discussion is "actively." Many Christians take a passive approach to spiritual matters. They wait and see if God convicts them, or they wait and see if God will inspire them in some way. But how can we take an active role in testing whether our actions and attitudes please Him?

TRANSITION: Read aloud the final paragraph on page 120 of the PSG:

Sooner or later, all of us have to grow up and make a decision. Will we choose God, or will we choose the world? God doesn't allow us to straddle the fence on this one. Mediocrity is unacceptable to God. Will we choose to live in the light or will we remain in the darkness?

Ephesians 5:8-10 Commentary

[Verse 8] Paul turned to the theme of **light** in contrast with **darkness**. He referred, of course, to spiritual light and darkness. Spiritually, darkness and disobedience go together. Light and disobedience do not. Every believer in Christ has experienced a transformation from darkness to light. Paul wrote straightforwardly and strikingly that **at one time you were darkness**. We might have expected Paul to have written that believers were once *in* darkness. Paul's point here, however, is not only that believers were once in dark surroundings or circumstances—or even in a realm of dark influences. His point is that believers themselves were expressions of spiritual darkness. Apart from Christ, people are not only in darkness, darkness is in them. It defines them.

Thankfully, believers are no longer identified with darkness. Though you were darkness, **now you are light**. Note the tense change: “you *were* ... now you *are*.” In going from the past tense to the present tense, we've experienced a dramatic change. Darkness has given way to radiance!

How did this transformation take place? The essential answer is: **in the Lord**. It was the Lord's work. This reflects that salvation is fully by grace. Paul wrote, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). We have not transformed ourselves from darkness to light; God has done it. After describing this transformation, Paul commanded his readers to **walk as children of light**. Paul's logic is simple: This is who you are, so live like it. If you are children of light, then live as children of light.

[Verse 9] To explain the obedient lifestyle, Paul blended the metaphors of **light** and **fruit**. Certain things come forth from light the way fruit comes forth from a vine or tree. We can readily grasp the idea of **the fruit of light**. We are the light of the world (see Matt. 5:14) because the light of Christ illumines us. The fruit that our lives produce is to express Christ's light.

Such fruit **is found in all that is good and right and true**. “Good” refers to kindness and generosity. “Right” in this case refers to right living. “True” means moral integrity. Darkness, on the other hand, is associated with hard-heartedness. (See Eph. 4:18.) Children of light will not be hard-hearted toward goodness, rightness, and truth. There is a fundamental, ethical distinction between light and darkness—between good and evil living, right and wrong behavior and attitudes.

[Verse 10] As children of light, how are we to pursue fruitfulness? One key answer to that question is to **discern what is pleasing to the Lord**. That is, we are to assess carefully what is pleasing to the Lord. We are to examine our courses of action. We are to discern, learn, and find out what pleases the Lord. Elsewhere, Paul encouraged us to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2). We are called to seek out actively the will of God by faith and clarify our understanding of it.

STUDY THE BIBLE

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Ephesians 5:11-14

¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "What Would You Say?" on page 121 of the PSG. If time allows, encourage volunteers to share their responses.



Choose one of the following statements about the reality of sin and evil in our world. Record how you would respond to that statement during a conversation with a friend or family member.

- "There's no such thing as 'right' and 'wrong'; it's all relative."
- "I've done a lot more good things than bad things, so I won't have any problem with God when I meet Him."
- "You don't have any right to tell me how I should live my life. Stop judging me."

How can you become better prepared to have these kinds of conversations as a representative of Jesus in your community?

READ: Ephesians 5:11-14 on page 122 of the PSG.

RECAP: Read aloud the final paragraph on page 122 of the PSG:

Because we live in a permissive world, we must be quick to reject everything that is evil—and even those things that give the appearance of evil. If we aren't constantly on guard, we can be molded by our culture and shaped by a society that ignores the principles laid out in God's Word.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Illustrate the pervasiveness of darkness in our world by asking group members to take out their smartphones. (Those who don't have smartphones can partner with those who do.) Encourage everyone to pull up a website they visit often, and then to start clicking links to other websites. Ask them to count how many clicks it takes before they arrive at something that needs to be rejected as darkness.

Ephesians 5:11-14 Commentary

[Verse 11] Christians have become light, but live in a world that remains dark. We struggle with what Paul would call “this present darkness” (Eph. 6:12). How are we to relate to the darkness of the world? Two commands answer this question. The first command is **take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness**. In Ephesians 5:7, Paul instructed believers not to be partners with the disobedient. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul wrote: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?” This is not a prohibition of friendships with unbelievers. (See 1 Cor. 5:9-10.) Jesus Himself was known as a friend of sinners. (See Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34.) We are not, however, to be in partnerships with unbelievers in the sense of participating in the “works of darkness.” The works of darkness are “unfruitful” in that they do not produce good. Sin may promise great things, but it fails to deliver anything of lasting and real value.

The second command is to **expose** the works of darkness. If a bright light shines in a room that has long been dark and unattended, many things may show. There may be dirt and trash. Roaches and rodents may have moved into the space. Shining the light makes the character and condition of the space clearly visible. We can expose darkness by boldly shining the light of Christ.

Goodness, righteousness, and truth are in stark contrast to selfishness, moral impurity, greed, and deception. Chastity has a distinct beauty that sensuality cannot match. In Philippians 2:14-15, Paul challenged believers to be “children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” Of course, not all people will applaud us for boldly shining the light of Christ. Some will see the distinction between themselves and the children of light and resent the light. They will criticize the light to try to justify their own darkness. Others, however, will be attracted to the light.

Our highest hope and intent in exposing darkness is to bring people into the light of Christ.

[Verse 12] There is a strong common sense reason not to participate in the works of darkness: **for it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret**. The evil character of the deeds is confirmed when people do the deeds in guarded secrecy. If something would be genuinely shameful to speak of publicly, it is shameful to do or say privately. Ask yourself: “How would I feel if what I’m considering doing or saying were broadcast publicly? Would I be comfortable if my behaviors were known?”

Paul’s reasoning seems to be along these lines: if you would be ashamed to speak of something, don’t participate in it!



STUDY THE BIBLE

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Ephesians 5:11-14 (continued)

13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

SUMMARIZE: Help group members engage the main themes from page 123 of the PSG:

- 1. "The fact that so many ungodly things have become acceptable in our culture doesn't change the unchanging truth. God's Word and His view of sin have never changed—and they never will. He will not allow evil to go unpunished."
- 2. "Paul gave us the proper response: 'Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.'"
- 3. "Our task is not simply to expose the things in the darkness. God calls us to bring people from the darkness into the light of Christ."

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 123 of the PSG: **"As Christians, what are the right motivations and goals for exposing darkness in the world?"**

Note: Group members may also want to talk about the wrong motivations for exposing darkness as they answer this question; allow them the freedom to do so. In fact, it may be helpful to explore the ways right and wrong motivations interact—including what might cause right motives to slip over time and become wrong motives.

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read the words to "This Little Light of Mine" at the bottom of page 123 in the PSG. Ask volunteers to share any memories or emotions they associate with that song.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 123 of the PSG: **"Where do you see opportunities to shine the light of Christ in your community?"**

GUIDE: Refer back to "The Point" for this session: **"Shine the light of Christ."** As time permits, encourage volunteers to share any final thoughts or ask any final questions.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:
How can we avoid becoming desensitized to darkness?

Ephesians 5:11-14 Commentary (continued)

[Verses 13-14] We need to remember that all secret things will eventually be known. **But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light.** People who live away from city lights see an illustration of this on most mornings. Before dawn, the world is covered in darkness. A person may look out over the landscape, but objects and animals are not visible. After the sun rises, the features and occupants of the land are in plain view in the light. Light shines now in the lives of believers. The light of Christ puts purity and love on display in us. This light is in sharp contrast with the works of darkness and can disclose the true character of those works. Light will shine on every life in the coming judgment. Things that are secret now will be exposed. When the Lord comes, He “will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart” (1 Cor. 4:5).

Believers as well as unbelievers need to take heed. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10). Unbelievers need to know that all evil will eventually, inevitably be exposed. Every person’s true character will come into full and clear view before the judgment seat. “For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light” (Luke 8:17). It is far better to welcome the light of Christ fully into our hearts and minds now than to wait for the exposure that is coming in judgment.

To that end, Paul concluded with a powerful exhortation. **Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”** The phrase “it says” may be Paul’s way of introducing his own combination of various Old Testament verses. Isaiah 60:1 reads, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” Paul may have been blending that verse with Isaiah 9:2 and 26:19 and showing that the fulfillment of these promises is in Christ. On the other hand, Paul may have been quoting or paraphrasing a first-century hymn or poem. We do not know with certainty Paul’s source for this saying. We do know the meaning of it.

Paul was directing and inviting all people to Christ. Unbelievers have come to the time to wake up from their spiritual comas and rise from spiritual death by God’s power. It is time for them to look fully in the face of Jesus and have His saving light shine upon them. Does someone who will attend your Bible study group this week need to hear this invitation to life and light in Christ? Believers need to guard against falling into a slothful, neglectful slumber. Be alert. You have responsibility in this world. You’ve risen from a dark grave; don’t return to it. Don’t flirt with the works of darkness that lead to shame. Christ has shone on you and will now shine His glorious light through you as a child of light!



Read the article “Paul’s Prison Epistles” in the Winter 2017-2018 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles “The ‘Truth’: A Word Study” (Winter 2013-2014), “Paul’s Use of Light and Darkness” (Winter 2011-2012), and “Righteousness in Pauline Thought” (Fall 2011) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator. Look for *Bundles: Bible Studies for Life*.



4 EXCUSES FOR AVOIDING ENROLLMENT

BY G. DWAYNE MCRARY

There are a lot of reasons why many churches don't practice enrollment in their groups ministries—and most of them are excuses, plain and simple. Here are the four most common excuses I hear.

You're Just Padding the Numbers

The truth is we are padding the numbers. Churches that use enrollment will have people on the class list that have never attended the group and may never attend the group. But does that change the fact that these are real people? Isn't every name the name of a real person who has at least expressed a desire to be part of a Bible study group?

Enrolling someone in a Bible study gets us one step closer to seeing them in Bible study. Enrollment dictates attendance.

If you're not planning on actively attempting to enroll people in your Bible study group, then what plan do you have for reaching your neighbors? And how has that plan been working?

Enrollment Hurts the Attendance Percentage

This excuse is a cousin to the first one. You will never have 100 percent attendance in a group that practices open enrollment. You will have lost people on the class list, and you will have people who have trouble finding some of the Old Testament books.

But everyone present? Nope.



I want everyone on the class list to be there as well, but I also want to reach people with the gospel. If I have to pick one, then reaching people with the gospel had better win that debate every time.

Side note: in most cases, “we dropped them from our class list” is another way of saying we don’t want to be held responsible for those we are unwilling to seek.

We Don’t Have Any Guests in Our Worship Service

Could it be that the reason you don’t have guests in worship is they know they aren’t welcome until after they attend? If we offered to enroll a person in a Bible study group before they attend, do you think it might raise the possibility that they will attend a worship service, as well?

This excuse points to a commonly accepted practice: attending a worship service is the appropriate first step in becoming a part of a church. That sounds good, but the truth is that people are looking for safe places where they can develop meaningful relationships, and that rarely happens in a worship service.

What if Sunday School—or whatever you call your Bible study groups that meet on a regular basis before or after a worship service—became the first step? Would we spend time worrying about what happens to a person after they join our church? Probably not, because they’re already connected to other believers through a Bible study group.

Our Class Is Already Too Large

First of all, too large for what? To add more people? To keep up with what you already have? The bottom line is you need smaller groups and more of them. And you need to be looking to start more smaller new groups. I say this for practical purposes as a teacher—I teach two Bible study groups weekly and have helped start three new groups over the past five years. I can make a great presentation to a group of 50, but I can’t really teach to their known needs. I am not capable of understanding and accounting for 50 different and unique need sets. But 12 I can manage—and I have room for a few more. I am a better teacher with a smaller group.

—G. Dwayne McCrary is a project team leader for ongoing adult Bible study resources at LifeWay. He also teaches an adult group and preschool group every Sunday in the church he attends.

4 WAYS TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION

BY MATT MORRIS

We've all been there—members of a Bible study group where another group member or the leader dominates the conversation. Every. Single. Week. What is your first thought? *Boring? I wish this guy would let others talk? Why isn't he asking questions?*

There's a vast difference between group leaders who are facilitators and group leaders who dominate discussion and don't ask the right questions or do the right things to give others the opportunity to speak up and add value to the conversation.

The reality is group leaders should only talk 30 percent of the time. If you're a group leader, pause and think about what percentage of time you talk. Do you give the members of your group the opportunity to speak up and answer questions? There are always going to be people in your group who will never speak. Maybe they're just uncomfortable speaking in front of a group. But maybe they don't add to the conversation because there are a few people who always answer questions and give their opinion.

Allow me to give you a few tips on how to involve others.

Be comfortable with silence. This is important. After you pose a question to your group, wait for twenty seconds. For someone who likes to lead, this can feel like an eternity. But those you lead need time to process what you've asked and formulate an answer, and that takes time. Do your best to wait twenty seconds before saying anything.

Sit next to the person who dominates the conversation. If there is one group member who's always the first to answer the questions you ask, sit next to them. Chances are that person is less likely to answer if they are sitting right next to you.

Not making eye contact with them affords others the opportunity to answer questions as well.

Talk between meetings. If allowing for a brief silence and sitting next to the conversation dominator doesn't help, talk to that person between meetings. I would suggest you do it away from the small group environment, whether that's at a church or in a home. Coffee shops are a great atmosphere. A conversation may go something like this: "Hey, I'm really thankful you're so responsive when I ask questions in small group, but I want to give others the opportunity to speak up as well. Can you help me with that?"

Make it a point to involve others. When posing a question to your group, ask another member what they think or how they interpret the question. "Carolyn, how did interpret the passage in Mark 7?" "Joel, how does the text we are studying apply directly to your situation right now?"

A couple of resources that may help you as you lead your group are *Field Guide for Small Group Leaders*, by Sam O'Neal, and *Leading Life Changing Small Groups*, by Bill Donahue.

Leaders have a wonderful opportunity to help people become more mature disciples of Christ. Facilitation over domination always needs to be top of mind.

—Matt Morris, a Brand Manager at LifeWay Christian Resources, regularly blogs at lifeway.com/groupministry.



BECAUSE I KNOW THE ONE

BY BETH MOORE

“But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day” (2 Tim. 1:12, CSB).

“Entrusted” and “entrusting.” Those two words sum up the daily—sometimes hourly—life of a servant of Christ like few others.

The whole interchange between God and child continually comes back to the issue of trust: trusting ourselves entirely to God—our loves, lacks, longings, and our very lives—again and again. Then proving trustworthy by the power of His Spirit again and again with what He entrusts to us.

Being faithful to a trust we can’t define is woefully difficult: God has entrusted us with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit-gifting to share it. The gospel and the gifting.



You have been appointed to eternal life. You, like those first Jesus-followers, have been appointed to go out and produce fruit. In John 15:5, Jesus specifically stated, "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

You are not only called to bear fruit. You are called to bear much fruit. I love the words of Jesus in John 15:8 and believe they extend with fresh life of the Spirit to every generation of Jesus-followers: "My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples" (CSB).

Those first disciples did their jobs. They cannot do ours. They produced their own fruit. They cannot produce ours. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded and commissioned His first followers to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (CSB). We are among those disciples. We have been appointed by God to the globe at this juncture in history. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:20, CSB).

We will also suffer at times because of our appointment.

Suffering is an inescapable part of inhaling oxygen in the atmosphere of this fallen planet. But, under this point, we're not talking about the suffering that is common to all humans. Paul's paradigm suggests that servants of Jesus suffer some things in direct correlation to the positions God called them to fill. A measure of your pain and hardship really is in connection to your calling. Some of it is spiritual warfare. Some of it is sociological resistance because the world hates us as it hated Christ.

(See John 15:18-19.) Some of it is ordained by God for our growth, our humility, our compassion, our obedience, our completion, our faith, and, read this carefully, our future commendation, joy, and fellowship in His glory. If we have a throw-down fit and refuse to partake in the sufferings of Christ, we will miss partaking in the explosive joy of that measure of His glory.

"Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler. But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name" (1 Peter 4:12-16, CSB).

When we run into great difficulty or pain in the journey of our calling, we're prone to either cast blame or jump to the conclusion that we must have done something wrong or landed somewhere wrong in our attempt to discern God's will. But sometimes hardship will come because you got it right. As hard as this is to grasp, sometimes suffering bubbles up from the well of God's immeasurable affection and devotion to us. He is not unfeeling. He is all-knowing. Something down the road depends on our present stretch of pavement. This He promises us: the suffering will be brief and the fruit of it as long as eternity. (See 2 Cor. 4:17)

Until we see Jesus face-to-face, our journeys won't be straight lines nearly as often as they will be a series of loops rolling us forward by circling us back to faith. Entrusted and entrusting. Will we trust Him with the suffering He's entrusted to us? Will we believe He has purpose? Do we have vision enough to believe He's planning one of the biggest harvests of our lives through the seed of the Word we're sowing through this hard season? Desperation can fertilize our soil and tears can water our seed like no ease could ever hope to. Are we willing to believe that right on the other side of this

life is a party of epic proportions where we'll ecstatically rejoice and share in His unfathomable inheritance?

Are you presently on a path that has circled you back to faith? What did Paul tell Timothy to do? The CSB translates the wording [of 2 Timothy 1:13], "Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching." Other translations use the phrase of sound words. The lexical Greek translated "sound" is *hugiainō* meaning: "To be healthy, sound, physically well (Eng.: hygiene)... Metaphorically of persons, to be sound in the faith, meaning firm, pure in respect to Christian doctrine and life. Of doctrine, meaning sound doctrine, i.e., true, pure, uncorrupted (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1)."

One Greek scholar translates the phrase, "Hold to the pattern of healthy words."

The adjective "healthy" nearly brings me to tears. God's words have been health to me. God used His words to heal my tormented mind and to piece back together my broken heart. He still uses them every day of my life to bring health to my soul. Does the concept of healthy words speak relevantly to you right now?

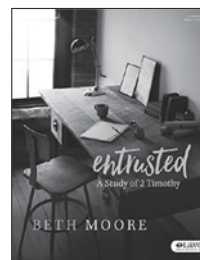
What is true individually has even greater ramifications corporately. The church cannot be healthy without holding tightly to God's Word and to sound doctrine. Methods may change but the Bible must remain. And not just opened but pored over. Studied. The Bride of Christ will grow sick and weak without it.

Each generation is meant to train the next but not into its mirror image. Even when Paul instructed the Corinthians to imitate him, he didn't mean they were to take on his personality. Rather, he exhorted them to model his character and godliness, as he modeled Christ. The goal is Christlikeness, not us-likeness. Spiritual daughters are not meant to look and sound just like their spiritual mothers. Neither are spiritual sons to replicate their spiritual fathers. Each generation needs time and space to grow and find its personality and place in the world. But each generation must hold onto the Scriptures for dear life or the Bride of Christ will suffer with poor circulation, heart disease, poor lung capacity, and a dull mind.

This was Paul's unbroken concrete under his feet when life quaked: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day" (2 Tim.1:12, CSB).

The Greek verb for "am persuaded" also translates "I am fully convinced." Nothing will substitute for knowing the One you believe in. No one can know Him for you. And no one He knows supplants His knowing you. Faith endures the furious tests by knowing the One in whom it rests.

Beth Moore is a Bible teacher and author of best-selling Bible studies and books for women. She is the founder of Living Proof Ministries and speaker at Living Proof Live events across the nation. Beth's mission is to guide women everywhere into a richer, more fulfilling relationship with Jesus.



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* Spiros Zodhiates, S, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers: 2000), 1402.

** William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 46* (Dallas, TX: Word Inc., 2000), 488.

*** Ibid.

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ENDNOTES

1. nps.gov/kala/learn/historyculture/damien.htm
2. samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/
3. instituteforenergyresearch.org/topics/encyclopedia/petroleum
4. mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/stories/the-13-largest-oil-spills-in-history
5. Oswald Chambers, *Workmen of God*, 1341.

COMING SPRING

God Is...

Session 1	Our Provider	Genesis 22:1-14
Session 2	Our Healer	Exodus 14:29-31; 15:22-27
Session 3	Our Banner	Exodus 17:8-16
Session 4	Our Peace	Judges 6:11-16,22-24
Session 5	Our Shepherd	Psalms 23:1-6
Session 6	Our Righteousness	Jeremiah 33:3-8,14-16

Special Focus

God Is Faithful Luke 24:1-12

Stand Up: How to Fight Injustice

Session 1	Be Ready to Stand	Esther 2:5-10,15-17
Session 2	Stand with Conviction	Esther 2:21-3:6
Session 3	Stand Down	Esther 4:1-3,10-16
Session 4	Stand with Humility	Esther 5:1-14
Session 5	Stand Up and Speak	Esther 7:1-10
Session 6	Keep Standing	Esther 8:1-8; 9:20-22