

2025-03-31 Jeremy McAlack Chapel

Good. Okay. If not, I'll speak loudly. Well, I'm so glad to be here this morning. The only thing that he didn't mention is I'm his son. I'm so glad that I have my dad here as well, and he's been my professor when I was here and my youth pastor growing up. I have truly been blessed, especially through my family. My wife, Emily and I, have been living in Morrisville, Pennsylvania, for the last six years. As you can see, this is a picture of our family. We have two biological children, Everett, who's seven, and then Adaline, who's four. Then we have a foster daughter named Catalina. She's 20 years old. Then one of our close friends, Michelle, also lives with us in Morrisville, Pennsylvania. And my wife is also pregnant, so we're expecting a baby boy in August. So we're very thankful for that. Well, it doesn't take long if you're around kids to notice how kids love to imitate. If you're involved with kids' ministry at your church, or maybe you babysat, or maybe you have younger siblings, for some reason, it's part of how God created us and how we learn is through imitation.

For me, as a parent, my kids love to imitate. Sometimes it's unfortunate, but they love to imitate me. I have this picture a couple of years ago, it was taken when Everett was only two. He's behind the steering wheel. To be honest, as I was going through my photos, I couldn't remember if I put him in the car or if he just went right in there by himself, and I found him there later. But he's got my shades on there, and then he's got his hands firmly gripped on the steering wheel. That's good right there, 10 and 2 position on the steering wheel. He's ready to drive. Then you can see a picture of me through the reflection there. But as a proud dad, taking that picture, it wasn't just that he wanted to drive, but he wanted to be just like me. That's why he got up there and he's like, "Look, I'm like Daddy." Now, here's another picture more recently of our family going to Legoland, New York. We love it there. We were doing our best Ninjago Lego Ninja poses before the picture. We just love hanging out together. It's so interesting to see how quickly kids love to imitate.

The same thing is for us, that as we get older, we continue to still imitate our friends, our peers, our classmates, our professors, those who we look up to. Especially for me, too. I don't know if you notice my dad who likes to... I've picked up on some of his mannerisms. But something that he likes to do is, if you get to know him, he likes to talk real close. If you're close to him, he won't ever back away. That's something that I've picked up on, and I don't know why, but it's just something that he does. And he likes to say, shnacks. We love our shnacks. The McAlack house loves our shnacks. But these are just some things that we pick up on. And it's not just the physical features, it's not just the mannerism, it's not just the voice. It's also the humor, the energy, the habits that we learn from each other, but also our spiritual life and our spiritual habits. And the Bible is very clear, and this is where we'll be today in Ephesians 5, if you have a Bible, you can turn there. But Paul is very clear, and he says, If you are children of God, God is your heavenly Father.

And if God is your heavenly Father, then you ought to imitate him. You ought to be just like him. And I love that Paul relates our personal relationship with God, the Father, like walking with him. There's this deep relationship. It's a journey. And as we walk, we learn, and we need to follow his footsteps. We're going to be in Chapter 5 of Ephesians. Before I read it, will you just pray with me? Just bow your head and pray with me. God, as we open our eyes to look at your word, we pray that you would open our minds so that we can understand it. We pray that you would open our hearts so that we can treasure it. God, will you give us grace to believe your word and give us strength to obey it today. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So in Ephesians 5: 1-7, it says, "Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children. Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talk, nor crude joking, which are out of place.

But instead, let there be thanksgiving, for you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous, that's an idolater, has no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not become partners with them." Fellow Christians, we are called to be set apart. We are no longer a part of the world of darkness. The world can be a dark place. It's confusing, and in our world, it's always changing and filled with hopelessness. Yet Paul is clear, where we are in our world, we truly are to be like lights, to shine in the darkness. And God tells us that he is love. If he's love, we should walk in love. That he is light, we should walk in the light. He is truth, we should walk in wisdom. It's sad to see many things changing, times are changing. Some things I grew up with as a child. It was funny, I was talking to my son, Everett, just a couple days ago, and he said, "Daddy, were you born in the 1900s?"

I thought, Oh, my goodness. I guess so. I guess you could say it like that. I never thought about it. But I guess I'm old. Yeah. Then I was thinking about some of these things that are changing around us. I found out that Forever 21 is no longer forever. Party City isn't really helping out with parties anymore. But the one thing that I still cling on to is Kohl's is still--they're shutting down their stores, but they're still alive, just barely. That was one of my favorite stores growing up. You know, there's some strange things happening around in our world, isn't there? A lot of things that cause us to be upset or stressed or confused. Tiktok being threatened to be banned and then banned for two days and then brought back to life again. Recently, Conor McGregor now planning to run for President of Ireland. I don't know if you heard about that. There's all of these things that are constantly changing and shifting, but we tend to grab hold of temporary things for our hope. If you're an Eagles fan in here, I don't know if you are, but that was something maybe last month, quickly, people were around the country holding on to a brief, temporary hope that the Chiefs wouldn't win another Super Bowl.

So I apologize if you're a Chiefs fan out there. Or we grab hold of other things. Maybe it's relationships or friendships. Maybe it's to have success in our jobs or find a career that would feel like we're not working, but that we would love. And yet, ultimately, these things are just temporary. And yet, God is calling us to speak into the world today, the hope that we have for eternity, not just the things that we can see, but the things that we might not be able to see, the eternal things, a faith in Christ, who loves us, who has walked before us, who cherishes us, who gave his life for us so that we can have this loving relationship with him, so that we can shine bright and point others to have this experience. But the truth is, what Paul is speaking into here are these sins that are not just reflected in the world, are they? But as Christians, unfortunately, it's sad to say that these same sins have infiltrated and invaded our homes, our churches. And Paul includes this sin of covetousness. It might seem a little bit out of place compared to these sexual sins that are mentioned, but it's a sin that's rooted in uncontrolled appetite.

The sexually immoral and the covetous person each desire to satisfy the appetite by taking what does not belong to them. As Paul is explaining this, and as we read it today, I hope that we would understand these aren't just sins that the world practice. But unfortunately, this is what our heart is prone to do. These are sins that we might struggle with as Christians. In 1 John, it says this, "For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, the pride of life, is not from the Father, but from the world." These worldly sins have the Christian, the church, and our homes. Think about it this way, as he warns us to not have even a hint of these kinds of sins in our life. I love baking. I don't do it often. When I was in eighth grade, I thought I would grow up to be a chef, but I'm not. I'm happy that I'm not. But when you're making brownies, you have to have all the right ingredients, and you want to make sure you have the right quality of ingredient, too. You have your sugar, you have your flour, you have what other things that you need for a brownies?

You need your chocolate, the cocoa powder, and especially the butter. The more butter the better. Then You also need eggs. If you have all the ingredients mixed in that bowl, and as you're mixing, you take your egg and you crack it, and you put it in there and you realize that the egg was rotten. You try to catch it before it gets in the batter, and as you're stirring it up, a little tiny piece of that rotten egg gets in there. Well, then you could think, you know what? I just need to get another better egg to cover up the rotten egg. Or a little bit more sugar, a little bit more cocoa powder. I'm going to get some vanilla off the shelf and put some vanilla. Nobody will notice, will they? Oh, yeah, they'll notice, right? The rotten egg, okay, could make someone sick. But may this be a picture for us. In our life, may there not even be a hint of these sins. Because even a hint can hinder our testimony. What we say, who we are, we say that we're a Christian, we say that we follow Christ. And yet when people look at our life, what do they see?

When people hear our words, what do they hear? Could they point out our testimony and say, That person is different. There's something about that person that I want. I want to be like them. I want to have a hope and a joy and be filled with the Holy Spirit like that person. Or when they see you, do they think that you're just like the rest of the world? People who are grabbing on to temporary things for hope, people who are speaking crude jokes, tempted with humor that reflects the world, maybe sinning secretly, looking at things that we shouldn't be looking at, practicing things in the dark that we shouldn't be practicing. But people who allow these appetites of sexual immorality and covetousness to drive their desires. Paul is very clear, and I think he's right when he says that it also connects to our speech. Usually it cultivates a kind of speech and humor that's also displeasing to God. In other words, people who commit these sins, maybe even in secret, often enjoy joking about them, too. Jesus says, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." A believer understands that there's nothing funny about sin.

There's two indications that I think could help us in our own life, too, and maybe those around us to identify a person's character. One is, what makes you laugh? What's your humor like? The other thing is, what makes you cry? Are these things pleasing to the Lord? In verse 4, Paul says that crude joking, or in other words, jesting, it's taken from this word that means able to turn easily. Some might even call this person someone has a quick wit. Have you ever heard that before? However, because of what's driving their appetite is sinfulness, this type of person can take any conversation and turn it and make a joke that's inappropriate. They're so quick to hear something and then distort it and make it into a joke that's inappropriate or sexual, create innuendos. The problem is that these things, it's not simply a matter of being immature and that we need to grow up, but this is a deep-rooted sin in our life that needs to be dealt with. Instead, Paul shares that the believer ought to be quick to do what? To give thanks. Are you someone that's quick to give thanks in any circumstance, whether you feel like you should be thankful or not, you feel like you have pressures or stress in your life, but to be quick to see what God might be doing, changing your heart, making him more like Christ through suffering and pain, or the blessings the things that we often forget about, the things that we take for granted, that we should be quick to speak to God, to be thankful, to be thankful for the people around us, the opportunities that we have.

Unfortunately, for all of us, we struggle with sin. And yet, we know that with sin, we have an amazing God who forgives us. When we go to God and seek repentance, that we turn from our sin and we look to God and we realized that Jesus Christ paid the penalty of our sin on the cross when he died. And then three days later, he came back to life. He resurrected from the grave to show us that we now have hope in a new life, that we can defeat sin. There is no power of sin in our life, that we no longer need to struggle with sin, but we turn those over to him. But we also know that there are consequences that we have to deal with because of our sin. That even if we're not living in this habitual pattern of sinfulness, we often still have to deal with the consequences of sin. Now, I want to continue on because I really want to focus on this idea that

Paul brings up that you, Christian, are a light in the darkness. I'm going to read the next couple of verses from verses 8-14. If you have your Bible, you can read along.

"For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. It is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, 'awake, 'oh Sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'" Notice that Paul says, he doesn't say that you're not in the darkness, but you were once darkness. The darkness produces hopelessness, loneliness, brokenness, hurt, pain, separation. Ultimately, darkness leads to death. We're contrasted by light. What does Paul say that light produces? Goodness, righteousness, and truth. It's easy for us to hide in the dark. When we sin, we might feel guilty. We withdraw and we don't want to confess those things to the Lord. Or maybe we're ashamed of coming out and stepping out into the light because we're scared of what we might see if we do walk in the light.

We're ashamed of our own sin. I want to show you a picture. I want to brace yourself for this, okay? The next picture I want to show you, it might make you maybe jump a little bit. Are you ready? Just brace yourself. This is something that I think hides in the dark, and I think it's pretty much sin, if it could be. All right. Does anybody know what this is? This is a bed bug. I really feel sorry for you if anybody's ever had to experience these in person. I want to tell you a quick story of my encounter with bed bugs. But bed bugs love to hide in the dark. When you shine the light, you know what they do? They scatter, and they go back to the darkness and they hide. Well, a couple of years ago, I was with three other pastors from our church, and we were on a staff retreat. I'm not going to say where we were. It doesn't matter. It's all taken care of. But, we were on the retreat. It was time to get ready for bed. We had our things, unpacked our things. Where we were, there were two bedrooms, and I took the top bunk, and then the two other pastors had another bunk.

They had the bottom bunk and then the top bunk. Then our lead pastor, of course, he acted like our dad, like our chaperone, almost. He had this separate bunk. There was a nice queen bed in the other bedroom for him. We were sleeping, having a great time, dreaming of happy dreams, unicorns and rainbows. And then all of a sudden, I woke up and I look over, and just a few feet away was the other pastor that was on his top bunk, and he's just rustling around in his bed. I'm a very, very light sleeper, but I love my sleep, so I'm starting to get a little frustrated and a little annoyed. But then, a few minutes later, I see the light from his phone. He shakes his phone and he sees the light, and he's still moving around in his bed. All of a sudden, I just hear him call and he's like, "Hey, bro." And I look over and he's got his light. He's like, "Can you help me real

quick?" So he comes out of his bed. I get out of my bed. We go into the other room and he's just like, "I don't know what's going on, but I just feel itchy all over my back.

Do you mind just checking to see if there's something there? I can't really see." So He just goes like this, and he just shows me just a little part, and I look, and he's just looking at my face as I'm looking. I'm just like, "No, you're okay. It's all right. It's okay." He had red bites all over his whole back. I'm like, "Okay, well, you do have some bites, just a couple. Let's go over to your bed and see what we could find."

Now, when you shine the light, you won't necessarily find the bed bugs, but you will find something else. You'll find little poops. We went over to the bed, and he's shining the light, and we're looking in the bed. Oh, my goodness, guys, sure enough, it wasn't a white bedsheet. It was just covered in little specks, like grains of sand all over. We just like looked at each other. We were just like, "Why?" His face is like, My back isn't that good, is it? I was like, "No, it's not." Well, meanwhile, all this is happening. The other two pastors are still sound asleep. The other pastor is still on the bottom bunk, and then the other lead pastor in his nice comfortable queen bed.

We're like, We got to wake them up, right? We should probably wake them up. We go down to the other pastor who's just on his bottom bunk, and we're like, John. We have the light shining on him. We're like, "John, you got to wake up." We just nudge him, and he wakes up. He wakes up and he's like, "Oh, my God." We're leaning over him like, "Are you okay?" And we're checking him for bed bugs, too. We're looking in his hair and he's just like, "What is going on? What's going on?" We're like, Well, we found bed bugs. He's like, "Bed bugs?" And he starts feeling like he's got stuff all over him, too. So we get out and we're like, We got to wake up our lead pastor. So we're banging on the door. Well, after a few minutes, we called the Retreat Center, and they send two experts from the retreat to come and help us. So they told us as they show up, it looked like they were prepared for war. They had big tool belts on their belt, and they came, and they're like, Okay. And one guy comes and he's like, "All right, there's really only one good way to kill a bed bug."

He has a little pocket on his shirt like this. I thought he was going to grab some heavy duty, some weapon on his belt. But instead, he goes just with two fingers into a little pocket on his shirt, and he pulls out a pocket knife. I'm like, What is going to happen? He's like, "There's only one good way to kill a bed bug." He flips open just a little blade. "Decapitate him." He's like, we're going to have to decapitate them. I'm like, "What in the world is going on?" I was like, Am I still dreaming? This is a terrible nightmare. What do you mean? We're going to have to hunt them down and take off their head. No, they told us, no, we're going to have to fumigate. They

don't like the heat and all this stuff. It was just a miserable mess of these red bugs infiltrating in the dark, and when the light goes on, they scatter. Guys, I tell you this story because unfortunately, this is us. This is a picture of us when we choose to disobey God. When we choose to disobey God, when we sin, we're choosing to step into the darkness.

Paul is clear, you are set apart. You should have no part of the darkness. You were once slaves of sin in darkness. Now, because you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you are part of the Kingdom of light. Why have anything to do with the darkness? Why go back and hide there? To be honest, we feel comfortable there sometimes. It's easy to go back here when we start to sin, and we feel like no one will know. I'm not hurting anybody. And so, we start to fall into these patterns of secret sin. We try to keep them hidden from everybody else because we think, "What will they think of me? What does God think of me?" And we ignore God and our relationship with him, and we just pretend like everything's fine. But Paul is clear that these sins, they leak out. They affect other people. They come out in our speech, in our humor, in our thoughts, and slowly we're destroying the very light that God's made us to be. We're not shining bright. We're a dull light that's covered in darkness. And yet Paul is saying, When you recognize your own brokenness, step back into the light, because by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us and in our hearts and in our life, he wants to use you to bring others to himself, to show the world what it really means to have joy in a time of hopelessness, to hold on to something that lasts for eternity, to have hope, not this world, but the life to come, and know that that hope in the life to come affects everything now and forever.

We're not just waiting for God to do something, but he can use you today. And so I want you to be mindful of this call, to walk in the light because God is light. Just as Jesus Christ himself called his very friend from the grave as he shouted, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus rose from the dead and came out of the grave, so he calls you. But why put the grave clothes back on and walk back into the tomb? Take those grave clothes off and shine brightly for Christ. Live in the light. Understand that because of God's love for you, he will forgive you and change you. Guys, I just want to challenge you before we finish to consider what it might look like in your own life. It's easy to have secret sins, to keep them hidden, and pretend like everything's okay. I want to actually just give you a minute, maybe to allow God to shine the light into your own life. Because Paul is clear that when we allow the light to shine in our life, God reveals himself. He exposes darkness and sin, but it also brings life and truth. And so I'm going to give you a time to just be quiet, just between you and the Lord.

If there's anything that you feel like you need to confess to him this morning, let's just take a minute to do that. As you're quiet, after a minute, I'm going to read the passage that I just read again from verses 8-14. And then you all have your glow sticks? I have a confession right now. I accidentally cracked part of mine already. After I give you a minute of quiet time, I'm going to

read that passage. And then here's my challenge to you. That glow stick, I would hope, would represent us, in this way. If you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in you now. The same God that rose Christ from the dead lives in you, the same power. And yet when we choose to live in the darkness, right? Your glow stick isn't shining at all. But when we reveal the Holy Spirit through our brokenness and we say, "Lord, I know that I need God, that it's not me and my good deeds that makes me shine bright." It's actually God in us, shining through us because we recognize our own sinfulness, that we need to rely on him in everything that we do. Every day.

And so if you want to break your glow stick, not just because you want to break it and see it shine, but you want to say, I recognize that I need God today, and I want to allow him to shine in my life, that I'll read the passage, and then I'm going to turn off the lights in here, and we'll get everybody to help us turn off the lights. And then, if you want to, you break it and you stand up where you're sitting and hold up your glow stick. If you're not ready for that commitment, that's okay. You can stay in your seats and just take that quiet time. But let's enter the quiet time now to pray, to allow God to examine our own life and confess those to him.

"For at one time, you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them, for it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, 'Awake, O sleeper,' and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Christian, I want to invite you that if you're willing to see your sinfulness and confess that to the Lord this morning and say, "God, be the light that shines through me. I need you. By the power of the Spirit, change me to make me more like Jesus. I want to have hope and joy and be filled with the power of the spirit so that I show the world that I am a light so that others can know you, too." Would you stand up and shine your light? I'm going to close in prayer.

Lord, we thank you so much for your grace and your love and your mercy through Jesus Christ, your son. We're so thankful that he willingly gave up his life, the greatest act of love for us. And now he calls us to walk in love because he first loved us. And we are called to be the light. We were once darkness, but now, God, we pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, you would help us to be the light, to walk in light with you. May those around us in this community, even here on this campus, Lord, we pray that you would help us to shine our lights brightly, to expose sin in our own life first, and to help others to do the same, so that we can confess those things before you, so that you would be glorified and Christ would be magnified in our life. Lord, we pray that Cairn University would become a hub, a beacon of light, of hope, in the surrounding

community and all around the world. Lord, we thank you so much for this morning that we can be reminded of how good you are and your righteousness and your truth.

We pray these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Thank you so much, guys. I hope you have a great rest of your day.