

## Introduction

Good morning. It's great to see you today. How are we doing? You guys are way more awake than the first service. I just want you to know that. We're going to begin this morning. I want us to have a time of prayer, and this is what I want us to pray for. Over the last couple of years, I have become friends with a pastor in our area. His name is Brandon Guindon. Brandon moved here from Idaho. He worked with The Met for, I think, about a year or 18 months, on their discipleship programs over there. He was then planted by The Met, starting a church in the Tomball area. It is at the "four corners" area, if you know what that is, at 2920 and 249; there is an old grocery store that is abandoned. They have purchased that, and they are renovating that and turning that into a church. He has two daughters that are stud softball players for Tomball Memorial. They were in a car wreck yesterday, and one of them received definitely serious injuries, but she is going to be okay. The other one is fighting for her life right now. Her name is Olivia. She is downtown at Memorial Hermann, and they are worried about her brain healing, swelling... all those kinds of things that you don't want to hear when you have a teenage daughter. I was texting with Brandon this morning. He said, "We are praying for complete and full healing, so that we will have a story to tell people about how our God is powerful and does incredible miracles." So I want ask, would you just pray with me? The girls' names are Emma and Olivia. I want to ask that we would pray out loud together, and then I will just pray over us and we'll finish that. Okay, Church... just pray out loud for Emma and Olivia, for their healing.

"Lord, I ask, in the Name of Jesus Christ... we get to ask in Jesus' Name... that You would take Olivia's brain, and Lord, that in whatever way Your Spirit does its healing work, that You would touch it and then Lord we ask, in Jesus' Name, that You would heal it. God, I pray that there would be no pressure, I pray that there would be complete healing, and then, Lord, I pray and I ask that next week You would give me the grace to stand here and report that she is healed and that You did a miracle. So, God, I pray and ask that we would get to see that. Lord, I pray for my brother, Pastor Brandon. I pray for his wife Amber and Lord, I don't know why things like this happen other than I know that You use them for Your glory, and so Lord we are trusting that You are going to do that right now. God, I pray that we would get to point to Your healing power and Your glory through this. God, I pray that You would be with Amber, the peace of your Holy Spirit, and Lord I ask all of these things in Jesus Name. Amen." Thank you, Church.

If you have your Bible with you, and I hope that you do, I want to invite you at this time to open it up with me to the Book of Ephesians. We're going to be in Ephesians chapter 5. Now, if you don't have a Bible, don't freak out. It's going to be okay. Right there in front of you, there's a seat tray; just grab that Bible right there. If you don't own a Bible, guess what? Now you do. That's your gift today. You get to keep that. We're really big spenders here... paperback Bibles... we give them out. We're glad that you have that. We believe that the Bible is important. God's Word is the way that God speaks to us, and we want you to have your own copy so that you can know how God is speaking to you. Now, we're going to be in the Book of Ephesians today, in chapter 5. If you're new to the Bible, let me explain it to you. The Bible is divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is a record of God's chosen people. They are called Israel. And Israel had the need for a Rescuer and a Redeemer. And God wanted to give them that Rescuer and Redeemer, but they continued to rebel against Him. The New Testament is the story of that Rescuer and Redeemer. His Name is Jesus. So Jesus comes and we read about His story in the New Testament: His birth, His life, His death, and then His resurrection. And we believe that His birth, His life, His death, and His resurrection are the way that we get a relationship with God. We call that the "Good News" or the "Gospel". We'll talk about that more in a second. The New Testament also tells us about people who follow Jesus. They are known as the "Church." So those who gather on Sundays to

worship Jesus, who follow after Him, they are known as the "Church." The Book of Ephesians was written by one of those Jesus followers. His name was Paul, and it was addressed to the Church in the city of Ephesus, in modern-day Turkey. So we're reading a letter that was written to the Church, and we're just reading pieces of that, seeing how we can be a better Church that follows after Jesus today. So let's jump in then, in Ephesians chapter 5, starting in verse 3.

*"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 is, 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; 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.'*

*"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

We've been reading this Book for several weeks now, and we've been discovering how it is that God gives us this Good News... the Gospel. What He does is He says that He has chosen us. He wants us to be His people, and in doing so, He rescues us from our sin, from our brokenness, and from our destruction. How does He do that? He does that by sending His Son Jesus... Jesus dies in our place. Now you're thinking, "What does that mean?" It means that you ought to be punished for all the evil that you've done, but God punishes Jesus... God in flesh... instead, making a way for Him to be completely just, yet loving, simultaneously. In doing so, Jesus is then raised from the dead, demonstrating that God wants not only us to have our sin punished but also to be raised to life with Him. So Christians believe that Jesus is now with God, reunited there in the Godhead and believe that one day we will be reunited with Him in heaven, if we place our faith in Him. We call that the Gospel, and the way that it works then is that there becomes this community of people who believe that. They are known as the Church, and they live in a very specific way.

### 1. Different In Our Behaviors (vv. 3-5)

We have been talking about the way that the Church ought to live, and Paul continues on with that here in Ephesians chapter 5, explaining new ways that we live. In fact, he has explained that we are going to be very different... different in a lot of ways... from the world. And the first way that he says that we will be different is that we will be different in our behaviors. Paul starts with this brief but also very direct, "Do not do these things" list. He says, "Stay away from sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish

talk, and crude joking." Now anytime that you see a "Do not do this" list, most of the time, because we are very individualistic in our thinking, we tend to think that that means, "Hey, you... don't do this." "Jim, Bob, Joe... don't be filthy, don't have crude jokes, don't be sexually immoral." Trust me... there's certainly a thing that you should definitely avoid those activities and it's directly addressed... but that's not what Paul is saying here. This is written to an entire church. You may not know this but Paul was Texan before there was a Texas because he always addressed it in the second person plural. Paul said, "Y'all... don't do these things." So Paul is always being very clear that this is a direct command for an entire community. We know this... if you go and you read the New Testament you see these sorts of commands over and over. I'm just going to give you a few examples:

Roman 15:5... *"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other, as Christ Jesus had."* ...Talking about the way that we ought to live in community toward one another.

Galatians 6:2... *"Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."*

John 15:12-13... This is Jesus speaking directly to His followers: *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* In other words, think about the way that Jesus loves people. That's the sort of love that we're supposed to have for one another. In fact, Jesus goes on to say that whenever people see us love the way that He loves, then they will see how deep the Father's love is, and they will be drawn toward Him.

Proverbs 17:17... In the Old Testament, *"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."*

Listen to this great one from the Apostle Peter in the Book of 1 Peter 4:8-11... *"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as the one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."* In other words, Peter says, "Do all of the gifts that God has given to you in order to serve one another so that we might see God's personality and picture and glory even better." There are more verses, and we could go and read those. In fact, they are all over the New Testament, these ideas of these "One Another" commands... love one another in this sort of pattern, after the love of Jesus Christ.

Now you may know that the Greek word for "church" in the New Testament is the word "ekklesia." It literally means "called out ones." You may also know that it was a political term... a political term that was used in a lot of different Greek parlance. But what you may not know is that that Greek term was actually applied in Roman military culture. Let me explain. Whenever the Romans would come into a new area and they would conquer and they would make these people submit, they knew that even though they had been defeated from a military perspective, they would need to win the hearts and the minds of the people whom they had defeated. And the best way to do that was to demonstrate to them that there was a better way to live, and that way was the Roman way. So what they would do is they would set aside a group of individuals that were cultured, that were educated, that were persuasive, and they would put them in significant positions within the city that had recently been conquered. And in living there, the idea was that over the course of a lifetime, people would see the superiority of the Roman customs, and they would see the way that the Roman way of life was a better way to live, with superior engineering, laws, etcetera... and

they would then decide that they would become Romans in their hearts. What were those people called that Rome left behind? ...The "Ekklesia." You see, whenever the Church is known as the "Ekklesia," the idea is this: It's that we live among a hostile people, but we are to live in such a way that they will see our way of life as a better way of life, and they will choose then to follow in this same way of living.

So Paul is saying, "We don't do these things because we are actually committed to living a different way of life." So let's just take the first example out of the list that Paul gives, and let's talk about how we can live in a positive way that brings influence into the world. So he starts with sexual immorality. So let's think about it, instead of just saying that simple statement that the Church has historically taught, "Sex is reserved between a man and a woman within the confines of a covenant marriage." That's the quick way that Christians say what they believe about sex. Why do we believe those things? Why does that even matter? How would that be better than the sexual vision that much of the world has for itself? Well, the way that you begin to demonstrate that there is a superior vision is you begin to see what it is that the Church has taught and why they have taught those things.

So just a few examples:

You see that the Church has taught faithfulness between one man and one woman over the course of a lifetime actually teaches covenant. That's one of the key tenants of the Christian faith: It's that our God is so faithful that He gives Jesus and is with us for a lifetime. There is a covenant of grace... a covenant of faith... that happens between God and His people. We teach that it is reflected in the bond of marriage.

There's also the idea of complimentary relationships between the sexes. Men are different than women, and whenever they come together then we get this idea of things working together in completion. The Bible tells us that men are created in the image of God. The Bible also tells us that women are created in the image of God, and we get a more complete picture whenever those two sexes come together to give us a more complete picture of all of the gifts and all of the attributes and all of the characteristics of who God is.

There's also another teaching that the Church has which is the idea that marriage matters because it results in children. So there's this idea that marriage is important because then there's procreation so the first command given to people in the Garden, "Be fruitful and multiply"... this idea that whenever we live in a healthy marriage and then there's children, then we're filling the earth with more people who will worship the Lord. And then there's also this idea that there is a great pleasure that is mirrored through sex that will one day actually be exceeded in heaven. We don't really talk about that a whole lot, but Ephesians 5 essentially says that the sex act is in some ways a precursor...a foretaste... of the divine pleasure that will come whenever the Church and Jesus are reunited one day but will actually be exceeded.

Those are just a few of the ways that the Church historically has said, "This is why we believe what we believe about sex." So those examples come out, and whenever the Church hears that, they go, "Okay... that's a superior way of living." And we contrast that when with the way that the world views sex.

Now... what's the highest ideal in the world's mind with regard to sex? "It's just me... whatever I want." That's basically it. There's this phrase out there: "Sexual Identity." You will not find that in documents even a hundred years ago. Why? ...Because it's something that has been created in the modern culture, in the modern mind, because we are attempting to rationalize a variety of sexual opinions and sexual perspectives that we want to be normalized. Consequently, we come up with a pattern of sexual behavior and call it "our identity" which then is in contrast to the very thing that Scripture teaches. So why does that

matter? It matters because, in the secular world, the way that we think of sex and sexuality is my identity. Whatever my desires are, whatever I want, how I choose to have sex, then that is actually "who I am... my sexual identity." Scripture... Christians actually combat that by saying, "The Bible never says that the highest expression of yourself is sexual behavior." Did you know that? You see, over and over the world tends to believe "I can't really achieve happiness... I won't really have fulfillment unless I have had sex in the way that I deem is the best way to have sex... on my terms." You will not find that anywhere in the pages of the Bible. What you will find in the pages of the Bible is that actually our highest identity is found in Christ. And you will find that actually by being a child of the King, by being adopted, by being chosen, by being washed, by being forgiven, by being graced, by being filled with faith, by having the Holy Spirit... these are things that define who I am, and actually those are far greater joys and far greater pleasures than you will actually have in a sexual relationship. We talk about that and that matters because then Christians can then say, "My identity is grounded in Christ, and because my identity is grounded in Christ, that will then guide how I manifest that in my sex life."

So... those are just a couple of quick examples that we give there. So Paul lays that out saying, "We're living in a different way." He then goes on to say, in verse 5, "...everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God." So the way that we tend to read that, because we are very individualistic, is then this: "In other words, are you saying that if I do A, B, or C behavior that is in this list then I am not going to heaven?" That is not what Paul is getting at. What Paul is saying is that you can't actually taste... you can't experience the Kingdom if you are living in rebellion to the King. You see, the way that it works is this: It is whenever you choose Jesus, you are choosing not just to say, "Yeah... I'll take a ticket to go to heaven; that sounds awesome." What you're really doing is you're choosing to say, "Not only do I want that grace and forgiveness that my God gives, but I also believe that because Jesus died in order to purchase me, I will follow Jesus wherever He calls me, and in doing so, I will chase after Him. If that means then that I must do something that is difficult, if I must follow in a way that doesn't make sense to me, I will do it." Why? "...Because He is the King and I'm not." The way that Kingdoms work... there a king, the king has a set of rules for the kingdom, and the citizens and subjects of the kingdom follow after the King. What Paul is getting at here is he is saying this: "If you're going to say that you're in the Church, you don't get to pick to laws you want to follow. You follow the King... you do what the King tells you to do." This is why, whenever the modern sensibilities... for instance, on sexuality... come out, they are at odds with the King because the King has said, "That may be what everybody else wants to do, but that's not what I want in My Kingdom." So we live according to the rules and regulations that have been given to us by our King. Even if it doesn't make sense to me, I trust Him because He is my King, and He has what is my best interest in His heart.

The pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer who pastored in Germany during World War II, described it in two concepts that he called "Cheap Grace" and "Costly Grace." This is what he said. He said, "'Cheap Grace' is no good." What's "Cheap Grace"? Bonhoeffer looked out and he said people that were in the Church who were actually, believe it or not, in the Church saying, "There's no reason that it's a problem if I follow after Hitler. What's the big deal? I believe in Jesus and I'm going to heaven. Who cares if I support the Nazis?" And you're going, "How could those people do that?" Let's just turn around and put the microscope on ourselves. Are there things that we believe... are there people that we follow that actually don't line up with the tenets of Scripture... with the teachings of the King? It's very easy for us to separate... to divorce... our real life from the life that we believe is "spiritual." Bonhoeffer, instead, said... "No, there this thing called 'Costly Grace.' You've been bought with a price, and you've been bought with the price by the blood of Jesus Christ, and you need to follow Him in the way that He purchased you. And whenever we do this in

this specific way, we are then living out the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom is filled and led by the Holy Spirit ... and it is also in people who follow after Him in a very specific and tangible way. So he goes on down through this list and he says, "Don't do these things but instead walk as children of light." Why? ...Because the light is the Kingdom of God. Follow after Jesus. Follow after the King. Be filled by the Spirit. This is the way that you are going to be different.

## 2. Different In Our Exposure. (v. 11)

Now, if you're like me, you're probably thinking at this point, "Why does God care so much if I'm different? What's the big deal?" I'm glad you asked. Verse 11: *"Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."* You see, what God is getting at is this: It is that whenever you live the Kingdom life... you follow after the King... do you know what happens? Over time, you have actually a superior life to those who rebel against the King. That doesn't mean that you'll necessarily have more power, influence, or money. It does mean, however, that you will have a heart of satisfaction and contentment that will rise up within you, over the course of a lifetime, because you will choose to follow the ways of the King. And whenever you do that, over the course of a lifetime, you begin to experience things and have things... a joy, a contentment, a peace... that those who have chosen not to follow after Jesus will never be able to have. If you've ever sat under a 100-year-old oak tree, you know what I'm talking about. You know that that did not sprout up overnight. Instead, you know that that was something that developed over a century. And you also know it doesn't matter what sort of tree I could plant, I could never grow a tree that is this big with this much shade in that short of a time. I couldn't do that in a week. It takes years to get that sort of a product. The Christian life is in the same way... you're driving roots deep down into who God is, and you're beginning to flourish more and more. And people see that shade of character that is constructed and grown over time... over a lifetime. So God is saying, through Paul, "You can't have the joy of the Christian life quickly, but it's something that is lived out in difference over time, contrasting it to the world."

So what does that have to do with verse 11? So Paul says, *"Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."* Now what is he talking about when he says "expose"? I don't know about you... whenever I think of somebody being exposed, I'm thinking of public humiliation. Right? Public humiliation... Are you guys big followers of Kim Kardashian and Taylor Swift on their social media accounts? I'm sure all of you are just lighting it up all the time. Recently there has been this flap between those two individuals. Basically, Taylor said one thing about "Yeezys" and then it gets back to Kim... all this kind of stuff. Long story short: So Kim says, "I'm going to expose Taylor on Snap Chat." And she does this whole big thing on Snap Chat, and everybody's on Twitter talking about it. They have their own hashtag: #KimExposedTaylorParty... It's just insane that we even care or know about these sorts of things. But the whole idea was public embarrassment and shame. Now if you listened to everything I just said and you didn't understand but about every fifth word... it's okay. Just think "Watergate"...that kind of same thing. It's just the idea of being exposed for something that you did that you shouldn't have done. That's what we think of when we think of exposing... we think of public humiliation. The reason that I bring all that up to you is, Paul is saying, "That's actually not how exposing works." Continue on in verse 13: *"But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light."* You see, the thing here is that Paul is not saying that we ought to expose someone by humiliating them, but instead what we ought to do is we ought to... listen, this is important... we ought to live in such a way that people see that that life is a more fruitful alternative, and whenever we live in this way, the light shines on the way

that they are living, and they say, "I don't want this anymore. I want that." You see, that's the way that it's supposed to work.

Most of way that the Church has done this, particularly in recent history but really if you go back and look at the Church's history over years and years and years is that we have relied on basically one strategy the majority of the time. And that strategy has been sweat, bluster, and anger. Nothing wrong with being righteously angry... nothing wrong with a lot of bluster, and nothing wrong with sweating... if you're doing it in the pursuit of truth. However... anger, bluster, and sweat will only get you so far. I know a few people who would say, "I turned to the Lord because someone confronted me... they were very straight with me... they were strong...", and there are individuals who respond to that. But I would say that in my experience the majority of individuals that I have seen who have turned to the Lord have seen a more fruitful way of life and have heard that spoken from the lips of someone. "Let me show you a more beautiful way. Let me show you a more fruitful way."

Let's just go back to this list that Paul has given us. We'll just start with the same first example that I was in in the first point, when he is saying that we need to have a different way... that we are to live and have different actions. We are going to be different in the way that we expose acts of darkness. It's not simply through preaching. Again, I'm not saying that preaching is bad or wrong or that we shouldn't speak the truth in love. It's nothing like that. We should speak those things, but we also need to expose differently through our lives. So let's stick with these examples that Paul gives. We'll just go with sexual immorality. Just think about some of the ways that the Church historically has said, "This is not the way to live." How would we expose that as unfruitful in a way that would not shame someone? Let's start with cohabitation. Cohabitation is the idea that you live together but you are not married. If you're here right now and I just said that and suddenly you got really nervous and you're wanting to run... Don't run. It's going to be okay. This is what I want you to hear:

1. We love you and we're glad that you're here.
2. The reason that the Church has said that this is a less fruitful way is because the Church believes that we can't really understand the beauty of God's love for us, that is completely faithful and committed, until we have been committed to another person in marriage instead of being uncommitted. Some of you are thinking, "That's the reason we're not getting married, because if this person goes crazy, I want out." I understand that. The whole idea there is that actually, whenever we love someone at this kind of a level, then we are beginning to model the picture of faithfulness that God has for us in Christ. We think that that is actually more fruitful... that actually commitment works.

This is why sometimes, whenever we talk to people who are considering joining our church, we say, "Membership requires that you actually adhere to this." Why? It's not because we trying to single people out but instead because we believe that if they will live in this way, until they are married, then they will experience some of the fruitfulness that God wants them to have. So sometimes we'll even say, "Hey, we'll help you find another place to live so that you can live apart prior to marriage, and then we'll counsel toward marriage through premarital counseling so that people can understand God's design for marriage." We think that that's a more fruitful way.

Homosexuality... If you're sitting here right now and you're like, "Oh, no... I'm nervous." Again... don't run. Here's the thing. We love you and what we believe is that there is actually a more fruitful way to

approach this sexual discussion. We think that God's gifts, for instance, of friendship and celibacy demonstrate that we would rather be more committed to the ideals of Christ, than that we would rather be committed to someone of the same gender. Again... it's not saying that individuals can't be friends at a very, very deep level. It's simply that those sexual behaviors have been forbidden by the King, and we think that in showing self-control, we will actually experience a fruitfulness over the long haul that we would not experience otherwise.

The same thing with abortion... Abortion is one of those hot-button political topics. Here's the thing: In the Church, this is what we would say: "If someone came into our Body and they were pregnant and they were not married, how would we respond to them?" Our design would say this. We want to respond to you by saying, "You are welcomed here and you are loved." On top of that, we want to give you an alternative that does not involve destroying the life of the child. Why? ...Because we believe that all people are created in the image of God, so this child deserves to live. Consequently, we want to counsel and provide in that, but also, if you decide that you can't raise this baby, then we want to provide an alternative for a family who loves and follows after Jesus, that they will be able to do so on your behalf. That's adoption. Adoption is taking someone who has no home and bringing them in. That's a picture of the Gospel. "I had no home spiritually; God rescued me through Jesus and brought me in."

There are all kinds of ways that this plays out and in all kinds of varied things. Sometimes I will talk to people who are single adults, and they'll say, "What about us? We're not married. Our story didn't go the way that we wanted it to." Or, "My marriage fell apart..." Here's the thing... the same kind of idea. We remain faithful to Jesus and we experience the sort of love and community at a level that I may not have in a marriage relationship, but it's actually very, very deep because... even you know this... that Scripture says that marriage will not continue on into heaven. Why? ...Because marriage is not ultimate. Marriage is not ultimate. What is ultimate? A relationship with Jesus is ultimate. So the idea is that you actually have more fulfillment in that relationship. "Well, man... what are driving at here?" This is what I'm driving at: As a church, the way that we demonstrate that our sexual ethic is superior is not by standing up and pointing at someone and screaming at them. Instead, what we say is, "Hey... we want you to be loved into this place. We want to love you into the Body and show you a more fruitful way." We want to shine the light onto your life and we want you to see, "I want what they have. That is a more fruitful and beautiful way that I can then live."

Have you ever wondered why it's so crowded at Chic fil-A? Do you ever think about that? You pull up in the drivethrough and you say, "Seriously? People want chicken at ten o'clock at night? Why is it always so crowded?" The reason that it's so crowded is that they have built something that people have chosen. Right? They have a great culture. They run that thing like a well-oiled machine. You say, "Thank you"... they say, (congregation) "My pleasure." You already know it. They have a saying that they say when you say, "Thank you." They have created a culture in there. It's not that everyone wants chicken. I mean chicken is awesome, but the reason that people go there is because of the culture that has been made. And people do what? They choose it. They pick it and say, "I want that." I will sit in a long line... why? "...Because I want to be treated in that kind of a way. I want that sort of experience." Listen, Church... that is what's supposed to happen here. People are supposed to come in and go, "I want that. I'll go through the inconvenience of messy relationships... I'll go through the difficulty of walking in that way because I want that. I want that."

### **3. Different In Our Fullness (vv. 18-20)**

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So Paul gets through that and he says, "We expose it in such a way then so that we see that our difference actually leads to something beautiful and even better." He says, "We're different in the way that we act, and we're different in the way that we expose..." Why? "...Because we're different in the way that we are filled. We are different in our fullness."

Skip down... go to verse 18: "*And do not get drunk with wine...*" Everybody's like, "I'm listening now. okay." "*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...*" Have you ever heard the comedian Louis C.K. talk about why it is that we text and drive? ...Because we text and we drive because we are afraid to be alone for even one second. Right? Maybe you've heard of the blogger Andrew Sullivan. Andrew Sullivan had this incredible blogging platform. He walked away from it. Why? ...Because he said he looked out online and he said, "This isn't really community. This is something that is interrupting real life." There's actually a Jewish rabbi now who is saying that he thinks that everybody ought to take all of their devices and just unplug them one day a week... just so that they can experience real life.

What's the point? The point is that those guys, believe it or not, none of them are Christians. What are they hitting on there? They're hitting on the fact that they understand that there is some need that has been wired innately within each of our hearts... that we need to connect with one another on a very intimate and a very deep level. They understand that. They understand that we need to be filled in a very different way. So what's Paul talking about whenever he says then, in verse 18, "*Don't get drunk with wine...*"? Is he talking then just about drinking alcohol?" No... that's not his point. "His point is what?" Look what he talks about right there in verse 19. "*...addressing one another in psalms and hymns...*" Have you ever been around drunk people? (Laughter) Ten of you have... (Laughter) Either that or the rest of you are like..."Ahhh... I don't know... can I say that I have?" They sing a lot. Have you ever noticed that? Everybody starts putting their arms around each other... singing... Everybody is a great vocalist after their third drink. I mean, everybody is super-talented and gifted in that moment. (Laughter) Did you see some of the videos this week from Wrigley-ville... the bars that were right there around Wrigley Field...? The Cubs that are in the World Series for the first time in 71 years? They would show pictures of bars at 8:00 a.m... packed, wall-to-wall... people drinking and singing. Why do drunk people sing? ...Because they want to manufacture joy, that's why. They lock arms with one another. They put their arms around each other. They are just trying to have fun. They want to fill themselves with something that feels good.

Paul is trying to contrast that... go on down. Look at verse 20: "*...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father...*" Have you ever noticed how people who have had too much to drink become way more affectionate? (In a syrupy voice...) "I love you..." (Laughter) "Man, you're great..." "You are so awesome." Why? Why do they start to sing and start to become effusive with their praise? The reason is because they want to say those things, but they believe that they do not have the courage to publicly encourage someone until they think they have a little bit of liquid courage in them. Here's the point: What Paul is saying is this... "Hey, guess what? You don't have to get liquored up to have that." Did you know that you can come and gather with a group of people who will be filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and you can experience that same joy? Have you ever been singing in church and felt warm in your chest? Do you know what that is? That's the Holy Spirit. God is saying, "You are filled with God's Holy Spirit." Some of you are saying, "Wait a minute... I'm not even a believer." Well guess what? That's the Holy Spirit saying... "Hey guess what..." (knocking three times) "...I'm here. Turn to Me." After we've been filled with the Holy Spirit, we can turn and we can speak to one another and say, "I just want you to know something.

I love you and I'm grateful for you and I see gifts in you, and God is using you and He is building you up. Don't you give up and don't you stop. You keep working hard. You keep looking after and raising those kids. Don't you stop looking for a job. God is going use you in a powerful way." Always build up and you would do those things. Why? ...Because we are filled with the Holy Spirit. We have something that people drink to try and get. Paul says, "Don't be filled with spirits... be filled with the Spirit." ...Because he wants you to understand that you can have the thing that the world is looking for. We are living differently and exposing differently because we have been filled differently. If right now you are sitting there saying, "I've never experienced that." Guess what? Today is your day. Today you can turn to Jesus and you can be filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and you can have this sort of love and beauty in your life.

I've been studying a lot of models of small groups, Life Groups, community groups, cell groups... whatever you want to call them... all over the world. Do you know what a lot of them do? Whenever they get together, they have a time of singing. One of the first things that they will do is they'll sing a song together. And if they don't have a musician in their group, then they'll turn on a YouTube video, or they'll put a song on the iPod and they'll just say this: They'll say, "Let's sing together and just let's listen to the Holy Spirit." And whenever the song is over, just say whatever it is you feel like the Holy Spirit is putting on their heart. Every week they will do this exercise. They will get done singing a song or two, and they will be sitting in a circle, and they'll just say, "I just feel like the Holy Spirit is telling me to tell you that God loves you and He is not giving up on you." They're not going, "You need to move to Alaska..." (Laughter) It's not that kind of stuff. It's like, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you? It's encouraging, edifying, building up... why? Why would they do that? ...Because they have been filled differently. They have been filled differently. I think that we ought to do that in our groups. Sing together and say, "Let's encourage one another in the Holy Spirit," because what happens is that we then begin to be filled in such a way that is totally different from the world... but it's what the world is looking for. Everybody wants to be told that they are loved. Everybody wants to know that they are accepted. Everybody wants to know that no matter what struggle they are walking through that they can come into this group, and this group of people says, "We know that that stinks but we are with you. We don't care if it's poverty. We don't care if it's addiction. We don't care if it's loneliness. We don't care if it's some sort of sin struggle that you have had. We are in this with you and God loves you. He is not giving up on you; neither are we." That's what everybody wants. (Clapping) Right?

So here's the thing that's incredible. The thing that's incredible is that that only comes through Jesus. Here's the funny part. Lots of us run away from it. We need you to be in a group. Why? ...Because you need to be filled in this way.

Two things I want to talk about... how we are going to respond today.

1. Some of us... do you know what we need to do? You need to stop running from Jesus. This is what I want to tell you. This is the Gospel. This is the Good News. You have sinned and you have rebelled against God. It's okay. We all have. ...But your future is incredibly bright. Do you want to know why? ...Because God sent His Son Jesus to be punished instead of you, and He rose from the dead three days later so that you could have life with God forever. All you have to do is come and get Him. Just say "Yes". If you say "Yes" to Him, He is yours.
2. The second way that we can respond. Today when you came in there was a card that looks just like this sitting in your seat. Everybody is going, "Why are we talking about Life Groups so much?" Let

me tell you why. ...Because you can't get this kind of fullness by yourself. We are a communal faith. We do this together. After the first of the year, we are going to start up a bunch more groups. All we're doing right now is we're just trying to find out who would say right now, "God is speaking to me; I know that I need to be part of a group." This is what I want you to do. I want you to fill this card out, drop it into a receptacle on your way out or take it to the Connection Center, or take it to the Info Desk. Take it somebody who looks like they know what they're doing. Give it to them and say, "I'm ready to take this next step." Here's the thing. The way that the Gospel of the Kingdom moves forward is through us deciding that we will love differently, live differently, that we will expose darkness differently, and that we will walk with one another in such a way that we will be filled differently. I don't know about you... I want that.

I'm going to ask the band to go ahead and come up here at this time, and we're going to sing a song here in just a moment. As they are making their way up here and we're getting ready to sing... this is what we're going to do. We are going to pray, and as we pray, I just want you to think, "Lord, how do You want me to respond?" And after you've decided that in your heart, we're going to stand and we're going to sing. There are going to be people standing right here at the front, and you just come to them. You say, "This is how I need to respond today."

Let me pray over us. "Lord Jesus, thank you God, thank You... that You receive us and Lord, because You receive us, the Church can receive us because the Church is to love in the way that You love. Lord, for people who are here today and they think, 'Whhoo... I'm not that forgiving.' That's okay, Lord. You will grow us. For people today who are scared, saying, 'Are they really going to love me like that?' Give them courage, Lord. They do not need the liquid courage; they need the Holy Spirit courage. God, I pray that today You would never allow us to walk alone, but You would bring us in to Your community... to Your Church. This is the way that we've been called to live. Lord, I pray that we would respond right now, in Jesus' Name. Amen."