

## What Is Acceptable To The Lord

Martin G. Collins

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Biblical symbolism of light and darkness is one of the most fascinating contrasts and representations found anywhere in Scripture. Its use even extends to the commission that God gave the Apostle Paul to "open the eyes" of the unconverted and to "turn them from darkness to light."

**Acts 26:14-18** "And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'"

This commission also carries over as the responsibility of all of God's ministers and, by extension (in the spirit) to the "holy priesthood" (mentioned by the Apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 2:5) of everyone who is a Christian. That applies to all of us. It truly is incredible that by realizing the physical value of light, we can begin to see that the beneficial effects also have an even more important spiritual application and universal impact on life. This essential responsibility is not only to the Christian but also to the non-Christian, as well. Biblically, sometimes the non-Christian is called "the unconverted"; in the Old Testament, he is called "the stranger."

**Deuteronomy 10:17-19** "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

We could say, "Love the unconverted, or the person in the world." This will be a major

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responsibility for us in the Millennium: for loving the stranger to become part of God's way of life.

Let me give you an example of the physical benefits of light for a moment. It is amazing how much we can learn from it on a spiritual level, as well. Light heals our bodies. It brightens everything and even works into the deepest parts of our physical constitutions. God has created a miraculously-manifested beneficial nature in light, the effects of which are seen in the body's production of what we call Vitamin D. In the article "The Four Steps to Getting More Vitamin D to Prevent Cancer, Osteoporosis, Depression and More," Mike Adams of the NaturalNews.com website writes

Getting sunlight on your skin, research now shows, is extremely important for preventing and even reversing chronic diseases. I'm talking about prostate cancer, breast cancer, cervical cancer, mental depression, osteoporosis and even, to some extent, type 2 diabetes. The interactions between sunlight and body chemistry for these diseases are quite complex.

Here are some highlights:

You most likely already know the importance of calcium for your health. If you don't have enough calcium circulating through your blood, you're going to have cardiovascular problems and you will probably end up with heart disease. Calcium is crucial for healthy nervous system function, as well.

You must have vitamin D in your body in order to use calcium. So if you're out there taking coral calcium supplements or eating a lot of green leafy vegetables, but not getting sunlight or ultraviolet radiation on your skin, then you are probably not absorbing the calcium you are going to such great trouble to ingest.

Sunlight can actually reverse osteoporosis. A lot of senior citizens are taking calcium supplements but not getting sunlight, so the calcium is passing right through their bodies. As a result, they're losing bone mineral density. However, by adding vitamin D to the equation through sunlight (remember, your skin generates vitamin D in response to sunlight exposure), senior citizens can start assimilating calcium and rebuilding their bones.

The only thing you need in order to treat osteoporosis is sunlight, calcium, and a little bit of physical exercise. You will rebuild bone mineral density very rapidly on that kind of program.

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Make sure that you're getting sunlight on your skin. If you do this one thing, and do it consistently, it will create such a positive health outcome. Sunlight will make a world of difference in your life. It will change your mood. It will change your biochemistry. It will enhance your bone mineral density, and it will help your body beat or prevent various forms of cancer.

In fact, vitamin D is a key compound in the regulation of cancer cell growth. Researchers are just now figuring out that people who are chronically deficient in vitamin D, which includes most Americans, are at far greater risk of a variety of different cancers. Vitamin D has been shown to be the single most powerful chemical compound known to medical science for preventing hormone-related cancers such as breast cancer and prostate cancer.

At the end of the article, he summarizes its contents in this way:

There are four main points you can take from this:

1. You have to get sunlight into your life in order to be healthy and prevent or even reverse major chronic diseases. Start getting more sun.
2. Boost your antioxidant count, because antioxidants will protect you from the risk of overexposure to sunlight. Astaxanthin, green foods powder, Berry Green, and other green foods are all excellent sources. Get those supplements now and find ways to work them into your diet starting today.
3. If you can't get sunlight, visit a tanning booth to get ultraviolet radiation. It's a secondary choice, but it's better than doing nothing. Remember not to use tanning booths for too long, and be sure to have great nutrition for at least 30 days before tanning in a booth.

I do not advocate using tanning booths at all. Most people misuse them. Obviously, his saying that you have to have great nutrition for at least 30 days before using one shows the danger.

4. If you can't get sunlight or get to a tanning booth, find other

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sources of vitamin D. The best source is cod liver oil, which you can mix into a delicious shake the same as you would most whole food supplements.

If you do these things ... You will have healthier bones, tissues, and blood. You'll help prevent cancer, depression, and gum disease. You'll heal more quickly from injury, and your mood will markedly improve.

Spiritually, that light comes to us through the Holy Spirit, and it must be activated or used on a daily basis through prayer and Bible study. Just as we need light every day for our physical health, we need that light from God every day. We talk to God in prayer, and He answers us and we listen to Him through Bible study.

In John 9:5, speaking to His disciples, Jesus said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." In Matthew 5:14, speaking to His disciples another time, Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." Both Jesus Christ and Christians are the light of the world. How can that be? The short explanation is that God the Father and His Son are the source of light, and if we reflect the light of God, we are the light of the world as Christ's representatives and because He is in us.

Jesus Christ has also told us, in Ephesians 5:8, that we are "light in the Lord." We are to irradiate this beneficence among our fellow human beings. Today, this radiance of spiritual light shines on and exposes the sins of the world; but during the Millennium, that light will be progressively more effectual in leading people to the truth and have decreasing need to expose the sins of the earth as people turn from their wicked ways to repent and obey God in massive numbers. That light will help bring mental health to the inhabitants of the earth during the Millennium on a grand scale.

The more people that see the blessings of God's way of life, the more there will be who will want to live it; and the fewer people who are desiring the world's way of life, the less who will want to live it. People are easily influenced in a negative way by pop culture, perverted fads, political correctness, and the popular biases.

During the thousand years of peace and prosperity, those who are the firstfruits of God's spiritual harvest—that is, the firstborn into God's Family and co-inheritors with Jesus Christ—will join Him in ruling the earth. We will be given the opportunity of bringing the spiritual knowledge of salvation—the light of Christ—to every human then alive and to

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those born during the Millennium. In the past, though, we were in the same unenlightened predicament as those upon whom we will reflect light.

**Ephesians 5:8-11** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

Light always exposes that which is wrong. It brings into sight and condemns it and shows us what is right, true, and good. Light makes everything open and plain and clear.

Take, for example, the person who is studying a section of scripture that he does not understand. He says, in effect, "I need some light shone on this!" Light opens things up; it makes everything plain and clear and easy to understand.

According to the Apostle Paul, Christians everywhere are to be characterized by these qualities of goodness, righteousness, and truth. The same holds true for our presence, ruling with Christ in the Millennium. We will teach these things during the one-thousand-year period, and the people will be expected to live by them.

**Isaiah 30:19-21** For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; You shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

By being what we are (or what we are supposed to be), we are a counteraction to evil. We are a manifestation of the just, true, holy, and upright life. Above all, we are this element of openness and truth that we bring into all our dealings and all our associations. This is also what we should be doing today.

God inaugurates the Millennium through an act of divine restoration. People often think of the Millennium as a state in which the redeemed simply move in and take it easy, but the contrary is actually the case. The Millennium is a beehive of human activity, filled

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with diligence and visible production on every hand. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesy that a great deal of this work is agrarian, with people planting and harvesting crops. A leading feature of work in the Millennium is that it is productive, and people who work receive the fruits of their labor.

**Isaiah 62:8-9** The LOORD has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength: "Surely I will no longer give your grain as food for your enemies; and the sons of the foreigner shall not drink your new wine, for which you have labored. But those who have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LOORD; those who have brought it together shall drink it in My holy courts."

In the Millennium, if you work, you eat it; if you do not, you starve. When you do work, you get to keep the fruit of your labor. Today, the government in the United States keeps at least five months of your labor for itself through taxation. Why? Because of greed. This will not happen in the Millennium.

Amos even paints a vivid picture of eagerness by farmers, and such natural abundance that the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed. Both physical and spiritual light will play a great part in everything.

**Ephesians 5:8-10** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

In verse 10, Paul closes the parentheses and ends his phrase "but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light..." with the words "finding out what is acceptable to the Lord." In certain ways, this is the key to it all, the key to the three things mentioned in parentheses. It provides the overriding principle that, if we find out what is acceptable to the Lord, it will guarantee the three manifestations of the light within us.

A parallel statement of the Apostle Paul is found in Romans 12:

**Romans 12:1-2** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

In verse 1, Paul stated general implications of a Christian offering his life to God as a sacrifice. Such an offering represents a complete change in lifestyle, involving both a negative and a positive aspect.

First, Paul commanded, "Do not be conformed." (The only other place this Greek word is used is in I Peter 1:14: "...as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance...") We are not to be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world ( *aioni* , "age"). The present Babylonian society has its own demonic pattern. This is the age before the Millennium, the age in which we live. Paul warns us that we are no longer to live the humanist lifestyle that prevails in this age. We must be non-conformed to the lifestyle of "the present evil age," and we must carry this non-conformity over into the next age, the Millennium.

Then, Paul commanded, "But be transformed," that is, "Keep on being transformed by the renewing of your mind." The Greek verb translated *transformed* is where we get our English word *metamorphosis*, a total change from the inside out. The key to this change is the mind, the control center of one's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions. As our mind keeps on being made new by the spiritual input of God's Word, prayer, and Spirit, our lifestyle keeps on being transformed.

Paul added, "that you may prove"; in other words, "you will be able to test and approve (prove by testing, prove genuine, ascertain) what God's will is." The New King James Version has "What is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." These three qualities are not attributes of God's will as the King James Version, New King James Version, New International Version, and some other translations imply. Rather, Paul said that God's will itself is what is good, well-pleasing (to Him), and perfect. *Good*, for example, is not an adjective (God's "good" will) but a noun (God's will is what is good—i.e., for each believer). The English Standard Version words it more clearly:

**Romans 12:2 (ESV)** Do not be conformed to this world, but 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.

As we are transformed in our minds and are made more like Christ, we come to agree with and desire God's will rather than our own will. Then we discover that God's will is what is good for us and that it pleases God and is complete in every way. It is all we need. Only by being renewed spiritually can we ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.

The great characteristic of the life and conduct of the Christian is that he sets himself to

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discover what it is that really pleases God. That is his ultimate motive. This is all-important, and we have to emphasize it in a very special way. In looking at conduct and behavior, we not only have to differentiate between the Christian and the flagrant, obvious sinner, but also between him and the so-called good, moral man, what we might call the "good pagan."

**Ephesians 5:10** finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

Verse 10 supplies the ultimate acid test. When you look at the lives of the two men you cannot easily see a lot of difference between them; they both seem to be good men, men who are characterized by good deeds. Yet one of them is a Christian, and the other is not. How are we to discern the truth concerning them? There is probably no better test than the one supplied in this tenth verse.

Here is something that is true of only the Christian, never of anybody else: It is the characteristic of the Christian that he is always proving—he is always finding out—what is acceptable to the Lord. Let me explain.

The Christian is not as concerned about and interested in goodness, righteousness, and truth in and of themselves (academically, philosophically, or psychologically) as actively living to achieve them. He is not only interested in them as abstract ideas and concepts, but as something to attain to and become, to live God's way of life.

On the other hand, non-Christians may be interested in these things in and of themselves. They may believe in goodness, believe in righteousness and justice, and believe in truth and in truthfulness. Therefore, they may seem to be "good" people, but they are "good" pagans.

The non-Christian may set them up as his code and live according to it. Let us grant him everything that he claims; he may succeed very well. If, however, that is all he is able to tell us, he is not a Christian. He is just excellent at paganism.

Basically, it is the teaching of the famous great Greek philosophers before Christ; they inculcated these virtues as principles, abstract principles. The Christian is not interested in them as abstract principles and philosophies. We are interested in them because we know that they constitute the will of God. It is God who interests us, because God is characterized by these things and is eager that we are also. We are interested in them because we want to live the quality of life that God does and be like Him.



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Paul goes further, then, and adds this differentiating truth: "Prove, find out what is acceptable to the Lord." Again, the true Christian, unlike the "good" moral person or the "good" religious person who is not a Christian, is not living this kind of life in order to please himself or to live up to his own standard or code. There are a lot of people who do that in this world, people that the world calls good.

We constantly see this in religion with non-Christians, with the "good" moral pagans. They search for churches or organizations that agree with their own personal beliefs. They try to create God in their own image and in their own minds, out of their own human reasoning. This is a major part of why true doctrine, which is based on the Holy Scriptures, is so vitally important.

Mainstream Christianity as well as all the other anti-Christ false religions have made up their religion counter to God's inspired written word. Non-Christians seek and find out what is acceptable to their own benefactors. Christians seek and find out and prove "what is acceptable to the Lord."

There are more people who seek acceptability with their patrons than do not. This is one of the most subtle demonic deceptions we can ever encounter—seeking approval from our peers—but our peers are in darkness. The Millennium will be void of this demonic deception, because Satan will be bound for a thousand years, but people will not be free from the deception of human reasoning; that will still have to be dealt with by spiritual power. God's government will be set up on earth, and people will be forced to follow it. There will still be rebellious nations. Israel will be converted first, followed by the rest of the nations. It will not all happen as soon as the Millennium begins. There will still be plenty of human nature to go around.

There are people who believe in having a standard, having a code, and they are doing their utmost to live up to that code. However, they are doing it to please themselves; they are doing it in order to live up to their own standard. Some are even ashamed when they break their own code, when they do not live up to that standard. The whole time, their motive is to please themselves and to conform to their own standard. This is very different from the Christian's ambition to prove and to find out what is acceptable to the Lord!

Let us take this a step further. There are many people who are living what is commonly called a "good life," simply because they are afraid of what people will say if they live otherwise. They are afraid of being found out and condemned. They are afraid of losing the support of their friends and neighbors. Non-Christians fear adverse publicity if they falter, and this fear and this concern for the support of others governs every aspect of

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their lives. They are governed in all their conduct by what other people think or say or do about them. The Christian is different:

**I Corinthians 4:3-5** But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

There is a time when God will reveal these things to the world, but that time is not yet. Right now, He is revealing these things through the light to a very few unique individuals, those of us in God's church.

That is how the converted person's mind works. Paul was not governed by what other people were going to say. In effect, Paul said, "Say whatever you want. It does not make any difference to me; I have committed my judgment to the Lord." That is what a Christian does; he proves and finds out what is acceptable to the Lord!

Let us take it a step even further. It is not enough just to live a life that is characterized by goodness and uprightness and truth. It is not enough to try to live a life in conformity with and according to the teaching of Jesus Christ because it is the best. There are a lot of people who do all these things, people who seem to be good, upright, and truthful. A person may read the ethics of the Greek and other philosophers and then come upon the Sermon on the Mount and he say, "Here is the height of virtue and the finest philosophy! It is the epitome of ethical thinking. I am going to live by this philosophy. I am going to live my life according to the dictates and the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, the noblest concept I have discovered." Thus he labels the Sermon on the Mount and the rest of scripture in equality with the Greek manuscripts of philosophy.

Is he a Christian? Well, if he stops at that point, no! The Christian is one who is governed by the need and desire to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." That is only possible with the Holy Spirit revealing these things.

We must be absolutely clear about this. The thing that proves that we are Christians is that, over and above everything else, our ultimate, our final consideration is our desire to seek and to know and to discover the will of God in order that we may please Him. It is a personal relationship to God and His Son Jesus Christ. This begins with our repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Of course, initially it

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begins with God's calling.

This puts true Christianity into a category entirely alone. Its motive, its mainspring, the most important thing about it is that none but the Christian can claim or even speak about the desire to live to the glory of God and to His praise and to please Him in all things: As the Apostle Paul puts it, "even as I don't please myself." His motivation was always to please God, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, even in his dreams.

A Christian realizes that he owes everything that he is and has and hopes to be to the One who still loved him while he was still in darkness, while he was still a sinner, while he was still ungodly, while there was still enmity in his heart. We realize that we owe Him everything because He so loved us that He gave His Son, and His Son gave freely of Himself for us. Let nothing please us, apart from what pleases God. Paul told the Romans to prove what the acceptable will of God is, and he expresses the same thought in writing to the Corinthians:

**I Corinthians 10:31** Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

It is only the Christian who does that! Does that mean, though, that in order to glorify God we must break off all communications with sinners outside of the church? During the Millennium, will God's people break off all communications with sinners outside Israel?

The Christian is not one who is suddenly and immediately, in one act, delivered out of all sin. We are forgiven all our previous sins in one act, but as we again sin, we must repent and receive forgiveness. Obviously, people at the beginning of the Millennium will not be instantly free of sin.

**Zechariah 14:17-19** And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

During the Millennium, nations will be expected to submit to God's laws (coming to the

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Feast of Tabernacles is part of God's law; it is a command), and any that sin will be punished. People will not be immediately free of sin just because God's government has been set up and just because His light shines in Jerusalem..

**Ephesians 5:11-13** And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

As Christians, we are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and we are to remain in society. We are to remain in the world but not be of the world. It is through God's use of us and our life, our conduct and behavior, our words and teaching as trained by Him that sinners have a hope of being called by God and delivered out of darkness.

Thus, we are not to cut ourselves off entirely from them. They are living a life of sin, yes; but, Paul says, if we are to have nothing at all to do with them, we would have to go completely out of the world. Christians would have to live in communities of their own and would never have any dealings at all with non-Christian people. Then Paul explains the distinction that he draws: if a person who belongs to the church becomes continually guilty of evil practices, we are not to have fellowship with him at all. Why? Because far more is expected of the person who is converted and a member of God's church, and he must live by a higher standard because of what he knows. We are held accountable for what we know.

If he is a Christian, he must be reprimanded and dealt with. Paul talks about handing such a person over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that he may be saved later. However, Paul does not tell us that we are to have nothing to do with outsiders whom we know to be guilty of sin.

**I Corinthians 5:9-13** I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from

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yourselves the evil person."

We only have authority, in a sense, over individuals who are members of God's church, who commit sins flagrantly and habitually. With outsiders, with people in the world, we are to maintain contact with sinners in exactly the same way as our Lord and Savior did. He was called "the friend of publicans and sinners." He sat with them; He ate and drank with them; they drew near to Him, and He did not refuse them; He did not reject them. Let me qualify this statement. I am not saying that we are to socialize with people in the world; and as we go on, I hope this will become very clear.

Christ mixed with them, He spoke to them; but He did it in such a way that He had no fellowship whatsoever with the unfruitful works of darkness. In other words, as Jesus Christ sat there and mixed with the publicans and sinners, they did not indulge in evil and foul and suggestive talk. They did not do that in Christ's presence; there was something about Him that prohibited that. It was His holiness, His purity, and His truth! It was so obvious to them that they did not want to do that in front of Him.

Years ago, I had a boss that knew that I was a member of the church. Every time we would have a meeting, he would let loose a curse word and then turn to me and say, "Excuse me. Pardon my French." Then he would continue on to use the foul language throughout the rest of the meeting. People in the world do recognize that we are different.

The Apostle Paul is telling us that, while we maintain our contacts with non-Christians for the good of their future and for their salvation, we do not have any fellowship in their attitudes and outlook or in their perverse talk. Most of them recognize our position and our profession of God and Christ. We can discuss other matters with them; but if they tend to bring in off-color or perverse things, we should excuse ourselves and leave. This meek show of disapproval is usually enough to send the right message. We are to show that we can have no fellowship with them and that we do not enjoy such things.

The line is sometimes very difficult to draw in situations like that, but we should know when the time comes to do that, if we are meek. We can have contact with them without enjoying the worldly things they are doing. We may share certain common interests with them, but we have no interest whatsoever in sinful behavior and anything harmful to their lives or ours.

Maintaining our contact with them provides a witness of God's way of life to them for their own good and benefit, but we should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of

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darkness in any shape or form. We can be a good witness to them; and then when God does call them, I believe they will remember meeting us. Do not think that your witness goes unnoticed; it is registered in there. Since this is very similar to the type of contact we will have with unconverted people in the Millennium, we should be developing this area of our personality and character now. How can we lovingly work with and teach people God's way of life if we treat them like parasites?

Our attitude should not only be negative, either; it is to be positive, as well, and even primarily. Paul says in Ephesians 5:11 to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose [or as in the KJV "reprove"] them." Here is a word, in the King James Version, that can be very easily misunderstood. To reprove or expose does not simply mean reprimand, condemn, or denounce. It is very easy to do that. We think that to reprove means to show our disgust, to severely correct it out of hand, but that is not what Paul meant at all. That was the attitude of the Pharisees who, when they saw these things, gathered up their robes and took themselves away. That is the typical Pharisaical attitude, and in many ways it is the exact opposite of the Christian attitude. It is purely negative.

I agree that it is very difficult not to act in this way at a time like this when we see and read about perverse things, and these things should bother us. How difficult it is not to show revulsion and abhorrence and not just to denounce it. That is not Paul's meaning here, though, and that is not what he is emphasizing.

Neither does reproofing or exposing simply mean that you apply moral teaching to the problem. Morality is a teaching that is somewhat negative. It is not complete. It denounces evil things specifically because they are bad for the person and bad for society, and there it stops.

Morality goes to a person who is guilty maybe of drunkenness, and it gives him a lecture on the evil effects of alcohol on the body. It goes on to give statistics about the evil effects of alcohol on production and industry, on the work place, on human relationships, on the wealth of the country, and a thousand and one things—perfectly true statements, every single one of them—but at that point it stops. Therefore, it is only negative and incomplete. In a sense, it is reproof; but it is not truly so. It is merely the negative application of moral teaching.

What, then, does Paul mean when he says, "But rather reprove or expose them"? The meaning of the word *reprove* is "to convince by means of evidence, to convict by means of giving enlightenment and understanding." It means that we are to throw light on these things in such a way that we really will convince the person of the nature of what he is

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doing and what it means to his spiritual future. To just come flat out and tell somebody that he is wrong or that he has sinned will only put up a wall. We get farther by our own example than we do by trying to force a person to do something. A person convinced against his will is a person of the same opinion still.

We are not just to denounce evil things in and of themselves; instead, we are to throw the whole light of the Word on them. We are not to address non-Christians about specific evils alone. In a loving, sympathetic, and understanding manner we should talk to them about themselves, their future, and their whole relationship to God. I am not talking about constantly preaching and throwing God's Truth in a non-Christian's face but witnessing in conversations and in action as the opportunity arises. Again, you will not see any changes, but it is something that helps us to develop our character and our personality for teaching in the future.

For example, the tragedy about the person who is the slave of drunkenness is not simply that he is a drunk and that the consequences are bad in a social sense, but that the person's relationship to God is altogether wrong. It does not matter what the sin is. A habitual sinner has no relationship to God and His Kingdom. The Apostle Paul tells us,

**Ephesians 5:5** For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

That is the point! Rightly reproofing or exposing means throwing the light of the Word of God on the person and his whole situation. You have to get him to realize that he is in darkness, that he has darkness within him, that he is dwelling in darkness, that his whole relationship to God is wrong. If he goes on living like that until his death, then he will be judged accordingly. This does not guarantee that it will inspire a change in him, but it fulfills our loving responsibility to him.

Of course, these applications are mostly in the form of our working and school relationships, but they do even carry over into our grocery store relationships, our meeting of the UPS man, or whenever we are meeting someone in the world. Are we sourpusses, or do we smile and look like we actually enjoy being in God's church?

We are to reprove and expose in this right way. We are to talk with them about God's way of life, not preach at them. They will know that we are different, that maybe we once took part in certain things, but that we no longer do that. Our responsibility is to let them know about the change that has come to us. We are to give them glimpses of a better

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life, a purer and a cleaner life, a life that is much more enjoyable.

God and His Son will shine their light on us, and we will in turn reflect that light. We will emanate the light of God in us. The same will be the case for Israel. God will be Israel's light, and Israel will reflect his light to other nations as a beacon, a guiding light to abundant blessings.

**Isaiah 60:19-21** "The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the LOORD will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; for the LOORD will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.

The light and beauty of truth is so great and the Lord's perfections shine so illustriously under God's goodness, righteousness, and truth that the eye is attracted to that light. This is because it is superior to all the natural splendor of the sun and moon. All the wonders and beauties of the natural world are lost in the superior brightness that shines in a righteous world.

The Apostle Paul continues his imagery of what light does, in Ephesians 5:

**Ephesians 5:13** But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

The true meaning of *manifest* is "to uncover, lay bare, reveal." Paul explains that when anything is exposed or reprov'd by the light, it is made visible and clear. He says, "for whatever makes manifest is light," which also can be translated, "for whatever makes things plain is light."

Why did publicans and sinners draw near to Jesus Christ? He was absolute purity and holiness; His speech was clear and plain. He had the effect of a magnet on them, drawing them near to Him. The Pharisees hated those people who longed to be with Christ, denounced them, and kept apart from them but when publicans and harlots saw Jesus Christ walking before them, they could not help but draw near to Him. This gives us an example of how people of whom we think as maybe some of the worst sinners, still have a longing and a need for that light and for the changing of their ways.



Isaiah prophesied that the Pharisees would be deceptive and phony. Human nature has always been the same and it was in Isaiah's and Christ's days and is today. Christ quoted Isaiah, in Matthew 15:

**Matthew 15:7-9** "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

The word *hypocrite* is based on the Greek theatrical words that mean "actor" or "to play a part." The essential identity of hypocrites is that they pretend to be something they are not. We see this in a huge way in mainstream Christianity. Christ exposed hypocrites by picturing them as "whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." It is not a pretty picture. Shine the light of truth on a hypocrite, and you will find a great difference between his deceptive facade and his true self. The contrast is as different as darkness and light.

There is something attractive about the light that is cast from holiness. Although it makes us feel very unworthy and unclean when we look at it, it makes us see the things we are doing as negative denunciation never does nor ever can do. The positive always has a greater effect than the negative and in a helpful and useful sense. It shows us our need and, at the same time, gives us a glimpse of something that is different from our past, much better, much more wonderful than anything we know.

Light shows holiness. Holiness is loving; it is appealing; it is pleasant; and it draws people. That is what is meant by "reproving" and "exposing." We are to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness by being light (Christ dwelling in us, and the Holy Spirit in us), by being what we are in our conversation, in our speech, in our walk in God's way of life. Reprove them—expose them—by showing them something of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Radiate on them the light of God's Truth and His way of life.

Remember that Christians are the light of the world. In your reflected light of Christ, they will see themselves and what they are doing as they have never done before. At the time God has appointed for them, they will long to be cleansed, to be washed, to be purified, to become holy as we are holy—but above all else as Christ is holy and as God the Father is holy. Do not share in their sinful speech and actions. Have no fellowship with what they are doing wrong. Reprove and expose them as "light in the Lord."

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Finally, we come to verse 14. In this context, the Apostle Paul is addressing Christians who have fallen asleep spiritually, those with a Laodicean attitude:

**Ephesians 5:14** Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

A Christian who has committed "deeds of darkness" must wake up and rise from the dead since he was involved with the deeds of evildoers. Christ's shining on him speaks of His approval, an indication that the repentant person is discerning and following what is pleasing to God.

Verses 7-14 deal with church discipline. Christians are to walk in the light; and in doing this, they expose to other believers any works that are unfruitful so that they can have the opportunity to also walk in the light and please God. A term that we might use here is "iron sharpens iron"; and the more one Christian shines his light (the light of God the Father and Christ), the more another person is able to work with God to increase and improve his character.

Verse 14—"Awake, you who sleep [spiritually], arise from the dead [from the kingdom of darkness], and Christ will give you light—is not only a call from God through the Apostle Paul to those called into God's church now. In a sense, it is the call to those who come out of the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord and enter into the Millennium.

We are living in troubled times. Is there anything that is not wrong with this world? We hear of wars and rumors of wars. We see a global financial crisis that was brought on by greed and deceit. We see sickness and suffering caused by man. We are beginning to see more famine, also caused by man. The day will come when God will remove all the blessings of abundance that He has given these nations. The whole world is in darkness, but we are sons of the light. God, through Christ, and the church are its only hope. Although the world tells us that we have peace and safety, we know better, because we see the signs of the times; and we know the evil that is set in the dark hearts of men. God has shed light on all this by giving us His truth.

**I Thessalonians 5:3-8** For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at

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night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

Putting on that helmet of salvation does no one any good if we are hermits, staying to ourselves and not helping people in the world to understand how wonderful God's way of life is.

The day is coming when we will have true peace. That day will be marked by the earth's being filled with God's truth—full of the knowledge of the Lord as light radiates from God and Christ. The Millennium will be marked by the peacefulness of life, freedom from the terrors of ordinary life. One level at which this tranquility exists is the natural.

**Isaiah 11:6-9** The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

This scripture (Isaiah 11:6) was so important to Herbert W. Armstrong that he had it put on the church seal of the Worldwide Church of God. I have a ring from Ambassador College, and this is on the ring, too. This is what Herbert Armstrong looked to and was excited about. We never want to confuse the Kingdom with the Millennium, since the Millennium is made up of physical people. The Kingdom itself is the Family of God, and that is where our hope and desire are.

God will make a covenant of peace and change the nature of wild beasts to comply. This condition will extend to people and nations, as the earth fills with the knowledge of the Lord and universal peace reigns. In contrast to this world, in which oppression from hostile nations threatens human security, during the Millennium people will live securely in their land, with no one to make them afraid. People will even be able to dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep safely in the woods, according to Ezekiel.

Isaiah tells us that the people will live in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. This will not happen completely until war is transformed into

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peace when all nations beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. In fact, as Hosea and Isaiah prophesy, God will abolish from the land the instruments of darkness and war. Ezekiel gives a fitting summary of the kinds of security that prevail in the Millennium:

**Ezekiel 34:28** And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make them afraid.

This is the will of God for the next age, as Christ rules with righteousness and a merciful rod of iron. We will rule with him, if we develop and put on the Christian character of goodness, righteousness, and truth from God's light. As Christians, we are not only interested in abstract virtues—although they are important, because they are the result of goodness, righteousness, and truth—but we are also interested in them because of our relationship with God the Father and His Son. We must find out what is acceptable to God.

Christ died to give us an opportunity to be the light of the world, that we might be true reflections of Him, that we might be like a city set upon a hill which cannot be hid and like the light that is not put under a basket but in a prominent place so that it irradiates its light throughout the entire room. "Prove what is acceptable unto the Lord," and, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."