

Are You Scared of the Light?

It happened again. As I write this, another scandal has captivated America's headlines and dominated the airwaves. The latest high-profile case involves a billionaire's private conversation with his mistress going public—a racist rant that turned him into America's most hated man overnight. The week before, it was a Hollywood actor allegedly trying to initiate a hotel hookup with a teenage girl. The week before that, a married politician elected for his conservative Christian values was caught kissing his staffer. And next week, there will be another name from the world of—take your pick: sports, politics, Hollywood or, yes, even the church world—exposed for some career-altering mishap involving [insert sex, drugs, race or money here].

The key word there is *exposed*. Because in every case, the heart of a person was unintentionally revealed. It wasn't just things said and done in secret that became public; it was personal character. Indeed, when hidden sin—which stems from the heart, not from some one-time action or exchange—is exposed, our true colors get shown and the truth comes out. That's not just the case with those who make the headline news; we're all susceptible to having our deepest, darkest sins dragged out for all the world to see. Because we know this is the case, many of us walk around with a gripping fear that one day we'll slip up, forget to cover our tracks enough and be exposed for who we really are.

And therein lies the problem.

If you're a true follower of Christ, you're continually realizing more about who you were before you met Jesus and who you are now. Before Christ, we were as good as dead. Ephesians 2:1 says, "You were dead in your transgressions and sins" (NIV). Romans 6:17 says we were "slaves to sin" and James 4:4 actually describes us as an "enemy of God." We don't have to

search far in Scripture or in everyday life to get a vivid picture of our natural depravity.

But after Christ, everything changes. We become new creations (2 Cor. 5:17), born again (John 3:3) and established in Christ through the seal of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21-22). We're adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:15), given the gift of eternal life (John 10:28) and granted citizenship in God's heavenly kingdom (Phil. 3:20). And to top it off, we actually become the very righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). What an awesome thought!

All these too-good-to-be-true transformations (and more!) happen when we are in the light. Jesus is that light, and in Him we find forgiveness, hope, peace, love and infinite other elements of divine perfection. Outside that light—in the darkness—we find death, destruction, misery and all the fruits of sin. Why, then, would we ever want to go toward the dark, much less stay there?

The answer is relatively simple. I'm well aware, however, that I'm already stating the basics to an almost entirely Christian readership that's heard these truths countless times. And yet how many of us continue to hide things in the darkness? How many are one exposed sin away from scandal? How many of us truly understand the old saying that "there, but for the grace of God, go I"?

Ephesians 5:8 reveals the truth that many of us so easily forget. "For you were once darkness," it says, "but now you are light in the Lord."

Did you catch that? Paul doesn't say we were hiding in darkness or that we were lost in darkness. He says we *were* the darkness. If we had looked up the definition of *darkness* before we met Christ, our picture would've represented the word. Yet because of Jesus, everything's changed. We don't just walk toward the light or shine a light; we are the light

because Jesus has remade our entire makeup, our very DNA. He has redefined us.

Far too many of us lose sight of this even as believers. We can't expect unbelievers to know this—the Bible is clear that their eyes are still blinded, just as ours were before Jesus encountered us on our journey and, like Paul, knocked us off our horse, asked us to join Him and turned our lives upside down.

If you're struggling with hidden sin, it's time to get exposed—in the wonderful way that brings freedom and redemption because of the light of Jesus. I realize that sounds like the scariest—and worst—thing you could possibly do. The church is often horrible at handling honest confession. We sometimes botch it when people flip the switch and willingly reveal their sin. But don't let that stop you from the freedom Jesus offers. He has made us light. It's time for us to, as Ephesians 5:8 concludes, “live as children of light.”

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