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Awake, O Sleeper

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Series: The Heights 2025
Ephesians 5:1-14

BIG IDEA - CHRIST CALLS PEOPLE TO WAKE UP FROM SPIRITUAL APATHY AND DARKNESS, TO LIVE FULLY AWAKE IN HIS LIGHT BY IMITATING GOD, WALKING IN LOVE, PURSUING HOLINESS, AND MAKING THE MOST OF THE TIME FOR HIS GLORY

Two Cities Church, that is the bull's-eye, the touchdown, the win for our church: people meeting Jesus and being made into his disciples. Guys, this morning, I was just asking a few people what their highlight of The Heights was. The first person I asked that question to, I said, "Tell me, was it a speaker? Was it a song? What was the highlight of The Heights for you?" He goes, "Yesterday, my mom, my dad, and my sister all came to Christ." I'm like, "I'm done asking people. You win. You win."

Guys, last night, Clayton King preached the gospel, and we saw just over 150 people make professions of faith in Christ. If you missed The Heights... Look. I don't want to guilt you, but if you missed The Heights, you missed out. Don't miss it next year. This is the final day of The Heights. Here's what else is unique. For those of you who remember this, today is the one-year anniversary of launching the Multiply Initiative.

It was a year ago today that I got up and said, "Guys, by the grace of God, we're going to multiply disciples, leaders, groups, and churches." We've done that. We planted a church in Davie County and sent 90 people to it. We launched Community Groups. We've seen 200 people baptized this year, and then all of the personal stories. We, of course, launched Lexington this last Easter. People led people to Christ. People got married. People got engaged.

Let me also say this. Here's what I know. There are some of you that what you hoped would happen by now through the Multiply Initiative hasn't happened. Part of what we

do as pastors...as Christians, but as pastors...is we help people deal with unanswered prayer requests. You can't be in ministry if you can't help people deal with an unanswered prayer request. There are a lot of them in this church.

There are a lot of you who wanted something to happen, for him to ask you out or for you guys to get pregnant or for you to get the job promotion or for your dad to come to Christ, and it hasn't happened yet. I just want to encourage you to keep moving forward. The call to multiply, which comes out of Genesis 1:28, is a lifelong calling with many peaks and many valleys.

Here's what I want to tell you. This is a little bit of a longer introduction today, so I apologize for that. I want to give you two other announcements that I've not shared publicly yet. These came out of the Multiply Initiative. I don't know if you remember this, but when I got up here... And I really meant it. I was like, "I've done this long enough to go, 'Guys, I don't know what's going to happen in the Multiply Initiative, and I think there are going to be a bunch of things that are going to happen that we don't even know they're going to happen yet.'"

One of them is that, during this last year, we started a fellowship program. Listen to this for a second. You're going to meet these guys at the end of the service today. We had two men in our church who this past year felt called... They were in the marketplace. They both have families. They felt called to leave the marketplace and to come on our staff to be equipped to go out and plant a church.

Think about that. Both of these guys went to their bosses and said, "I quit." They came on our staff, and over the next two years, we're going to train them, and we are going to send them out. You'll meet them at the end of the service, and I want you guys to consider going with them.

Here's the other thing. With the launch of our Lexington Campus this last year, we became a multisite church, and we love it even more than we thought we would, because multisite keeps the church effective by keeping it local. It raises up new leaders. It reaches new people.

So, today, I want to tell you where we're headed next with our campuses. Here's what has happened. Since we've gone to Lexington, you guys will come up to me in the lobby or outside, or somewhere, and you'll say, "You need to come to where I live. You need to put a campus where I live." Then you always tell me a "-ton," a "-ville," or a "-boro" that you're from.

Here's the question: Where is the best next place for us to go? I'm excited to tell you today the next place we're going to go is west of Winston. I want you to think Davie

County, Mocksville, Advance, Lewisville, Clemmons...that whole area. We have hundreds and hundreds of people coming from there. It's great, but it's hard long term to stay connected to a church that you're driving 25 minutes to get to. It's hard to bring your friends to "come and see" evangelism, and it's hard to get your students connected midweek to our student ministry.

You might go, "Well, Kyle, how are we going to do this?" This is what is so awesome. Do you remember this building, the Northwest Boulevard Campus? Raise your hand if you've never been to that building before. Just raise it up. Don't be embarrassed. Look around here. Okay, listen. We grew to over 2,000 people in this building, and then we've been using it for students. We're going to continue to use it for students, but here's what's interesting. This is important to understand.

We were meeting with some pastors, and we were like, "Guys, we're out of space." I mean, look at this. Right? We're out of space on Sundays, and the 5:00 is getting filled up, and we have the Lexington Campus. We're like, "We're out of space." They said, "But you have a building that you grew to 2,000 people in that can seat 400 people that has kids' space, and you're not using it?" It's like, "I repent."

Starting January 4, we are turning that building into the Multiply Campus. We're going to put a screen in there just like we have in Lexington. We're going to staff it. We're turning the hourglass over right now. Less than four months from now, we're launching this. What I'm trying to say to Lexington is you're getting a younger brother. Congrats.

So, anybody who's interested in this West Campus... First of all, text the word *west* to 39808, and we'll get you a bunch of information. I say this humbly, because this idea didn't come *from* us; it came *to* us. The genius of this, guys, is we're going to have nine months, from January 4 until The Heights Conference next year, to build this West Campus.

I know you go, "Well, where's the final location going to be?" Do you know what's going to happen? Uncle Remus is going to show up and go, "Well, I've got 14 acres, you know." "Well, I didn't know that until we started meeting." We're going to figure it out together, guys, but we are going to launch in such an enormous way, because we're going to be able to build the culture, build the systems, build the teams, and have nine months starting January 4, and then we're going to move west.

Here's what I want you to do. There's no pressure, but if you're at all interested, consider coming to our interest meeting right after the 5:00 service two weeks from now, and we'll begin to answer all of your questions and dream together. With that said, let's pray.

Lord, thank you for The Heights Conference. I really believe you have done so many unique things over the last 72 hours. Thank you for Pastor Jon and Pastor Dave and Pastor Clayton, just a picture of three godly men with very different personalities and preaching styles who came here with very different assignments of what they wanted to see happen. Thank you for the encouragement we heard of what God does when he shows up in a city. Thank you for the picture of heaven that Pastor Dave gave us, and thank you for the clear call to Christ last night from Pastor Clayton. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Have you ever not set an alarm by accident and slept in? Or maybe you're such a deep sleeper... Have you ever slept through an alarm? Did you ever miss an important meeting because you slept in? You never want to admit that to somebody. Right? I remember I was in college ministry, back in my college ministry days, and I was meeting with a key leader who was going to be in the college ministry. We were supposed to meet at 6:00 a.m. at Starbucks.

Now, when you're doing college ministry, 6:00 a.m. is very early. Okay? I remember that the day I was supposed to wake up at 6:00 a.m., I woke up to a phone call from this guy. It was 6:15 in the morning. I picked up the phone call, embarrassed and kind of startled, and he said, "Are we still meeting?" I apologized. I only lived a few minutes from Starbucks. I got there another 10 minutes late.

I want to talk to you today about waking up from sleep so you don't miss the most important meeting. It's interesting. Some people... You know, you bought the hat. You got the "Awake, O Sleeper" hat, maybe, or you have the "Awake, O Sleeper" shirt, and some of you might have thought, "Man! The Heights is cool, and this theme *Awake, O Sleeper* is so cool. Who thought of this?" God.

I want to take you to Ephesians 5:14. I want to read this to you. Ephesians 5:14 says, **"...for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"** So, today we're going to talk about the metaphor of sleeping and waking in the Bible. Paul (and Jesus does this too) will often take images and metaphors of things we all understand to explain things we don't understand.

We all understand sleeping and waking up. Right? But it's kind of strange. Do you find it strange...? You don't, because everybody does it. Don't you find it just a little strange, when you think about it, that you spend a third of your life unconscious? We just act like it's normal. It's like, "All right. Well, see you in eight hours. I'm going to go unconscious." If you live to 75, you slept for 25 years.

Sleep, though, is so important. Think about this with me for a second. Sleep is more important than food. Fact. I can prove it to you. You can go way longer without food than you can go without sleep. From what I read, if you are an elite marathon runner with 5 percent body fat... That is, like, fit as a fiddle. If you have 5 percent body fat, you can not eat for a month and be fine. I know you guys feel like you can't skip lunch or whatever.

An elite athlete with 5 percent body fat can not eat for a month and be fine, but if we get six hours of sleep instead of eight hours of sleep, it feels like, "Where am I?" Right? If you've ever been in college and had to pull an all-nighter, or if you're a mom of young kids, you realize how important sleep is. Well, Paul says we're asleep and we need to wake up.

Now, listen to this. This is important to understand everything else I'm going to say today. In the Bible, sleep is a metaphor for two realities. First, sleep is a metaphor for death. So, here's what happened. In the first century, Christians started to die before Christ returned. Now, we're used to that now. It doesn't scare us. But in the first century, when Christians started dying and Christ hadn't returned yet, everyone was like, "What about the resurrection? What's going on?"

So, Paul began to write to them and say, "Do not worry about our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep." Paul says for the Christian... He uses the metaphor of sleep for death. If you ever take your 5-year-old to a funeral, and they look in the casket, they all say the same thing: "It looks like he's sleeping." Sleep is a metaphor for being *spiritually* dead. It's like, you don't know what's going on. You're unaware of what's going on around you.

The other thing is sleep is a metaphor for spiritual apathy, spiritual passivity, spiritual slothfulness. So, in one sense, when you become a Christian, you wake up from a very deep sleep, but the temptation in life is to fall back asleep. This is why Jesus in his teaching, again and again and again, says things like, "Stay awake. Stay alert."

Look. I'll show you this. This is not a small theme. I want to show you a couple of other places this shows up. In Romans 13:11, Paul says, "***Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.***" He's talking to Christians.

What does Paul mean by "Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed"? He's talking about our final salvation that happens either when Christ returns or we die. You know this, but every day you live, you're living one day closer to either Christ returning or you dying. Death is to the individual what Christ's return is to the whole world. It ends everything.

So, what he's saying is "Wake up and realize how short your life is and how little time you have." The average person lives 73 years, which kind of sounds like a long time until you break it into days. It's fewer than 27,000 days. The older you get, the more you realize every season of your life is super short. You're like, "Oh, college is over. Oh, singleness is over. Oh, married without kids is over. Oh, kids in the house is over. Oh, career is over." Paul says, "Wake up and see how short life is."

Then there's another thing. Look at what Jesus says in Revelation 3. He says to the church, "**Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.**" Basically, Jesus says, "Wake up, because you are not all you could be."

This is a terrifying question to ask yourself: How much better would everybody and everything around you be if you were better? Dads, how much better would everything in your home be if you were better? No one wants to ask that question, because everybody knows, "If I was more faithful, if I was more like Christ, if I was more fruitful, it wouldn't just benefit and bless me; it would benefit and bless everybody I'm connected to, and I'm connected to a lot of people."

Here's why we're talking about this today, guys. We're talking about this because the Bible says that we are to be awake in a world that is asleep. Here's the last one, and then we'll get to the text. First Thessalonians 5:6: "**So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.**"

I could talk about how Winston-Salem or Lexington or the larger Triad, or whatever we want to say, or the United States... We could talk about how it's asleep. That's always easy. It's easy for the church to pick on the culture and all that. I think the bigger problem is the church is asleep. The church is a sleeping giant. Listen. I am a "big-C church" guy. I love pastors. I love local churches. So, I want to put a couple of airbags around this.

There are so many great, good, gospel-preaching churches in Winston and Lexington and all over the Triad and all over the United States. There are so many good, great pastors, but I genuinely think... I'm not saying it's worse in Winston-Salem than it is anywhere else, but there are so many churches and so many Christians that have fallen asleep, and they don't even know it.

Has that ever happened to you before? Sometimes it happens to me. Like, I'll be up late. Everyone in the family is, you know... I'm like, "All right. Just one more episode. One more episode." Then I'll wake up and it's 3:00 in the morning. That's the problem. I don't

even know when I fell asleep. I didn't even know I was sleeping until I finally woke up, and then I'm like, "When did I fall asleep?"

Some of you fell asleep in college. Some of you fell asleep the moment your kid was born. Some of you fell asleep when you got into that relationship. God is calling us today to wake up. Here's my message: five decisions you will make when you're awake. That's it. Five decisions. We're going to go through them quickly. Five decisions you will make if you're awake.

The first one is you will decide to *imitate God*. Look at verse 1. "**Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.**" Whether you're a Christian or not a Christian, there are some things we all have in common. We love to imitate. It doesn't matter. Everybody, when they're 3 or 4, has to go through the stage of play, and the first thing they do is they want to play house. One of the reasons they want to play house is they want to imitate Mom and Dad. What do we say? "Imitation is the highest form of flattery."

Imitation is so powerful that Tiger Woods changed the game of golf because everyone wanted to imitate him. Did you see what golfers looked like before him? They looked more like John Daly. He comes on the scene, and there's the fit golfer, the athletic golfer, and the disciplined golfer. Think about what Michael Jordan did for basketball. Think about what Mark Zuckerberg did for the cool, tee shirt-wearing tech CEO. Imitation is so powerful. The problem sometimes is we're imitating the wrong people.

You know, it's interesting. I'll speak to the ladies for a second, because I know... Don't act like you're not excited about this. Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce are engaged. It's interesting. I was trying not to read too much about this, but I did read a little bit about it. Here's what's interesting about that. You could argue... Okay, Taylor Swift. Whatever you think about her, she's one of the most famous women alive. She's the first person to become a billionaire just by singing.

I was reading these articles, and what they were saying is now that Taylor is engaged, they think we're going to see a lot more marriages happen. Isn't that interesting? With her relationship with Travis and the engagement and the marriage, they're normalizing marriage. I don't know what she's going to sing about anymore. But that's the power of imitation.

This is interesting. In the Bible, we are told to imitate people. We ultimately follow Christ, but we are to imitate people. Paul says, "Follow me as I follow Jesus." Paul actually tells other Christians somewhere, "Imitate churches." He writes in 2 Corinthians to the church, and he's like, "Hey, you guys are pretty generous, but you're not as

generous as the Macedonian church, and I would encourage you to imitate them, because they're really amazing."

This is one of the only places we are told to imitate God. Here's the thing: you can't imitate somebody if you don't know them well and spend a lot of time around them. By the way, imitating Christ, imitating godly people... This is the reason we encourage people to get into community, because the most important things in life are not taught, they're caught, and that happens in community. If you are awake, a decision you will make is you'll imitate God.

Secondly, if you are awake, another decision you will make is to *walk in love*. Let me show you verse 2. "***And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***" Now, there are certain topics that when I talk about them, I feel like, "Uh! I'm going against the 'yawn, yawn' of our church."

Like, "All right. Yeah, walk in love. That's the most basic and most boring thing. Why do we even need to talk about it? It's so obvious. I mean, isn't the whole commandment to love God and love each other?" Well, I want to talk about what love *is* and what love *isn't*, because in theology, when you define something, you do affirmations and denials. *Affirmations* is "This is what this is," and *denials* is "This is what this is not."

You might ask, "What is the opposite of love?" Some people say *hate*, but that's actually not the opposite of love. If you love someone, you may hate the things they're doing because you love them and want the best for them. The opposite of love is not hate; it's indifference. It's not caring, which is the exact same idea of sleeping...not caring. "I don't care what goes on. I'm in my own world." That's what happens when you sleep.

I heard a story one time about this married couple. They were fighting all the time. I guess they were even fighting in public, which can be embarrassing. Some lady walked up to them and said, "You know what? If my husband and I fought like that, we'd still be married." What happens when a relationship goes bad, maybe especially a marriage, is what settles into the heart is indifference. "I don't care about this relationship anymore. I don't care about this person anymore. I don't care about this future anymore."

There are two wrong ways the culture thinks about love. They think about love as sentimentalism, which is like "Love is just a feeling." Love is *more* than a feeling, but it's not *less* than a feeling. People will talk about love as if it's completely out of their control. "I fell in love." Anyone who has fallen in love and dated knows what that's like. "I fell in love." But they're the same people who say, "I fell *out* of love." So, we have to say it's more than a feeling.

Another thing... Here's what a lot of people feel. Parents feel this with their kids getting older. This is a wrong definition of love, but here's the second one in our culture: "Love is affirmation" or (you've seen the signs) "Love equals love." If you live in Davie County, they may not have gotten to you yet, but they're coming. They're in Ardmore. They're in West End.

You know, the yellow equal sign with the blue square, and all that kind of stuff, that's at your human resources department at school and at the DEI office at the university... All of that is "Love equals love." Again, it's kind of connected. It's basically saying love is a feeling that can be acted upon in whatever way you want to.

Here's what you feel. Parents feel this when their kids are living a rebellious lifestyle. They're like, "Well, I love Johnny, but Johnny is cohabitating with this girl, and I don't agree with that. They're living together. He wants to come on the ski trip, and he wants to bring her, but we don't believe in that. They want to share a bedroom, and they want to act like this is all normal."

Some of you know this. You're in this world or you have a friend in this world. You feel like, "If I tell them they can't come and I disagree with their lifestyle, what are they going to say to me? They're going to say I'm unloving." Here's what love is. I got this from John Frame. He's a Yoda-smart guy in Orlando. He says love is *allegiance, action, and affection*.

Think of a wedding ceremony. When I did my first wedding, this guy... He's with the Lord now. His name was Tom Gears. He pulled me aside. He goes, "All right. When you do this wedding, don't be funny. Don't be cute. Just give them the vows." I listened to him except for the part about not being funny and not being cute a little bit, but the rest of it...

Here's what he was saying. At the center of a wedding is the vows. People think, "Oh, what a great location. Oh, look, open bar. Oh, look, band. Oh, cool venue." That's why people come to the wedding or don't come. The purpose of inviting people to the wedding is to observe the vows. It's the allegiance.

Okay, that's allegiance, and then action is the volitional nature. Listen. The Hebrew word for love is the word *ahabah*. It literally means a love of the will. So, it's allegiance, actions, *then* affections. The reason our culture is so messed up is because we want to have the affections without the actions or the allegiance, but the way you get the affections is through deepening your allegiance and your actions.

Here's the thing. Look back at verse 2. I want to show you this about love. He says, "**And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...**" So, here's the whole thing.

We've been talking in this conference, obviously, about waking up. What wakes a person up is being loved. God has for us an efficacious love.

Every once in a while... Just pick an age. You'll see a lady, and maybe she's in her mid-70s. No one in the culture would immediately say, "We're going to put her on the front of *Cosmo*," but when you meet this lady in her 70s, she is just stunning. She's beautiful. I've met many of these women before, and they all have one thing in common. They've been loved very well by their husband for 40 years. It's a love that transforms you.

What we're told here is that when Christ loved us, that wakes us up. We have to have an experience of love before we can extend that love to other people. Then he says Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. In other words, the biblical definition of love is that it's self-giving and sacrificial, which is what always touches our hearts. When my boys get a little bit older, I want to introduce them to *Band of Brothers*, the HBO series.

What happens in that series... There are different scenes. This happens in every war movie. The grenade is thrown, and before anyone can even think, one guy jumps on it. He gives his life in a moment for these other 9 or 10 guys. Those types of scenes in movies and stories in history deeply touch our hearts. Here's the thing, though: most of us are never going to have the chance to give our whole life in one moment, but could we lay our life down in little ways?

Think about it. I know it's worth more than this, but if your life was worth a million dollars... God doesn't often ask us, symbolically, metaphorically, to give all million dollars at once, but he might say, "I need you to give \$1,000 of your life today. Tomorrow I might just need 100, but a day might be coming up where I'm asking for \$100,000, and it's actually going to be all of the other little things you've done that are going to prepare you for it."

Guys, if I can talk to the husbands for a moment, we are called to love our wives as Christ loved the church, and we struggle to watch her show. You know, it's interesting. To lay your life down in little ways... Just like Christ, we have to go to them, because they can't come to us. Think about our kids.

You know, it's interesting. Dave Stone told a story. We were with him after the service on Friday night. He told a story that I've not been able to forget. I've been thinking about it again and again and again since two nights ago. You know, Dave Stone, who was here, one of our speakers... He's 64 years old. He still cries when talking about his dad, because he said his dad was such a sacrificial man.

There was a group of pastors. He told this story to us. He said, "My dad was always a small church pastor, and one day he got a call from this really big, popular church in town

to speak." Now, you probably understand this, but this is my world, so let me explain this to you. This is a big deal. The one time The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham called me to speak, I moved everything on my calendar immediately to be able to do it.

Dave Stone's dad was a small church pastor. He finally gets a call to speak at this bigger church. He thinks, "Well, maybe this could help me." Dave Stone says, "I was in the other room listening." His dad says, "Well, what's the date? Oh, February 3." Dave Stone said he went, "Oh no! That's the day of my play."

He said, "I watched my dad go, 'Hold on. Let me get my schedule. I already have a commitment that day. Thanks for thinking of me.'" Dave Stone said, "Dad didn't know I was in the other room." He said, "Dad never said anything to me, but I can't tell you what that did to a seventh-grade boy trying to find his way through life." Walking in love is a commitment to lay our lives down in little ways.

Thirdly, it's a *commitment to be different*. 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."***

By the way, if you were here two weeks ago, this passage is actually very similar to what I just preached on in Colossians, chapter 3, so I'm not going to get into all of the details of sexual sin and all this kind of stuff. We don't have time, and I dealt with it two weeks ago.

Here's what I want to say. When Paul, at least in this passage, says an awake person lives differently...they're an attractive alternative...he gives two areas that you live differently: sex and speech. If you are going to really live for Christ, it's going to affect your body and your mouth, your sexuality and your speech.

Now, we have to understand that we live in a culture (this is not new to Christians) that's confused about sex, and I don't mean this in a demeaning way to our culture. Our culture views sex as merely physical, but we know it's not. The human experience tells us it's not just physical. Here's an interesting thing. If a woman gets beat up by a man, she will almost always tell the police, but if a woman is raped, she rarely tells anybody.

We don't know why, but men with the deepest sexual issues almost always have distant, uninvolved dads. So, we can't say sex is just physical. We know it's not. We can't say sex is safe. "Safe sex" was kind of a big deal in the 90s and early 2000s. Sex isn't safe because of emotion. Sex isn't safe because of disease. Sex isn't safe because of pregnancy. I mean, AIDS was a massive wake-up call in the 80s. It was like, "Yeah, sex isn't safe."

Sex is viewed in our culture as "The only thing you need for sex to happen is consent." The Bible says what you need is *covenant*; the culture says what you need is *consent*. Then we wonder, "Why is everybody so brokenhearted?" Because consent plus youth... What about consent plus regret? What about consent plus alcohol?

Here's the thing. Paul says in verse 3 that we should live such sexually pure lives that it's not even named among us, or *not even a hint* is the literal phrase. Here's why God gives us that standard: because every other standard will let you down. You have to set the bar at not even a hint of it, because if you begin to let it in, it will grow and grow and grow.

I had a pastor say to a group of us one time, "Everybody is three decisions from destroying their life." By the way, they don't normally happen on the same night. You're not like, "I'm going to go to Vegas." That was your first bad decision. You know, "I'm going to make three bad decisions."

No. They normally happen, like, you let something into your life as a teenager and told nobody when you were 14, and then you made another decision when you were 22. All of a sudden, you're 34, and you're like... It's a very painful experience to walk with people back through the small decisions they made to allow things into their life that led them to the horrible place they're in today.

You have to understand that the world is not going to understand the Christian sexual ethic. I've never seen this movie, but do you remember the movie that came out years ago, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*? Was that a movie about honoring celibacy and singleness? It was not. It was a Steve Carell movie making fun of anybody who would be that old and still be a virgin.

The second area it talks about is speech. If you grow up in a Christian home, you think what it means to be a Christian with your language is that there are a few words you don't say. In fact, you learn the words you're allowed to say instead of *those* words. Here's what I want you to know. Being a Christian...yes, there are certain things we shouldn't say, but it's actually more about what we say.

In other words, there are a lot of people who go, "I would never say certain filthy words." Yes, but you gossip, usually through your prayer requests. "Please pray for Diane. She's going through a divorce. Shh!" Or, men, you use sarcasm. The apostle Paul uses sarcasm. Sarcasm is like mustard. Just put a little bit on. Okay?

Technically, here's what sarcasm does, psychologically. Sarcasm kills intimacy. Some men don't know... I mean, you have to understand. There are men (maybe they're in this church) who have never had a deep conversation with anybody in their entire life.

Anytime it even gets close to getting there, one of their defenses is to use humor so the conversation will stop being serious and you'll stop getting to know them.

So, he says if you're going to be awake, the decisions you need to make are to walk in love, to be different, and to imitate God. Here's the other one: to *walk in the light*. Drop down to verse 7. ***"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."***

This makes sense. Right? He says if you're going to be awake, you have to walk in the light, and you have to stay in the light. You think about it. There are certain people you know who are hard to wake up. Normally, one of your kids is super hard to wake up. The faintest sound... Like, the coffee machine turns on in the morning, and they're like, "Who's here?"

But there are other people who are very difficult to wake up. Really, you have two options...well, three. I guess you could shake them. One option is like, "Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!" The other option, in light of all that, is like, "I'm going to hit every light in their room, and I'm going to pull the blinds so the sun can come in here," because that's what light does.

Now, here's the thing. The Bible talks about different types of darkness people walk in. Jesus says, at one point, they love the darkness. Sometimes darkness means secret sin you indulge in. By the way, what's interesting is most people sin alone, so no one else can see them do it, and often at night, because I don't even think they like to watch themselves sin. I think the image of God in us... We don't even like to watch ourselves sin.

Think about the average fraternity party. The whole point of a fraternity party is to keep consciousness at the lowest possible level. Dim the lights. Make it at night. Make it late so everyone is already tired. Keep the alcohol flowing. Keep the music very loud. What's that all about? "I don't really even want to see what we're going to do."

Being in the dark can mean being ignorant. We'll use that phrase sometimes. "I'm in the dark about it. I don't understand it." We need to come into the light. Now, you go, "Why wouldn't everyone want to come into the light?" By the way, when it says *light*, it's not talking about *these* lights. This was written 2,000 years ago. It's talking about the sun.

You go, "Why wouldn't you want to come into the light?" You know, it's like these people at the beach I watch. They sit under an umbrella at the beach. Is that some of you? I'm

like, "Guys, get out there!" People worshiped the sun for 2,000 years for a reason...vitamin D and all this stuff. But you watch people hide from the sun.

Look. The sun gives you warmth. It gives you health. It gives you direction. It lets you see. But here's the big thing. The reason people don't like to come into the light is it exposes what was in the darkness. Back in the day, when I was in middle school, I went to middle school dances. I don't know that anything good ever happens at a middle school dance. I was in public middle school in Pittsburgh. Nothing good happened there.

Basically, we'd be at these dances. You know, the music, and it would be dark, and we'd be in this gymnasium. We'd be dancing with people...fast dancing, slow dancing, dancing with some cute girl you liked...all this kind of stuff. Then they would turn the music off and say, "Guys, it's time to go home." We'd be like, "We don't want to go home. Our parents can wait to pick us up." Then they would hit all of the lights. You looked at who you were just dancing with, and you were like...

You see trash on the ground, and everybody is sweating. You're like, "I think my mom is here." You're ready to... Sometimes that's what God does in our lives. If you grew up in a Christian home, he probably is using a dimmer, but sometimes, if, like myself, you didn't grow up with a lot of access to the gospel of Jesus Christ... All of a sudden, it felt like he hit every light.

That leads to the last thing he says we're going to do. He says if we are awake, we are going to *expose the darkness*. It's not just that we'll come into the light; we'll expose the darkness. Look at verse 11. ***"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..."***

If we're going to be awake, the Bible says one of the things we have to do is expose the darkness. Maybe, when I say that, the first thing you think of is "Man, we've got to tell other people about the sinful things in our world." We'll get there, but the first way we expose the darkness is we have to expose the darkness in our own hearts through confession.

My favorite definition is *confession* is merely agreeing with what God has said. It's not making excuses. It's not using euphemisms to talk about your sin. It's going, "God, this is what I'm doing, and it's sinful, and I need to repent." In fact, here's the thing. Some of you may want to find one person you can trust, where you go, "Man, I need to tell you something."

Every once in a while, that'll happen to me. Someone will come up to me, and they'll say, "I've never told anybody this before." I used to... I still get a little nervous, because you

never know, but I used to just get nervous. Now I get excited, because I'm like, "Man, I'm about to watch this person get free." The moment they say it out loud, it begins to lose its power.

The second way we expose the darkness is we begin to change. The brighter you become, the more the people who are living in darkness are going to be frustrated with your brightness. If you get up, and you're like, "I'm going to start getting up, and I'm going to start praying and reading my Bible in the mornings," by day three or four your roommates are going to go, "Why are you doing that? I guess you're going to go to sleep earlier now too."

You start eating healthy in your family, and everyone is going to be mad at you. You're like, "This is so strange. I'm just eating healthy." You're exposing how unhealthy *they* eat. That's what they're frustrated at.

Here's the final thing. We have to expose the darkness in our culture, which is something that... It's not that I enjoy doing this. I'm not a culture warrior; I'm a Bible teacher. But one of the things we have to do sometimes... Here's what waking up is, by the way. Here's the definition of waking up: facing reality.

I'm sure you've heard of Emmett Till. Emmett Till was a teenage boy who lived in Chicago in 1955. He was going to visit his family. So, in 1955, he went from Chicago to Mississippi, but he didn't know what it was like to be Black in the South. He looked at... I think it was an owner of a grocery store. He looked at a lady in a way that she thought, "He shouldn't be looking at me." She told her husband, and her husband and his friend abducted this young boy, tortured him, and killed him. This happened in 1955.

When they had the funeral, they said to the mother, "We really would recommend a closed casket, because what happened to Emmett is... We don't even really want *you* to see it." She said, "No. We're going to do an open casket, and we're inviting everybody." She invited all of the news stations. She invited all of the newspapers, because she wanted the world to wake up to the sin of racism, and she wanted people to face reality.

What do you need to wake up to? It's hard to wake certain people up. I ultimately can't wake you up. Only the Holy Spirit can wake a person up. Part of it is some people don't want to be woken up because it's very, very painful. You know this, right? The deeper you were sleeping, the harder it is to be woken up.

What Paul does in this verse, "Awake, O sleeper," is he does something that just isn't done a lot in the Bible. He tells us what conversion feels like. Last night, Clayton told us how to become a Christian. Right now, I'm telling you what becoming a Christian feels

like. It feels like being woken up from a deep sleep. That happened to about 150 people here yesterday, here and down in Lexington.

I want to speak to the Christian in here who has fallen asleep and been spiritually passive and spiritually slothful. I want to encourage you. Where do you need to wake up? Some of you need to hear this: "Wake up; you're married." Some of you need to hear, "Wake up; you don't have money for that."

Some of you need to hear, "Wake up; you're addicted. There's hope, but you have to tell someone." Some of you need to hear, "Wake up; you've not read the Bible in months," or "Wake up; you're the only Christian in your home. You're the only Christian at work, and God wants to use you."

Do you know what's interesting? It's out of *this* passage and a passage in Isaiah that Christians, back in the 1800s, started to say the phrase, "Rise and shine," which was so popular that it was just adopted. We forget a lot of reasons why we do things. That's something you may have said to your kids and never even thought. It flows out of this passage. What would it look like (I'm going to pray this over us) if, as this conference closes, we would wake up and we would rise and shine? Let's pray.

Lord, I pray that over this church. I pray that over the campus of Lexington, Lord. "Awake, O sleeper." Lord, would you wake us up? The interesting thing about waking up is we can't wake ourselves up. We need an alarm clock. We need somebody else to come in and shake us. We can't choose when to wake up. Lord, you have to do it.

Holy Spirit, would you wake people up? If there's anyone in here, and they are spiritually dead, would you wake them up? Anyone in here who would say, "I don't love Christ. I don't love the Bible. I don't fear God. I don't think of heaven. I'm not convicted of any sin..." Would you wake them up, Lord?

But for hundreds and hundreds of us, Lord... I just feel like there are people in here who fell asleep spiritually as soon as they left their house. They've been in a long dream, and it's time to wake up. Some people fell asleep to anything spiritual as soon as they had their kids. God, would you speak into the heart of every person? "Awake, O church; awake, O Christian, and Christ will shine on you." It's in his name we ask, amen.