

Our Approach To The Former Life



In this Christian discipleship study we are going to look at how God would have us approach sinful activities we used to be involved in before we became saved, and how God would have us relate to unsaved people we associated with before coming to Christ. In this study, we will be looking at several key verses from the Bible that relate to the issues at hand:

Ephesians 5:11 - And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Ephesians 5:12 - For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

Ephesians 5:13 - But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

First, let's look at activities that we may have been involved in before we became saved, activities that are obviously sinful and need to be totally avoided:

Sexual immorality of any kind including adultery, fornication, pornography, homosexuality.

Intoxicating drinks and illegal drug use.

Uncontrolled, unkind, evil speech including profanity, mocking, slander, gossip.

Laziness including avoiding work (or doing a poor job of it) both at home and at a job.

Now, let's just name some activities that we may have been involved in that God might want us to avoid or deal with in a different way than before, once we become saved (born again) by God. These are activities that the world may not necessarily look down on:

Membership in organizations that have an unbiblical religious focus (Freemasonry, Knights Of Columbus, "Pro-Choice" organizations, ecumenical religious groups, etc.)

Membership in clubs or groups that might hinder our walk with the Lord (poker club, bingo club, science clubs that promote evolution, clubs that meet at bars or where alcohol is involved)

Online gaming groups that involve violence and/or role-playing or that simply take us away from our responsibilities to a job and family.

Watching movies and videos - at home or in the theater - that entertain but do not teach anything of real value.

Listening to music that does not glorify God.

Spending lots of money on yourself and little if any on others.

This list could probably be a mile long. So, rather than going in that direction, it is better for the Christian to study God's Word to see what things are permissible and what are not. Note that we are not promoting joining secular clubs but "dealing with them differently", which could include no longer sending them donations, no longer encouraging people to support or join them, no longer approving of certain things those clubs or organizations may

promote. Each Christian needs to seek the Lord about their own individual activities. In some situations in life, it might be a good idea to get involved in secular activities such as becoming a member of a town council or local board of education, if those things don't cause you to compromise your walk with the Lord AND if instead, they are used by you to minister to others in Jesus name. Many Christians who are public school teachers are forced to compromise by the secular-humanists who run public schools. There are many things related to their faith in Christ that they are forbidden to do as public school teachers, mainly they have to censor their own speech as it relates to Christianity and they have to feed children the dirty water of the godless or god-hating secular authorities who are often involved in the preparation of school curriculums.

In the Bible we can find one simple test that can help us evaluate the good or bad of every activity and every situation:

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” - 1 Corinthians 10:31

God also wants us to RESPOND to people and situations in a certain way, and not simply AVOID them. So to do that, we will delve into the short passage in Ephesians chapter 5 listed above.

Ephesians 5:11

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness...”

This phrase is referring to the workers of darkness (the men of the world, who are in darkness). It is not sinful to have fellowship with them in a civil way, or to dwell among them as long as what you are doing is lawful and God glorifying, especially when there is an opportunity to be of spiritual benefit to others. Conversation with and participation in things sinful would not be right. Also, involvement in anything that draws a soul away from Christ and His righteousness and that could cause others to do likewise or that causes shame to Christ and His church, would be sin. Anything that causes the lost to be comfortable in their sin and in their lost estate would also be wrong for a Christian to take part in.

Things that are spiritually unfruitful (i.e. “works of darkness”) or that hinder a believer from “redeeming the time” should be avoided. And conversely, things that are spiritually fruitful (i.e. “works of light”) are what believers should be concentrating on in their walk with the Lord. The “works of

darkness” are those activities that are APPOSED to the LIGHT: to the light of the divine word, both law and Gospel, to the light of grace, to God the fountain of light, and to Christ the light of the world.

We would describe “unfruitful” as being of no profit and advantage – bringing forth no fruit, unless it be guilt, fear, shame, corruption and death.

And “fellowship” with those works of darkness as: being involved in committing the same, assisting in them, consenting to them, approving of them, receiving any worldly advantage from them, and winking and conniving at them. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul describes this kind of fellowship as being unequally yoked.

“...but rather reprove [them];”

So, instead of being involved with ungodly people we should be correcting them or strongly disapproving of what they are doing both by words and by deeds, and by our own godly life and conversation. This contrast is an important witness on our part – as believers – to an unsaved world. There is no other way for us to deal with sin, either in our own life or that of those around us. To ignore sin, to avoid confronting it, is to condone it and shows our lack of concern and indifference to the sinner and the consequences of sin... God saves us so that we would be our brother’s keeper and would show concern and compassion for the lost... so that we would indeed blow the trumpet to warn them of their impending doom if they stay on the broad road that leadeth unto destruction:

“But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.” [Ezekiel 33:6]

Also, to look the other way as those around us violate our God’s commandments, blaspheme His holy name, and make a mockery of sin is to show our own disrespect and disregard for God’s command to His people to be salt and light in the world.

Ephesians 5:12

“For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

This is a reason (“for it is a shame even to speak of those [ungodly] things”) why believers should walk as children of light and why they should prove what is acceptable and pleasing to God; why they should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; why the apostle Paul urged believers to reprove the unsaved.

Paul is here saying why the workers of iniquity should be reprov'd by deeds rather than by words – because it is a shame to even speak of those sins, especially when they are of such a scandalous nature, that it is a shame to mention the very names of them. What kind of deeds of the part of God's people would be a reproof to ungodly men? Leaving their company when they act ungodly... simply acting kindly to persons the ungodly are mocking... defending those whom sinners are mistreating... praising and thanking God while others around you are cursing Him.

Ephesians 5:13

“But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light...”

And all sins should be reprov'd. There is no benefit in ignoring sin and certainly worse than no benefit in condoning sin or those who commit sin. And reproof (correction, rebuking, etc.), should come from ministers of the Gospel and by other saints, and will certainly come one way or the other by God; either by His Spirit convincing of them, or by His judgments, and the eventual letting out of His wrath and fury, either here or hereafter, for the punishment of their evil deeds.

“...for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light;”

And it is so very true, that light, which contrasts the darkness, is what makes the deeds of darkness all the more evident for the sinfulness and lawlessness that they are. And in the spiritual realm, the light consists of Christ the sun of righteousness; or of the divine word, or of godly men.

NOTE: Much of the above material is derived from John Gill's Bible Commentary. A good portion of that material has been edited and reworded for clarity and conciseness.

REFERENCES

1. 2 Corinthians 6:14 – “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”
