

When Silence Is Sinful

Scripture: Ephesians 5:11

Code: B140220

Ignore it and it will go away. That seems to be the tactic the charismatic movement has adopted when it comes to false prophets, heretical theology, and phony miracles. Many charismatics simply turn a blind eye to the corruption in their midst, assuming that if it's not happening in their church then it's not their problem.

But that's not the biblical pattern for dealing with sin in the church. In fact, it directly contradicts the apostle Paul's instructions for dealing with false converts and professing believers whose sin is corrupting the church. To the church at Ephesus he wrote, "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them" (Ephesians 5:11).

Our Christian responsibility goes beyond abstaining from the "deeds of darkness." We are also called to *expose* them. To ignore evil is to encourage it, and to keep quiet about it is to help promote it. The verb translated as "expose" (from *elegchō*) can also carry the idea of reproof, correction, punishment, or discipline. We are to confront sin with intolerance.

Sometimes such exposure and reproof will be direct and at other times indirect, but it should always be immediate. When we are living in obedience to God, that fact in itself will be a testimony against wrong. When those around us see us helping those in need rather than exploiting them, hear us talking with purity instead of profanity, and observe us speaking truthfully rather than deceitfully, our example will be a rebuke against selfishness, unwholesome talk, and lies. Simply refusing to participate in a dishonest business or social practice will sometimes be such a strong rebuke that it costs us our job or a friendship. Dishonesty is terribly uncomfortable in the presence of honesty, even when there is no verbal or other direct opposition.

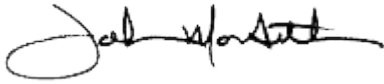
Often, of course, open rebuke is necessary. Silent testimony will only go so far. Failure to speak out against and oppose evil is a failure to obey God. Believers are to expose the works of darkness with whatever legitimate, biblical means necessary. Love that does not openly expose and oppose sin is not biblical love. Love not only "does not act unbecomingly" but it "does not rejoice in unrighteousness" wherever it might be found (1 Corinthians 13:5–6). Our Lord said, "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private. . . . If he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you. . . . If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church" (Matthew 18:15–17). This is the responsibility of every Christian (cf. 1 Timothy 5:1, 20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15).

Unfortunately, many Christians are barely able to keep their own spiritual and moral houses in order that they do not have the discernment, inclination, or power to confront evil in the church or in society at large. We should be so mature in biblical truth, obedience, holiness, and love that the natural course of our life is to expose, rebuke, and offer the remedy for every kind of evil.

Sadly, many Christians do not confront evil because they do not take it seriously. They laugh and joke about unadulterated wickedness—things that are immoral and ungodly in the extreme. They

recognize the sinfulness of those things and would likely never participate in them; but they enjoy them vicariously. In so doing, they not only fail to be an influence against evil but are instead influenced by it—contaminated to the extent that they think and talk about it without exposing and rebuking it.

Whether the sin is isolated to one small group or congregation, or it thrives on a global scale like the corruption in the charismatic movement, God's people need to be faithful to expose and deal with it biblically.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

(Adapted from [*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*](#).)

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