



IMITATORS OF GOD

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Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:1-17

Walk in love, light and wisdom

Introduction:

Be imitators of God – as dear children (v.1)

As a parent has influence over the life, the values and the habits of a child, so let God have influence over you, as His child. The normal, natural outcome – you will be like Him!

Can you identify some of the powerful traits or characteristics of the family you grew up in? (Good or bad.)

Can you identify some of the key traits or characteristics of the family of God? When our Heavenly Father has His way, these are all good!

The Gospel message is not try harder; perform better.

“Being like God does not start with effort; it starts with identity!”

We become like Him because we experience His love. (Remember Ephesians 3: **Knowing God's** love leads to us being filled with all of His fullness.)

Imitate Him, *as beloved children*. You are loved by God. Assimilate His character traits and make them yours. Embrace His culture. Just be like Him. Do things the way He does them. Like Father, like son. We watch Him; we consider Him; we fix our eyes on Him (Hebrews 12:2-3).

Imitate God? We are born again into it. We carry the DNA of our Father; we carry the family traits and characteristics. We share His values.

It can be in the simplest of ways (e.g. God is always reaching out)

Paul says here in Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God like children imitate their fathers (it comes through identity, not effort) and then he says in v.2 and *walk in love...* **Let's** take a closer look at that...

1. Walk in love (v.2-7)

Not that fuzzy feeling: This is action based; it is Christ centred; it is costly.

Being an imitator of God will involve walking in sacrificial love, not walking in selfish desire. **Walking in Christ's love** involves sacrifice - and the one being pleased is God, not just the other person.

It will involve time, inconvenience and oftentimes money.

Michael Eaton: “Love is doing what has to be done for others, no matter what it costs us.”

If we are walking as **God's** dear children; walking in love; **walking in the culture of God's family** – then some things just **don't fit in:** (v.3-4)

There is no place in our family culture for:

- Fornication - porneia, pornography, promiscuity, adultery
- Uncleaness – impurity, anything unwholesome
- Covetousness - desire for advantage, more, things, greed
- Filthiness – anything obscene or indecent
- Foolish talking – saying things that are silly, unwise, not sharp
- Coarse jesting – crude, vulgar jokes. Speech content is important! (Including WhatsApp, video clips, likes, shares)

It's a deception to think: **Don't worry, it's not that serious;** they are just old or conservative.

Partaking in these activities denies us our inheritance in His Kingdom.

(Inheritance has to do with reward – it could be present or future. Here it refers to the present – the fullness of blessing, walking in the kingdom of God)

What is appropriate in our family culture is giving of thanks - which speaks of appreciation, respect and honour.

So let's imitate God our Father by walking in love, living out the sacrificial love of Christ, and not partaking in the things He knows will exclude us from the full life and inheritance He has planned for us.

Paul doesn't just say we should walk in love, he also says in v.8 that we should walk as children of light.

2. Walk in light (v.8-14)

Walk as children of light. You were darkness. You are light.

(You have not relocated or moved from darkness to light; you have changed who you are!)
You are light! Now be who you are!

Darkness is your old identity; light is your true identity; therefore walk as children of light.

Jesus is the light of the world; His light is in us; we are the light of the world!

Find out what is acceptable to the Lord! His will; what pleases Him.

Darkness: (Unacceptable)

Unfruitful works

Shameful

Done in secret

Everything mentioned in v.3&4:

(Uncleaness, covetousness, etc.)

Light: (Acceptable)

Fruit of the light / Spirit

Goodness (kindness)

Righteousness (integrity)

Truth (openness)

Expose darkness

Your light makes the spiritual situation around you visible. You were darkness. You are light.
Walk as children of light.

Do you need light? It is available! (See v.14) What a promise! There is nothing to be embarrassed about. Every single one of us was darkness.

Be imitators of God by walking in the light! (That means: no darkness; nothing hidden; everything transparent.)

Let me ask you this: If you were elected as a candidate in the US presidential elections, and your life was investigated by journalists from the opposing party who were looking for anything to discredit you by, what could they report on? (The good news is – God already knows; nothing they could find would surprise him.)

Isn't it time to be honest? Respond to the light that the Holy Spirit is shining upon your life this morning. Deal with the darkness. It is out of character for you as a child of light. (*Stop pretending it doesn't matter.*)

You were darkness. You are light. Walk as children of light.

This is how you imitate your Father!

Let's move on to one last aspect for today as Paul continues to encourage us to imitate our Father...

3. Walk in wisdom (v.15-17)

Wisdom is skill at living. Be skilful in the way in which you live.

There is a foolish way to live in this world and there is a wise way!

The foolish are careless, thoughtless, not concerned with evil or good. (Governed by desires, impulses - short-term impulsiveness. If it feels good, do it. Go with what seems right for now; what is expedient.)

Many walk as fools, thinking they are wise. The wisdom of this age is not the wisdom of God. (E.g. Gender confusion and re-**definition is not God's wisdom.**)

Paul says: Walk circumspectly, carefully and thoughtfully – this is wisdom.

Take your time. Think. Consider the consequences. Take a long-term view. Weigh your actions in the presence of the Lord.

You are surrounded by evil. Don't make hasty, unwise choices. You are in a war zone.

You need to know what the things are that please the Lord. Do His will. **Don't be paralyzed** while you are trying to figure out His will.

Be active in imitating Him: get on and walk in love; walk in light; walk in wisdom.

The wise 'redeem the time' (v.16). What does that mean? Buy up the time; buy it back; rescue it from loss; regain possession of it.

Make the most of the time you have available; **use your time wisely. Don't waste your days.** Make the most of every opportunity. The clock is ticking towards eternity.

The wise invest their time in fruitful and meaningful activity. They want lasting impact. They have an eternal perspective.

The unwise waste their time and effort on sinful, insignificant, meaningless activity. The foolish live only for the pleasures and comforts of this world - the here and now.

(Testimony: many can testify that they lived in that space; but God got you)

If we imitate our Father, we will walk in wisdom. We will value His perspective on things and we will make that our perspective too.

Recap:

You are a child of God. You have His love, His light and His wisdom.

Now, imitate your Father! Walk in love, walk in light and walk in wisdom!

Responses:

- i) Have you ever responded to what Jesus accomplished?
Have you become a new man; are you a new creation in Christ; do you have this new identity in your new family (as a son or a daughter of God)? Is child of God your true identity?
Paul tells us: Be imitators of God - as dear children.

"Being like God does not start with effort; it starts with identity!"

- ii) **Maybe somewhere on your journey through life you have joined God's family, but you know you are not living up to the family name; you are not adhering to the culture of your new family; you are **doing things that are unacceptable to your Father...**** Today, walk away from those things of darkness and re-position yourself in His family as a child of light.

(Becoming part of a Community Group is a practical way of growing in the culture of **God's family.**)

- iii) **Maybe you are totally devoted to your Father...**
Then redeem the time; take hold of everything that has been paid for; Use every opportunity to be fruitful, enjoy adding to your eternal inheritance; understand what the will of the Lord is and do it! (Not just saved from or to live avoiding sin; saved to – fruitful action!) Make kindness your lifestyle.

Be an expression of His perspective and wisdom wherever you go!

Final reminder:

You are a child of God. You have His love, His light and His wisdom.

Now, imitate your Father! Walk in love, walk in light and walk in wisdom!

Discussion questions:

1. Think about being an imitator of God. Name a characteristic of God that you most want to grow in. Explain why you chose that one.
2. We also imitate God by leaving inappropriate or incompatible things behind. What do you need to leave behind now, as you journey with God and move forward with Him?
3. We imitate God by being light in a dark world. How comfortable are you when your light exposes darkness around you? Can you give examples?