

Ephesians 5:1-7

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,

Children have a natural tendency to imitate parents. (That's why the statement, "Do as I say, not as I do" doesn't work!) There is no higher standard, nor greater example than to imitate God!

We already saw in chapter 4:1 that we are to *lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called*, which is living a life that is different from others (4:17).

**1. There are obviously some things about God that we can't imitate. (We can't be omniscient, etc.) What are some things we can imitate?

When we studied the Sermon on the Mount, we saw these words of Jesus that call us to imitate some aspects of God in Matthew 5:43-48....

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

In 1 Corinthians 11:2, the Apostle Paul said, *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ*. Could you say that to someone?

²and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

"Live in love" (literally, "walk in love")...here is another way in which we can be imitators of God. James (2:8) calls this "the royal law." *You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

**2. What would that kind of love look like? What examples could you give?

Sinclair Ferguson writes, "Loving others is not an optional extra in the Christian life but a requirement. It does not depend on the whims of our emotions but on understanding God's Word, on the commitment of our will and the devotion of our heart. It is deliberate obedience, not an inexplicable urge to that overtakes us."

** 3. The NIV translates this: **"just as Christ loved us..."** How did Christ love us?

John 15:12-13

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

"gave Himself up for us" Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience. As the Apostle Paul wrote to Philippians (2:6-8) about Jesus...*who, though He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.*

The term **"fragrant offering"** calls forth Old Testament imagery, as in Leviticus 2:1-2...

When someone brings a grain offering to the LORD, his offering is to be of fine flour. They are to pour oil on it, put incense on it² and take it to Aaron's sons the priests. The priest shall take a handful of the fine flour and oil, together with all the incense, and burn this as a memorial portion on the altar, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

We are to be an offering, too! As Paul wrote in Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

**4. In what practical ways can you give yourself as an offering to God?

³But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints.

**5. Why is even a “mention” or a “hint” (NIV) a negative thing? What are some examples?

** 6. In what subtle ways does greed evidence itself?

“among saints” – NIV: “God’s holy people” Remember that holy means set apart or different.

Here are some practical examples of how we are to be different:

⁴Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving. “vulgar talk” or “coarse joking” (NIV) The Greek word is “eutrapelia,” meaning witticism, (i.e. in a vulgar sense); ribaldry.

7. What are some reasons that these things are **“out of place”?

As Paul often does, first the bad and then the good... **“instead, let there be thanksgiving.”**

The two types of talk should be mutually exclusive. As James (3:9-12) said,

With the tongue we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. This ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? ¹²Can a fig tree yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

When there is bad, it pushes out the good. But for the Christian, the good should displace the bad.

⁵Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

**8. What is idolatry? How are the things that Paul mentions idolatry?

There were some in the early church (Gnostics/Docetists) who taught the separation of the body and the spirit/soul. They believed that Jesus never had a physical body, and couldn't have, as the body was basically evil. They believed that what was done physically would not have an influence on a person spiritually, as the two were completely separate. This is certainly not what Paul was teaching here, nor is it found anywhere else in the New Testament.

The Apostle Paul writes in a similar vein in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, but it is important to note his conclusion in verse 11!

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

“That is what some of you were.” In other words, no one is without hope!

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient.

In Paul’s day, that might have been the Gnostics (see above); or those whose argument Paul countered in Romans 6 (There were those who said, “The more one sins, the more grace God gives, so keep sinning!” Paul said “No!” Or, as J.B. Phillips paraphrased, “What a ghastly thought!”

**9. What “empty words” are popular today?

The most recent Presbyterian Hymnal wanted to include “In Christ Alone”, but wanted to remove reference to “the wrath of God.” Authors refused to change the original words as it is a biblical reference. Consequently, the hymn was not included.

Back in Ephesians 2:3-4, Paul wrote,

*All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, **we were by nature objects of wrath.** ⁴**But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,** ⁵*made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.**

God’s wrath is related to love! God cares too much to be indifferent.

**10. How do you feel when someone you love makes a bad choice? Consider how God might feel the same way. It might also surprise you to know that the “wrath of God” goes with rejoicing!

Romans 5:8-11 says,

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Ephesians 5:6 also calls us to be obedient to God, a frequent theme in Scripture. This is what Jesus said as recorded in John 14:23-24a,

“If anyone loves me, they will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and We will come to them and make our home with them. The one who does not love Me will not obey My teaching.”

⁷Therefore do not be associated with them. [That is, the ones who deceive with empty words; those who are disobedient.]

The Apostle Paul also stressed the same concept to the church at Corinth when he wrote,

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)

This is often used to refer to marriage – which is certainly true – but it is much broader than that.

Ephesians 5A, 5:1-7

**11. What are some other instances where that would be the case?

This also pertains to “not going along with the crowd” – something that children are often taught rather early in life, but the same thing is true in adulthood. (It’s just more subtle.)

© 2020 Robert W. Mentze