

# Be Imitators of God

Thesis: Man's sin was that he wanted to be like God in quality (Genesis 3:5), God's command is that man is to be like God in holiness (Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48 <perfection>; Luke 6:37 <merciful>; full of graciousness (Ephesians 4:32).

*Ephesians 5:1-17*

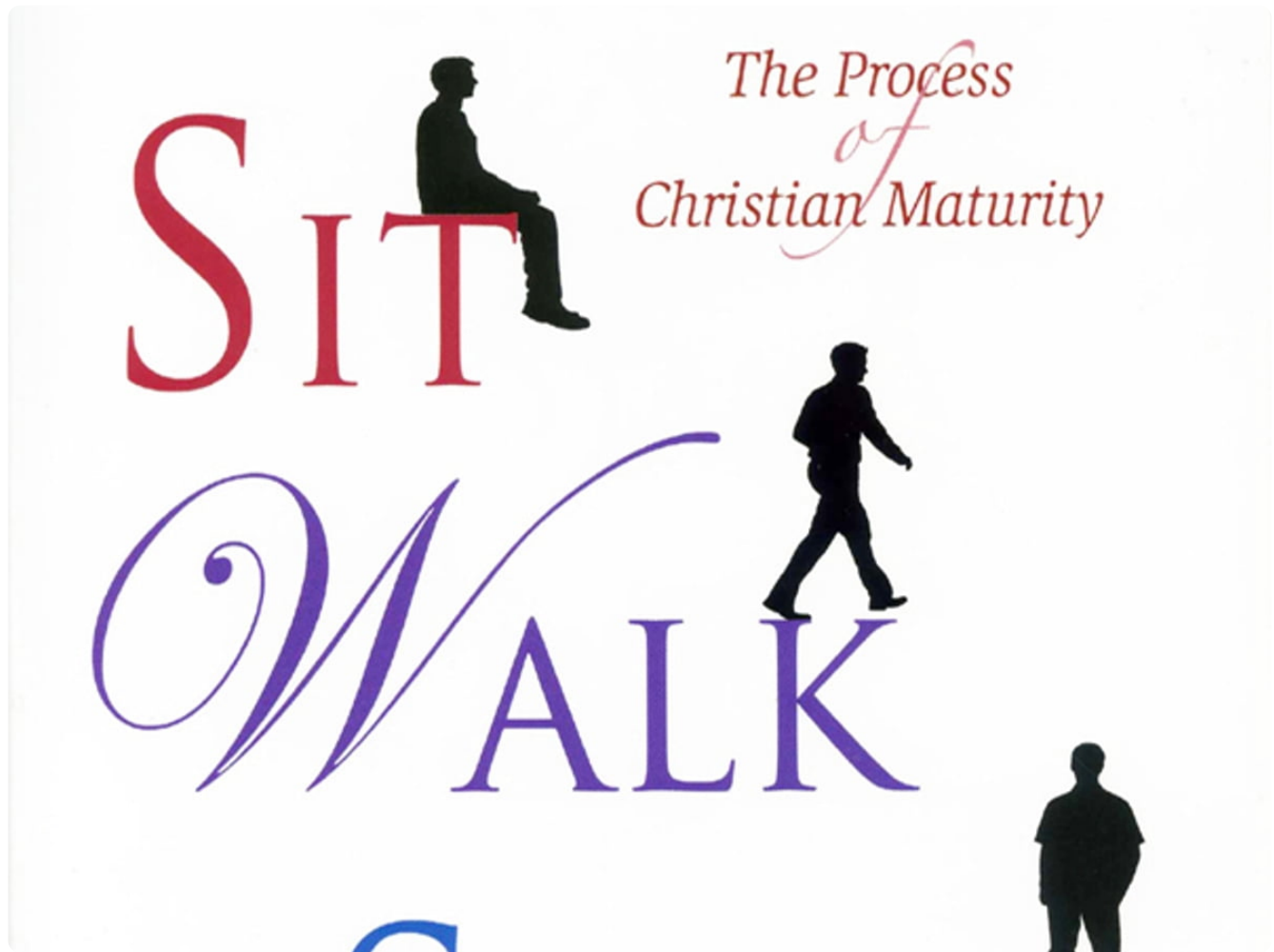
## INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

- Paul teaches us in Ephesians that we are to sit, walk, and stand.
  - **Seated** in the heavenly realms: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus." (**Ephesians 2:4-6**). How great to be seated in the heavenly places right now, as children of God, enjoying the spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3)
  - **Walk: Ephesians 5:1-17** - Commanded to imitate/mimic God.
  - **Stand:** "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." (**Ephesians 6:11**) - Encouraged to dig our cleats in the dirt, lock our shields together and stand fast-ready for hand to hand combat against all the evil schemes of the devil.
- **See word definition:**
- This lesson deals with Paul's admonition to look like our Father by imitating Him in:
  - God is love - vs. 2

- God is light - vs. 8
- God is truth - vs. 15

## MEDIA



*Watchman Nee - prisoner in China*

## WORD DEFINITION: IMITATORS

Imitators:

- Mimic - in a good sense. Someone once said, "We are to practice being God." Maybe this sounds off to your ears, but it was Jesus who said, "**Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**" (Matthew 5:48)
- Many young children mimic their peers doing the wrong things. Marketing directors realize this and use influencers to "influence" peers to buy a product.
- Children mimic parents: child follows father mowing grass, in the driver's seat, picking up a cigarette - positive and negative.
- Ephesians 5:1-2
- Bible talks about our spiritual walk, even a hymn about walking in the footsteps of Jesus.
- One's walk is more than what many religious people mean by the phrase a spiritual journey or doing my walk on my terms, but we are being molded into what our Father, as adopted children, wants us to be. And God in Christ has pioneered that walk for us - or as someone has said it - Jesus the "pioneer and perfecter of the faith" (Hebrews 12:-2 - NIV)

Sermon outline

## 1 God is Love (Ephesians 5:1-2)

### BIBLE PASSAGE

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and **walk in love, just** as Christ also loved you and **gave Himself up for us**, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." (Ephesians 5:1-2)

## EXPLANATION

- A. One of the most basic characteristics of God is that He is love, and if we are to be imitators of God, then we need to BE love. ("The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." 1 John 4:8)
- B. Paul continues the thought of unity from Ephesians 1-4: in the church, among the brethren, each doing their part to maintain unity and peace. Weddings and funerals are times for rejoicing and families coming together; people often walk on eggshells because family relationships are frayed. Love should cover a multitude of sins. ("Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8)
- C. "Just as Christ ..."
  1. The degree of love - the Begotten Son loved the Father and us too - obedient death.
  2. The Father received the love and sacrifice as a fragrant aroma/it made the Father happy.
- D. Paul gave reasons why Christians ought to walk in love.
  1. We are God's children. "As beloved children" means that we no longer are of the gentile world, walking in the nature of the world full of selfishness, anger, hate, and lust, but it is natural as children of God to walk in love, just as Christ loved us. ("For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." 2 Peter 1:4).
  2. We have been purchased with a great price: ("offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma")
    - a. John 15:13; ""As beloved children" means that we no longer are of the gentile world, walking in the nature of the world full of selfishness, anger, hate, and lust, but it is natural as children of God to walk in love, just as Christ loved us."
    - b. Romans 5:10; "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."
    - c. Romans 13:8; "

- d. Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the law*."
- e. Romans 5:5; "and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
- f. Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice to allow all humanity to know salvation through obedience. Our response should be love for God and others.

### **APPLICATION**

When we practice being God or being perfect as our heavenly Father, we will understand that we don't have any time to waste in darkness.

## **2 God is Light (Ephesians 5:3-14)**

### **TRANSITION**

Since "God is light" and we are imitating our Father, we should walk in the light and have nothing to do with the darkness of sin. Paul gives three descriptions of Christians that prove his point.

## EXPLANATION

### A. We are saints (3-4)

1. "set apart" 1 Peter 2:9 No longer belong to the dark world around us.
2. It is beneath the dignity of Christians to indulge in the sins that belong in the world of darkness - Paul refers to them as sexual sins (porneia)
  - a. Immorality (means to sell; to treat people as commodities, as things. Most slang words that young people use for the opposite sex treat people as less than people.- prevalent then and today, no different! These sins have brought havoc and ruin to Christian homes and many churches.
  - b. Impurity - dirt
  - c. Covetousness - greed, grabbing anything you want, the itch to get your hands on what belongs to other people. The fornicator and the covetous person each desire to satisfy the appetite by taking what does not belong to them. "The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) would describe these two sins. "Let there not be even a hint of these sins!" said Paul."
  - d. All three are self-indulgences. All three live to get, grab, and get what I want...self-indulgence. This is what will happen if you imitate other people and not imitate God!
3. Sins of the tongue or sins of the heart - Ephesians 5:4 - note the relationship between the previous sins of porneia and the sins of the tongue. People with base appetites usually cultivate a base kind of speech and humor. People who want to commit sexual sins or are committing them enjoy jesting about them.
  1. Ephesians 4:29 - Foolish talk that accomplishes nothing
  2. Coarse jesting - able to turn easily. Idea is one that can take any conversation or word and turn it to something filthy.

### 3. Illustration # 1 of wedding comedian

### B. We are members of the kingdom (5-6)

1. We entered the Kingdom of God when we believed and obeyed the Gospel.

(John 3:3 - born again)

2. "They which practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21, literal translation).
3. The morally unclean and the covetous will join the fornicator in judgment.
4. Paul says that the person who practices these things is an idolator. This is because an idolater worships something (in this case - the things mentioned in the verses, hoping to get illicit pleasure in return).
5. vs. 6 - deceivers: There were some people (libertine Christians, early Gnostics, unconverted Jews or Gentiles...?) who were ignoring the clear teaching of God's Word and attempting to convince the Ephesians that God didn't care if they lived in sin and committed these terrible things. Paul said, "Don't believe them! God will punish them and you!" (Romans 6:1-2 - continue in sin so that grace may abound? May it never be!")

### C. We are light (7-14)

1. You cannot walk straight in darkness.
  - a. Good = light, and Evil = darkness. More crime (sin) is committed at night than during the day. Criminals like the "cover of darkness, as do sinners." Have you ever wondered why nightclubs, dance clubs, bars, etc., are dark? Why billard and clandestine gambling halls are smoke-filled and dark? Dad would say, "be home before dark. Werewolves, vampires, bats, and other bloodsuckers come out at night." Evil people do not like the light because their deeds are evil.
  - b. Vs. 8: Note the text does not say we were in darkness, but that we WERE the darkness. And, it does not say you are now in the light, but that we are NOW light. **This means we are either making this world a darker or lighter place. We are either darkness making the world darker, or we are light shining and exposing sin.**
2. Two things about darkness:
  - a. vs. 11: Unfruitful -Never produces anything. Light is needed to make things grow.
  - b. vs. 12: Unmentionable - Some things are so evil that we would be so ashamed to talk about them if we did them. We would not volunteer to mention them or want anyone to discuss them.

3. Light and darkness live side by side; what does light have to do with darkness?
- a. vs. 11: Do not participate (associate) in the unfruitful deeds of darkness - does not mean never have anything to do with people in the world, but as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Bad company corrupts good morals..."
1. Don't intertwine yourself with darkness to the point that it is a main part of your life - the majority of your association.
  2. You will dress like the world, talk like the world, act like the world, etc.; **contact, yes, but company, NO!**
- b. vs. 11: but instead, even expose them.. It does not mean having a protest parade in front of people's houses to expose their evil sins.
1. Someone said, "I would rather light a candle than curse the darkness." In the church, as the family of God, the Scriptures command us to care for our brethren caught in a trespass.
  2. What about the world? Turn on OUR light switch and make sure we are the LIGHT. As the Light in the world, we will expose evil.
  3. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."  
(Matthew 5:16)

## ILLUSTRATION

### Illustration #1 Wedding Comedian:

- **A Christian woman attended an anniversary dinner in honor of a friend, not knowing there would be a program of low comedy following the meal.**
- **The so-called comedian tried to entertain the crowd with coarse humor that degraded everything the Christian guest held to be sacred and honorable.**
- **At one point in the program, the comedian's throat became dry. "Please bring me a glass of water," he called to a waiter.**



- **At that point, the Christian woman added, “And bring a toothbrush and a bar of soap with it!”**
- **To be sure, soap in the mouth will never cleanse the conversation, but she made her point.**
- **Christians who have God’s Word in their hearts (Col. 3:16) will always season their speech with salt (Col. 4:6); for grace in the heart means grace on the lips.**

## APPLICATION

- When you think of light, you think of waking up to a new day, and this is the picture Paul painted in Ephesians 5:14: "For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.” (Is. 60:1)
  - The day when Jesus was resurrected from the dead was the dawning of a new day for the world.
  - When we were buried in the grave of baptism and raised with Christ in the newness of life was the dawning of a new day.
  - The darkness of the graveyard is dead and we are now walking in the light of salvation.
  - Salvation is the beginning of a new day, and we ought to live as those who belong to the light, not to the darkness. “Lazarus, come forth!”
  - The Christian has no business in the darkness. He is a *saint*, which means he is a partaker “of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12).
  - He enjoys a special relationship with God because he has been delivered “from the power of darkness” and has been translated “into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13).
  - He is “light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8).

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ephesians 5:15-17 (ESV - English Standard Version)

<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,

<sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

## 3 Be Careful How You Walk (Ephesians 15-17)

### EPHESIANS 5:15-17

A. Paul has told us to imitate God and walk in love and the light. Now we are to walk as wise and not as unwise. This means we are to walk with a purpose.

1. "Those who walk in love (v. 2) and walk in the light (v. 8) must also walk in wisdom. To walk or live as a wise person is not just to have knowledge but skill in living. It is to have practical insight concerning the right thing to do in a given situation. Wisdom is the ability to see things as God sees them and act accordingly." (Boles)

B. "Making the most of your time, understand the will of the Lord..."

1. "The foolish man does not know Christ's purpose for him and for his world, so he foolishly squanders his opportunities." (ibid)

2. Ephesians were not lacking in instruction, and they were lacking in

understanding and obedience.

3. This is why Paul is so adamant that we should not waste our time doing other things instead of **learning** the will of the Lord.

C. Application: Line of thought has been - Imitate God, be holy as God is, be perfect as our Father in heaven...Our goal is to live, act, think, and speak so that God is reflected and not darkness, that our light exposes sin and not makes the world darker. This is wisdom.

## CONCLUSION

Ephesians 5:14 (Is. 60:1 and 26:19)

"For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

- When you think of light, you think of waking up to a new day, and Paul presented this picture (Eph. 5:14), paraphrasing Isaiah 60:1. You have the same image in

### **Romans 13:11–13**

- **"Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy."**
- When Christ arose from the dead was the dawning of a new day for the world.
  - Christians are not sleeping in sin and death.
  - We have been raised from the dead through faith in Him.
  - The darkness of the graveyard is passed, and we are now walking in the light of salvation.
  - Salvation is the beginning of a new day, and we ought to live as those who belong to the light, not the darkness. "Lazarus, come forth!"

- The Christian has no business in the darkness.
  - He is a *saint*, which means he is a partaker “of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12).
  - He is a kingdom child because he has been delivered “from the power of darkness” and has been translated “into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13).
  - He is “light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8).
- Why would we not want to be imitators of God as beloved children?
- Plan of Salvation.

Illustration: Southeast Pacific Islanders: Worshipped the moon because it came out at night when there was darkness, and the sun only showed up during the day when there was already light.