

# Be Imitators of God

Notes | January 10, 2021

## Phrase in Ephesians 5:1 – Be Imitators of God

- This phrase has me thinking a lot about imitation recently...
- Imitation in Nature – Ducklings
- Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery
  - Cheap Knock Offs - Rollex
  - Imitation Crabmeat
  - Sibling Rivalry Imitation
  - The purity of a child imitating his or her parents
    - Parents encourage imitation from the earliest moments
    - Children imitate their parents because they think they are the greatest
    - Elizabeth – budgeting and making money
    - Katherine – sweet spirit, kindness to others
    - Jackson – watching football, saving money, cleaning the kitchen
    - GREAT DELIGHT

## Ephesians 5:1 - Be imitators of God AS BELOVED CHILDREN

- God DELIGHTS when we imitate Him
  - We cannot BE God any more than a duck can BE a human
  - We can imitate God by becoming more like His Son, Jesus
  - Jesus is the perfect Son of God – the perfect imitator of our heavenly Father
    - Jesus walked free from sin and walked in perfect love
    - He only did what He saw the Father doing
    - He only said what the Father wanted Him to say
  - Great delight comes from imitating Jesus
- Why is it so easy for us to imitate cheap knock offs?
  - Imitating something or someone besides God is called idolatry
  - Satan is the great imposter, an imitation father, a cheap knock-off
  - Yet all of us have exchanged imitating God to imitate Satan through sin

## Our Origin Story – Adam and Eve (Genesis 1-3)

- When God made man and woman, He made us different than anything else in creation (holy)
  - We were made to be imitators of God – to rule over creation with justice and righteousness, just like our heavenly Father
  - We were made in the image of God – to reflect God's glory
  - We were made as children of God – Adam and Eve had no father but God
- Satan convinced Adam and Eve to imitate him instead of God.
  - Jesus said Satan is the father of lies (every lie finds its origin with him)
  - Satan spoke lies to Adam and Eve to convince them to disobey God and follow him
    - Did God really say? AND You will not surely die.
  - Adam and Eve went against their good nature to disobey God and follow Satan
- When Adam and Eve sinned, they exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator

- They fell from perfection and fell under the curse of sin (they took on a sinful nature)
- As our parents, the Bible teaches all of us are born into a sinful nature like theirs
  - Children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2)
  - Sons and daughters of disobedience (Eph. 2)
  - Children of darkness (Eph. 5)
  - Strangers and aliens (Eph. 2)
- In other words, Adam and Eve exchanged imitating God to be imitators of Satan, and all of us have followed in their footsteps
  - All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23)

### The Gospel

- What we all need is a way to be redeemed from our sinful nature
  - We all need a way to be restored back into God's family
- God's great goal in us is to conform us into the image of His Son, Jesus (Rom. 8:29)
  - First, God had to redeem us from sin by atoning for our sins and making us sinless
  - Then, God had to give us a new nature
  - Now, we must learn to live out our new identity, our new nature, in the flesh
  - Someday, sin will be eradicated forever
- God's great goal in us is to make us more like His Son, Jesus
  - Jesus is the perfect imitator of the Father
  - He is the invisible God made visible in human flesh
  - To imitate Jesus is to imitate God

Practically, what does it look like to become an imitator of God by being an imitator of Jesus?

### Ephesians 5:1-2

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And **walk in love, as Christ loved** us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

### What does it look like to be an imitator of Jesus?

1. Walk in love
2. Walk free from sin

*This is what the rest of Ephesians 5 is all about.*

**Ephesians 5:1-2** - Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And **walk in love, as Christ loved** us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- Keep it simple – LOVE GOD AND LOVE PEOPLE
- Walking in love is the opposite of walking in sin, and walking in sin is the opposite of walking in love
- Jesus walked in perfect love towards God and others because He never sinned
- We do not get to define love, God defines love (God is love – 1 John 4:8)
- For God's goal to be accomplished in us, we must walk in love and walk free from sin

### Ephesians 5:3-21 – BESETTING SINS

IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION: Besetting sins are not the same thing as fighting for faith and the daily battle against the flesh.

## **Ephesians 5:3-21**

<sup>3</sup> But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. <sup>4</sup> Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not become partners with them; <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

<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. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

### **What is a besetting sin?**

A besetting sin is a sin issue that is persistent in our lives.

1. You are known by others as someone with this sin problem – it can be named among you
2. Your words reveal the sin problem in your heart
3. You are keeping your sin problem in the dark
4. You are self-medicating to deal with the pain your sin problem is causing
5. It interrupts unity and fellowship in the body of Christ (the church)

### **The besetting sin in Ephesians 5 is SEXUAL IMMORALITY.**

- This should not be overlooked.
  - Sexual immorality plagued the church in Paul's day, and it plagues the church now.
- Sexual sin is about as anti-god as it gets. There is no love in sexual sin except for self-love.
- Sexual sin is idolatry – we cannot be imitators of God and walk in sexual sin (Eph. 5:5)
  - Exchanging imitating God to become imitators of Satan and of the flesh

### **What does the Bible define as a sexual sin?**

- Adultery (cheating on your spouse)
- Fornication (sexual acts outside the marriage covenant)
- Sexual sins with your eyes (like pornography or looking at others with lust in your heart)
- Sexual sins with your thoughts (evil imaginations, recalling images)
- Sexual sins against your own body (abuse, your body belongs to God)
- Perverting God's design for sex (homosexuality, sex changes, and other sexual perversions)

SEXUAL SIN IS GODLESS. WE CANNOT BE IMITATORS OF GOD AND LIVE IN SEXUAL SIN. GOD'S GOAL IN US CANNOT BE ACCOMPLISHED WHILE WE TOLERATE SEXUAL SIN IN OUR LIVES.

Sexual sin is the focal point of Ephesians 5. If this is you, you need to stay on this focal point.

### **Perhaps your sin issue is some other besetting sin:**

- Love of money (you cannot serve two masters)
- Laziness and apathy
  - Older generation – I've put in my time... coasting through
  - Younger generation – unwilling to work, men not providing for their families
- Substance abuse
- Unforgiveness or bitterness
- Anger
- Tongue – lying, gossip, unrighteous judgements / slander

Whatever it is, if you have a besetting sin in your life, you must face it head on! You cannot skirt around a besetting sin. You cannot wish it away or ignore it and make it go away. You cannot wait it out. You must confront it. The longer you wait, the more devastating the consequences will become. Be sure your sin will find you out.

### **According to Ephesians 5, how do we deal with besetting sins and face them head on?**

1. Acknowledge you have a sin problem
2. Examine your speech – what you say reveals your heart
3. Bring your sin problem into the light
  - a. If you are not a believer, repent and ask Jesus to forgive your sins (Christ's light will shine on you)

- b. If you are a believer, repent and believe that you are LIGHT (the new creation in Christ)
- 4. Refuse to self-medicate, but be filled with the Spirit (grow in faith and love)
- 5. Press into Jesus' Church (sing to one another, make melody in your heart, submit to one another)

**SIDE TANGENT:**

- Very next passage is on marriage and family
- THIS IS NO ACCIDENT!!! You cannot have a stable or successful marriage and family if you are not being an imitator of God and are living in a besetting sin
- Greatest barrier, even in our church, to reproducing disciple-makers... besetting sins that leave men unstable
- Next week – we will dig into this passage on marriage and how our marriages provide a unique opportunity for us to be imitators of God.

**Your Response:**

- Are you being an imitator of God?
  - To be an imitator of God means to walk in love as Christ loved
  - To be an imitator of God means to walk free from sin
- Are you imitating Satan by living in besetting sin?
  - Is there a sin issue that is persistent or known in your life?
  - What do your words reveal about your heart?
  - Have you been keeping your sin issue a secret?
  - Have you been self-medicating to deal with the pain your sin has caused?
  - Has your sin issue compromised unity and oneness between you and your church family?
  - **If ANY or ALL are true, will you confront this sin issue head on?**