

## Being Imitators of God

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In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul gave a sobering instruction: “Be imitators of God...” (Eph. 5:1). God is holy, separate from everything earthly and human. He is eternally pure. How can we be like Him? We are weak and frequently given to sin. Was Paul giving an impossible instruction?

Paul characterized our imitation of God. We are to be imitators of God *as dear children*. God loves us as children. He nurtures and cares for us. He is not cold and detached. He is warm and loving. Therefore, we are to respond to Him like children responding to a loving father. In the following verses of chapter five, Paul clarifies how we are to imitate God as dear children.

### Being an Imitator of God Means...

**1. Walking in love.** God is love; therefore, imitating Him involves modeling His love in our lives. The love of God is best understood as being sacrificial. In Ephesians five, Paul wrote, “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:2).

We can understand God when we look at His Son, Jesus. Jesus is our example for how we are to be like God. The love of God shown in Jesus was sacrificial. His death served us with life. His death also served the redemptive purposes of His Father. The self-giving love of Jesus shows us how we can serve other people and please God, our Father.

**2. Living a moral life.** Much of the real work of imitating God involves our moral behavior. Paul wrote, “But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 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” (Eph. 5:3-5).

In this text, Paul uses the description “saints” to refer to the dear children of God. This term indicates people who have been consecrated to God through obedience to the Gospel. They aspire to the holiness of God and seek to better serve Him in the world. Imitating God through our morality requires self-examination, self-control, and an awareness of present temptations.

Living according to lust is the opposite of everything God is seeking to accomplish in His dear children. Being impulsive and unrestrained in our actions and speech is not without consequence. As Paul clearly states, those who are impure in their lifestyles will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**3. Being different.** Being an imitator of God will result in us being noticeably different in the world. Paul wrote, “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things

the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them” (Eph. 5:6-7).

Walking in love and living morally can be made difficult by other people. We do not live isolated from the world. We live among people who are selfish, unkind, materialistic, and immoral. We may work with people like this. We may have neighbors like this. We may go to school with people like this. These are the kind of people who need to see a godly example for the sake of their salvation.

However, ungodly people can have a harmful influence on the dear children of God. They can pressure them into sinning. Paul warns about deceptive words of ungodly people. Such words can have a powerful influence on us. They can persuade saints to share in sinful behavior. We may think we could have an easier life if we gave in to the pressure of ungodly people. Yet, Paul gives the strongest of warnings against such thinking. If we listen to the empty words of ungodly people, we will incur the wrath of God.

**4. Walking in the light.** God is light. Jesus once declare that He was the Light of the world (John 8:12). Therefore, imitating God as His dear children involves walking in the light. Paul wrote, “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph. 5:8-10).

Walking in the light is not an abstract, ethereal concept. Paul explains the meaning of this expression in practical terms. The fruit of light is found in all that is good, right, and true. This means we are to live according to what is good, right, and true. Using the word of God, we are to discern what pleases our Father. He expects us to make right decisions in life.

The works of darkness do not produce that which is good, right, and true. Rather, we are to use the light of God to expose the works of darkness. Exposure will warn others about the dangers of sin. Also, exposure can illuminate the hearts and minds of the children of darkness to become the children of light.

### **Conclusion**

Being an imitator of God can seem like an overwhelming task. Learning about the power and holiness of God must humble us. However, being like God is not an impossible command. God gave us His dear Son to give us an example to model.

God commanding us to imitate Him does not stem from egotism. It comes from divine love. Following this command will only bless our lives. Being like Him is how we change our character. Also, following this command is how we fill the earth with His light. The world needs the light of God. For the sake of those in darkness, we can illuminate the path that leads to immortality.