

## Ephesians 5 - Imitators

Good morning church! Pastor Sandy has given me the opportunity to come open the Word with you all today. Pastor Sandy will be back with us next Sunday. My name is Andrew and I am the high school youth pastor here at the church. If you need a BIBLE this morning... USHERS... Once you have your Bible turn with me to Ephesians 5, we will be covering the whole chapter this morning. Let's pray before we get started...

Show of hands, who is a parent here this morning? Great, many of you are. Another show of hands, who here was at some point in their life, a child? DUH-DOY! We all had childhoods. Childhood was just a few years ago for the high schoolers here this morning. And for some of us, childhood was decades ago. However long ago it was, if we all reflected back to our story, somewhere in it we'd find our childhood heroes.

Every childhood has heroes! Usually mom and dad. These heroes play a pivotal role in a child's life, as they seek to imitate and mimic the things their hero does. Children learn best through imitating their parents. For me, one of my childhood heroes was my dad. He's a handy guy, I would watch him repair things, work on the car, always fixing what was broken. My parents tell me I would break my toys just so I could put them back together and fix things just like dad did! I wanted to imitate him and be just like him!

And in our text today, this is Paul's point to the Christian in verse 1, **"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children."** Since we are now children of God through faith in Jesus, we should imitate Him in our life, speak like Him, live like Him. And we do that as Paul says by walking as He walks, walking as children of God. The way we walk refers to how we live our lives! Because we've put on the new man described in chapter 4 and have new life in Jesus, we should therefore be imitators of God and walk worthy of what He's done for us.

Here's the thing we need to realize upfront, the way we live our lives matters to God, and is a reflection of/ response to the work that Jesus has already done in our hearts.

Paul covers 4 characteristics of God for the Ephesian Christians and us to imitate in the way we walk. With each point, he also contrasts the way we shouldn't walk, in imitation of the world, leaving it for you and I to make a choice. Paul tells us to 1) Walk in love, not lust. 2) Walk in light, not darkness. 3) Walk in wisdom, not foolishness. And finally 4) Walk in submission, not selfishness. This is where we're headed, but throughout it we must pose the question to ourselves "Who are we imitating?" In other words, do I look more like my heavenly Father, or do I look more like the world? Who is that person looking back at me in the mirror each morning?

We need to be honest with ourselves, about who we see when we look into the mirror. Do I look in the mirror and recognize smiling, WOW! All the good things in my life are a result of God's work in me. Thank you God! I'm not the person I used to be thank you Lord. OR do you look in the mirror and struggle to look at the yourself in the eyes in the reflection, ashamed that you're not who you say you are, bearing more resemblance to the world, not the Father...

I know first hand how easy it is to talk a big talk about God but not actually walk the walk! But "if you're going to talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk!" Talking about a relationship with Jesus without backing up your words with the equivalent actions, makes it fair to ask if the things you claim are even true at all.

So, let's look at our own lives this morning and examine the way we are walking...

Read again verse 1, **"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."**

The first way we should walk as we imitate God is to walk in love. 1 John 4:8 tells us that God is Love! Love and God can't be separated, He is perfect in His love, no one could ever love you like God has loved you. Love is a huge subject, with many varying opinions on what true love is. So what is the God kind of love?

He tells us, walk in love, "as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God..." the God kind of love, true love, is a self-sacrificial love. Self-giving. Jesus took the punishment of God in our place, this is what we should be imitating, laying ourselves down for others. And boy is that a tall order!

God you mean I gotta love that guy? Everyone? Sacrificial love isn't selective love. And just as Christ has laid down His life for us, you can lay down your life for others in the same manner... Now, we often think we could lay down our life in a dramatic kind of way, to rescue and show our love, be the hero in someone's life.

You're at work, and muslim terrorists toting AK-47s, barge in and say "we're hunting Christians and we're going to shoot someone down for being a Christian, who's going to be the victim?! Everyone of us, starting raising our hands, "I'll do it, I'll die for you all, I love you, I love you!" WOAHH! Big dramatic moment and all of that. Look in many ways that would be much easier to do than do what God calls of us, and that's to lay down our lives in little ways every day.

For example, let's just say your life is worth this \$100 bill. Don't take that too literally, but for reason of example, \$100 bill. It would be easy to lay down that \$100 in one big payment! (Not easy for me that's a lot of money haha!) But what does God typically say, He says no let's break it down and lay down our lives in countless little ways each day. So take your \$100 and break it down to 10,000 pennies, which is what I have here. And I want you to go out and distribute them one by one, you lay down your life that way! But now I can't feel like a hero in the dramatic moment... Can't I just do it the dramatic way? God says no, lay down your life for others piece by piece, always, and as you do you're offering that sacrifice unto the Lord. Takes a lot more effort doesn't it?

Put the needs of your kids first, your wife, your classmates, that co-worker you can't stand and disagree with everything on and secretly you're excited the 4th of July is this week and you have to deal with them one less day!!!! (Pour it out haha). The right response to Jesus' self-giving love is to treat others the same way. But Paul also contrasts walking in love, and warns us to not walk in lust.

Verse 3, But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Paul gives us this comprehensive list of things that are the opposite of love!

Fornication, we've heard the word taught before, is the catch-all term, porneia, which is all sexual activity outside of a marriage covenant between one man/woman. This includes porn, homosexuality, lusting after another man's wife, and more. The world calls fornication "making love". We made love. No you didn't, you're making a mess is what you're doing... injuring, damaging, and stealing from anyone you want... Sex outside of marriage doesn't say "I love you" but says "I love me." I don't care what you feel like whenever we're done... I care about my feelings.

I've heard it many times, "you know, me and my girlfriend haven't done "THAT" at least, but we've done all this other stuff... THAT is referring to sexual intercourse. Well all of that OTHER STUFF falls under the category all uncleanness Paul says. That's not self-giving love, that's self-absorbed love. That's covetousness, taking what I want, lusting for things that don't belong to me... Until I marry that person, it doesn't belong to me!

These attitudes pour over into speech too. Paul tells us that Children of God should not be characterized by filthy foolish talking/language, coarse jesting referring to inappropriate sexual humor/innuendo. Many can take any normal conversation and find a way to make a sexual joke of it. A Christian should be taking no part in that foolishness. Foolish here is also translated moronic. Don't be a moron and join in on the dirty jokes.

None of these things are fitting for the Christian, the saints, to be a saint, is to be set apart for God's use. Sexual immorality doesn't align with God's will for your life and the purposes of sex. Shouldn't even be named about you... But obviously since Paul is talking about this in a letter for the Christians in Ephesus, it was a problem they struggled with then, and Christians struggle with today.

Ephesus was a corrupt city, the center for sexual immorality and worship of sex in the ancient world. And believers in the city were starting to imitate the world instead of God... Happens today too, we live in a society drenched with sexual immorality in every corner. It is celebrated as a good thing, not a taboo thing anymore, and you're the taboo dinosaur if you don't agree with the world's views on sexuality.

Who are you imitating Christian? (PAUSE) You know we can get into conversations with other believers, and start to gripe and shout about how bad our world is, oh our environment is just horrible. This world's going to hell in a hand basket! And yes it is bad, I agree. There is temptation behind every scroll of your finger on the screen. Scroll down any media feed and you see a sexual image, you try to look past b/c you know you should, but then you scroll back up, look at it again, click on it this time, and you're trapped. There are traps laid in every area of life trying to get our young kids/teens plugged into the wrong heroes to imitate.

This is the exact reason why we need to come to the WORD of God and listen and allow Him to say NO MORE! There should be no more of that in your life Christian, doesn't matter what environment we're in! And as you cling to the Word, He starts to change you, renew you, and build something strong in our hearts, an identity that is rooted as a child of God, and forsaking the old lifestyles we once walked. And I'll be that much more ready to battle next time an image flashes across my screen. Apostle Paul and Bob Newhart were right, we can just stop it.

And we should, because verse 5, [For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.](#)

The person walking in lust, resting in old habitual practices of sin, will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. We are given a new life in the work of Jesus! IF the old man was crucified on the cross, and you're the new man, the new man should live differently than the old dead guy on the tree! There is a change! Now the changes in the Christian's life aren't all at once, instantaneous, but there should be some change there.

People can claim, "oh yeah I love God, oh yeah we tiight! But their life is lived completely in habits of sin. You can talk the talk all you want, but the way you walk reveals the truth. And there are plenty of people under the disguise of Christianity, who want to deceive you with empty words to remain there.

Sounds like this, "Don't worry about being pure, or sin, we know you prayed to accept Christ, you're good, do what feels right to you." OR I can't believe that a loving God would judge you because you're living this way, I mean you were born this way! How could a loving God judge you for being you? I'm sure that's not right, God is love after all, so you keep doing you."

Those things are lies. This deception Paul describes occurs today in the church who supports a person's lifestyle of sin, homosexuality. They're lying and deceiving that person to be comfortable in sin leading to destruction. Paul says that since the only future for sin is judgment/death, don't align yourself, don't identify with what I've told you will be judged. Don't let anyone deceive you.

My identity should not be placed in who I was before I gave my life to Christ. It should not be placed in the sins that once were strongholds in my life. God did not make anyone with homosexual desires. We were born into a sinful world. We all struggle with some similar things and also

different things. But I don't walk around now and introduce myself, identify myself as Andrew the "porn addict Christian". Paul doesn't sign his letters "Paul, the Executioner Christian" the Persecutor Christian. I don't wear that badge because that was the old me, who was nailed to the cross with Jesus! I am a child of God, a son made righteous by my Savior. I am no longer the same. Thank you God!

When we hold onto our former identity before Christ, we leave room in our flesh to justify the relapses of that lifestyle. And before you know you're in the habit again. And Satan wants to make it worse and deceive you into thinking that this is okay, God is love, He's okay with me being this way. No He's not. Are there Christians who struggle with same sex attraction? Yes! Just like there are Christians who struggle with heterosexual immorality.

Is it possible for a Christian to commit these sins? Yes. But if that sin dominates your life and characteristics/traits, it's fair to ask if you are actually who you say you are! We should be walking in love, not walking in lust. Imitating Christ's self-giving love is the correct response to what He's done and sacrificed for us...

He builds upon this in verse 8, [For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 \(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth\), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.](#)

The next characteristic of God we should imitate in our walk, is walking in light, not darkness. And he makes a heavy statement, you WERE once darkness. Doesn't say that before you were a Christian, you were IN darkness, but that you WERE darkness. You and I made darkness darker! We actively contributed to the darkness of the world! But notice that glorious word, BUT! But now you ARE light in the Lord. He doesn't say you just have the light, but YOU ARE the light in this world. Notice the distinction again, don't identify with what you ONCE were! YOU ARE NOW light! So go walk as a child of the light!

In John 8, Jesus says "I am the light of the World." In the sermon on the mount, Jesus says to His disciples also, "You are the light of the world." Imitate Jesus, YOU are the light! You have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in you! You are different! We should be marked by goodness, sharing the truth with others that are in darkness. We shouldn't be defiling people, sexualizing other people's minds with our dirty speech. Don't have fellowship with the works of darkness! But rather expose the darkness Paul says!

Light exposes, illuminates what is happening! Have you ever flipped over a big rock in the woods, only to expose underneath what was a whole community of little insects, bugs, lizards, thriving in the darkness. What happens the light shines in on them? They lose their minds, and start scrambling every which direction to find another dark place to go do whatever weird things they are doing in the dark together...

I mean why are bars and clubs always so dark and dim? Well cause there's just living for God in there right?! Haha no, there's sin occurring. And if you, being the light of the world, walk into a sinful environment, and there's things that are happening that you are not partaking in, and they know who you are, how does that make those people feel? EXPOSED!

The world doesn't have other light sources. Darkness reigns, can't get light except through God's people... We are rubbing shoulders with darkness every day in the halls of school, office break room, at our kids team sports events, do we stand out? Does your life bring light to the darkness? Do people in my circles know that I'm a Christian? Do I cause people to question what's so different about me?

Or are we giggling in the corner at the crude jokes and expletives used by your coworkers? Sure you didn't get up and look at the picture they're sharing, or say something to engage. But that's just the problem. We still walk in darkness when we are silent and hide our light! It's not enough to just not participate in darkness, but God through Paul tells us to expose darkness. "Hey man I don't want to hear you guys talking like that around me, just don't include me in on those conversations? Can you keep the foul language down around me, I don't appreciate it." Are you distinctive, influential in your environment?

Maybe you already have that reputation, and you can tell because your coworkers, teammates behave differently when you walk in the room. The laughing stops, the cursing ceases, and the tone is different when you're around. Great! You're exposing the darkness.

This dark world needs light givers fast! Verse 13, [But all things that are \[d\]exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."](#)

Everything will be exposed, yet in the meantime, there are still Christians who are sleeping on the job! Living on cruise control, comfortable within the 4 walls of their home and their church. Let that not be said of us. Let's wake up and be the light of the world, walking in light, not darkness. This is how we should imitate Jesus, the light of the world.

Verse 15, Paul gives us another area to walk the walk, we are to walk in wisdom, not foolishness. Verse 15, [See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.](#)

To walk circumspectly, means to walk aware of your surroundings, walk wisely. The original root word *acrovas*, is the same root word for the word we use for *acrobat*. Recently our family went to a circus show and the tightrope walkers certainly knew how to walk circumspectly. Aware of the way the rope moves under their feet, paying attention to the way their weight shifts from left to right cause changes in balance, and bringing all other times on the rope with them in their mind for reference to make the right decision in case of a problem.

A foolish walker proceeds forward without caution, without setting boundaries, without keeping an eye on the changes in their environment. We need to walk wise, and do so by redeeming the time! To redeem the time, or to literally buy up the time, we must be treating time as a valuable commodity! As if you only have so much of it. Which is 100% true!

The sense of urgency is placed on making the most of every opportunity for Jesus, to be used by Him! To be the light, to be His mouthpiece. Don't know where to start? I've got a challenge for you, and I know it will work. Everyday before you start your day, pray, "Lord I boldly ask for opportunities today be a light in someone's life. Lord I want to be used by You, please help me to see the opportunities you place in front of me." If you pray that each day I know He will answer and use you Christian! Make yourself available and buy up those opportunities! See someone crying in the corner. Don't just point and laugh and say "wow what a weirdo what's their problem?" No, go check on them, ask if they need help/prayer, and be a light!

We need to walk wise with intention, unlike the fool who wastes time immersed in the culture instead of being available to be used. We should organize our time based on what takes supremacy in our lives. As Christians, our priority should be our personal relationship with Jesus and His calling. Don't walk through life without seeking the will of the Lord, God wants to work in and through you! So walk the line, listen for His voice, and be used.

He continues verse 18, [And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,](#)

What's influencing the way you walk? Paul boldly says that drunkenness is dissipation, or wastefulness! Paul says why choose to spend our time and resources on a depressant, to the point that it hinders my wisdom, ability to judge, and maintain self-control. Being impaired or even setting out with the intention to get impaired by any substance is sin.



Paul contrasts the depressant effects of alcohol with the filling of the Holy Spirit! Is Paul saying we are to get DRUNK on the Holy Spirit? No! The Holy Spirit has the opposite effect. As we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we grow in wisdom and self-control. The imitator of Christ seeks to walk in the Spirit, unlike the fool walking in waste.

And as you are filled with the Spirit you will want to praise God even more and be an encouragement to other to praise Him with their lives! He is worthy of our responsive praise! We sing the song is He Worthy and praise Him with our lips/heart , but how much more so can we praise Him with our lives and the way we Walk,

Verse 21, [submitting to one another in the fear of God.](#)

Now before we even get to verse 22, where Paul tells wives to submit to their own husbands, Paul set the stage in verse 21 by saying Christians, submit to one another in the fear of God. This sets the context for the rest of the chapter where he describes marriage. The fourth and final way that Paul tells us to walk the talk as we imitate Christ is to walk in submission not selfishness.

The word submitting literally means to be under in rank. It's a military word, just as we have varying levels of rank in the military from privates to generals. In the lower ranks are expected to respect those of higher rank.

I like how Warren Wiersbe describes the concept of rank in the Armed Forces, he says it has to do with order and authority, rather than with value or ability. See, this idea is simple to understand when you tell Private Ryan to submit under the the rank of his general. But Paul says more than that here, He says, Christians, submit to one another!

Commentators says this is essentially like telling a group of privates in the army to "submit to one another". When you tell two privates of the same rank to submit to one another, the emphasis shifts to the reality that they are in the same squad.

So be a good squad mate. How? well, be thinking of the well-being of your other squad mates before your own needs. Keep up the team morale by working to create unity within the squad, not division. Do you know what destroys a squad from within... Selfishness of a member! You guys are on the same team! Fighting the same enemy. How can you succeed against the enemy when you're focused on fighting with each other?

Christians we are in the same squad! Let me ask you, do you get jealous or bitter when you see a fellow brother or sister in Christ succeed? Or are you happy for them and for the cause of the kingdom to be promoted forward? Are you motivated to grow by your fellow believers or discouraged because you don't have what they have?

We should submitting to one another as Christian's, but why? Verse 21, out of fear/respect for God. I'm going to value you as my brother or sister not just because it's the nice thing to do but because I love Jesus and I want to be like Him! Now don't misunderstand, there is still God appointed order and rank, in the church. In Hebrews were told to be submissive to those who ruled over us, those watch out for our souls, like leaders, elders, pastors.

And there are many individual squads in the body of Christ! The squad Paul focuses in on is the husband and wife dug in on the front line together. Let's read the rest of these verses, and get an idea of what our marriage fox hole should look like. Don't worry I'm almost done with the military symbolism haha...

Verse 22, [Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.](#)

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might [g]sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, [h]of His flesh and of His bones. 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Reading this section in it's entirety allows us to see thank God has appointed both an individual position and a purpose for both the wife and a husband in a marriage.

Paul begins in verse 22 by telling us, the position of the wife in marriage, wives, submit to your own husband's as to the Lord.

the wife's position of submission has nothing to do value and ability, and does not imply inferiority either. It has everything to do with God appointed order.

You've heard it said before by Pastor Sandy, there is a mission for the Christian marriage and that mission is obeying and glorifying God. Wife says I'm going to put myself under (sub) that mission as a part of the squad.

The is the wife's position. The husband's commanded position in marriage is found in verse 25, husbands, love your wives. How? Just as Christ also loved the church gave himself for her. Don't those words sound familiar? Of course, because those are the same words that Paul uses at the beginning of the chapter in to describe how to walk in love, the God kind of love. Husband, you should love your wife with a self sacrificing, self giving love that gives without expecting anything in return. You should love your wife enough to die for her..

Which brings us back over here to the pennies giving of ourselves . But let's be honest here men in this room, I know some of you were thinking it.... wouldn't it just be easier if we could just say hey honey, here's \$100 can you just take this and we can call it even!

No, no, no! Husband you're called to lay down your life and give your self in thousands of small ways each day to love her as Christ loved you.

So, the wife's position of submission is beautifully balanced with a husband's position of love. And the overarching purpose for both the husband and the wife in marriage is to do their part in illustrating the relationship between Jesus and the church through their relationship with one another.

God chose to set it up this way and man it is beautiful. But do you know what can destroy a marriage/squad from within... Selfishness in either member.

Are you and your spouse living right now as a team? Or are you in opposite corners of the foxhole? How can you succeed against the enemy when you're focused on fighting with each other?

You are on the same team. I can personally attest that the more my wife Alli and I die to ourselves, the better and sweeter our marriage becomes. Here's the great thing... if we as individuals correctly respond to the love and work of Jesus Christ in our life, walking in love, in light, in wisdom, and submission, AND THEN bring that way of life into our positions of marriage, we will be well on our way to fulfilling the will of God in our marriage.

We are all called into individual relationships with Jesus. **How's yours?** Who have you been imitating? Who's the hero in your life right now?

It's easy to talk to talk, how's your walk? Christian, If you've been living in lust, darkness, foolishness, selfishness and these things are starting to characterize your lifestyle there is something wrong.

A Christian may be in sin for a season, but as you know it's miserable and it can't last. Today is the day to repent and begin imitating Christ!

Or maybe your identity this morning is wrapped up in your desires and the world. But as you know by experience, that too is a miserable way to live. And the only future for sin is death and judgment.

But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you. won't you accept Him today.

Let's pray.