

Ephesians 5:1-7 "Walk In Love"

In this world there are *innovators* & there are *imitators*. People who *set* the trends & people who *follow* the trends. & In the world we often strive to be the *innovators*, people coming up w/the next catch phrase, the next fashion trend, the next viral video. **Something that sets us apart from the average individual. Something that says, "Look at me, I'm original, creative & innovative!"** However; when it comes to the life of the believer, it's not *innovation* the scriptures exhort us unto, but *imitation*.

Jesus, on the night of His betrayal gathered His disciples *around* Him & He began to minister *to* them by washing their feet. He'd spent the last 3 yrs or so living a life of holiness for them to observe & learn from, He'd taught them the scriptures, shown them humility, compassion, love & leadership. He'd sacrificed His own needs for the sake of others again & again & again, & now here He was on the eve of His betrayal.

So what does He do? Does He say, "Boys, I've got a rough night ahead of Me, something beyond anything any of you could possibly comprehend. So how about for the next couple of hours, you just let Me relax, make sure My cup stays full, there's bread on My plate & maybe you could just rub My shoulders, or encourage Me w/the word?" He doesn't do that. We read that Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come *from* God and was going *to* God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. & When it was all said & done He said, **"I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."** ¹

Listen, don't worry about innovation, focus on *imitation*. In Matt's Gospel Jesus said, **"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master."** ² Paul said, **"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."** ³ & Throughout the last ½ of the book of Ephesians we will continue to be exhorted unto godly living. The 1st 3 Ch's establishes doctrine, the last 3 focus on duty. What we believe translating into how we behave. It's from the inside out, not the outside in. We're not trying to clean up our act outwardly & hope that will somehow help us inwardly. We've been transformed *inwardly* (through the blood of J.C., His death & resurrection) & this (Ch's 4-6) is what that looks like outwardly; *out* of dead in sins, *into* alive to God in Christ.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Jn 13:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Mt 10:24-25]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Co 11:1]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 1

Family we can't go beyond this point w/out stopping to consider the exhortation, the imperative (command) that Paul has just placed upon us!

He says, "Therefore" (which is to say, "in light of what I just spoke to you about") & what did He just speak to us about? Vs 32 of Ch 4, that we (as the body of Christ) be *kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another* even as God in Christ has forgiven us...

So the topic at hand is forgiveness, & the exhortation is that we follow the example that God has established in our forgiveness toward *others*, w/the standard being His forgiveness toward *us* in Christ. As He's forgiven you, so you are to forgive others... (Now if you weren't here last week I'd highly recommend you secure or download a copy of that study & give it a listen).

Because the measure of God's forgiveness toward *us* is something we all do well to truly think *through*, be humbled & drawn near to Him *by*. He didn't forgive us because we deserved it, or took the initiative to seek it, He pursued us. *He* didn't do anything wrong, yet He took upon Himself the *guilt* for the sake of reconciliation (He paid the price of *our* violation/offense), & He not only *forgave* us, He made *family* of us. He forgave us *knowing* that we'd sin against Him again & again in the *same way!*

Now... Be imitators of God. Forgive one another. Listen, bitterness & animosity are areas by which the enemy looks to gain a foothold in our lives. & Just so you know, growing bitter or antagonistic in your heart toward someone else does little to no damage to *them*, but it will *destroy* you... You'll become *imprisoned* by your inability to forgive. Not to mention that having received such undeserved, unearned, unwarranted forgiveness ourselves from God, He doesn't take it lightly when we then in turn refuse to forgive someone else. (I encouraged you to read Matt 18:21-35 last week, let's look at it together today.) **Matt 18**

God, having forgiven us, expects that we will in like manner forgive others... Be imitators of God. Notice it doesn't say, "Be admirers of God" or "Be adorers of God" (though those things are important), this is a call to action. Be *imitators* of God... as dear children.

It's natural for a child to imitate his parents. For better, or sometimes for worse. I was reminded of that commercial back in the 80's where the dad comes in his son's room & confronts him w/a little box of drug paraphernalia & he starts grilling him over where he got it & who taught him how to do that stuff...

& The kid responds, “You alright! I learned it by watching you!” & The commentator responds, “Parents who use drugs, have children who use drugs.” It’s natural for children to imitate their parents. Even so the child of God ought to imitate God.

Vs 2

I love the fact (& don’t think it’s a coincidence) that the command to imitate God is sandwiched right between the exhortations to forgive one another & walk in love...

God the Father is set before us as our model of forgiveness, God the Son is set before us as the apex example of walking in love. Of course, God *is* love, so in imitating Him it stands to reason that we would then walk (or lead our lives) *in* love. & Notice it’s not calling our attention to a simple “feel good” kind of love, one of the key words in this Vs is the word “sacrifice”, the kind of love we’re to walk in is not *sentimental*, it’s *sacrificial*.

The apostle John tells us, “*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*”⁴ So the litmus test for walking in love is found in whether or not we will lay down our lives...

What does it mean to “lay down” our lives? Often times we can get caught up in the romantic notion of being in a situation where someone pulls out a gun & as they take aim, we go running in slow motion, diving into the air as someone is shouting “Noooooo” & we take a bullet for them, laying down our lives for them. Though that *may* happen, odds aren’t in your favor that it *will* happen. Generally, it’s *not* a bullet that God asks us to take, but it may be an offense...

It’s amazing how being offended can create what some might refer to as an “irreconcilable difference” between people. People leave churches over offenses, they give up on friendships or families over offenses (or hurt feelings). But what’s the appropriate way to handle an offense in the body of Christ? What did God do when we offended Him? When we transgressed against Him? When we violated Him? He took the penalty upon Himself & died for us so that rather than spend eternity in *separation from* Him, we might receive *reconciliation w/Him*. Offenses create separation, forgiveness brings reconciliation. But here’s the deal, there *is no* reconciliation apart from death...

Once there’s been an offense, a violation, a separation/breach in the relationship, until someone is willing to die (die to self) the separation will remain. What had to happen before we could be reconciled to God? Someone had to die, someone had to be willing to absorb the wrong (even though He wasn’t in the wrong).

⁴ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Jn 3:16]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now; what could possibly motivate someone to absorb the wrong (even if they were never in the wrong) in order to reconcile a relationship? It's in Vs 2, Love.

& That type of self-sacrificing, others-oriented love rises before God as a sweet-smelling aroma. It's well pleasing to Him when we look past the suffering or the sorrow to the sweetness of pleasing Him (that is, being *like* Him).

The old nature is *selfish*, builds walls & declares war. The new nature is *selfless*, it operates in love therefore it builds bridges & proclaims peace. Walking in love is something we decide upon daily. Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, (that is, be with Me, be like Me) *let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*"⁵ It's something we have to be intentional about, *daily*. & Know this, true love will always demand sacrifice, there's always a cost involved.

Sometimes the sacrifice is large, or it may be little by little along the way, but the principle remains, love will lay self down for the sake of others...

Vs 3-4

Interesting isn't it? Right after he speaks on the self-sacrificing characteristics of true love he contrasts that w/things that the world often equates w/love. "Fornication" "uncleanness", these things don't reflect love, they seek to gratify lust. The word "Fornication" is a very broad word, it's the word "Porneia" from which we get our word "pornography", it points to any & every kind of illicit sexual behavior. *It includes pre-marital, extra-marital, homosexual or bestial relations of any kind.* The word "uncleanness" serves to underscore the word "fornication" it's like a net that's cast under that word in order to catch anything that thinks it's found a loophole in the 1st word. Any kind of immoral behavior whatsoever...

He throws in the word "covetousness" because it serves as the root in fornication & uncleanness, it's desiring someone else (who is not your spouse) for your own selfish gratification. Love (we just discovered) *gives for* others, these things are all about *getting from* others.

Paul says, "These kinds of things shouldn't even be *named* among you (as is fitting for saints)". It's not fitting to even *talk* about them, much less participate *in* them. & Ladies & gentlemen, Paul isn't saying "avoid these things so you can *be* a saint." He's saying, "Now that *you are* a saint, live in a manner fitting *for* a saint." Be who you are in Christ.

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Lk 9:23]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He's not so much drawing attention to filthiness as he is trying to demonstrate what a life looks like that's focused on holiness. These things aren't even on the radar of holiness, they're not reflective of Christ in you.

When a true believer falls into one of these sins... It brings an agony of the soul. He's not saying a believer will never stumble (David stumbled). But do you remember what he said about it? He said, *"When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer."*⁶ David was saying, "I was drying up & decaying on the inside, my sin was destroying my soul & it was like I was dying."

That's how it feels when you fall into sin as a child of God. & I'm going to tell that if you can engage in these kinds of things & it doesn't bother you... you're not a child of God. Make your calling & election sure! The Holy Spirit will be faithful to convict you, go to God, confess your sin & be reconciled to Christ...

Vs 3 points to sin w/in the context of sex (again outside of marriage, the marriage bed is undefiled, sexual union between a man & a wife is ordained of God, it creates a harmony/unity/oneness between them). But Vs 3 highlights sin w/in the context of sex, Vs 4 points to sin w/in the context of speech.

It's easy to connect the dots, people w/base appetites sexually typically cultivate a base kind of speech, base kind of humor & those who commit sexual sin often enjoy jesting about it... Someone has said that 2 indications of a person's character are what makes him laugh & what makes him weep.

Here, Paul talks about "filthiness" (the idea is obscene speech or behavior). He speaks of "foolish talking", think of the babblings of a drunk, just being stupid, nothing profitable in it. "Coarse jesting" speaks being "able to turn easily". It's being quick witted. Now, wit can be a tremendous blessing. But when it's attached to a filthy mind or base motive it become a curse. This is the person who's able to take anything you say & spin it into something filthy or inappropriate. Coarse jesting pollutes the conversation.

& Again, a sense of humor is a gift from God. It can help us to decompress, or sometimes kind of "reset" when we've been rocked... It can lift our spirit & give us joy. However, what's in view here is that which tears someone down or plants inappropriate seeds in the hearts/minds of those around us. That's not fitting, it runs contrary to who we are in Christ, it's out of place in our lives.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 32:3-4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What is fitting, is the giving of thanks. An attitude of gratitude... Last week, we picked up on the pattern that we're to put away *lying* because that hurts others & we're to be about helping others. We're to keep our *anger* in check & not give the devil a foothold in our lives through it because that hurts others & we're to be about helping others. *We're not to steal because that hurts others, we're work hard & give, which helps others. We're to use our speech in a way that helps (edifies others) not hurts others.* & Here we note the same. Fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness & foolish talking doesn't help anyone, however an attitude of thanksgiving & appreciation... does.

Vs 5

"Wait, are you saying that if I've fallen into one of these categories I can't go to heaven?" No, repent of your sin, find forgiveness in Christ. What Paul is saying is that if these kinds of things define you, you partake & participate in them w/out a heart of repentance. *They're the practiced pattern of your life, then your cannot & will not go to heaven... You have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. You've heard me say it before, the grace of God that saves your soul, will change your life (from the inside out). If Christ is alive in you then His life will shine through you & His life is characterized not by these things, but in true righteousness & holiness...*

Notice as well that Paul identifies covetousness as idolatry. Most people perceive idolatry as bowing down to some little trinket. But to long for anything or anyone above God in our lives is to idolize it, that thing or that person becomes our god. They take 1st place in our heart... Look at Vs 6.

Vs 6-7

Paul is not pulling punches today! He's saying, "Hey, don't let anyone minimize or justify those things in your life like, it's not that big of a deal, it's a big deal!" These are the things that will invoke the wrath of God upon a Christ rejecting world! (Walking in the lust of man rather than the love of God).

Now I could stand here & tell you that it's ok, you're ok, we're all ok & it really doesn't matter, these are just human flaws, God understands & we'll all be better when we're in heaven one day. So go ahead & just live w/who you want, sleep w/who you want, same gender, opposite gender, none of that really matters... *But that would be to deceive you, those words are empty, there's no substance to them, they're leading you blindly down the pathway toward destruction. The truth of the matter is that lives & lifestyles like these mentioned will bring the wrath of God upon the sons (people) of disobedience...*

“Well that don’t sound too loving!” Really? Which is truly loving, to stand silently on the shore while your friend is in a boat floating down river headed for Niagara Falls? Or to warn them of what’s up ahead should they choose not to turn around? How about throwing them a life line? Doing whatever you can to reel them into shore?

In Jeremiah’s day there were prophets who were prophesying falsely, telling people not what they needed to hear but what they wanted to hear. & God said, *“The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?”*⁷ Telling people what they want to hear won’t help them in the end. Thank God for people who are willing to tell you what you *need* to hear... Who will speak the truth, in love.

Judgment *is* coming. God will deal w/those who’ve chosen to reject J.C. & walk after their own ways... Hell is a real place. But grace is available.

It’s not those who are well who have need of a physician, but those who are sick. Jesus didn’t come to call the righteous, but the sinner to repentance. & The truth is, that’s every one of us. We’ve all sinned & fall short of the glory of God. But as we read in Vs 2, Christ has loved us, & He’s given Himself for us, an offering & a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling aroma. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you’ll be saved.

Believer, don’t lapse back into the lusts of the flesh, don’t be “partakers” w/them (the sons of disobedience) in these things. But rather be imitators of God & walk in love. Don’t be overcome by evil; but overcome evil with good & God will be glorified in your life.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your forgiveness toward us, may we forgive others even as You have forgiven us in Christ. & Jesus we thank You for Your selfless love, Your willingness to lay down Your life for us, may we walk in love & lay down our lives for one another. May we turn from sin in our lives & seek after You w/a true heart. Be glorified in us...

God loves you, Christ died for you & His grace is available *to* you. You’re not going to be able to get your act together & then God will save you. He saves you & then *He* cleans you up, from the inside out. Turn from your sin, trust in J.C. who’s loved you & given Himself for you & He’ll give you new life today.

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Je 5:31] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.