



Imitators of God

Heading into Ephesians chapter 5, we find ourselves in the middle of a lengthy discourse from the Apostle Paul on the Christian's obligation to live rightly. In fact, this theme continues through the end of his epistle, so we should prepare ourselves for quite a bit more godly advice from Paul as we continue unpacking this beautiful letter.

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. [Eph 5:1-2](#)

Besides one instance in the book of Hebrews, Paul is the only New Testament writer to use "imitate" (Greek: [mimētēs](#), which also can be understood as "mimic"), and he always used it in relation to copying another's godly behavior and lifestyle. For example, he says in [1 Cor 11:11](#), "***be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.***" And in [1 Thes 1:6-7](#), "***you also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.***"

Paul's encouragement to believers here is to act like him in imitating Christ. But how do we do this? Thankfully he answers this immediately: ***and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us.*** It doesn't get any more basic than this. One of the easiest ways we can imitate God is to imitate His Son – by walking in love toward God and others.

Unlike English, in Greek there are at least six different words to describe love and they cover a gamut of emotion and action. In our verse today, Paul uses the familiar word [agapaō](#), which is a deep-felt, brotherly, affectionate love. Unsurprisingly, this is the same word Jesus used when He told us to love our neighbors as ourselves ([Matt 19:19](#)), to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul ([Mark 12:30](#)), and of the Father's love for us when He gave His only son for us ([John 3:16](#)). It is a sacrificial, selfless love, and one that is not tied to emotion or personal gain. This is the type of love that characterizes every corner of a strong Christian's life, and therefore can be an earthly example worthy of imitating in our quest to imitate God Himself.

When we walk in this [agapaō](#) love, we also imitate ***an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*** Paul's Jewish readers would have immediately connected this statement to the Old Testament commands regarding offerings and sacrifices made on



the altar, which were being tied directly to Christ as both a high priest and final propitiation for a believer's sin. (See [Exodus 29](#), [Leviticus 1](#), and [Numbers 28 & 29](#) for examples.) While here Paul is speaking specifically of Christ's atoning sacrifice, it should still be our aim and goal to walk in such a way that our lives are a fragrant aroma to the Lord.

In fact, Paul confirms that when we walk in love and the knowledge of Christ "***we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life,***" ([2 Cor 2:15-16](#)).

The first part of that verse really stood out to me... "***For we are a fragrance of Christ to God***". Just picture that... our imitation of Christ's agapaō love is a familiar and pleasant scent that wafts up to the Father's throne, a perfume that reminds Him of His Son's ultimate obedience and sacrifice to save the lost.

As we consider this truth today, let's ask the Lord to help us better imitate His deep and lasting love. In each situation we encounter, may we take it as an opportunity to reflect Christ to our family, friends, and neighbors. And may our heartfelt, selfless, humble imitation of this type of love be a pleasant and sweet aroma that reaches the Father's throne in heaven.

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