

Imitators of God Ephesians 5:1-2

Introduction

NJFK—

¹ 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.

1. Imitate your heavenly Father (1).
2. Sacrificially love as did your Savior-King (2).

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Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

We imitate God's character not merely because as humans we are made in His image, but also because we are born again by the Spirit of God and indwelt by Him. Our new nature is to love others the way God loves us. We are beloved of God. And we are children of God. It is natural for children to imitate their fathers, and in their dna is the bent to do so.

Paul states this as a command, though, calling us to imitate God intentionally, expressing our born again identity instead of our original state of flesh-driven behavior,

living in a way that shows grateful love for the One who loved us first.

Instead of taking our cues just from how others treat us, which can be all over the map, we seek to love others the way God has loved us.

It is the power of God's life in us and God's love for us that enables obedience to the commands that precede and follow these verses.

Preceding verses: We build others up with our gracious, fitting words that reflect God's heart toward us, rather than tearing people down with hateful speech. We show tenderhearted kindness toward one another with a forgiven heart toward them because we have experienced God's forgiveness in Christ.

Following verses: We show our love for others not by taking advantage of them to feed our appetites but by sacrificing ourselves for their benefit. Sexual purity and propriety show love for others. Affirming sexual sin reveals a lack of love for God and for human beings, because sexual sin is self-destructive. It is not loving to affirm what destroys people. We want to build them up. We don't want to seduce them or encourage them toward impurity, but rather to help them toward purity and health.

From the Garden of Eden onward Satan's lie is that pursuing our appetites in violation of God's commands is the path to fulfillment. The serpent casts God as selfish and cruel to deny what we desire. But it is the devil who is a liar and murderer bent on dishonoring God and destroying us.

People in the world should be able to learn what God is like by observing His children. How often they get a false view of God because those who claim to be His children fail to imitate His character.

2. Sacrificially love as did your Savior-King (2).

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Jesus Christ always did what pleased His Father. He and His Father were one. As God the Son He was the exact representation of God. He made God visible to us. If we would imitate God, we need to look at Jesus Christ.

Walk in love—see that love surrounds and pervades all your normal, walkabout living

As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us—love-driven sacrifice of Himself on the cross (compassionate motivation) for sinners

who deserved judgment. *His love for us sinners did not condone our sin, but drove Him to die for our sin to free us from its guilt and its power.*

To this day Christ intercedes for us at the right hand of God as our great High Priest. He is touched with sympathetic feeling for us, having been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4).

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God—pleasing to God (fragrant), offered to God—as the Judge to be propitiated (saving mission)

The OT describes the sacrifices as a sweet smell, a fragrant aroma to God. Speaks of the pleasure of God at a sacrifice that is acceptable to Him.

Christ's sacrifice not only atoned for us, but also pleased God. That's why it worked redemption for us.

This is the way a Christian husband is to love his wife, giving himself up for her, nourishing and cherishing her, causing her to flourish in every way (Ephesians 5).

It pleases God for us to sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others. It shows them love, and it brings Him pleasure.

Human beings in general understand this concept. We admire and praise those who risk their own lives to rescue others. When we imitate the sacrificial love of Christ our doing so resonates with the human heart as well as with the heart of God.

Conclusion

1. Imitate your heavenly Father (1).
2. Sacrificially love as did your Savior-King (2).

What are some ways you can live this way this week?