

Be Imitators of God pt.2

Ephesians 5:3-21

During our last session we talked about being an imitator of God and what that looks like. We noted that imitating God looks like a little child who imitates their parents. They try to do everything the same what their parents do and they want to grow up to be like their parents. In order to imitate God in this manner we must love and sacrifice. That is we are to love everyone, even our enemies! And we also must sacrifice our own desires in order to present ourself to God (Romans 12:1-2).

Today we are going to continue this idea of being an imitator of God by looking at specific areas that Paul warns the church in Ephesus to abandon and abstain from. Paul makes two arguments in Ephesians 5:3-12, the first argument is that as imitators of God we must not partner with the children of disobedience. Secondly, as imitators of God we must walk in the light. We are going to look at how both of these ideas (one negative and one positive) are like the two different sides of a coin. Yes, each side is unique but at the end of the day it's the same coin!

Do not Partner with the Children of Disobedience (5:3-7)

The command come in verse 7 where Paul uses the exact same phrase from Ephesians 2:2, "the sons (children) of disobedience." Notice the "therefore" at the beginning of verse 7. If we are to not partner with the children of disobedience we need to see why. We find the answer by looking back at the verses leading up to verse 7. Paul lays out what it looks like to be apart of the children of disobedience starting in verse 3. Paul is giving us four characteristics of those who are the children of disobedience.

- A. **Sexual Immorality:** the Greek word *PORNeia* is used throughout the Bible to reference sexual immorality. When we think about this, understand that sexual immorality is any more of sexual activity outside of the marital covenant. Hebrews 13:4 reads, "*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be by undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral (porneia) and adulterous.*"
- B. **Impurity:** here we find the idea of just being dirty or unclean. This can be related to being ceremonial unclean but in a broader sense, it simply means to be morally corrupt. This is the individual that has no morals, no standards. They are willing to do anything, even knowing that it is wrong, they will chose to do it anyway because they have no moral compass, no standards, nothing is off limits to them.
- C. **Covetousness:** is not a word that we use often in our daily conversations, however, the idea of covetousness is very familiar to us. To covet is to desire material possessions, we tend to use the word greed or jealousy when talking about covetousness. Those who covet have a strong desire for material possessions and are willing to compromise their morality to obtain their obsession. In 1 Timothy 6:10 Paul writes, "*For the LOVE of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this CRAVING that some have wandered away form the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*"

- D. **Bad Language:** in verse 4 Paul emphasis the need for us to watch our mouths, he says it in three different ways: filthy talk, foolish talk, and crude joking. In his teaching to the church at Jerusalem, James set out a whole section to discuss the dangers of our speech and the need to control it. James 3:1-12 is dedicated to this issue. In James 3:8 he writes, “*but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*”

Be a Child of the Light (5:8-21)

Next, Paul turns the coin over to speak on being a child of the light, notice the difference between children of the light and children of disobedience. As Paul transitions from darkness to light, he reminds us (once again calling back to chapter 2) that we once were darkness, not IN darkness, but that we WERE darkness. But now, he says we ARE light in the Lord. One of the most important words in the Greek is the verb *eimi* (pronounce *I-me*) which is used more the 2,400 times. The word means *to be*, or *exist as*, it's the verb of being. Here in verse 8, Paul uses this verb to say you once existed as darkness but now you exist as light because you are in the Lord who saved you by His grace! Man this is awesome news!!! So what does it look like to be a child of the light, Paul focus in on four aspects.

- A. **Walk:** if we now exist as light in the Lord, our first command is to WALK! He qualifies this walk in verse 9 and 15. In verse 9 he says that those who walk in light will produce fruit and that fruit will be good, right, and true. Then in verse 15 he states we are to be careful and make sure we are walking in wisdom. Someone once said “*knowledge is what you know but wisdom is what you show.*” We all have a walk, the idea of walk is simply our life, how we go about each day. How we relate to others in person and on social media and in our families. This walk is to be done in wisdom, producing fruits of goodness and truth.
- B. **Discern:** the idea of discernment is that we would test all things to determine if this is the Lord's will. We find this in verse 10 and verse 17. In verse 10 Paul says we can ask the question does this please God to help determine the answer of is this the will of the Lord (verse 15). We see this idea of testing all that is around us throughout scripture. Jesus brings testing up in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:15-20 when he tells us that we are to be aware of false prophets. He then tell us that we can discern false prophets by testing their fruit. In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (5:21) it states, “*but test everything; hold fast what is good.*”
- C. **Expose:** in verses 11-14 Paul says the children of the light are to expose the darkness. The number one job of any light is to expose the darkness. Every time we use a flashlight or turn the lights on when entering a room, we are exposing the darkness so that we can see what was hidden. Here, Paul has the same idea for the Christ-follower. By discerning the will of the Lord and walking (living) a life characterized by goodness, truth, and righteousness we will expose darkness, we will expose the evil around us. Often times when we think about darkness we imagine murderers and thieves and just really bad people. But another way we expose the darkness is on simple social mantras that seem ok, for instance the idea of “*Follow your hear!*” It sounds so nice and innocent but by using discernment we recognize that this is a dangerous philosophy and we can expose as so.
- D. **Spirit Filled:** lastly, Paul wraps up the call to be Children of the Light by putting the proverbial cherry on top as he commands us to be filled with the Spirit of God. Ultimately, if we are going to be a child of the Light it starts with the Spirit of God, it's powered by the

Spirit of God, and it's completed by the Spirit of God. We are completely dependent on the Spirit to strengthen us and guide us. One aspect of salvation is that we are given the Spirit at salvation. Paul states this in Ephesians 1:13-14, "*In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.*" Once again we see both sides of the coin as Paul says you can fill up on alcohol but that will lead to debauchery (senseless, reckless living) but you need to fill up on the Spirit of God and walk in the light.

Questions for Self Examination

So as we wrap up Ephesians 5:3-21, I want to encourage you to examine yourself. When we read God's word, whether in small groups, by ourself, or in corporate worship, we need to always take time and examine ourselves. See how we are stacking up according to the Bible and what can we do better. This is not a time to degrade ourselves, but it may be a time for repentance as we look to model our lives after the Christ that we follow.

1. How is my walk? Are others blessed by me or am I a bad influence? Am I trying to walk like Jesus or am I doing my own thing? What makes it so hard to follow Jesus?
2. Am I able to discern the things of God? Am I able to discern the things of the World? Do I think about what is God's will before I make decisions? What makes it hard for me to discern God's will for my life?
3. Am I a shining light? In my home? In my community? In my activities? Does my behavior expose darkness/sin around me or am I complacent in the darkness/sin around me? How can I be a light to those in darkness? How can I expose sin and still love people?
4. Do I make a conscious effort to be filled with the Spirit? Can I recognize the filling of the Spirit? How is my walk affected when I am full of the Spirit? How is my walk affected when I am low on the Spirit? What steps do I need to take in order to be more open to the filling of the Holy Spirit in my life?