

Eph 5:1-2 Walk in Love

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and 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.

Therefore, become imitators of God

This word translated as “imitators” or “followers” in English Bibles is *mimētai* in the Greek, the root of our word *mimic*. When Paul tells us to be imitators of God, he’s saying follow God’s example. Beloved children imitate the behaviors and actions of their parents. To properly imitate God, we must first be His children. John 1:12-13 **“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”** (John 1:12–13). If we receive Christ and believe in His name, we become God’s beloved children.

As beloved children

Imitation is an important part of childhood play as they imitate what they see in their parents. They are copying us out of admiration for who we are. We are serving as their role-model. As their father in Christ, He reminds the Corinthian Church in 1 Cor 4:15-17 saying **15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you, be imitators of me. 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.** Paul’s giving them a faithful example as their Father in Christ of one to follow as an example as he follows Christ. He is their model in living out the Christian life. So, why does Paul tell people to be followers or imitators of him as he follows God, instead of just saying be imitators or followers of God? Because, although we are in awe of God, and His perfect character, His Grace, His Love, His Long-Suffering with us, His Kindness, His Provision for us, it’s still difficult to wrap our heads around applying this to our lives concretely, since we don’t actually see God doing this in front of us, with our eyes every day. We either read of it in the Bible, or see the effects of His work in our lives, as He works behind the scenes. Most of the time, God uses people to work through, to show His love and grace through, and to minister. And these people give us a concrete example to follow. A role-model has to be seen in order to be imitated. Jesus did this for the original disciples, giving them His Life as the example. This is the point of 1 John 1-3 **What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was revealed, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was revealed to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.** So, both John and Paul are saying, “we’ve personally seen the example of Jesus, and have been taught to walk worthy—follow our example. The Christian life must be learned, for it does NOT come naturally! And the easiest way is to imitate Christians around us who are living by faith, walking by the Spirit. Paul is a concrete example of continual zeal for God, and effort in cooperating with the Holy Spirit to fulfill God’s plan for his life. He is a sinner who was forgiven much, and who therefore loves much is an example to all of us who have sinned much! It is through following the example of Jesus, and of those saints that we read about, as well as those we see around us diligently imitating, following, serving God that we are inspired to get about doing the work that God has for us to do in our lives.

Although the imitation of God is not directly spoken about in the Old Testament, the call to imitate God is often expressed through the call to holiness. Many men and women in the Old Testament lived godly and righteously, but Job distinguished himself “perfect and upright” (Job 1:1). The word perfect in the Hebrew gives the idea of a person being complete and entire, not lacking any necessary ingredient while upright has the connotation of one’s being just and righteous. The reason for the separating of Abraham from his fathers household was so that he would leave idol-worship, and learn to live a holy

life. The reason to separate Israel from the other nations is so that they would lead holy, sanctified lives that would please God well and be found faultless in his eyes. Leviticus 19:2 commands, **"Speak to the entire congregation of the Israelites and tell them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'"** This call to holiness is a reflection of God's character and serves as a foundational principle for ethical living. So, from the Old Testament, and the revelation of the Holy Spirit, Paul hears God saying—be holy, be like Me, my Beloved Children!

and walk in love—How are we supposed to be like God as His beloved children? The first thing that Paul says is "walk in love"—it's God's priority! We must walk worthy of the call, walk in love. Eph 4:1-3 **Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** Since we are renewed, Born Again to be like Christ, we must rid ourselves of our old way of life, these old habits, as well as hurts and hangups, through allowing God to apply the power of the Holy Spirit to our lives, and transform us into Christians—little Christs, those who are made in His Image. Adopted children of God, because of what He has done for us. Paul is urging us to allow the Holy Spirit to change us from within, and for this to work itself outward, so that we are transformed to look more and more like Jesus. As we get to know Jesus more and more, we want to obey, and conform our lives to His, living out God's will for our lives. As knowledge of Jesus increases, so does our willingness to walk as Jesus walked, because He loves us, He commanded us, and He wants what's best for us. Paul says "make it your habit" to walk in love by serving one another, just as Jesus did, loving even those who don't love us, even as Jesus did.

Walk in Love. Paul reminds us that we have already been forgiven so much more than we can ever forgive of others, that there's no comparison—this kind, forgiving character of God is what we should imitate. We are saved because of God's great love Eph 2:4 **4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),...** That creates a debt that we owe. Rom 13:8 **Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for the one who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law.** From the cross, Jesus prayed for His murderers: **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"** (Luke 23:34). We reflect Jesus when we forgive the ones who wronged us. For believers being like Jesus is the ultimate goal. Jesus is our example of how to live our lives, how we should treat each other, and how to become "become imitators of God." Then people see Jesus in us most clearly, as we walk in love, even toward those who don't love us.

Agape (ἀγάπη) is the word that is used for love here. This is the self-sacrificing kind of love that we should have for all people, even for our enemies. It is a selfless kind of love that we have as Christians, because Christ has given us this kind of love." **But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you;"** (Matthew 5:44). This agape love is a free choice toward someone to show them affection, whether they deserve it or not. Agape has the good of the person loved in mind. Agape is a love given despite the lack of merit in the person loved, and it is a love that seeks to give. Agape is self-sacrificial love. A correct concept of agape love is based on God's love in that he extends to the undeserving and unloving sinner and the wayward believer, so that they will change their ways. This Love is seeking the highest good in the one loved. Ultimately, for us, as His Children, the highest good is the will of God for us. So, the love that we are supposed to walking out in our lives is agape love toward God: Romans 12:1 **Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.** And, we are to have this self-sacrificing love toward other believers: John 13:34-5 **4 I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**