

Ephesians 5:1-20

We are to be imitators of God, so when people see us they see Christ.

We should show that we are different than those living in the darkness.

We imitate God, praise what God has done and live a life that's different to prove that you are different.

I enjoy wrestling with the boys. Annie tells me to stop because then when I'm gone the boys will do it to each other. But I love it! So I keep doing it. This morning I am at home hanging with the kids while my wife is at church doing a Bible Study. All of a sudden Collin picks up Matthan and body slams him into the couch and I freak out, I'm like oh my gosh, are you ok. I see his face, ready to burst into tears when he starts cracking up. He has this little cackle he does that is his laugh. I was like phew, Annie would have killed me. But so many times my kids want to be like me even when I don't realize it. Annie and I have to watch what we say all the time. Last week I had just watched Nacho Libre and I love the line when Jack Black goes "Get that corn out of my face" and so I was walking around the house one day when Eden was "cooking" in her room and yelled "Get that corn out of my face." I started cracking up but it made me realize that they are imitating everything we say and do. We are always being watched.

Now, I always feel like I am being watched, my wife has made me paranoid around my kids Too many times we focus on the fact that we are being watched by people who are not Christians to see how we act.

But doesn't that bog us down? I mean I have to act this way or I will ruin it for all of humanity. Then we focus on our actions to make sure that we are being a Christian that honors God. We go to class or work and have this burden that we have to be perfect to those around us. We can't get upset, we can't mess up, and we can't fail! But yet, we are human and the Bible constantly talks about how we will fail, but that's what Christ died for. So why do we constantly feel like we have to achieve this perfection in the eyes of people who don't even know what perfection is!? Sometimes we act inappropriately; sometimes we mess up without even realizing it. We are human we are going to fail. However, is that an excuse for sin? Paul continues in Ephesians 5 what was said in **Ephesians 4:20-24** the new nature in Christ. When we decide to give our lives to Christ we become new creations, this is where the term born again comes from. We are now fully God's and not ourselves anymore, which is great. We have some amazing power that can only come from God. We are able to lean on Him in our struggles when we do mess up. We have the power of praying and asking for help from Him.

The believers in Ephesus lived in a city that was full of spiritual darkness, immorality, ungodliness and decadence. This is what almost all of the believers had been saved out of and because of their background they constantly had to be reminded what it means to live in the light. Think of someone coming out of alcoholism, he/she has to constantly remind themselves to not drink. Move their minds to something else so they won't fall again.

Ephesians 4:20-24 (NLT), 5:1-20 (NIV)

v. 1 – Jesus was our example of God. He imitated God (because He was God) in everything He did so that we would know how to be a Christian. John 13:15 – "I have given you an example, Do as I have done to you."

v. 4 – Foolish Talk – Two Greek words: moros and legos, comes from moron = dull or stupid, legos = to speak – intended to describe the conversation of someone intellectually deficient. What comes out of your mouth is a reflection of what is in your heart. Christ said that everything from your mouth comes from your heart in **Matthew 15:18-19**.

V. 9 – Fruit of light (fruit of the Spirit)

v.11 – Talking about Christians (in your own life and the church)

v.12 – Sometimes talking about those sins can be a stumbling block to someone else.

v.15-20 Paul builds on each statement up to verse 20.

Because our Father, God, is holy, we are to be holy. Kind, we are to be kind, forgiving, we are to be forgiving, God humbled Himself to come as Christ and die for us, we are to humble ourselves. Because God is love we are to walk in love and express that same love.

This is really hard for us to do, that's why we require a new nature because of our selfish desires there is no way for us to control this. When you get your new nature with the power of the Holy Spirit, you are able to change your actions to reflect that of God because it is Him working in you.

Your focus should be that of imitating God, you need to live a life that is different that proves you are different. Not acting the right way around people but being on edge or trying to not “mess up.” When we follow what Paul says and put the focus back on Christ by reading His word, seeking the Lord in prayer and listening, we are able to imitate God. Yes, it's basic but everything boils down to hearing from God and acting like Him right?

We have been called out of darkness, this life that resembled immorality, fornication, selfishness, judgmental attitudes and ungodliness. If you are a follower of Christ and have given your life over to Him, you can no longer live in darkness; you are living in the light. However, when you keep practicing a sin, you are still living in darkness. Christ's Light is what pierces through that darkness and exposes any secret sins in your life. Only He can clean you up, make you whole again in God's eyes. But, you have to be willing to live in the light and give up this sin, confess it and repent.

We learn best by imitating a model, this is the idea of internships, once the content has been mastered before a student becomes a practitioner they must intern under a master (Illustration: Electrician, Physician). Who are some of the mentors that you follow as a parent, for marriage, for vocation, for hobbies, etc.?

Everyone has models that they follow, whether known or not. These models give us a great advantage if they are Christ-like or a disadvantage if they were not. Help your group identify both positive and negative models, but not to blame them, but rather to understand how we pick up new habits.

How can we focus on the things we are grateful for rather than on the things we want to change in our own Small Group discussions?

Psalm 1:1-3

What is the process of walking away from God's leadership in Psalm 1:1?

What is the contrast of the one who follows God in Psalm 1:2-3?

What is the difference of climbing into bed with the disobedient and living in the world to reach the world?

Vern closed with a strong emphasis on the importance of reading the Bible, which is the revelation of God's will for every Christ follower. This will keep us from creating rules that will isolate us from the world God called us to influence, while keeping us moving toward Christ likeness.

What about habitual sin?

The believers in Ephesus lived in a city that was full of spiritual darkness, immorality, ungodliness and decadence. This is what almost all of the believers had been saved out of and because of their background they constantly had to be reminded what it means to live in the light. Think of someone coming out of alcoholism, he/she has to constantly remind themselves to not drink. Move their minds to something else so they won't fall again.

What does it mean to be an imitator of God?

Gal 5:16-26 – fruits of the Spirit – Which of these sins do you struggle with? How can the Fruits of the Spirit be manifested in our lives?

What are some specific ways you can imitate your heavenly father in your relationships?

Do you tend to tolerate evil and look the other way, or do you confront it gently and in love when you see it in another believer who you are close to? Why?

What are some of these sins that you are committing that you need prayer for?