

Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, and the background is a bright blue sky with some clouds. The text is overlaid on the center of the Bible.

Imitating the Father

Walk in Love

Scripture text: Ephesians 5

IMITATING OUR FATHER

Ephesians 5:1–17

The word followers in Ephesians 5:1 is the word mimics, so that the verse can be translated: “Be ye imitators of God as beloved children.”

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; [KJV]

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore ***be imitators of God***, as beloved children. [ESV]

This sets the theme for the section. Paul is simply arguing that **children are like their parents**, a fact that can be **both encouraging and embarrassing to those of us who have children**.

Have you ever seen a child sitting in the front seat of an automobile, trying to drive like his father! Or walking behind him, pretending to mow the lawn? Or, sad to say, imitating Dad smoking a cigarette or taking a drink of alcohol? Children probably **learn more by watching and imitating than any other way**.

If we are the children of God, **then we ought to imitate our Father**.

This is the basis for the three admonitions in this section.

God is love (1 John 4:8); therefore, **“walk in love”** (Eph. 5:1–2).

God is light (1 John 1:5); therefore, **walk as children of light** (Eph. 5:3–14).

God is truth (1 John 5:6); therefore, **walk in wisdom** (Eph. 5:15–17).

Of course, each of these “walks” is a part of Paul’s exhortation to **“walk in purity.”**

Walk in Love (Eph. 5:1–2)

This admonition ties in with the last two verses of the previous chapter where Paul has warned us against bitterness and anger. **It is tragic when these attitudes show up in the family of God.** As a pastor, I have witnessed malice and bitterness in the lives of people as I have conducted funerals and even weddings. You would think that sharing the sorrow of losing a loved one, or sharing a joy of a marriage, would enable people to forgive past wrongs and try to get along with each other. But such is not the case. **It takes a real love in the heart, for “charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins”** (1 Peter 4:8).

Paul gave several reasons why the Christian ought to walk in love.

He is God's child. Having been born again through faith in Christ, he is therefore one of the “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4); and since “God is love” **it is logical that God's children will walk in love.**

When Paul encouraged his readers to “walk in love,” he was not asking them to do something that was foreign to the Christian life; for **we have received a new nature that wants to express itself in love.**

The old nature is basically selfish, and for this reason builds walls and declares war. But the new nature is loving, and therefore builds bridges and proclaims peace.

He is God's beloved child. "Be ye imitators of God as beloved children." Imagine, God speaks of us the same way He spoke of Jesus Christ: **"This is My beloved Son"** (Matt. 3:17). In fact, the Father loves us as He loves His Son (John 17:23). We are born into a loving relationship with the Father **that ought to result in our showing love to Him by the way we live.**

What more could the Father do to express His love to us? Is it asking too much for us to “**walk in love**” to please Him?

He was purchased with a great price. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). But He laid down His life for His enemies (Rom. 5:10). Our love for Him is our response to His love for us. Paul compares Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to the Old Testament “sweet-savor” sacrifices that were presented at the altar of the temple (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; 2:9).

The idea behind “sweet-savor” is simply that the **sacrifice is well-pleasing to God.**

This does not suggest that God is pleased that sin demands death, and that His Son had to die to save lost sinners. Rather, it indicates that the death of Christ **satisfies the holy law of God and therefore is acceptable and pleasing to the Father.**

The sweet-savor offerings are described in Leviticus 1–3; the **burnt offering**, the **meal offering**, and the **peace offering.**

The burnt offering **pictures Christ's complete devotion to God;**

the meal offering, **His perfection of character;**

and the peace offering, **His making peace between sinners and God.**

Since the sin offering and the trespass offering (Lev. 4–5) picture Christ taking the place of the sinner, they are not considered “sweet-savor” offerings.

Certainly nothing is beautiful about sin!

Paul begins with “**walk in love**” because love is the fundamental factor in the Christian life.

If we walk in love, we will not disobey God or injure men because as stated in ...

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for **the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.**

Romans 5:5 and hope does not put us to shame, because **God's love has been poured into our hearts** through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Walk As Children of Light (Eph. 5:3–14)

Since “God is light” and we are imitating our Father, **then we should walk in the light and have nothing to do with the darkness of sin.** Paul gives three descriptions of believers that prove his point.

We are saints (vv. 3–4). That is, we are “**set-apart ones**” and no longer belong to the world of darkness around us. We have been “**called out of darkness into His marvelous light**” (1 Peter 2:9).

It is beneath the dignity of a saint to indulge in the sins that belong to the world of darkness, some of which Paul names here.

He warns us against the sexual sins (fornication, uncleanness) which were so prevalent in that day—and are prevalent today. Sad to say, these sins have invaded the homes of Christians and brought grief to local churches too.

“Covetousness” may seem out of place next to fornication, but the two sins are but different expressions of the same basic weakness of fallen nature—**uncontrolled appetite**.

The fornicator and the covetous person each desire to satisfy the appetite **by taking what does not belong to them**.

“The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16) would describe these two sins. “Let there not be even a hint of these sins!” said Paul.

In Ephesians 5:4 he **warned against sins of the tongue**, which, of course, **are really sins of the heart**.

It is not difficult to see the relationship between the sins named in Ephesians 5:3 and those in Ephesians 5:4. People who have base appetites usually cultivate a base kind of speech and humor, and often people who want to commit sexual sins, or have committed them, **enjoy jesting about them**.

Two indications of a person's character are what makes him laugh and what makes him weep.

The saint of God sees nothing humorous in obscene language or jests. “Foolish talking” does not mean innocent humor but rather senseless conversation that cheapens the man and **does not edify or minister grace to the hearers** (Eph. 4:29).

Paul is not condemning small talk because much conversation falls into that classification. **He is condemning foolish talk that accomplishes no good purpose.**

Jesting is a translation of a word that means “able to turn easily.” This suggests a certain kind of conversationalist who can turn any statement into a coarse jest.

The gift of wit is a blessing, but when it is attached to a filthy mind or a base motive, it becomes a curse.

There are quick-witted people **who can pollute any conversation with jests** that are always inconvenient (**out of place**). How much better it is for us **to be quick to give thanks!**

This is certainly the best way to give glory to God and **keep the conversation pure.**

A Christian woman attended an anniversary dinner in honor of a friend, not knowing that there would be a program of low comedy following the meal. The so-called comedian **tried to entertain the crowd with coarse humor that degraded everything that the Christian guest held to be sacred and honorable.** At one point in the program, the comedian's throat became dry. "Please bring me a glass of water," he called to a waiter.

At that point the Christian woman added, "**And bring a toothbrush and a bar of soap with it!**" To be sure, soap in the mouth will never cleanse the conversation, but she made her point.

Christians who have God's Word in their hearts (Col. 3:16) will always **season their speech with salt** (Col. 4:6); **for grace in the heart means grace on the lips.**

We are kings (vv. 5–6). When we trusted Christ, we entered into the kingdom of God (John 3:3); but we are also awaiting the full revelation of His kingdom when He returns (2 Tim. 4:1).

Paul makes it clear that people who deliberately and persistently live in sin will not share in God's kingdom.

“They which practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21, literal translation).

“**Whoremonger**” is a translation of the Greek word pornos, from which we get our word pornography, and it means “one who practices fornication—illicit sex.” The morally unclean and the covetous will join the fornicator in judgment. Paul equates covetousness with idolatry, **for it is the worship of something other than God**. These warnings deal with the **habitual practice of sin**, and **not the occasional act of sin**.

David committed adultery, yet God forgave him and one day took him to heaven. Certainly **David was disciplined for his sin, but he was not rejected by God.**

In Paul's day, **there were false Christians who argued that believers could live in sin and get away with it.** These deceivers had many arguments to convince ignorant Christians that they could sin repeatedly and still enter God's kingdom. "You were saved by grace!" they argued. "Therefore go ahead and sin that God's grace might abound!" **Paul answered that foolish argument in Romans 6.**

“Sin in the life of a believer is different from sin in the life of an unsaved person!” **Yes—it’s worse!** God judges sin no matter where He finds it, and He does not want to find it in the life of one of His own children. I personally believe that no true Christian can ever be lost, but he **will prove the reality of his faith by an obedient life.**

There are many professors who are not possessors (Matt. 7:21–23). A Christian is not sinless, but he does sin less—and less—and less! The Christian is a king, and **it is beneath his dignity to indulge in the practices of the lost world that is outside the kingdom of God.**

We are light (vv. 7–14). This figure is the main thrust of the passage, for Paul was admonishing his readers to “**walk as children of light.**” You will want to read 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 for a parallel passage that explains **the contrasts that exist between the child of God and the unsaved person.**

Paul did not say that we were “in the darkness,” but that we “were darkness.” Now that we are saved, “what communion hath light with darkness?” After all, light produces fruit, but the works of darkness are unfruitful as far as spiritual things are concerned. “For the fruit of the Spirit [or “the light”] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.”

It is impossible to be in darkness and light at the same time!

The light produces “**goodness**,” one manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Goodness is “**love in action**.” Righteousness means rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. **Both of these qualities are based on truth, which is conformity to the Word and will of God.**

Jesus had much to say about light and darkness. “Let your light so shine before men, **that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven**” (Matt. 5:16).

John 3:20-21 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But **whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."**

To **"walk as children of light"** means **to live before the eyes of God**, not hiding anything. It is relatively easy to hide things from other people because they cannot see our hearts and minds; but as stated in

Hebrews 4:13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him **to whom we must give account.**

Every time I take a plane to a meeting, I must surrender myself and my luggage to a special inspection, and I am happy to do so, because this inspection helps to detect bombs. I have never been afraid to walk through the “detection tunnel” or have my luggage pass through the X-ray equipment, **because I have nothing to hide.**

An author asked Charles Spurgeon for permission to write his life story, and the great preacher replied, “You may write my life in the skies—I have nothing to hide!”

But walking “as children of light” also means revealing God’s light in our daily lives.

By our character and conduct, we bring God’s light into a dark world.

As God’s lights, we help others find their way to Christ. The mind of the unsaved person is blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:3–4) and by sin (Eph. 4:17–19).

Only as we witness and share Christ can the light enter in. Just as a healthy person can assist the sickly, so a child of God can lead the lost out of darkness into God’s wonderful light.

Light reveals God; light produces fruit; but **light also exposes what is wrong.**

No surgeon would willingly operate in darkness lest he made a false move and take a life. How could an artist paint a true picture in darkness? **The light reveals the truth and exposes the true character of things.**

This explains why the unsaved person stays clear of the church and the Bible. God's light reveals his true character, and **the exposure is not very complimentary.**

As we Christians walk in light, we refuse to fellowship with the darkness, and **we expose the dark things of sin for what they really are.**

“I am come a light into the world,” said Jesus (John 12:46). He also said to His disciples, “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). When He was here on earth, the perfection of His character and conduct exposed the sinfulness of those around Him. This is one reason why the religious leaders hated Him and sought to destroy Him. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22).

Just as a healthy person unconsciously exposes the handicaps and sicknesses of people he visits in a hospital, **so the Christian exposes the darkness and sin around him just by living like a Christian.**

Paul tells us to live balanced lives—positively, to walk in the light; negatively, to denounce and expose the wickedness of those in the darkness.

It is not enough simply to expose the wickedness of those in the darkness. It is not enough simply to expose sin. **We must also bear fruit.**

But Ephesians 5:12 gives us a caution. Be careful how you deal with the “unfruitful works of darkness.” The motto today seems to be, “Tell it like it is!” And yet that can be a dangerous policy when it comes to exposing the filthy things of darkness, **lest we unconsciously advertise and promote sin**. Paul said, “**It is a shame even to speak of those things**” (Eph. 5:12). Some preachers enjoy reveling in the sensational, so much so that their sermons excite appetites and give to the innocent more information than they need. “*but I want you **to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.***” (Rom. 16:19).

I recall a friend in youth work who felt it necessary to read all that the teenagers were reading “in order to understand them better,” and it so polluted his mind that he himself fell into sin.

It is not necessary for the believer to perform an autopsy on a rotting corpse to expose its rottenness.

All he has to do is turn on the light! “But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,” (Eph. 5:13).

When you think of light, you think of waking up to a new day, and Paul presented this picture (***Ephesians 5:14*** *for anything that becomes visible is light.*

Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."), paraphrasing Isaiah 60:1.

Isaiah 60:1 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

You have the same image in Romans 13:11–13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–10.

Romans 13:11-13 Besides this you know the time, that **the hour has come** for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The **night is far gone; the day is at hand**. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and **put on the armor of light**. **Let us walk properly as in the daytime**, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

That Easter morning, when Christ arose from the dead, was **the dawning of a new day for the world**. **Christians are not sleeping in sin and death**.