



A People who Imitate God

Ephesians 5:1-16

Are we sitting comfortably, these verses tell us not to! The passage concludes with a warning: Be very careful (v15), to wake up (v14) and to not be deceived (v6). There's something to be gained and something that can be lost. There's a wrong application of the gospel that prevents the grace of God filling and changing your life and it's to be avoided at all costs.

We must apply this correctly and wake up to the truth of the gospel:

- Part 1: **Forgiveness.** v1 says Follow God's example, which is described in chapter 4 "just as in Christ God forgave you." God has forgiven all our sins.
- Part 2: **Identity.** v2 "as dearly loved children". The gospel doesn't leave us fearful of God; but loved by him, secure, knowing we're his children.
- Part 3: **Grow in his likeness.** Just like a child grows in a parent's likeness. How do we become Christ-like? By following his example. Keep God front and centre: v2 "just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Cultural idolatry impedes our progress in imitating God. Greed, impurity and sexual immorality were prevalent in Ephesus and are also in Edinburgh! The gospel calls us out of the cultural idolatry that surrounds us. We're to live entirely differently. Such behaviours produce darkness and result in judgement for those who don't believe. Paul says they are improper behaviours for God's Holy People. You have a new identity in the family of God.

Strategies in Imitating God:

1. **Self-Identify as Holy.** You are light. (v8) Believe what God says is true of you, not what you feel.

2. **Find out what pleases the Lord. (v10)** v1 Jesus is the example: serving others, worshipping God. Love God and love your neighbour.
3. **Avoid unrighteous living (v11).** Have nothing to do with fruitless deeds of darkness.... If in the light we can see darkness as what it is, unfruitful.
4. **Illuminate (v13).** Everything exposed by the light becomes visible... (the word is a light to our path). 1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.* (Light helps us see better. In it we can fix problems, get help from others and grace from God. You find you're not alone.)

“Wake up O sleeper and rise from the dead.” Is likely a baptism hymn that celebrated new life in Christ. Baptism is a clear moment where we recognise the wonderful truth that God has changed us and will continue to do so.

Questions:

- **Forgiveness.** Why is it important to understand God has already forgiven your sins before approaching the topic of Christian behaviour?
- **Acceptance.** Why is it important to know God loves you all the time as his child when living the Christian life? Do you find this easy or hard to accept?
- **New identity.** How does “Self-identification” as one of God’s Holy People help us in our desire to conform to Christ’s example?
- **Pleasing God.** Most of us lead busy lives. Does pleasing the Lord mean doing more, changing what we do with our time or how we think about what we do? What does it mean for you?
- **Avoid and illuminate struggles with sin.** How can we grow in transparency in the areas we struggle with sin? What practical measures can we adopt?



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