

# EPHESIANS 5:1-14

## Imitators of God

### Memory Verse

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Ephesians 5:1-2

### Real-life Problems

Do you ever feel like you keep making the same mistakes over and over again? If Jesus has freed us from sin and given us a Spirit of righteousness, why do we still find ourselves reverting back to our former ways? Why do we choose sin when we have tasted righteousness? While we have been freed from our slavery to sin, until we are fully redeemed, we will battle the temptations of the flesh. However, through the renewing of our minds in the truth of the gospel, we can live in light of our new identity as children of God.

### The Good News

Even though we were all once children of darkness, those who are now in Christ have been made children of light. By God's grace and through His Spirit, we can now live as imitators of God in Christ.

## I. Introduction

### OPENING QUESTIONS

**Idea #1:** If you could switch lives with one famous person, who would it be? Why?

**Idea #2:** What is one hobby or skill you would love to master?

**Idea #3:** If you knew that your future career was as a teacher, what subject would you want to teach?

### PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

### REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

#### What does gospel mean?

Good news

#### What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

#### Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

#### What is grace?

God's love for undeserving sinners

## REVIEW

### 1) What were the two reasons Paul wrote this letter?

1) To remind the church of the power of the gospel 2) To encourage believers to live in light of their new identity as the church

### 2) Who was the original audience of this letter?

The church, or followers of Jesus Christ, in Ephesus

### 3) Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Paul was in prison for his work in spreading the gospel.

## *What's going on?*

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### REMIND

In Jesus, we have been given a new identity. We no longer have to live as ones who do not know God, but, through the Holy Spirit in us, we can put off our old sin and put on Christlikeness.

### TODAY WE'LL LEARN

- 1) As children of God, we are called to imitate Him by walking in love.
- 2) As children of God, we are called to imitate Him by walking in light.
- 3) As children of God, we are called to put away darkness.

## *Read*

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Read **Ephesians 5:1-14** aloud in your group.

## *II. Questions for Discussion*

### A. WHAT?

**1) According to Paul in verse 1, what is the identity we have as we seek to imitate God?**

We are beloved children.

**2) Looking at verse 2, what is the example of love we should follow as we walk in love?**

Christ's love for us that is shown through Him giving up Himself on our behalf as a sacrifice to God.

**3) What are the six actions and/or sins Paul addresses as "out of place" for believers in verses 3-4? Old self:**

belonging to sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking

**4) According to verse 4, what is something good that should be found among the saints?**

Thanksgiving

**5) In verse 6, Paul says the wrath of God comes upon the "sons of disobedience." Does anyone remember where else Paul has used this phrase?**

Ephesians 2:2

**6) Paul uses the imagery of light and dark to contrast the way believers are to live that is different than the world. According to verse 9, where is the fruit of light found?**

It's found in all that is good, right and true.

**7) According to verses 11-14, what is one thing that the light does to the darkness and what happens once it does?**

The light exposes the darkness (v. 11), which makes what is in the darkness visible (v. 13) and turns it to light (v. 14).

### B. SO WHAT?

**1) Why would Paul use Jesus as the example of how we are to walk in love?**

Jesus is the perfect example of pure love. Just as Jesus lived a sinless life, He also lived a life that gave us a visible image of the invisible God. If we want to see what true love is, then we have to look to God, because He literally defines love in Himself (1 John 4:8). Apart of Jesus, every other love is only a reflection of true love.

While we could never walk in perfect love like Jesus; it is His example of true love that we strive to imitate as children of God.

**2) Why do you think Paul makes a point to address thanksgiving in verse 4?**

Paul wants us to see the stark contrast between what life is like for those who are not children of God and those who are His children. To be able to live as a child of God should cause us to overflow with thanksgiving for the good gifts we have through our inheritance in God's kingdom.

**3) Why do you think Paul would want to make such a clear connection between these actions and eternity in verse 5? How does this connect with what Paul is saying in verse 6?**

Paul spent a great deal of time at the start of the letter making clear the hope and grace of the gospel. He did this so that the Ephesians believers would understand the difference a life transformed by the gospel and one that has not been. Paul has made it very clear that it is not our actions or works that save us.

However, he is now wanting the Ephesians believers to see that while your works do not save you, they do serve as evidence of your salvation. If there is no evidence of grace-fed growth in someone's life, then that is a sign that the gospel has not yet done its transforming work. This is why in verse 6 he urges them to not let someone deceive them by convincing them otherwise.

#### **4) What do verses 13-14 tell us about how the light transforms us?**

According to these verses, the light not only shine on us, but it actually turns darkness into light—it transforms it. The light exposes darkness, but it also destroys darkness as it turns its into light. Where light exists, darkness cannot remain.

Now have them think of how these things could be true in their own lives. What would it mean to completely forgive your sibling? What does it look like to forgive someone who has not asked for it?

### **Lighthouse**

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Lighthouses were created to address two needs that sailors on the ocean have. First, to help them find their way to shore in the darkness. Second, it brings protection. The light from the lighthouses helped to reveal the any areas of danger near the shore that would be hidden by the dark of night.

This is what Paul is trying to help us understand about the power of God's light. Not only are we to walk in the light as God's children, but we are to expose the dangers hidden in the darkness by shining out light. As we walk in the light and live in the light, the darkness will not overcome us. Because in the same way that the rocks of the shore only become visible when the light exposes them, the "works of darkness" (v.11) can only be exposed by the light of God.

### **C. NOW WHAT?**

**1) We are called to love as Christ loved us. What often keeps you from loving others this way? Why can this command be challenging?**

**2) As children of light, we are called to pursue what is good, right and true, and to expose darkness. What might this look like for you to do these things?**

This is an opportunity to help your students consider practical ways to pursue God. Make sure your students' answers stay centered on them and not others.

**3) How might you invite other Christians to join you as you seek to walk in love and light?**

Answer will vary. Examples might be accountability groups, prayer partners, committing to community in the church, etc.

## *Main takeaway*

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As beloved children of God, we are called to imitate Him as we walk in love and light and expose the darkness.

## *III. Closing*

### REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

Even though we were all once children of darkness, those who are now in Christ have been made children of light. By God's grace, as children of light, we can now live as imitators of God in Christ.

### CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord, today we confess that we do not always love others as You have loved us. We have not always loved our neighbor as ourselves. We ask that you would give us the strength, through Your Spirit, to walk in true love. Give us the wisdom to know the difference between light and dark and to walk as children of the light. Amen.

## *Supporting resources*

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### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) What are the areas of my life where darkness has/threatens to take a foothold? How can I expose that darkness to the light?
- 2) In what ways can I love others more like Christ loved me?
- 3) What would it take for me to fully walk in love and light as Paul describes in this passage? What do I need to stop doing? What do I need to begin doing?

### QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) In this week's passage, Paul says we are to walk in love as Christ loved us. Does the thought of loving others with the same love of Jesus scare you or bring you hope?
- 2) What does it mean for you to pursue the fruit of light in your own life?
- 3) In what ways can we, as a family, help one another to walk in the light and expose the darkness in our lives?