

Being Pure
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Ephesians 5:1-14

- For good or bad...whether we like it or not...our children learn their earliest lessons by imitating mom and dad!
- Little boys "shave" (hopefully with toy razors!); Little girls totter around in mom's high heels with lipstick on and jewelry draped around them. Sometimes we hear them utter words or expressions that mom or dad say...sometimes we blush when it happens.
- Country singer Rodney Atkins has a song that talks about that. It's called: WATCHIN' YOU
- In the opening lines as he and his little boy go through the drive in, the little boy spills his orange drink in his lap and uses a word that he's heard dad use and it's not a good one!
- Where DID YOU HEAR THAT WORD? I been watchin' YOU Dad!

The chorus says:

*"I've been watching you, dad ain't that cool?
I'm your buckaroo, I wanna be like you.
And eat all my food and grow as tall as you are.
We got cowboy boots and camo pants
Yeah, we're just alike, hey, ain't we dad?
I want to do everything you do.
So I've been watching you."*

- The good news: By the end of the song the little boy is kneeling by his bed and talking to God the same way he's seen daddy do it.

Kids learn by imitating their parents.

In Ephesians 5 Paul says BELIEVERS need to pattern our lives and conduct by IMITATING our HEAVENLY FATHER.

- Question: How would you describe to a new believer what it means to "copy" God's behavior? Discussion

God is perfect; we're all FAR from perfect and will drive ourselves nuts if we think we can be. However, through the change God makes in our nature, we CAN REFLECT GOD's holy nature in our behavior.

Ephesians 5:1-2

1Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- Verse 1: Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
- Sometimes people will imitate or immolate someone to make a positive impression on that person...maybe a boss or someone who can help them in some way. What do we call that?
- Sucking up! "Brown nosing." Manipulation.
- In verse 1 why does Paul say we should imitate God? "Beloved children" A child who looks up to the parent.
- I call it "looking up" as opposed to "sucking up"
- It's admiration that leads to imitation...not manipulation.
- Verse 2 says: And walk in love,
- What do we mean when we use that word WALK? Living our life...the journey of our life.
- How are imitators of God to walk? In love.
- Why Are imitators of God to walk in love? As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

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.

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.

- In the first two verses Paul has given us our mission; our motivation; and our mode of operation:
- Be imitators of God BECAUSE we are loved and carry it out by with LOVE.
- What does Paul mean in verse two when he talks about a "fragrant offering"?
- In Leviticus five offerings were commanded for God by Israel. The first three were FRAGRANT...an aroma that pleased the Lord:
- Burnt offering - Christ's perfection
- Grain offering - Christ's total devotion to God in giving his life to please the Father
- Peace offering - Christ making peace between man and God
- The other two offerings...the sin offering and the guilt offering were REPULSIVE to God
- All five were necessary in the Old Testament system of sacrifices...but the first three sent up an aroma that was like perfume to the Father. The last two caused by SIN and GUILT were a stinch to His nostrils.
- When we walk in love imitating God it's like the sweetest perfume to Him. But when we walk in darkness it's a stinch to him...look at verses 3-7.

Ephesians 5:3-7

3But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.[a] 6Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7Therefore do not be partners with them.

- In these verses, Paul gives some guidelines to living a Holy life that imitates God
- Verse 3: He says sexual immorality...all impurity...and covetousness shouldn't even be NAMED among believers.
- When we hear the term someone's "good name" what does that mean? Reputation.
- There shouldn't even be a HINT of sexual immorality; impurity; or covetousness/greed...these are improper for God's people.
- If we are to be imitators of God we have a reputation to uphold.
- As Christians we (as they would say in the Old West) "wear the brand" of Jesus Christ.

In the Lion King Mufasa's ghost says to Simba: "Remember who you are. You are my son and the one true king. Remember..."

You and I know that we DO serve THE ONE TRUE KING and we are his HEIRS. We need to REMEMBER WHO WE ARE AND WHOSE WE ARE.

- The world sits on the edge of its seat watching for Christians to MESS UP!

Charles Spurgeon said:

Alas! the beard of reputation once shorn is hard to grow again.

- Did you get that? Once a Christian messes up in the area of sexual immorality, it's hard to replace that reputation they threw away in the process.
- Paul focuses on a few important examples.
- What are the first areas in verse three that he focuses on? Sex; Purity; and Greed.
- Sexual immorality - Sex that is not used as God designed it to be used.
 - 1 Cor 6:18-20 Paul uses a strong word he said to...
18 **Flee** from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.
19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,
20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

- All impurity...Paul covers all the bases here, if God doesn't approve of it then it shouldn't be in the life of the believer.
 - When you buy a bottle of water you expect "pure" water...nothing in there that shouldn't be.
 - Old joke: Waiter what's that bug doing in my soup...?
 - When you order a bowl of soup you aren't going to be happy if a bug is doing the "backstroke" in it.
 - Story: "Would you like flies with that?" Matt's glass of water.
 - When you're in a restaurant and they bring you a glass of water you expect it to be free from flies!
 - Let's be clear...if you're human, even a Christian, sometimes you're gonna get a fly in your glass.
 - We fight daily with impure thoughts and words
 - But what do you do when you discover a fly in your glass...you go get a clean glass and clean water.
 - How many professing Christians are serving up the meal of their life with flies in the water and bugs in the soup and not doing anything about it? Just a question?
- Covetousness
 - What is covetousness?

The dictionary definition:

1. Excessively and culpably desirous of the possessions of another.
2. Marked by extreme desire to acquire or possess: covetous of learning.

- Exodus 20:17 explains the TENTH COMMANDMENT: Don't covet your neighbor's house; wife; servants; his ox; his donkey; or ANYTHING that belongs to him.
- A spirit of covetousness says: I'm not happy with what I have I want what YOU have!

Alistair Begg writes:

...it refers to illegitimate desire. Every desire that rises in our hearts is not to be equated with coveting. (i.e. A man desires a wife finds a good thing Prov 18:22 or desiring children..Ps. 127:4...gifts from the Lord). There are many such things that may be the object of legitimate desire. .. "Lawful desire can very quickly become coveting when we desire the wrong things, such as our neighbor's wife, or when our desires spring from the wrong motives, for example, to simply get rich."

"Covetousness (and) fornication (are) different expressions of the same basic weakness of of fallen nature --- uncontrolled appetite." (Wiersbe)

- Verse 4: Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.
- Does this mean a Christian can't enjoy jokes and humor? What DOES it mean?

- "...but instead let there be thanksgiving."
- Here's an interesting take on that subject of sexual immorality and covetousness. Instead of looking at someONE or someTHING and lusting for them...what if you immediately shift your thoughts to being THANKFUL for what God HAS given you?
- Verse 5: For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.
- Does this mean anyone who falls in sexual imorality or impurity or covetousness isn't going to heaven? No.
- Paul is talking about a "pattern" of sin in a person's life. If a person is saved though they will still sin, their desire to consistently and PERsistently sin as a lifestyle will change.
- Susan often says of the sinful conduct of an unbeliever, "What do you expect? They're a pagan...they don't know any better." "When you get saved your 'want tos' change!"
- Before we all start feeling like a slug for having an impure thought or doubting our salvation if we catch ourselves coveting something...

Quoting Wiersbe again:

"A Christian is not sinless, but he does sin less, and less, and less! The Christian is a king (me: at least a child of the King), and it is beneath his dignity to indulge in the practices of the lost world that is outside the kingdom of God."

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Therefore do not become partners with them;

- Some might say: If I'm save by grace and not works and can't lose my salvation by sinning, then why not just sin, ask forgiveness, and let grace solve my problem?
- In fact, in that day there were false Christians who argued just that...that believers could live in sin and get away with it.
- Paul answered this in Romans 6

Romans 6:1-2

1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

- Then Paul goes on in that chapter to explain that
 - Sin's power is broken
 - Sin-loving nature is buried
 - You are no longer under sin's control

John MacArthur writes:

No Christian will be sinless in this present life, but it is dangerously deceptive for Christians to offer assurance of salvation to a professing believer whose life is characterized by persistent sin and who shows no shame for that sin or hunger for the holy and pure things of God.

Ephesians 5:8-14

8For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10and find out what pleases the Lord. 11Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said:

"Wake up, O sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."

- Verse 8 says for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.
- Notice it doesn't say "you were IN darkness" it says "you WERE darkness."
- Before Christ our lives are all about DARKNESS

John 1:5-7

5This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7But 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[a] sin.

- This dark world NEEDS light!
- When we go to the doctor one of the most important tools they have are bright lights.
- A jeweler can't really see the quality of a stone without a good light.
- A photographer gets the shot they need with good lighting.
- Ever see those reflective panels photographers use to put the light where they need it?
- The reflector is not the source. The SUN is the source...the panel REFLECTS the light of the sun.
- You and I are to be REFLECTORS of the light of the S-O-N...son.
- Verse 10: Says we are to DISCERN What is pleasing to the Lord.
- Romans 12:1,2 - Gives us some insight on DISCERNING what is PLEASING to God.

Romans 12:1-2 (New International Version)

1Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual[a] act of worship. 2Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- I heard John MacArthur say on the radio the other day: Some people go through life trying to discern what God is saying to them...looking for a supernatural REVELATION. He's already spoken...it's all in the book.
- We discern what God wants by RENEWING OUR MINDS in His WORD.
- Verses 11-13 tell us to...

11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret

13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,

- Don't just avoid WORKS OF DARKNESS, let people KNOW WHY you avoid them
- As believers we're not to go around CONDEMNING people and pointing a crooked finger in their faces...HOWEVER, we can be SILENT and let it be interpreted as APPROVAL.
- We need to speak out LOVINGLY but firmly.
- In the early stages of a friendship a man told a very dirty joke not only in my presence but Susan's. He could tell by the look on my face what I thought. He uncomfortably said: "Oh, you'll probably tell that joke this week at work." I said, "No, that won't happen."
- He's still my friend...a good friend who I love and pray for. But he's never told me another dirty joke.
- Finally, in Verse 14: Paul quotes from Isaiah 60:1...Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."
- It's believed these words may have been used as part of a hymn in the early church.
- If it was a hymn back then, what kind of hymn would it have been based on those words?:
- "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."
- An INVITATION hymn.
- Paul is giving an invitation to the unsaved in this church...
- WAKE UP from your state of spiritual death and Christ will shine His light of love on YOU!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We are all FAR from perfection but we CAN be imitators of our Heavenly Father.

- Got didn't make us robots, he gave us a choice in how we conduct our lives.
- If you have a problem with over-eating you don't hang out at Krispy Kreme.
- If you have a problem with alcohol you don't hang out at a bar.
- If you have a problem with gambling you don't hang out at Harrah's Cherokee Casino.
- We have a responsibility to live a certain way as IMITATORS of God's holiness.
- When we do, we'll be REFLECTORS of HIS LIGHT in a dark world.