

# Ephesians 5:1-17

## “Imitators of God”

### Pastor Bruce Zachary

**Intro.** Where can you find contentment? This is the great philosophical quest of the ages. The world’s two primary paths are: The pursuit of sensual pleasure (e.g. food, drink, sex) or indifference to pleasure and pain. Neither way provides contentment, but there is a way to experience true contentment that we’ll discover...

**Subject: Imitators of God**

**Object: Be content in Christ**

**Context:** Called to put-off the old way of life dominated by the flesh and put-on the new spiritual life in Christ

#### 1. Christ’s love [1-7]

Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. <sup>3</sup> But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; <sup>4</sup> neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. <sup>5</sup> For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them.

We are to imitate God as His dear children [1]. The Greek *mimites* is related to our English mimic. The term “walk” [2] speaks of lifestyle (cf. “Walk worthy” and “walk not as the world” [4:1, 17]). Oscar Wilde observed that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Copying someone or something is an implicit way to show respect or pay homage. What does it look like to imitate God? We’ll discover how to imitate God and be content by looking at and learning from Jesus. Jesus is the most content person who ever walked the earth.

**Jesus’ love is selfless and sacrificial [2]:** He has given Himself for us as a sacrifice to God [5:25].

Jesus’ example of selfless sacrificial love is revealed in His incarnation, life with us, and His death on the cross as a sacrifice for our sin. However, before we follow His example, we need to truly appreciate God’s love for us. Jesus’ followers are God’s *dear* children [1]. Appreciating and appropriating His perfect love, holiness, and goodness is the source of contentment.

**Jesus’ love is pure [3-4]:** Fornication refers to sexual intimacy outside of marriage, uncleanness refers to sexual immorality generally, and covetousness generally refers to all greed, but here the focus is lust [3]. The issue isn’t AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases [STDs], unwanted pregnancies, or

abortion. And the issue is not rules, or don't do this, or even abstaining, but we'll discover that its contentment.

God's ideal is for marriage to reflect the union between Christ and His church [5:25-33]. Husbands and wives are to experience emotional, spiritual, and physical intimacy and that glorifies God and satisfies man. Sexual impurity is an obstacle to intimacy with God and your spouse; and indicates of a lack of contentment in God.

Sexual purity reflects your love for God, contentment in Him, obedience to His will, and love for others [1Th. 4:3]. Remember, this is written to people in Ephesus, where Diana the goddess of fertility was worshipped with orgies at her temple. Similarly, in our country pornography is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Culturally, so-called safe sex is encouraged, but God's love is selfless, sacrificial, and pure. You are not only impacting yourself, but another person created in God's image. You can't discover true contentment in sex any more than you can find it in drugs, things, or people. That is why lusts are deceitful [4:22] they don't deliver what they promise.

### **The opposite of lust is not purity, but contentment in God**

Jesus' words are pure. Similarly, our words should not be dominated by profanity, sexual innuendo, off-color jokes or remarks [4]. Instead, we should be expressing thanks [4], and later in this epistle (letter) we are encouraged to give thanks always for all things [5:20]. The expression of gratitude to God regardless of circumstances is the fruit of contentment that flows from knowing God's love in Christ.

**Contentment is learned from intimacy and time with Jesus [Phil. 4:11-13].** Godliness with contentment is great gain [1 Tim. 6:6-8], because you'll discover that God is the only One who can satisfy.

In contrast, if you are ruled by lust, not Christ's love, and there is no remorse or desire to repent then you are likely not saved [5-7]. If your master passion is the world or the flesh then sexual sin, and greed dominate and God is not Lord in your life. Don't be deceived by empty words [6]. In Paul's day, the Gnostics were Greek philosophers who argued that the physical body was inherently evil and the spiritual was inherently good and thus sin in the body won't harm the spiritual nature. Their empty words were contrary to the gospel and pervert the grace of God [Rom. 6:1-2]. In our culture, neo-atheists argue there is no God, and agnostics argue all people go to heaven. And liberal churches ignore or avoid confronting sin. If you are going to imitate God, and Christ's love then don't have anything to do with false philosophies, because they alienate you from God in this life and the life to come. And you never discover the true contentment you crave.

## **2. Christ's light [8-14]**

**Jesus' light is reflected by His followers [8-10].**

**For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), <sup>10</sup> finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.**

Before you received Christ and His life, your life was characterized by darkness, but in Christ you reflect the light or glory of God [8]. In the Creation account, we see that God said, "Let there be light and there was light" [Gen. 1:2-4]. Thus, before the Sun, the glory of God was manifest as light.

## **Jesus is the light of the world [Jn. 8:12], and His followers reflect that light [Mt. 5:14].**

Christ's light is described as: goodness [9] or moral excellence, righteousness [9] which is giving people what they are due or doing the right thing, and truth [9] which relates to honesty reliability, and integrity. Those seeking Christ's light are seeking to please the Lord [10]. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness" [Is. 5:20].

## **Jesus' light reveals God's glory and exposes darkness [11-13].**

**<sup>11</sup> And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup> But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. <sup>14</sup> Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."**

We are to engage, befriend, and build relationships with people who know Jesus and those who don't know Him, but we are not to engage in behavior that God has declared out of bounds (the unfruitful works of darkness) [11]. Instead we expose them [11,13]. You remove darkness in a room by turning on the light not pushing out the darkness.

We should seek to reveal the light to encourage people to be restored in their relationship with God. Jesus said that we should live in such a way that people see our good works and glorify God [Mt.5:14]. And when we speak to people about God's standards, we should do so with love, respect, and humility to encourage restoration with God that always produces greater contentment.

**This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed [Jn.3:19-20]**

## **3. Christ's purpose [15-17]**

**<sup>15</sup> See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, <sup>16</sup> redeeming the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*.**

**Jesus' followers make God their priority [15].** We are called to live circumspectly or carefully as it relates to God. Being wise rather than foolish means honoring God with your life and choices. This is where contentment is found.

**Jesus' followers seize God's opportunities [16].** The Greek term translated "time" is *kairos* a word associated with opportunities or seasons in contrast with measured time which is the Greek term *chronos*. Kairos was depicted as a cherub with a long forelock and bald backside. So, you couldn't grab him once he past. Opportunities are precious, because the age we live in is dominated by immorality [Mt. 24;11-12, 2Tim. 3].

**Jesus' followers live to know and do God's will [17].** To understand God's will is to seek to know and do it. This is the key to contentment. The Bible reveals God's will. As you study, and learn the word of God, and allow God by His Spirit to conform you to the image of Christ you discover contentment in Christ as imitators of God.

## **Study Guide Qs**

***Q1. If you could go back in time, and speak to early adolescent you about sex and God's ideal of love as opposed to the culture's standard what advice would you give?***

***Q2 How is contentment in Christ the key to overcome lusts rather than a set of rules, warning of dangers, or urging obedience?***

***Q3. How are you learning to be content in Christ regardless of your circumstances?***

***Q4. Consider some of your experiences of trying to expose sin in a way that tried to help another person come to Christ. Describe something that seemed to work well and something that didn't.***

***Q5 What are some opportunities that you seized that you didn't regret, and/or some you missed that you did regret?***

***Q6 How did you make God a greater priority in 2017?***

## **Digging Deeper**

**1. How would you like to make God a greater priority in 2018?**