

WHY WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO BE IMITATORS OF GOD

We encourage each one of the flock here at Chesapeake to be mindful that the Christian life is not some unattainable ideal in a book. God sent His son, Jesus Christ, to this earth that man might know Him, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:" (1 Peter 2:21)

In Ephesians 5:1, Paul tells the Christians at Ephesus to be followers of God as "dear children." When we become children of God, there should be changes in our lives. Ephesians 5:2-13 speaks to this very subject. These verses tell us how we can learn to be "imitators of God."

First, we must strive to walk in love. Ephesians 5:2 says, "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." One's "walk" is his manner of life. The standard for the Christian's love is Christ, Himself. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John 13:34) The Christian should love in a sacrificial manner, as Christ loved, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10:15) This is the principle of putting others before ourselves, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3)

Second, God's children must reject moral impurity (Ephesians 5:3-5). In our times, when immorality is justified as "freedom" and "constitutional liberty," Christians must stand up for the morality contained in God's Word. We must be mindful that because a thing is declared legal by the world, doesn't mean that it is righteous in God's eyes. To reject God's standard is to reject God, Himself. Jesus told us in Matthew 4:4, "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Third, we must guard against false teaching (Ephesians 5:6-7). The only possible solution to the problem of false teaching is to know and obey the Truth. Sadly, this is not always the case even among those who claim to be God's people. Paul had difficulty with those who did not want to hear the truth, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16) Only a constant striving to obey the Truth will purify one's soul, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren..." (1 Peter 1:22)

Fourth, as "dear children" of God, we must be light in a world of darkness (Ephesians 5:8-13). God draws a clear line between good and evil, His children and the children of the devil, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" (1 Peter 2:9) Because He has delivered us from Satan's darkness, we must live with Him in light, and let that light show forth, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) To be "imitators" of God, we must walk in the light, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Brethren, let us conclude by taking to heart Ephesians 5:14, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Life without Christ is a self-deception that our lives are in accordance with what is pleasing to God. It is Christ who gives us the Truth and eternal life, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20)

- The Elders