



Sermon Series: Be Imitators of God

Message #4 – Doing Our Part as Imitators of God

Pre-Sermon Video: **Hope**

Getting the Nod

Open with singing the song: Oh, Be Careful Little Eyes What You See, Oh, Be Careful Little Ears What You Hear.



Illustration of a Peanut's cartoon: Lucy and Linus were sitting in front of the television set when Lucy said to Linus, "Go get me a glass of water." Linus looked surprised, "Why should I do anything for you? You never do anything for me." "On your 75th birthday," Lucy promised, "I will bake you a cake." Linus got up, headed to the kitchen and said, "**Life is more pleasant when you have**

something to look forward to." **Application: What is it that our children have to look forward to?**

Let me ask the question, "If we are to be imitators of God, how can we instill the hope that we have into the children that God has given us?" Especially in the world they see today!!

First, do you have a steadfast unshakeable hope in God? Because our children need to see a hopeful future... and God wants us to consider what our children see in us, so they can believe there is Someone in control in a world and country of chaos!!!

Two weeks I began a sermon series in Ephesians 5:1-21 called, "Be Imitators of God." Paul tells us to walk in love; to walk in light; and to walk in wisdom. Today, I want to examine how Christians walk before their children. Let's read about walking before our children in Ephesians 5:1-2...

NKJV | Eph 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 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.)

Transition: Notice Paul's reference to us being like "DEAR CHILDREN... we will touch that later..."

Connecting Us

Story Often Told By Ronald Reagan: Former President Ronald Reagan likes to tell a story which he says is true about a newspaper photographer out in Los Angeles who was called in by his editor and told of a fire that was raging out in Southern Los Angeles. His assignment was to rush down to a small airport, board a waiting plane, get some pictures of the fire, and be back in time for the afternoon edition.

Breathlessly, he raced to the airport and drove his car to the end of the runway. Sure enough, there was a plane waiting with all the engines all revved up, ready to go. He got aboard, and at about five thousand feet, he began getting his camera out of the bag. He told the fellow flying the plane to get him over the fire so he could take his pictures and get back to the paper. From the other side of the cockpit there was a deafening silence. Then he heard these unsettling words: "**Aren't you the instructor?"**

We adults can get so caught up in what's wrong with the world and the anarchy that we forget to think about what the children are seeing and what anxiety they are experiencing. Who's in charge? **Being Imitators of God means being someone who possesses hope.** Think about what our children are thinking and what answers we should be sharing:

- **The pandemic is out of control!** (Our Response) **God's got this!!!** NKJV | Ro 8:18 **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.**
- **All you see is hatred, division, and violence!** (Our Response) **God will protect us!!** NLT | Is 41:10 **Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.**
- **So many are struggling with addictions!** (Our Response) **God can set them free from their sickness!** NKJV | Jas 5:15-16 **And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.**
- **There's so much sexual confusion!** (Or Response) **God can clear that up!! The confusion stems from eliminating God from picture.** NLT | 1 Co 6:18-20 **Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. 19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So, you must honor God with your body.**
- **What's the big picture in all this madness?** (Our Response) **This is not all there is!** The Message | Jn 5:24 **"It's urgent that you listen carefully to this: Anyone here who believes what I am saying right now and aligns himself with the Father, who has in fact put me in charge, has at this very moment the real, lasting life and is no longer condemned to be an outsider. This person has taken a giant step from the world of the dead to the world of the living.**

What our children need is a godly perspective: A four old boy wanted to have his own section of their garden in the back yard. When his section was roped off, the little fellow went to work. He turned the soil, broke the clumps, and planted his favorite vegetable--corn. Toward the middle of July, Mark was concerned that his corn was not growing fast enough. I tried to reassure him that the corn was doing just fine by quoting him the familiar benchmark used by farmers, **"...knee-high by the fourth of July."** His response to his father was, **"My knees or yours?"** (Source: Nicholas Mokolke, Bits and Pieces, September 19, 1991, p. 2.)

Application: Our children are developing a worldview, and we must invest in what they are thinking.

Transition: But what is it that confirms our life's value to our children? It is in being IMITATORS OF GOD!!! It is in the way we walk before our children.

God's Take on Walking in Wisdom

In Ephesians 5, Paul tells us about four things that we are responsible for in our Imitating God. God has already died for us to break the curse of sin; He has already provided power in His BLOOD, His Resurrection, and His Holy Spirit living in us for direction and ability to overcome temptation... **but this is not a one-sided relationship and we have something to contribute to this hope that we give to our children!!**

Let's look at Ephesians again to see how we do our part as Imitators of God to impact our children...

Four Responsibilities an Imitator of God Takes On:

1. Practicing forgiveness and mercy. (vs. 1-2)

- **2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us...**
- Jesus Christ is the embodiment of love and forgiveness and mercy.
- Imitating Jesus means we imitate His forgiveness and show others mercy... just like we were given it.
- **Challenge? Is there someone you haven't forgiven?**
- **Did you know that true forgiveness and mercy is a three level commitment?**
 - **Forgiveness of the will.** Forgiveness out of obedience. God's requested way.
 - **Forgiveness of the heart.** This may take longer... but spirituality moves it along.
 - **Forgiveness that leads to reconciliation.** This may never happen. But when you have reached this place... a willingness to forgive and a heart that desires it... you have a pure and holy path of forgiveness.

2. Ending ungodly habits. (vs. 3-5)

- NLT | Eph 5:3-5 **Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. 4 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.**
- **Get rid of the old habits and sinful ways from your lives!!!** If these are allowed in our lives... eternity will be horrible for you and your children will follow you!
- **The power over those temptations come from the Holy Spirit and His ability to turn our focus into spiritual gratitude!**
- **The Challenge? Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.** Focus on what God has done for you!!! Not what the world has for you!!!

3. Letting no one deceive you. (vs. 6-10)

- NLT | Eph 5:6-7 **Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. 7 Don't participate in the things these people do.**
- Decide who your heroes are going to be! Be careful who you hang around. Are you going to be the one who influences others... or the one who is influenced by others?
- **Illustration of Dad and Copperheads:** My dad was raised in West Virginia. He told me that you would have to be careful in the fall when the leaves were on the ground. You see, in West Virginia you have to be careful around those leaves because of what was hiding in those leaves. He told me that there were lots of Copperhead Snakes there. Copperheads are venomous Pit Vipers that strike you as soon as they sense heat when any part of your body comes near them. And they blend PERFECTLY in with the beautiful fall leaves. And when they sense a predator is near, they will sometimes freeze in place, making them blend in even better, and making it tougher to discern the danger. And they don't even have the good manners to rattle at you like rattlesnakes do in Texas. **Application:** So be careful of those serpents that hide behind friendship and beauty, just waiting for a chance to strike at you and bring destruction. Don't let others deceive you and lead you down the path of

unrighteousness. It only takes one step in the wrong direction... and the slow fade begins.

4. **Having no fellowship with darkness. (vs. 11-14)**

- NLT | Eph 5:8-10 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. 10 Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.
- **Our hatred of sin and our love for the Lord not only keeps us from backsliding, but it plants the seeds of conviction in your children!!!**
- NKJV | Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.
- **I also like how Eugene paraphrases it...The Message | Proverbs 22:6 Point your kids in the right direction— when they're old they won't be lost.**

So, Imitators of God practice forgiveness and mercy; we end our godly habits; we make sure we aren't deceived; and we have no fellowship with darkness anymore. That's clear scripture, but Paul tells us to be like "DEAR CHILDREN"! What is he trying to tell us?

Paul uses the Greek work *agapatos* which refers to a child who is **"worthy of love"**. He is saying that when we imitate God... it is with a heart after their parent's approval and blessing. That means...

Imitating Like Children: (5:1)

1. **Is knowing your first love.** NLT | Re 2:4 **"But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!** Do our children see that God is still #1 in your life?
2. **Is trusting your Father's actions.** NKJV | 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do our kids see us trusting?
3. **Is showing your unashamed affection.** NLT | Ro 12:10 Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other. Is our love for others obvious?
4. **Is following your Father's footsteps.** NKJV | Mk 8:34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Application: Let me close with a story of Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley...

Conclusion

Mark Batterson's Story of Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley: Wilson grew up on a farm in Jericho, Vermont, and as a young boy he developed a fascination and obsession with snowflakes. Most people go indoors during snowstorms. Not Wilson. He would run outside when the flakes started falling, catch them on black velvet, look at them under a microscope, and take photographs of them before they melted. **His first photomicrograph of a snowflake was taken on January 15, 1885.**

Under the microscope, I found that snowflakes were miracles of beauty; and it seemed a shame that this beauty should not be seen and appreciated by others. Every crystal was a masterpiece of design and no one design was ever repeated. When a snowflake melted, that design was forever lost. Just that much beauty was gone, without leaving any record behind.

Being the first known photographer of snowflakes, Wilson pursued his passion for more than fifty years. He amassed **a collection of 5,381 photographs** that was published in his magnum opus, **titled Snow Crystals**.

And then he died a fitting death—a death that symbolized and epitomized his life. Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley contracted pneumonia while walking six miles through a severe snowstorm and died on December 23, 1931.

And that is how I figured out how I want to die. No, I don't want to die from pneumonia. But I do want to die doing what I love. And I want that truth to be spoken by my children when I leave this world. I am determined to be an IMITATOR OF GOD until the day I die. Life is too precious to settle for anything less. Mark Batterson, *Wild Goose Chase* (Multnomah, 2008), pp. 15-16 From a sermon by Terry Blankenship, *Singing a Song of Wonder*, 1/21/2010

Let's stand: How about you? Are your primary aspirations to die rich or popular? Are you more focused on pleasure than God's presence? Are you more concerned about being a Republican than being a Christian? Is life more about you than your family?

Is there anyone watching us by live-stream that knows you need to pray? Or someone sitting in a pew? Won't you join me in prayer? Our kids are on the line here. (Oh be careful little eyes what you see...) **Let's pray...**