Imitating God
Ephesians 5:1-2

Objective: Help people know how to behave like God’s children.

Reading: Ephesians 5:1-7.

Memory: Ephesians 5:1, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.”

Introduction:
1. Monty Python movie; “In Search Of The Holy Grail” has a scene where the knights are attacked by a rabbit “with big, sharp, pointy teeth”. Funny? Shocking? Absurd because that is not what rabbits are like. You don’t expect a rabbit to behave like a Bobcat.
2. Neither should one expect a Christian, a Child of God, to act and behave like Children of darkness or like ordinary people of the world. As Christians,

We need to behave like God’s dearly loved children. (HOW?)

This is the Apostles point in the Book of Ephesians. Here are Christians who are not living up to their Christian commitment, giving a wrong image of Christ, and endangering their salvation because they have not made appropriate and commensurate changes in their lives to reflect their fellowship with God in Christ.

Keying in on Ephesians 5:1, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children”, let’s consider some things we need to focus on if we are to live like children of God.

One of the prime characteristics of God that we often fall short on is forgiveness. As children of God, Christians are supposed to

I. Have a forgiving Spirit. (This is what children of God are like!)

A. This is role-modeled for us by Jesus.
   1. Ephesians 4:32: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
   2. He didn’t hold a grudge, even though you were offensive to Him, even though your sins were the cause of His coming to earth and being crucified.
   3. He didn’t wait for you to deserve a blessing. He took the initiative. He came as Peacemaker, with the intention of finding you and restoring you to relationship with God. Willingly, eagerly.

B. How do I get this kind of a spirit?
   1. It won’t happen by accident. It won’t happen by itself. It won’t happen without effort. You need to WANT to be godlike, and you need to work at it. God won’t just give it to you if you are not really interested.
   2. It starts from effort to be kind and compassionate toward others. Ephesians 4:32: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
   3. Am I being “kind” HOW can I be kind to somebody like that? They don’t deserve “kindness”.
   4. Am I compassionate toward them? They don’t deserve my “compassion”.
   5. Neither did you! Remember God’s kindness and God’s compassion towards you.
   6. I probably need to develop a new way of thinking about it. Romans 12:1-2, “Therefore, 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 act of worship. 2 Do 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.”
   7. Maybe I can get some kindness and some compassion towards them if I realize they are lost in darkness, in ignorance, in sin. That they don’t know any better! Isn’t that what Jesus was saying when He hung on the cross and said of those who had tortured and crucified Him, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34) I feel sorry for them. They don’t know any better. They are caught up in serving Satan and don’t even realize it.
   8. Can you come to a thinking where you feel sorry for them that they don’t know better. Where you wish you could help them out of that dark rut they are in. They may not let you, but you want to.
   9. It may take repeated effort to correct yourself to think like Jesus, but with HS, you can.

C. Who has offended you?
1. Has someone spoken harshly to you? Has someone been rude to you? Been physically offensive?
2. Do you think someone has gossiped about you or taken something of yours? Snubbed you?
3. Is their crime / offense worse than what they did to Jesus? He loved them, He did no harm to them, spoke only truth, yet they beat Him and executed Him in a brutal fashion.
4. Are you willing to say, like Jesus, “Father, I forgive them. Please forgive them also.”?
5. Are you willing to tell them, “I forgive you”, and mean it? With the help of God’s spirit, you can.

There is another overriding principle to guide us in imitating God as dearly loved children of God. That is, 

II. Live a life of love. (This is what children of God are like!)

A. This is also role-modeled for us by Jesus.
   1. Ephesians 5:1-2, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
   2. God IS love! What would you expect His children to be like?
   3. What is the role-model you have been following most of your life? Where did you learn how to relate to other people?
      a. From society? From books? From peers? From parents and family?
      b. They have not always done it right. That is why Old Testament is full of repeated instructions to confess the sins of our Fathers.
   4. Let Christ, Emmanuel, “God-with-us”, God-in-the-flesh be your role model. This is how we know what God is like. John 1:18, “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”
   5. Look at Christ, as revealed in Scripture, and see what God the Father is like, and hence what we as children are to be like. Look at the very “Son of God” and learn to live like a child of God.

B. Christ’s life of love is expressed in sacrifice.
   1. Christ’s love is seen in sacrifice on behalf of the Father. John 14:30, “…the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.” So Christ willingly went to be crucified – because that was what the Father wanted and sent Him to do. Doing the Father’s will was Christ’s “glory”!
   2. Christ’s love is seen in sacrifice on our behalf. John 3:16, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
   3. This willingness to sacrifice is essential to love. It means stepping out of our routines. It means stepping out of our comfort zones.

C. Our life of love should be expressed in sacrifice as well.
   1. You can see it in sacrifice for your children. A Mom goes without so her children can have! Goes without sleep, without many of the nice things she would like to do for herself.
   2. Such love should be seen in our sacrifice for other human souls as well.
   3. In reaching out and caring for the underprivileged and those genuinely in need of help.
      a. James 1:27, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”
      b. Philippians 2:4, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”
   4. Do you sacrifice your time for others? Do you give of your “means” to help others? Are you covetous with the blessing God has provided you with, or are you generous with them?
   5. Christ’s “glory” was sacrifice on the Cross. What “glory” has God sent you to sacrifice?

A third concept of how we can and should behave like dearly loved children of God is by

III. Being examples of holiness. (This is what children of God are like!)

A. God is holy and His children must be holy.
   1. Ephesians 5:3, “But 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.”
   2. As a Child of Him who IS holy, we should be holy! In all honesty, are you involved in any such God-disgracing things as are mentioned in Ephesians 5:4-5, “Nor should there be obscenity,
foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For 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. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality or impurity.
b. Ask yourself if any of your behavior is a matter of greed or selfishness.
c. Check you language; no obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking.

3. 1 Peter 1:15-16. “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” God IS holy, so we ought to honestly examine ourselves to see if there are any “un-holy” things we are doing or involved in? Get rid of them. Stop them. They are not right or appropriate for a child of God.

4. Is God really honored by your purity? Do you have a determination to not sin? Ever! No matter what??!!

5. Our moment to moment behavior and lives should be characterized by gratitude and appreciation for the blessings God has given us.

B. Be a living illustration of what is proper for a “holy” people.
1. The word “holy” has a fundamental meaning of being “separated”.
   a. Separated for God and set aside from “normal” use. Hence separated from sin
2. We are “separated” for god’s use and His honor. Reserved for Him, so not used in defiling ways.
   a. This container is set aside for storing food, so I don’t use it for cleaning paint brushes.
   b. This vessel (Christian) is set aside for honoring God – it is not used for many common human practices.
3. “Holy People” are “saints. That is you, Christian. Make it a point to live like it. We often hear people, even Christians say, “I’m not a saint, you know”. You better be. Christ died so you could be and would be. This is the promise you made in your baptism – to be washed and purified by the blood of Christ. To set aside all sin. To keep your conscience clean.
4. Saints, “holy ones” are those who have had their sins washed away by Christ. They have been forgiven and cleansed. They are thankful and have committed to keep it that way.
5. This is essential and this is why He tells them in Ephesians 4:22-24. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

So What?
Who are you? Do you belong to God? Are you a child of God? If so, (and this is very important) so that you are not deceived, or living in hypocrisy; if you really are a child of God, expecting to ultimately arrive in heaven, (look at Ephesians 5:15) “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,” Make sure you are actually living like a child of God.

Closing Prayer:
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Reading: Ephesians 5:1-7

Memory: Ephesians 5:1

“B_ i_ o_ G_, t_, a_ d_ l_ c_ ”

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Things we need to focus on if we are to live like children of God.

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A. This is role-modeled for us by Jesus.

B. How do I get this kind of a spirit?

C. Who has offended you?

**II. Live a life of love.** *(This is what children of God are like!)*
A. This is also role-modeled for us by Jesus.

B. Christ’s life of love is expressed in sacrifice.

C. Our life of love should be expressed in sacrifice as well.

**III. Being examples of holiness.** *(This is what children of God are like!)*
A. God is holy and His children must be holy.

B. Be a living illustration of what is proper for a “holy” people.

**So What?** Ephesians 5:15
Make sure you are actually living like a child of God.