**FOLLOW GOD’S EXAMPLE**

Ephesians 5:1-21

Key Verse 1

**“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children”**

**Introduction**



 1 John 2:6 **“Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”** Apostle John must have lived just as Jesus had, practicing what Jesus Himself had done. Through this, he was gradually transformed into the Apostle of love. He imitated Jesus’ love. Whoever we spend time with and try to imitate, will determine what kind of person we become. In today’s passage, Paul exhorts Christians to follow God’s example. He gives specific instructions as to how we should follow God’s example as God’s dearly loved children.

1. Read verses 1-2. Why should we follow God’s example? (1) How can we follow God’s example in and through Christ? (2)

 1-1, Read verses 1-2.

 Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children **2** and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1-2, Why should we follow God’s example? (1)

***Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children***

* Here, Paul continues from Ephesians 4, where he described how Christians should relate to one another.
* Paul wanted the Ephesians to follow God’s example as his dearly loved children. In the past, the Ephesians worshiped idols such as the Greek goddess Artemis.
* They followed the pagan occult practices and indulged in repulsive immorality. But by God’s grace and love, the Ephesian Christians became God’s dearly loved children.



* Now they were to live a life as God’s dear children. They were now to follow God’s example. In other words, now their role model was God.
* The perfect role model is God and we as his children are to follow his example. The incarnated God, Jesus is our perfect example.
* A Christian life is a journey from this world to heaven, trying to follow God’s example. We Christians are gradually transformed into the image of Jesus more and more by imitating and following Jesus’ example in our daily lives.
* The more we know Jesus, the more amazed we become and want to follow in His footsteps. To follow Jesus’ example means to think and act just like Jesus in our practical lives.
* According to the 1984 version of the NIV, this verse says, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children….”
* Someone said, “Everybody is an example. Some are good examples, some are bad.” There are not many people who may say, “Follow my exemplary life.”
* But Apostle Paul in his epistles often said to the Christians to follow his example or imitate him (1 Cor 4:16, 11:1; Phil 3:15,17, 4:9; 2 Thess 3:7-9; 2 Tim 3:12).
* Paul followed Jesus’ example: his life, death and resurrection. He even wanted to follow Jesus’ death eagerly in order to experience Jesus’ resurrection.
* So he said in Philippians 3:10-11, “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

1-3, How can we follow God’s example in and through Christ? (2)

 ***and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***

* Paul first mentions love in following God’s way. Here love in the Greek text is “agape,” meaning God’s unconditional love.
* Among all attributes of God, it’s his unconditional love that really stands out. His love is the love that goes beyond our human understanding.
* Throughout the Bible, we see that His beloved children are so sinful. They turn their backs against him again and again.
* But God loves them unconditionally. As history repeats, we are exactly like the sinful people in the Bible and God still loves us unconditionally.
* Most of all in his unfathomable love, he sent his own Son Jesus to rescue us from eternal destruction.
* On earth, Jesus first showed the love of God to all kinds of sinners. Jesus gave himself up on the cross to save sinners.
* God’s love is a forgiving love. God’s love is giving love one-sidedly. His love is a “giving himself up” love.
* Jesus loved us to the point that he gave himself up as a fragrant offering to God. God’s love is not lip-service love, nor a feeling.
* His love involves sacrificial action. Unless we take action and give up something we love for others, we are not really walking in the way of love.
* It is so difficult because we are naturally self-centered and not willing to sacrifice or give up something for others.

John 13:34-35 reads,

 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

* We must love others as Jesus sacrificially loved us. This is the new command Jesus gave us. This is Jesus’ command that his followers must obey.
* May we obey Jesus’ command and walk in the way of love by forgiving others and sacrificially giving something we have to others.

2. Read verses 3-7. What must we avoid as God’s holy people? (3) What kind of words are appropriate for a child of God? (4) What warnings are given? (5-7)

2-1, Read verses 3-7.

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. **4** 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 person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. **6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. **7** Therefore do not be partners with them.

2-2, What must we avoid as God’s holy people? (3)

***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.***

* Paul emphasizes that sexual immorality or impurity or greed must be absent, even a hint of it from the Christian fellowship.
* Sexual sins ruin not only our personality but also Christian fellowship. God’s people are to be holy because our Father God is holy.

 1 Peter 1:15 says,

 “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in **all** you do.”

2-3, What words are inappropriate for a child of God? (4)

 ***Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.***

* We have the privilege of freedom of speech. “The First Amendment (Amendment I) to the United States Constitution prohibits the making of any law respecting an establishment of religion, ensuring that there is no prohibition on the free exercise of religion, abridging the freedom of speech, infringing on the freedom of the press, interfering with the right to …”
* But we, dear children of God in the heavenly realms should not abuse this privilege by speaking without reverence to God or respect for others.
* No doubt, our mouth gets us in trouble more than anything else. We must keep watch over what we say.
* But more fundamentally, we must have pure hearts, because what is stored inside will eventually come out of our mouths.

Matthew 12:34-37 reads,

 “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. **35** A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. **36** But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. **37** For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

* What kind of words are appropriate for a child of God?

***Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving***

* We must be ready to give thanks to God in any situation. The life of love is characterized by thanksgiving towards God and also towards one’s neighbor.

2-4, What warnings are given? (5-7)

 ***For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.***



* Significantly, Paul says that the **covetous man** is an **idolater**. Idolatry happens in much more subtle (and powerful) ways than simply bowing down before a statue.
* We cannot allow empty words to excuse or minimize God’s judgment due to the practice of these sins. It is certain that because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
* Therefore do not be partakers with them - Paul assumes that Christians will not have their lives habitually marked by fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness. We should never partake in such practices as unbelievers do.

3. Read verses 8-14. How can we live as children of light? (8-10) What should we do with the fruitless deeds of darkness? (11-12) Why? (13-14)

3-1, Read verses 8-14.

For 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) **10** and find out what pleases the Lord.**11** Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. **12** It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. **13** But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. **14** This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

3-2, How can we live as children of light? (8-10)

***8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.***

* Paul says that in the past, we were not only in darkness but also we were darkness itself. Wherever we went, we also brought darkness with us.
* When I came to UBF for the first time, everybody looked so bright and I often heard people laughing a lot during the Sunday worship service. I condemned them because I thought that they were blaspheming before the Holy God. But later, through personal Bible study, I realized that I was in darkness.
* Thank God who shines the Light and the Life, who is Jesus, on those who are darkness.

***Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord.***

* In Jesus, we are light. There is no room for darkness. We should not be angels in church and devils at home. Instead we must consistently live out our new identities as children of light and bear good fruit.
* This requires finding out what pleases the Lord. So, children of light must study the Bible, pray and then put God’s word into practice.

Matthew 5:16 says,

 “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deed and praise your Father in heaven.”

3-3, What should we do with the fruitless deeds of darkness? (11-12)

***11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.***

* Children of light stay away from the fruitless deeds of darkness.
* They should not even talk about what is done in darkness because those deeds are so shameful.
* Darkness pervades the world but children of light drive it out by shining Jesus’ light. Children of light also expose the fruitlessness of darkness so that people may see it, turn away from it, and have a new start in Jesus.

3-4, Why? (13-14)

 ***But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”***

* When we live as children of light, we become the light of the world exposing fruitless deeds of darkness and shameful behavior of the sinful world.
* Many Bible scholars think that verse 14 is part of an early Christian hymn, probably a hymn of repentance and encouragement. “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”
* These verses probably addressed nominal believers who needed to wake up, instead of participating in fruitless deeds of darkness and shameful behavior. When they woke up from their spiritual slumber, Christ would shine on them.

4. Read verses 15-21. How should we live? (15-16a) Why? (16b) Why should we understand the Lord’s will? (17) What should we do instead of getting drunk on wine? (18-20) What should be our attitude towards one another? (21)

4-1, Read verses 15-21.

**15** Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. **18** Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, **20** always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **21** Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

4-2, How should we live? (15-16a)

4-3, Why? (16b)

 ***Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.***

* Here Paul urges God’s children to live as the wise, because the days are evil.

Matthew 10:16 reads(Jesus says),

 “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”

* We know the meaning of, “Be very careful.” It is God’s imperative for his dear children. It says, “Be very careful how you live.”
* In particular we need wisdom to make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.
* Outwardly, and to the eyes of unbelievers the days don’t look evil because there are many things to enjoy and seek for pleasure.
* But when we look at the world through the perspective of what the Bible teaches, the days are evil; and our growing children are exposed to it, at the risk of being influenced.
* But we don’t have to be discouraged or fearful. Instead, we can pray diligently for them and teach them the word of God.
* Therefore, we must make the most of every opportunity to serve God’s purpose for the Lord and his gospel. In fact, every opportunity is an opportunity to glorify God.

4-4, Why should we understand the Lord’s will? (17)

 ***Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.***

* Fools live according to their sinful nature but truly wise people understand what God’s will is because God’s will is the best all the time

4-5, What should we do instead of getting drunk on wine? (18-20)

 ***Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

* Godless people get drunk and grope in darkness, but God’s children get filled with the Holy Spirit like the early Christians who encouraged one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit.
* The Holy Spirit gives perfect joy and peace. Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit cannot but sing hymns and gospel songs joyfully and thankfully.
* They will always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4-6, What should be our attitude towards one another? (21)

 ***Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.***

* When we are filled with the Spirit, it will show by our mutual submission to each other. This submission will be done in the fear of God, not the fear of man.
* Submitting: The word submitting here literally means, “to be under in rank.” It is a military word.
* It speaks of the way that an army is organized in rank. You have generals, colonels, majors, captains, sergeants, and privates. Those in lower rank are obligated to respect those in a higher rank.
* We know that a private can be smarter and have more talent than a general. But he is still under rank to the general.
* The idea of submission doesn’t have anything to do with someone being smarter, better, or more talented. It has to do with a God-appointed order.
* Paul means that we should take this “under rank” attitude of the military and apply it to our everyday dealings with each other.
* When a man joins the military, the first thing he does is strip away his individuality. He is now the member of a company or battalion. He is no longer an individual.
* When you join the army, you essentially sign away your right to decide what you want to do with your life and your time.
* An army is filled with individuals, but they cannot assert their individuality all the time without considering anyone else. That is the first concept that is broken when anyone joins the army.
* In practice, submitting to one another promotes the idea of being a “team player”.
* So the Christian must not be thoughtless, but think of others. The Christian must not be individualistic or self-assertive to the extent of negatively affecting others. The Christian must not be self-seeking.
* We must have a “team attitude.” We must be happy when someone else succeeds or does well.
* **Out of reverence for Christ** - This is an important point, because Paul repeats the idea the following lessons.
* The words in the fear of God describe what should be our motive for submitting to one another. We should submit to one another.
* Let us see ourselves no longer in an individualistic way, but as a unit, as a company or a battalion out of respect for God the Father and out of respect for Jesus Christ.
* The motive for submission is not merely human kindness. The motive for submission is not the law of God. The motive for submission is respect for Jesus Christ.
* If we respect Jesus, we then should submit to one another because we love Jesus. Paul uses the term reverence (holy fear) in this passage.
* It is a fear of disappointing Jesus. That is totally compatible with love. When you really respect someone, you care about pleasing him or her, and you are afraid to disappoint that person. Amen.

**Conclusion**

 God’s children are those who live with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source of joy, peace, thanksgiving and heavenly life. May God touch us and help us to follow God’s example so that we would walk in God’s love, live as God’s holy people, live as light in the Lord, and live a joyful and thankful life in the Holy Spirit.

**One word: God’s children!**