

Ephesians 5:1-15

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[0 : 00] Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to lead the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it. See what four of that courts above.

Imitation is everywhere. It's around us. All around us. And even dictates our own moves. Our next moves. You might ask, okay, what exactly do you mean by imitation? Merriam-Webster has this to say. Imitation is the act of copying or imitating someone or something.

Culturally speaking, we look into it. Where can we see imitation in our culture? A personal favorite of mine. Country music. But is it just me or do they all seem to talk about the same thing, right? A guy, his girl, his truck, and a dog. What about this hairstyle? I didn't make it up, right? I found it online. I thought it looked nice. So I copied it.

[1 : 08] Everyone seems to want granite countertops and a white picket fence, right? But when you walk into your local Starbucks and you hear the person in front of you say, I need my Ice Grande Skimbo Calate with extra whip.

What about social media? How many more forms could there be? You can tweet it, retweet it, pin it, like it, blog it, or you can make a YouTube video about it. But let's face it, when it comes to things or ideas in culture, you're probably not the first one to do it or think about it.

Culturally speaking, everyone and everything imitates. Someone already has. It's been done. In and of themselves, these types of imitations we just talked about, that you see around your house and your town or in your wardrobe, aren't bad.

They just show us a reality of how culture grows and develops and changes. But imitation is a coin with two sides. When speaking on a personal level, there are many forms of sinful imitation.

For those of you who don't know, I'm a nurse. I work in the emergency room, which, I mean, I've guessed is a fast-paced, high-stress environment. Anything can come in the door. Sometimes I have the chance to speak about my faith at work, or about church plant, or even share the gospel message.

[2 : 32] But many times, work brings out the worst in me. I wind up looking and acting more like my co-workers than a follower of Christ. Time after time, this happens.

I imitate their actions and words and thoughts instead of imitating those of Christ. Sarcastic response here, a harsh tone there, feelings of anger and bitterness, rage deep inside, external frustrations, talking down on patients, family members, or other staff members.

I feed into cultures. Stand up for yourself. Make sure everyone likes you. Prove your point. Act just like everyone else in certain situations.

I look no different, even though I'm a follower of Christ. I come home from work asking, Who was I today? Why did I act like that? What happened?

Could others recognize Christ in me today? How about you? Do you have an awareness of your tendencies? Do you surprise yourself with your imitation of the world's attitudes, thoughts, and actions?

[3 : 43] Where does this happen to you? Maybe it's at work, bickering, fighting with co-workers, putting down others to build up yourself, working on a certain project or a certain team with a hidden agenda.

Maybe it's at home with your interaction and treatment of your children or your spouse. Do you work hard and chip in around the house or let someone else do it later?

Do you put on a church face and then turn into some incredible hulk or dictator at home? How about with your friends or socially?

Crude jokes or dirty language to get a laugh? Are you viewed as successful by your peers? Or cool, but for the wrong reasons? Do you hide from evangelism or talking about your faith?

What about the places that you hang out? Do they look like the places that honor the Lord? The people that you hang out with, do they honor the Lord? Friends, before moving on, before we can really see and understand this passage, we need to understand that you and I are fully wrapped in life and culture of imitation.

[4 : 57] Whether we like it or not, whether it's fully intentional or seemingly more subconscious. As a human, but even more so as a follower of Christ, our lives are lived in one of two ways.

In worldly imitation or in Christ-like imitation. Friends, if you get one thing out of this today, let it be this phrase. Please write this down.

Walk as Christ, sorry, walk as Christ-like imitators, loving God, loving others. Again, walk as Christ-like imitators, loving God, loving others.

The good thing is that we're not alone in our lives in imitation. In fact, the Apostle Paul has some words on imitation in chapter 5 of Ephesians, as Megan read earlier.

But to really understand where he's going, we have to get a grip of where Paul has brought us from. Last week we heard from Dave in Ephesians chapter 4.

[6 : 04] Verse 17 said, No longer walk as the Gentiles do in darkness. But why? Verse 18, Because they're darkened by their understanding. They're called to, Verse 22, Put off the old self.

In 24, Put on the new. The text in the second half of chapter 4 is concerning the church's imitation of the Gentiles. It is a list of what the behaviors of the worldly imitator look like.

Paul pleads with the Ephesian church, Put off the old. Ceasing your imitation of the world. But he doesn't stop there. He gives what I feel is one of the greatest exhortations in all of his epistles.

Realize, Paul's speaking to the Ephesian church. Yes, but he's speaking to you and I. His exhortation, in the verses that follow, are for us.

And friends, they're not something to be taken lightly. I want us to look at Paul's words in verses 1-14 of chapter 5 in three sections.

[7 : 11] Write these down. Number one, the exhortation. Number two, an example. And number three, the equipping.

Number one, the exhortation. Number two, an example. And number three, the equipping. So first, let's look at the exhortation.

This is our being called to righteous imitation. The exhortation is our being called to righteous imitation. Let's read verses 1 and 2.

Therefore, Paul says, the imitators of God, as beloved children, walk in love, as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering, sacrifice to God.

Clearly, we can see by looking at these two verses, especially the first couple words, Paul is urging you and I to be imitators of God. If you missed that part, read it again.

[8 : 16] It's right there. And it's rooted, the word therefore, is rooted in the statement in chapter 4. Where Paul has just told us about what it looks like to live the new life.

What it looks like to walk in the new life. Therefore, the answer to how we do this is be imitators of God.

verse 32 of chapter 4 says, at the end says, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

The new lives we live, the new walk we walk, is because God has forgiven us.

There's no other way to do it. We will never walk in a new life if we don't see the grace that we've been given. So Paul says, therefore, be imitators.

Okay, cool. How? Well, what does he say? As Christ. But he goes a step further to describe in what way we're called to imitate as Christ.

[9 : 25] He says, walk in love as Christ. Walk in love is translated live in love, which actually reveals much more of an intentionality than carefully directed style of living.

You don't just occasionally walk in love as a Christian. We live always in love. This command isn't optional.

It's a lifestyle. It's a way to live. Verses 1 and 2 reveal two broad ways in which Christ is an imitator of God. Number one, by loving the Father. Number two, by loving others.

Let's look at the first. Loving the Father. Consider this, friends. Christ, God's Son, came to earth to accomplish the Father's will. Became a fragrant aroma to God in his pursuit.

That's how Christ loved the Father. Let's turn to the second aspect of Christ walking in love. His loving others. Christ accomplished this by giving himself up for us, mankind, the one whom he came to earth to save and redeem.

[10:32] It's through the lens of Christ's life examples of loving the Father and loving others that we're going to be able to grasp the next 12 verses of chapter 5. Now that we've seen the exhortation are being called to righteous imitation.

Let's look at an example. The call to flee sinful imitation. Verses 3 to 5. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among the saints. Let there be no filthiness or foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place. Instead, let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or whose covetousness, that is, an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. As believers, when walking in darkness, imitating the world, we're not imitating Christ's example. We're going to look at two ways. Remember, loving God, loving others. The first is loving God. Walking in darkness, I'm sorry, the first is loving others. Walking in darkness and not loving others means blatant disregard for others.

[11:53] These two verses are three and four very much so a continuation of insight into chapter four, the description of the one who imitates the world. We saw examples in chapter four of impurity, hardness of heart, futile minds, anger, corrupting talk.

What do we see in chapter five? It's a continuation. Sexual morality from which we get our word *parnea*, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, stupid words, crude joking, vulgar talk. You might look at this list and say, I'm not really into those. It's cool, but I don't really struggle with those, but I'm glad I didn't mention fill in the blank or fill in the other blank.

We can't miss the fact that Paul didn't choose, Paul could have chosen any number of sins to reference here. This isn't a special list of sins by any means.

So why does Paul use these sins? Why does Paul name these ones? This is the answer. It's because they're harmful to others. This list is made up of sins which are specifically harmful to other people.

[13:09] the one who exhibits these traits is thinking only of himself and in many cases intentionally destructive to those around him. Let's look closer.

Verse 3. Sexual morality would be an impurity hurt a spouse, a family, and 1 Corinthians they hurt a church, a friendship, selfish and self-gratifying flesh.

On a different note, the second section, the way we talk, the way we speak puts others down, causes them to stumble, disturbs their thought life, makes them question their identity and who they are and who Christ has made them and where God has them in life.

How did Christ act towards others? Matthew 9 says he had compassion on the hungry crowds.

John 4 says he talked to the leopards and prostitutes society's rejects.

Again, Matthew 9 says he healed the sick and the lame. Friends, he was nailed to a cross for the ones who rejected him as king and still reject him. Isaiah 53, 5 says he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.

[14:22] Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds were healed. Christ thought of himself blessed. During his time on earth he revealed his deep, deep love for others.

So remember the other half of admitting like Christ. First is loving others and second is loving God or loving the Father. Walking in darkness and not loving God means dishonoring God with our lifestyles.

Let's read verses 5 to 7. 6 to 7. Let no one deceive you with empty words for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Therefore, do not be partakers with them. Paul uses some pretty strong confusing language here. Seemingly confusing.

We need to know first of all, friends, what Paul is not saying. Paul is not saying that Christians who sin are not Christians. It won't be allowed into the kingdom.

[15:32] We know that this isn't true from many places in Scripture. After all, paraphrasing one commentator, how many of us have never sinned even one time in any of these ways since beginning our journey?

There should be no answer. what is being said in verses 5 through 7 is that the one who lives his or her life enveloped in sin, the text says, sexually immoral, impure, who is covetous, that is an idolater, abusing grace intentionally, or using God's grace as a reason to sin more, or the one who lives a lifestyle of sinning without repentance or conviction, is exhibiting the characteristics of one

who doesn't know the Father and who doesn't have a relationship with Him.

Therefore, that person will not inherit the kingdom. We know this, that those without a relationship with Christ will not have eternal life. The text goes on to say, let no one deceive you with empty words.

The Gnostics of the Bible time believe that fleshly sins were different and detached from the soul, that they were acceptable. We, however, know that our bodies are the Lord's temple, His dwelling place.

So we know the statement's untrue. In essence, in these three verses, five through seven, Paul is saying this, Ephesians, why do you sin as though you are one who is not redeemed by Christ's blood?

[17:10] Why do you choose to imitate the world as you do? You're acting as those who are not redeemed, like those who do not imitate the Father, don't know to imitate the Father, do not become partakers with them.

We walk in darkness, not loving God, through our lifestyle of dishonor to Him. So we've seen an agreed fact that we imitate.

Before moving on, I think it's important to gain insight into why we imitate. The Association for Psychological Science has this to say. A new study of Australian preschoolers and Kalahari Bushmen children finds that a particular kind of imitation, over-imitation, in which a child copies everything an adult shows them, not just the steps that lead to an outcome, appear to be a universal human activity.

Researchers believe the work sheds light on how humans develop in transient culture. Psychologist Mark Nielsen had this to say. Scientists have been finding this odd effect where children will copy everything that they see an adult demonstrate to them, even if there's no clear, obvious reasons as to why these actions are being relevant.

Interesting. We imitate because that's how we grew up. That's how we've been taught. That's what we've learned. That's what we're surrounded by in culture. Because of the presence of imitation, so many times we find ourselves acting, talking, and thinking in ways that we don't even want to and never intended to.

[18:53] As the study showed, actions that are irrelevant and end up oftentimes leading to sin and regret. We wind up living and looking exactly like what we don't want to do.

Because it's been laid out in front of us. It's been done before. It's easily recognizable and attainable. But why do we do it? Like the children described in the research study, why do we as Christians act in ways that don't make sense and aren't consistent with Christ-like imitation? religion? Lev S. Vygotsky, a Russian developmental psychologist, born in 1896, through his study and research came to this conclusion.

Through others, we become ourselves. Through others, we become ourselves. We become what we imitated.

The way I live my life has been dictated by my past, and oftentimes I see it dictating my future. I'm stuck. So often I live as a person I don't want.

[20:02] Who am I? I think this is where as Christians we can start to lose perspective. We see our sins. We see where they came from.

We don't know why we're sinning. seeing our sins can push us in two ways. The first of which is our trying to fix our problems.

Seeing our sins can push us in two ways. The first of which is trying to fix our problems, which I as a medical professional would like to call fixing our symptoms. What if your doctor only treated your symptoms?

What if he never really treated your illness? You have pneumonia? I'm just going to give you some medicine for your cough. Not antibiotics at all.

Not for the infection. You don't have to be any type of medical person to know that it's not going to work. You're just fixing the symptoms for a while.

[21:07] Actually, due to the days and days of lapsed time and the missing treatment for the true problem, you'll actually be doing much worse than when we first began. How about a tire that's low on pressure?

Our Honda currently has that problem. So I'm living this out right now. I don't know how that works. It keeps going to the right.

And so what do I do? Of course I turn the steering wheel a little more. The problem, it's gone, right? And that starts to bug me. I should fix this problem. But every time I get in the car, I get to put air in the tire.

And so every time I have to turn the wheel to the left to avoid swerving to the right. Time after time after time. It's been weeks. It's been months. I'm not really fixing the problem.

I'm just controlling the symptoms of a low PSI. so I keep turning and turning and the tire inevitably probably keeps losing and losing more and more air.

[22 : 16] Why did I do that? As believers, we do the same things. We view our sins as symptoms so we treat the symptoms. We make little surface level adjustments so that we don't quite exhibit those same things.

And we veer ourselves back onto the straight and narrow with the white knuckle approach. Holding on. We wind up going back right to the things, friends. We've all seen it in our lives.

A thought process that tells us we only need to change a little bit. We become our own saviors.

Become our own gods. And our spiral towards a self-reconciling salvation becomes embedded in our hearts and our minds.

As we continue to fail, time after time, to imitate that which is righteous. What's our hope? Living in a world and culture of sinful and immoral limitation.

Living lives at a time that has proven to be unrighteous and unloving for God and others. What is there to do? First, friends, let's go back to the basics.

[23 : 33] back to our foundation. Confess her sins, repent, and seek heart change. The joy of the imitator of Christ accepts the goodness of the Father with a joyful thanksgiving and a deep offering to please him.

This needs to come first. He doesn't try to fix himself, but acknowledges he can't fix himself. He cannot be his own savior. After all, it's never our attempt to save ourselves, but our confession of sin and accepting the gift of God's grace through Christ that gave us our salvation in the first place. So we looked at the first way our sin helps us to push us. The second way our sin helps to push us in a helpful way is that it can push us towards the deeper truth of what's really going on.

the deeper truth, friends, is that we need to work on our hearts, on our relationship with the Father. As we finish the last few verses of chapter 5, verses 8 through 13, give us the answers as to how. It says this, walk, I'm sorry, for at one time you were in darkness, but now you're light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

[25 : 00] the fruit of light is found in all that's good and right and true, and try to discern what's pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

It's shameful to speak of the things they do in secret, but when anything is exposed to the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, awake, O sleeper, rise from the dead, Christ will shine on you.

So we've looked at the exhortation, we've looked at the example, now let's look at the equipping. The equipping is this, living and applying Christ-like innovations.

The equipping is living and applying Christ-like invitation. we just read verses 8-14 say, walk as children of life.

There it is. Maybe you're saying, yeah, cool, thanks for that, now we'll do it, yeah, I'm ready. But wait, how do I actually do that?

[26 : 14] How many times have you read scripture or heard a sermon and you come away and you're saying, yeah, great, can't wait, right on, give me some evidence and you get home and you're like, I have no idea how to do this.

Friends, scripture is meant to equip us, so let's be equipped. The answer is in the text. How do I walk as a child of light? Just like the book of Ephesians, just like living as Christians, walking as a child of light comes by, number one, understanding the truth of who you are, number two, understanding that with this truth, the Bible shows us how to be changed.

First, we'll look at understanding who you are. There's two parts to it. Being a child and being of light. Being a child, verse one says of chapter five, you notice I skipped over it.

It says, the imitators of God, as beloved children, those of you are parents, we've seen how much you love your kids. Think of all the things parents do and all they invest, taking care, loving their child at all costs.

Parents love, love their children, unlike anything else we see anywhere. Jules and I are having our baby here in the next few weeks. And I feel like I've grown so much to love my child deeply, but I haven't even met her.

[27 : 57] Friends, God takes that to a greater level. Remember in the Featians of the world, He chose us and Him before the foundation of the world. He loved us long before He met us.

He knew what our lives would look like. Even with our sin and contempt shown towards Him, He knew everything about our lives. What a Father.

Being of light, friends, you've been adopted by Almighty God, King Jesus. He's chosen you, He's redeemed you, He's changed your life for all time, He's washed you clean, He's blotted out your sins.

The hymn says, sin had left a crimson stain. He washed you white as snow. He's brought you from darkness to light. You never bring your salvation.

Stop feeling like you're condemned. Children of light are no longer condemned. Romans 8 says, there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[29 : 04] The child of light sees his sin, repents, accepts the Father's forgiveness. forgiveness. Stop acting like your sin is too big for God to forgive. Stop trying to fix yourself.

Be your own Savior. Stop feeling so condemned that you shy away from the most loving, caring Father that ever was, is, and will be.

Just like the story of the prodigal son who took all that was his, his inheritance, he left home, and whose father longed for his return.

The passage of weeks of this, while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, felt compassion, and ran and embraced and kissed him.

So many times, we are the greatest inhibition to our growth because we won't forgive ourselves, we won't let it go. We keep ourselves from debtful relationship with Jesus.

[30 : 10] We're not waiting for him to move, we're waiting for us. Jesus culture is a song that says this, if grace is an ocean, we're all sinking.

Praise be to God. Because we're children of life, we're able to walk as Christ-like imitators. Only because we're children of life, we're able to walk like Christ like them in world.

Which, as we've seen, means two things, friends. Loving God, loving others. Okay, so how do we actually walk like Christ? How do we do it?

Through the same process, friends, of how God has saved us. How God has redeemed our lives from the pit, saved us from eternal death. This is part of the process of the gospel.

God's plan to save men and have relationship with him all through Jesus. We're going to look at three ways in the text in which we can be Christ-like imitators and walk as children of life.

[31 : 19] It's in reverse order, but the first one is found in verse 11. Number one, exposing darkness. Number two, discerning what's pleasing to the Lord.

Number three, displaying the fruits of life. Now remember I said, these are three facets of how we have gained our salvation, how God has given us our salvation.

How? Exposing darkness. Friends, everyone started out at this point, God has exposed our sins. Sometimes the most humiliating, degrading thing that we can think of in our prideful minds.

God has exposed our sins by exposing darkness. And if he would have just left us there, it would have been just. The second thing God did in verse 10 was he told us, helped us to discern what's pleasing to him.

Friends, after he exposed our sin, he revealed his desire for his children to begin a relationship and honor him with their lives. He exposed darkness, he helped us discern what's pleasing to the Lord, and finally he helps us display the fruits of life.

[32 : 43] If you're a Christian in this room today, you have been given the gift of the Spirit. And only through the Spirit are you able to honor him and bring him his due glory.

These three truths of the gospel are present in all of Scripture. God's good news of Jesus transcends time. It's applicable then to the Ephesians just as much as it's applicable now to us.

That's exciting. So here are some objective ways that we can apply these three principles through loving God and loving others. Number one, through loving God.

Here's how we expose darkness. Friends, Romans 12, 1 and 2 teaches us that we need to be renewed and transformed.

The Bible refines and transforms. Is this your habit? The point of Scripture is that it first informs then transforms. What's this book worth?

[33 : 47] What's it worth? If our truths that we find in here are just stored up in our brains, put somewhere on the back burner. Oh yeah, I remember that.

I was in a sauna. I went to people. I remember that life changing concept that Christ taught. I don't really know how to use it. I don't really apply it. Not using your Bible is like going to a new place and having directions, but just not using them.

It's foolish. So being transformed by the Scriptures and then the second way we can expose darkness is by prayer. Friends, if we're not asking God to reveal our sins, what are we doing? If you're not asking God to have him show you how detrimental your sin is in your relationship to him, what are you doing?

We need to be brought to light. We need to confess our sins and accept grace. Friends, accept grace. We love God by exposing darkness. We love God by pleasing the Lord.

[35 : 02] Know what that life is and then live it. We learned in chapter four, Paul defines for us what it means to walk in our new life. Is this your pattern?

Have you put off the old? Have you escaped from the darkness and have you put on the new? Friends, we please the Lord by walking in our new life.

We also please the Lord by abiding by what he says in Psalm 51 which says, the Lord doesn't want sacrifice, but he wants a broken spirit on his right part.

I encourage you to read that chapter of Psalms. Is this your prayer? Is this what you desire?

Friends, we love God by exposing darkness.

We love God by pleasing the Lord. We love God by fruits of light, exhibiting the fruits, choosing to walk in the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5, says that for us.

[36 : 08] Know them, live them, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, faithfulness. The fruits of life means exhibiting Christ-like characteristics.

Friends, if there's anything or anyone that you study in the Bible, let one of those, preferably the first one, the one you know most of, be Christ Jesus himself.

Study him, know him, imitate him. What if we imitate Christ like we imitate other things and other people and our culture? Fruits of light are choosing to walk in the Spirit, imitating Christ in his character, and then finally, friends, pray.

Hebrews 11, 6 says, God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. What father does not give good things to his child that his child desires?

friends, pray that you may exhibit the fruits of light. So besides loving God and walking as children of light, we can also love others.

[37 : 18] Friends, this is exactly what Christ did. Imitate him, exposing people's darkness with your light, regardless of where you feel like you are in the Christian walk, being a child of light, means that there's someone out there that actually can learn to be blessed by what you have to say.

And there's someone out there that needs to hear what the Lord's doing in your heart and your heart. Just as you've been blessed by others, so others can be blessed by you.

Friends, we need to grow together with believers. We need to have significant relationships with them. James 5, 16, 17 says, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. We love others by exposing their darkness and we love others by helping them realize the things that are pleasing to the Lord.

Teach, read scripture together, take time and talk with them, and make sure to follow up. We love others by encouraging them to exhibit their fruits of life.

[38 : 41] Don't just point out sin, encourage them to good fruit. Chapter 4, the first half, talks about unity of the church being promoted by each other.

This brings the other people to glory to God. The final thing is consider Christ's pursuit of the twelve, of the twelve disciples. Think about the time and prayers and energy and efforts that he invested in their lives.

Truly, Christ's love for others is the most importance to him. Christ's pursuit and love for others is worth imitating. And friends, the result of walking as children of light, the results are infinite.

here's why. Because by doing this we create an ever-flowing cascade which brings glory to God, thus life to the believer, thus blessing to the church, thus glory to God.

Shoreline, walk as imitators of Christ, loving God and loving others. The final section. Verse 14, the last verse, says this, for anything that's light becomes visible.

[40 : 00] Therefore, it says, awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. This final section will leave us with a message of hope.

If you're leaving today with a message of condemnation, if you're leaving today feeling condemned and thinking more about your sin than the grace you've been shown, you've misheard what I'm saying.

Go back and read this passage. This is an incredibly life-changing passage. Paul, leave us with a message of hope. Although we will fail, we will sin, we will at times imitate the world, not Christ. It's who we are as imperfect people. Paul gave this hope. We just read it. Awake, O sleep, or rise from the dead. Christ will shine on you. Open your eyes.

See your sin. Arise from the deeds of darkness, from death. Christ will reveal his will. And as you begin to imitate him once again, he'll reveal to you he is a well-pleased and loving father.

[41 : 15] How about you personally? I'm going to give you an example of four types of people. Where do you think you fall in this continuum? Maybe you see yourself as person number one.

There's no rank or order to these. You've heard the discussion on the imitation of God, the world, and all that stuff. It doesn't really make sense. You're not really sure about the Bible.

Talk like life change. have you considered starting a relationship with Jesus? Something I'd love to talk to you about. the good news of Jesus is that for all time God has longed for a relationship with man.

Then man has sinned. And God for years and years has pursued man in an attempt to regain that relationship, that perfect relationship.

And man has pushed him away. the once and for all that God did was sending Christ to save us. Acceptance in Christ, faith that his righteousness covers any amount of your sin, is what it means to be a believer in Christ, to be a follower in Christ.

[42 : 36] This is the decision that you can make today. I'm going to be happy to talk to you about that after this night. So maybe you're person number two.

You've accepted Christ as your Savior, but you're still new to Christianity. That's okay. You're not quite sure about imitating Christ.

Is it worth it? I mean, I'm kind of confused. Maybe you find yourself looking more like the world than Christ. That's okay. We all start somewhere.

But you understand your faith in Jesus. Friends, and that is the greatest decision you can make. You've created your foundation. From here you grow.

Don't be ashamed to grow. Don't be upset that you're sinning. Instead, pursue imitation of Christ. Maybe you're person three, a believer who has just not quite fully surrendered a couple specific areas of their life to the Lord.

[43 : 43] You know what these areas are. You've seen them. Habitually fall into them. Maybe it's daily, maybe it's weekly, maybe it's monthly. You fall into the same word imitation time and time again.

Maybe you need to imitate Christ in specific areas. Maybe you're person number four who has fully embraced imitation of Christ.

you're not sinless, you don't claim to be, but you don't find yourself often imitating the world. Have you started encouraging others in the same way?

When asked what the greatest commandment is, Christ said, love the word of God, fill your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Friend, are you taking care of your Christian brothers and sisters?

are you exposing their deeds and urging them towards the light? Could you be doing more in that area? Could you be praying more? Could you be pursuing them more?

[44 : 49] Wherever you find yourself, regardless of number one through four, Christ has died for your sins and offers as much grace as he offers any other person in those categories.

Friends, he's called all of us to walk a life of imitation of him. The Imitators of Christ, loving God, loving God. I want to leave us with these, pondering these dreams as a church.

What would your personal lives look like if you walked in imitation of Christ? How about your marriages or dating relationships, evangelism, interaction with non-believers, non-Christians?

What would our trips look like? What would our geographic area look like? Friends, what would our world look like? My parting question to you today is this.

Christ has shown us imitation. What will you do about it? Pray with me. God, you are so good to have sent us Jesus, your son.

[46 : 03] You are so good to have taken sinful people and shown us grace. Teach us to accept that. Teach us to change.

God, remind us that we are not here to control our own symptoms. We are here to fall on our knees before your throne of grace and accept the change and accept that our relationship with you needs to change.

Lord, teach us who you are, teach us who we are in you, and then teach us how to have life and heart change. Teach us to be Christ-like in the who is loving God and loving us.