**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Walking Worthy: Walk in Love**

**Ephesians 5:1-2**

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 We are continuing our series in Ephesians, Brought to Life; Brought Together. As we have said, Ephesians can be divided in two sections, chapters one through three describe what *God has done in us* through Christ while chapters four through six call us to *live out what God has done in us*, what Paul calls walking worthy. The command to walk worthy is rooted in what God has already done in us. As we begin chapter five today, Paul commands us to imitate God by walking in love. So, let’s look at 5:1-2 today our message entitled, Walk in Love.

 The two verses make one point, walk in love. First we see the Principle: Walk in Love, Paul commands us to imitate God as his beloved children by walking in love. Then he describes the Pattern for Love: Christ’s Sacrificial Love, walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us. So todays big idea is be loving. The Christian life can be summarized as be loving.

**The Principle of Love**

 Therefore, tells us Paul is drawing a conclusion. Since the new self has been created after the likeness of God, *therefore* be imitators of God. But to imitate God we need to know what God is like. But how do we know what God is like? We come to know what God is like by knowing him primarily through Scripture. What God is like and what he does is found primarily through his word so we must engage Scripture. I say engage, because we must do more than just read it. We must think about what we read and what it means and how it relates to my life.

 Paul describes how we imitate God in the next phrase, as beloved children. He does not say be imitators of God, children; he says be imitators of God as beloved children. We cannot imitate God apart from being children who are loved by him. We are not just God’s children, we are his beloved children. There are unloved children and this often scars them for life. But God is not an unloving Father. His love heals the wounds from any lack of human love we have. How do we know and experience God’s love? When Jesus prayed for his disciples he said, "Father, I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word (John 17:20)." It is God’s design that we come to faith by seeing the love of Christ in the words of those who knew him. We see and experience God’s love through the writers of Scripture. And God does not just love all of us but he loves you in particular. He set his affections on you in eternity and adopted you to be his child (1:4-5). Let that sink in, feel the wonder and weight of that truth. It is meant to be deeply emotional and transformational. Be imitators of God because you are his beloved child.

 Then Paul describes imitating God specifically as walk in love (2). This is the fifth time we have seen the word walk in Ephesians. It describes how we used to walk in our sin (2:2); to walk in the good works which God prepared beforehand for us (2:10); to walk in a manner worthy of our calling (4:1); walk as children of Light (5:8) and walk in wisdom (5:15). Walk is a metaphor describing what characterizes one’s life. To walk in love means that your life is characterized by love. He gives us the greatest pattern for love, walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. To understand God the Father’s love more clearly, we need to look at Christ, who is the ultimate imitator of the Father (John 14:9) as we consider the pattern for love.

**The Pattern for Love**

 The greatest example or pattern of love was Jesus’ death on the cross (Jn 3:16). Or, as Paul tells husbands to “love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:25).” Christ’s sacrificial love is the pattern for us to follow. There are four characteristics of Christ’s love that I want us to see. First is the depth of Christ’s love, seen in his giving himself for you. Christ giving himself is the demonstration of his love. Second is the cost of Christ’s love, seen in his giving himself. He gave more than money, time, inconvenience, even suffering, he sacrificed himself. Third is the focus of Christ’s love, for you. Christ loved you and gave himself for you. Paul is writing to the church, about the church. He gave himself up for you personally in particular.

 But if Christ is only our pattern, it leaves us powerless to follow his example. To walk in love, we must look to Christ who is not only our supreme pattern but who is also our ultimate sacrificial substitute for sin. His death was a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. That leads us to our fourth characteristic, the effectiveness of Christ’s love. The Father was pleased with the Sons act of sacrificial love. Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. When God looked upon the love that his Son poured out for us on the cross, it was a fragrant sacrifice, accepted by him as a substitute for sin. God the Father loved the Son’s love of us. And because it was acceptable, it frees us from sin and selfishness so we can walk in love, a self-sacrificial love. Receiving God’s love as his children and the Sons loving through the cross empowers us to walk in love.

**Life Group Questions:**

1. What is does it mean to imitate? Give an example from your life?
2. How are we to imitate God?
3. What is the significance of Paul saying for us to imitate God as beloved children?
4. What does it mean for us to be loved by God as his children?
5. What does it mean to engage the bible rather than just read it?
6. Is it necessary to *like* everyone you love? How do these two qualities relate to one another?
7. Why is commitment to a local body of believers foundational for loving relationships? When is it right to leave a church?
8. How does God’s love for us free us to love others?
9. How is God speaking to you in this message?
10. How does this passage relate to you own discipleship?
11. How does this message help you in making disciples?