

My Life--An Original Copy

My Life--part 4

March 10, 2013

Ephesians 5

DAY 1

Ephesians 4 tells us that your life is an original. You create the life you live by the choices you make. You may feel like life has gotten away from you, that you're caught up in a storm of someone else's making. Actually, you get to still make choices, and those choices help shape your future and who you are, the story of your life.

You are the one that leads your life. I can't lead your life. Your parents can't lead your life. We'd like to blame a few others for the sorry mess we're in, but in the final analysis, it's *your* life. No matter whether our plights be easy or hard, you still have to make choices about how you'll respond. And out of those decisions comes a story.

You have the opportunity to write what that life will be.

Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children² 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.

1. Though your life is an "original," our life is to be a copy! Of whom?

2. What do you think Paul means by being an imitator of God?

3. When my brother and I were young, we tried to imitate our dad. My sister tried to emulate our mother. Have you tried to imitate another person? Who? And what traits did you try to emulate?

4. Paul says we are to imitate God as "dearly loved children." Is that how you see yourself in God's eyes? If not, what "picture" do you have? How do *you think* God sees you?

5. Our perspective can be easily skewed as to our "love-ability." Place a check mark next to any item below that tends to skew your vision from yourself as "dearly loved children."

Your father was harsh, hard, distant, etc.

Your past failure(s) to follow God haunts you.

Your present sin.

You believe God has not been good to you.

Christians (or so-called Christians) have let you down.

Other: _____

6. The truth IS: YOU are a DEARLY BELOVED CHILD!!!! Thank God for this truth. Live it today!

DAY 2

Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children² 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.

1. Yesterday we explored imitating God as dearly loved children. The Greek word, "dearly" implies affection and tenderness. How does God's love as *tender* and *affectionate* strike you?

2. The bible also describes God as "receiving" us, in a similar manner to a father, down on one knee, beckoning his son to run to him with great delight. Can you see God receiving you this way?

3. If you can't see God that way, does that mean that you are left out of God's love?

4. You will either take the truth that you are "dearly loved children" as:

a. "True" but not "real" to you.

b. "True" and "real" to you because you feel it.

c. "True" and "real" to you whether or not you feel it, given the ways that our thinking has been skewed by the traumas of our lives.

5. Which of the items in question #4 HAS BEEN most true of you?

6. Which of the items in question #4 do you want to be most true of you?

7. Which of the items in question #4 do you think God wants to be most true of you? Why?

8. God is leading His people to *trust* His love irrespective of our feelings or skewed thinking. What would be some benefits of this?

DAY 3

Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² 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.

1. "Be imitators" is one Greek word, "mimitate." Take off the first "m" and what English word do you have?

2. A number of years ago, several of us drew characters on sheets of paper using a heavy, black Marksalot. We were able to trace copies of these characters simply by placing a blank sheet of paper over the original and *tracing* what we saw on the original.

3. We are to "*trace*" God's character onto our lives, our "sheets of paper." For each of the verses below, jot down what it would mean to trace God's character onto your life:

1 Peter 1:15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Luke 6:36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Ephesians 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

1 John 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous.

4. Imitating God is a tall order. Which of the items above would be the easiest for you?

5. Which of the items in question #3 would be the hardest for you? Why?

6. Pray for God's power to be at work in you, as you seek to imitate Him!

DAY 4

1. God calls us to imitate Him. That may seem like a daunting task. It is! The apostle Paul wrote to the new church at Corinth. Read part of his instruction, below...

1 Cor. 11:1 Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

2. If you were a member of the church in Corinth, would following someone's example that you can see be easier than following God's example that you cannot "see?"

3. What would you want to see in Paul to imitate?

4. If you are a leader in your church, this is also your mandate! You are to set the pace for others to follow. How would that change your perspective as to your church involvement?

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5. Ephesians 5:2 says we are live a life of love.

a. Does this kind of love depend on your feeling "love?"

b. We live intentional love. What would that mean?

6. What is our pattern of love to be? (Look back at Eph. 5:2).

7. God's love for us is sacrificial. Is there a price too high that God would not pay for us?

8. Is there someone in your life that is difficult to love? Intentional, sacrificial love is your calling. What can you do this week to make an investment of love?

DAY 5

Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children² 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.

1. Why is love to be intentional?

2. Love doesn't depend on your feelings. Our culture thinks otherwise. "If you don't feel loving, isn't it hypocritical to act loving?" Let me ask you some questions:

"If I don't feel like getting out of bed when the alarm goes off is it hypocritical to still get out of bed?"

"If I don't feel like doing my taxes, is it hypocritical to work on my taxes anyway?"

"If I don't feel like being responsible, is it hypocritical to act responsibly anyway?"

3. Love is not just one of many commandments. Read the following passage:

Romans 13:8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.⁹ The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

4. In Romans 13:8, how is the importance of loving one another compare to fulfilling "the law," the Old Testament?

5. In Romans 13:9, how is the importance of loving one another compared with the Ten Commandments?

6. In Romans 13:10, how is the importance of loving one another compared to the Old Testament?

7. Look back at Eph. 5:1-2. What is the effect when we love like God?

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.

8. Love is not "convenient." It requires a sacrifice. It is costly. Are you willing to love like God our Father?