

## FOLLOWERS OF GOD

(Eph 5:1-2)

### A. In the Ephesians letter, Paul described the character of a Christian.

1. His description begins in verse 17 of chapter 4 & continues through the end of the letter.
2. The key verses are found in (4:20-21).
3. Paul was describing the character of Christ, & thus the character that Christ demands of us.

[Paul began chapter 5 with seven statements (admonitions) that will aid us in building the character Paul described.]

#### I. “Be followers of God” (1a)

##### A. What does it mean to follow God?

1. Peter, Andrew, James, John, Matthew, & Philip left their livelihood when Jesus said, “Follow Me” (Matt 4:17-20; 9:9; Jn 1:43).
2. **Who Will Follow Jesus:** “Listening for His orders, ready to obey; who will follow Jesus serving Him today?”
  - a. Many think it’s a good idea to *follow Jesus*, but they just don’t want to follow Him THAT closely.
  - b. They don’t mind *following Him* so long as they can do that when & how they want to (cf. Matt 8:19-22; Mk 8:34-37), but to follow Him like the disciples/apostles – that’s out of the question.

### B. The word “followers” or “imitators” (NKJV) means to mimic someone.

1. As when a little girl mimics her mother in the kitchen – it’s a mark of respect & love.

2. Imitation is the first stage in molding behavior that will come natural to us later in life.
3. Imitating God means looking to Christ as the benchmark (standard) of proper behavior.
  - a. And we will have to make a tremendous sacrifice to imitate Him.

---

**Jn 12:24-26** – Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground & dies, it remains alone; **but if it dies, it produces much grain.** 25 He who loves his life will lose it, & **he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.** 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; & where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

---

[A death must occur before we can even begin to follow God; we must kill the desire we have to be the director of our own lives.

**That's** right, we must become children again.]

## II. “As dear children” (1b)

### A. All children are “dear” or “beloved”.

1. But in the OT, God’s children became “rebellious children” (Isa 30:1).
2. They became “children of wrath” by fulfilling the desires of the flesh & mind (Eph 2:3).
3. But God has always *only* wanted “dear” or “beloved children” – children He can love & trust to always follow His wisdom.
4. Those who receive Christ...are given “the right to become children of God” (Jn 1:12).
5. We are to give every effort & all mental energy to being “obedient children” (1 Pet 1:14).

[Do you follow God? **Are** you His dear child? **This** is what we must do...]

### III. **“Walk in love”** (2a)

#### A. **Love** is the very essence of God’s nature or character (1 Jn 4:16).

1. To love means to do what is in the best interest of others (not what interests others).
  - a. To walk in love you may have to correct someone in a spirit of gentleness.
  - b. But to love means to do for others the very thing Christ would do in your place.
2. It is natural, normal & expected that God’s children will have His nature.

#### B. **Jesus** said to be in His kingdom we “must be born again...of water & the Spirit.”

1. One is “born” into a family, so to see the kingdom of God, we must be born into the family of God.
2. Can we know when that has happened to someone after his or her baptism?
  - a. Yes! They will begin to walk in love.
  - b. You will see them dedicate their lives & service to the Lord’s people (church).
  - c. You will see them attempting to help others learn the gospel.
  - d. They no longer keep relationships just for their personal pleasure, but for the purpose of leading them to salvation.

[That’s the way Christ walked in love. “He the Great Example is & Pattern set for me”.]

#### IV. “As Christ also has loved us” (2b).

##### A. This is perhaps the greatest challenge of the Christian’s life.

1. When we learn to love as Christ loved us, we will begin to live as He lived.

[And HOW did He love us?]

#### V. “And given Himself for us” (2c)

##### A. I think it’s important to say that Christ gave Himself for us when He left heaven.

1. Because everything He did from that decision on was for our benefit (Heb 12:1-3).
2. His life was a gift to us: every word & action.

##### B. But Paul has in mind Jesus’ death on the cross, where He purchased our redemption from sin by the shedding of His blood.

---

**John 15:9-14** – As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments & abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, & that your joy may be full. 12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 **Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.** 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

---

1. Would you die for the person sitting next to you? Is that too much to ask?
2. Then would you at least live for the welfare of that person?
  - a. That is HOW you die for someone; that is HOW you “walk in love as Christ has loved us, & given Himself for us.”
3. Why does a nurse clean up after a sick patient? Obligation, pity, pay

4. Why does a parent clean up after a sick child?  
Love!
5. Why did Christ give Himself for us – we who were dead in our sins – asleep in our own waste when we didn't know we were sick?

[**Because** He loved us! **And** that kind of love was...]

VI. **“An offering & a sacrifice to God”** (2d)

VII. **“For a sweet-smelling aroma”** (2e)

A. **The life of Christ demonstrated that God is no longer interested in the OT animal sacrifices.**

1. God requires a living sacrifice today (Ro 12:1-2).
2. I have no idea whether God enjoyed the smell of the burnt offerings.

3. But I do know that it was like a sweet-smelling aroma to Him every time one of His children took the time to read His law & offer the sacrifice that He commanded.
4. And I do know that our lives too will be a sweet-smelling aroma to Him when we make the sacrifices in our lives that He commands.

---

**2 Cor 5:6-10** – So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body & to be present with the Lord. 9 ***Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*** 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

---

**CLOSING:** Will you make it your aim today:

- To follow God
- To become His dear child
- To walk in love
- As Christ loved us
- To give yourself to others
- To offer your life as a sacrifice to God
- To be a sweet-aroma to Him