

Walk in Love, Not Lust

Blueprint: God's Design for the Church

Ephesians 5:1-6

If you have your bibles, take your bibles out. If you don't have bibles, go ahead and stand anyway, and we are going to turn our attention to God's Word now and study together as we continue through the book of Ephesians, one of my favorite books of the Bible. It talks about God's blueprint for the church and that is what we've been talking about for the last several months, and we're going to continue to talk about that this morning as we open our bibles to Ephesians chapter 5. We are going to read verses 1 and 2 and add to it verses 3-6. If I was to title this message this morning, and you can just kind of watch for this as we read the passage, here is what the title would be--Walk in Love, Not Lust. See if you see why we are titling the message this way when we read the Word of God.

Scripture

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."

(Prayer)

Father, one more time, we ask you afresh to anoint us as the speaker and anoint us as the congregation, to both speak and to hear Your Word. Father, may we just get our knife and fork out and feast on Your Word. May we not just taste it, but may we swallow it, may we digest it, and may we have faith to know that Your Word this morning is going to give us that spiritual nourishment, that spiritual energy that we need to continue to grow up and be the part of this body that we need to be. Father, thank You that we don't gather this morning and speculate, but that you will give us a clear, full, final revelation of Yourself to us in Your Son. And You've not only given us the Living Word, You've given us the written Word, and we know that the written Word ultimately points us to the Living Word, and that's Your Son. So Father, we just want to thank You right now for what You are going to speak to us. In Your precious, precious Son's name, we ask You to not let us be speakers only or hearers only, but doers of Your Word. It's in Jesus name we ask it. Amen.

You may be seated. I know you get tired of me saying this, but I just love the book of Ephesians. I love how it's simply arranged, how the first three chapters tell us about the root, but then verses 4-6 tell us about the fruit. How chapters 1-3 talk about our spiritual wealth, but then chapters 4-6 talks about our spiritual walk. How when you begin to read this book, in the first part you see the blessing of being a Christian, but then when you get to the end of the book, it talks about the behavior we should have as a Christian. How the first part of the book talks about the finished work of the Christ, but the last part of the book talks about the faithful walk of the Christian. The first part of the book basically tells us who we are in Christ, and then the last part of the book tells us what we should be doing since we are in Christ. It's almost like in the beginning of the book, the curtain of heaven is pulled back and God lets us see what He sees, and that is Christ in us. But then at the end of the book, God wants the eye of the world to be opened to see the same Christ that He sees in us. Did you catch that? That is my desire this morning for us, not just you but for me, as a church, that the world see the same Christ in us that God sees. Is that your desire? If it is, can I ask you this question? Who would that be to you? If God was

going to let the world see Christ in you, who would that be? Who is the world to you, so to speak? Is it a parent, child, a spouse, a friend, a co-worker, an employee, an employer? That's God's desire for the world around you to see Christ in you.

Chapter 5, verse 1 begins with that famous word that we love here at Hardin, "therefore." We talked about this last week, but we've got another one. Any time in Scripture that we see a "therefore" in the Bible, we stop and see what it's there for. Here's what this "therefore" is there for; it's a connecting word. It's a word that Paul used that alerted his audience who was reading this letter that what he was getting ready to say to them was based on what he had just said to them. I don't know if some of you have noticed this, but some of you have been with me a long time. And I don't know if you remember, but thirty-four plus years ago when I first came to this church, I could have a message from God and I could get it done in about twenty minutes. Then over these thirty-four plus years, it's taken me longer and longer and longer. Have you noticed the sermon gets longer and longer and longer? Do you remember a couple of years ago I asked you if we could start the 8:00 service at 7:50? If we could add ten minutes to the 9:15 service; if we could start the 10:30 service ten minutes later. If you'll just give us ten more minutes, we could get done on time, and we haven't got done on time yet! I want to let you know what's going on. The reason my sermons are getting longer is because years ago when it was just a few of us and we just had one service, I could look around and I could see that what I was saying you were getting. Now see, I'm kind of like Paul. What I'm saying right now and what I'm telling you right now, I'm only telling you what I'm telling you right now but it's because I'm getting you ready for what I'm going to say next. And it's really what I'm going to say next that's the most important. But in order for you to be ready for what I'm going to say next and be able to understand what I'm going to say next, I've got to make sure that you understand what I'm telling you right now. So sometimes I can't tell if you're really getting what I'm telling you right now, and if I don't know that you're getting what I'm telling you right now, I don't think you're going to be ready for what I'm going to tell you next, so I have to tell you more clearly, describe more in detail what I'm telling you right now because if what I'm telling you right

now you don't get, you're going to be lost when I tell you what's next. And what I'm telling you right now is really not about what I'm telling you right now, it's about what I'm going to tell you next. Does that make sense? So that's why the sermons are getting longer. As we get more people and more services, I've got to make sure you get what I'm saying next, but you're not going to get what I'm saying next if you don't get what I'm saying now. So here's what we need to do. Maybe after a little while, if you get the point maybe you need to say "got it," amen? And if you get it, then I can move on to the next point, because it's really the next point we are trying to get to.

And here is what Paul is trying to tell us: based on everything I've been telling you since I started the second part of this letter, it is for right now. "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Now, what had he been telling us so that we would understand this? Here is what he's been telling us: that we have a new walk, and with that new walk comes a new dress of clothing, a new suit of salvation. You see, the moment you and I repented of sin and put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we once and for all put off that old person that we used to be, who was dead to God and alive to sin and sinned, we became brand new. The moment we turned from sin and put our faith in Christ, a miracle happened. That person who was alive to sin, dead to God, he died and a new guy got up in this old body. And the new man in this body is now alive to God and dead to sin. Sin is not dead in me, but the new man I am in Christ is dead to sin, and now I've got a new life.

So what's going to happen here is Paul is going to begin to describe what this new life I have, with these new clothes that I'm wearing, what this actually looks like. Then in verses 1-21, he is going to tell us what this new walk looks like. He's going to tell us in verses 1-6 that we are to walk in love, not lust. Then in verses 7-14, he's going to tell us we are to walk in light, not darkness. Then in verses 15-21, he's going to tell us we are to walk in wisdom, not foolishness. But what he tells us first of all is this; that each one of us should be an imitator of God. Think about that just for a moment. In the world I live in, I should imitate God.

This word, imitate, is where we get that English word, mimic, from. I don't know about you, but I have some certain things in my personality, some certain things in my life that the people who know me really well will mimic from time to time. Yes. If I catch them doing it, I'll say, "Don't mimic me! Quit mimicking me!" And all of a sudden, I'm confronted with something that I do that I might not even be aware I'm doing. I promise you this, God will never say to you, "Quit mimicking me. Don't mimic me." He knows fully who He is, and His desire for you and me is to mimic Him, to be a mime, so to speak. Have you ever been to those places where they have the mimes? Aren't they cool? With no words, they speak a message. You've got to understand that as a preacher, how I love the ability that God gave a musician. They are artists who can take words and in about three and a half minutes, they can tell a story that it takes me forty-three minutes to tell. They can do it in three and a half, and we remember it forever...The Old Rugged Cross...Did you hear how we just all got in in unity and sung that to God? Let me tell you about a mime, no words. It's been called the art of silence, to where a person can so study their subject that with their physical movement and their exaggerated expressions they can tell a story. That's what you and I have been called to do. I want you to think this thought with me, and please tell me you get it when you get it or we'll be here a while. If you did not have the ability to speak words, what would your actions say about God? We used to kind of have this little thought when somebody was saying something to us if their life didn't match up to what they were saying, we would kind of go, "Excuse me, I can't hear what you're saying because your actions are speaking so much louder than what you're saying." Who do you mimic God to? How are you doing? You see, Paul has just told us that we're to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave us, "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children."

Why do I imitate God to the world in which I live? It's because I am in a special relationship with Him to where He is no longer just my Creator; He is my heavenly Father, amen. Now I want you to hear this; please at some point let me know you get it, or we can't go any further. What the Bible is trying to do in printing this connecting word in the middle of these two thoughts is this, the basis of your and my relationship with God as Father

and child is this fact that God in Christ forgave us. Please tell me you get that. We have been forgiven by God, amen! And when God forgave us, His forgiveness is complete, it's instant, and it's free. He didn't just deal with what I've done in my past; He's already dealt with what I'm going to do in my future. He dealt with it instantly in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, and it was free. There was nothing in me that caused Him to forgive me; it was what was in Him. It's who He is that caused Him to sovereignly pour out His love on me and deal with my sin on a cross. So the basis of the most important relationship in my life, the basis of that relationship is I'm forgiven. I'm forgiven by God, who is holy, holy, holy. So God couldn't just sweep my sin under the rug; He couldn't just look the other way! He knew my heart, and my heart was wicked, my heart was evil, my heart was self-centered. But because of His great love, He put His Son on that cross for me and here is what I've got to understand: as a child of God, the basis of my relationship with Him is forgiveness, so therefore, the basis of my relationship with other people in my world is going to be what? Forgiveness. Tell me you see this. Got it? yes.

I want to say something here that breaks my heart. I've been doing this a long time, and when you've been in one church as long as I've been, I know you guys and you guys know me, right? And here is what I've discovered: we hurt each other, and sometimes I don't know that we know we hurt each other. Because here is what I've discovered, hurting people hurt other people. And people who hurt other people have been hurt. And usually they've been hurt in a significant relationship in their life, maybe their dad, maybe their mom, maybe their husband, maybe their wife, may have been a boyfriend, may have been a girlfriend, maybe a parent-child relationship, maybe a boss relationship, may have been a pastor-church member relationship. And we live out of that relationship. Because that relationship wasn't right, or is not right, we're not right; therefore, we hurt other people because we're hurting. Does that make sense to anybody here? I've got to where now as a pastor I can see past what you just said or did, but some of us can't. Because I immediately go whoa...if we could sit down and talk, you've been hurt. And here's what I know; if you've been hurt in your past and you haven't been healed from that, you're still trying to draw self-esteem, self-worth, from that relationship rather than

the relationship you should draw from and that is the relationship you have with God in Christ. Did everybody get this?

Listen to what the Bible is saying...therefore be imitators of God, as children, no, as beloved children. Now I want to ask you a serious question, is there anybody in here who really doesn't believe God loves them? We'll stop the whole service for you, I promise you. How do we know God loves us? It's obvious isn't it. He put His Son on a cross in our place, judged us in Him, and poured out His wrath on Him so that we could be right with Him. That is the relationship we must draw our self-worth, self-esteem, security, and identity from. Because here is what we know, in every one of us, in our psyche, in our soul, in our spirit, there is a need to be accepted and a need to be loved. And all other relationships are affected by the most important relationship in our lives. If you make the most important relationship in your life your wife, your spouse, your kids, your job, your preacher, or your whoever, you are going to get hurt, and then you are going to hurt other people. Tell me you are getting this.

So here is what the Bible wants you to know, you are a loved child, you are a special child, you are a unique child. Can I say this, and it blows the world's mind, God didn't have to love you! Scripture doesn't teach a general love where God just generally loved the world and put His Son on a cross and left it up to us whether we decided to love Him or not! The Bible tells us God loved us before the foundation of the world! The Bible tells us God loved us before we loved Him! You are special. You are unique. You are loved by Him. Now mimic Him. Don't mimic how your husband treats you, don't mimic how your wife treats you, and don't mimic how other people treat you, mimic how God treats you. You're forgiven; you're His child. Kory called yesterday afternoon and said they were going to a Murray State ballgame and wanted to know if they could drop off two of the kids. He didn't have to call; absolutely he can drop them off. We didn't really know which two we were getting. We got Evie and Garnet. When Evie first came in, she had a hold of Dad and she just wouldn't let go of Dad, so Memish and I had a contest to see who could get her away from Dad, and guess who she came to? She came to Papaw! Immediately she takes me by the hand and she takes me up the steps into her little room

and immediately went to the closet. She's just turned two, and she opens the closet door and gets her baby doll out. Evie hadn't been there in a few days, and Evie knew to change the baby's diaper, so we changed the baby's diaper. Evie knew that her baby needed milk, so she grabbed the bottle. Evie also knows that babies that are two and under love pacifiers, so we couldn't close the closet door until we had the pacifier. And now, she's got her baby, fresh diaper, bottle, and pacifier, and she goes to the little basket and she gets out the book, and she wants Papaw to read a book to her baby. So Papaw reads a book to her baby! Now can I just ask you, where did Evie get this? We already had three boys before her, and I never had a boy do that, never. Where did this come from? You know where it came from. Yes, she has the DNA of her mom and dad, but she has a different DNA and she's doing to her baby what the significant people in her life do to her. And that is they hold her and they hug her, and they love her and they change her diaper, and they give her a bottle and let her have her pacifier from time to time, and they pick out a book and they read to her. And so all Evie Kate knows is that she wants for her baby what she has, amen.

Why can't we want that for other people! The basis of that starts with us understanding the basis of our relationship with God is forgiveness, and therefore my basis of anybody in my world is I must be willing to be forgiving too. Can we just write this down? If you've got somebody in your world that you've had to forgive in the past, you're going to have to forgive them again in the future, so why don't we just go ahead and forgive them right now before they ever do it. Amen? Amen? Let's just deal with it! You are going to hurt me again. I'm going to forgive you already because I'm not going to deal with you based on my relationship with you only. I'm going to deal with you based on the relationship I have with God, and I'm going to treat you like God treats me. Wow!

Now I've got to say this because it's an obvious fact, you all know it; you're the ones who tell me this all the time. I have a son. His name is Kory. I look a lot like him. I mean, when he was little everybody would tell him that he looks like me, but now, everybody tells me that I look like him. That's ok. I take that as a compliment. One of my most fond memories of

being pastor of this church and having a son who God's changed his life, called him into ministry, (I have many spiritual sons, but this spiritual son is also my spiritual son) one day, years ago, I was standing about right here on a Sunday morning and my son was in the baptistry getting ready to baptize a person and for some reason, I don't know why, I gave the introduction and then Kory baptized the person. I preached the sermon, walked out to the foyer, was standing by the door, and a lady came out, shook my hand, and said, "I just love it when you baptize people." I didn't have the heart to say, "Mam that wasn't me; that was my son." Let me tell you what tops that. Not very long ago, my son did a wedding for somebody in this church that I attended. I'm in the back watching the wedding, and I've got to be totally honest if it's ok to be proud of your son, there was just a moment where I was sitting there going wow, this is really good. And I got over my feelings being hurt that they asked him to marry them instead of me, ok? Chris and Kory get all the weddings now, and I get all the funerals, ok, so anyway. Get this picture; it was really good and I was really proud of my son. The next day we come to church and a person in this church who was visiting, when I shook their hands said, "I just got to tell you, I loved the way you did that wedding yesterday." Well I knew how good the wedding was, so I just smiled and let her think it was me instead of Kory!

Please tell me you get where I'm going with this. This is why God said about Jesus, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." I promise you, it will never hurt God's feelings for you to so live His life that somebody gets you and Him mixed up and thinks you are just like your Father! We are His child! We are supposed to mimic Him. And to make sure we know what mimicking Him is, Paul is clear. He puts another connecting word, "...and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us." You see, as we imitate God, the basis of that relationship is God's forgiving, so I must be forgiving. But my pattern now for how I mimic God is the love of Christ, and His love was giving. Do you know what He gave? He gave Himself. He gave Himself up. Does everybody hear that? It wasn't about Him. It was about us, because He loved us with a love that didn't arise because there was a need in Christ because He was insufficient. No, the second Person of the triune God has always been

sufficient. God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit didn't have to have us to complete anything that was missing in Them. Amen? Please tell me you get where I'm going. The reason so many of us struggle to mimic God is because there are deficiencies in our life that we're trying to get from the people that's in our life, that we're trying to make significant in our life, and when they fail us, it crushes us. Christ got crushed. Why? Because He loved you, He loved me. Can I just say this? He knew what was going to happen before He ever came, and for thirty-three and a half years as a human being, He saw the cross coming and He didn't avoid it. He faced it head on. Why? Because He gave Himself up because He loved us. That's what God's called us to mimic.

I've told you this a million times, but here comes a million and one. Please tell me you get this. There are four chief characteristics of Christ love.

1. He selected an object to love.
2. He evaluated the need in that object.
3. He elevated that need to a place of priority in His own life.
4. He imparted of His own resources, Himself, to meet that need.

That's what we've been called to do; walk, live, with our spouse, with our children, with our family unit, with our church, with our employers, our employees, our classmates, our co-workers to where I make a choice, and it's a conscious choice, I choose to love you. Then once that choice has been made, I choose to evaluate the need you have. And therefore, I'm in this relationship for what I can give you, not for what I get from this. Then once I've made that evaluation, I then elevate that to a place of priority in my life to where it's now on my mind that you have a need. Then I realize in time that God has designed me in a unique way to where I have the resources to meet that need. And it's not me giving you things. It's not me buying you something. It's not me bailing you out. It's me giving you myself.

Can I just stop here for a moment and do a little marital counseling? This is why some of you men have a wife that's not where she ought to be. You're trying to give her things. You're trying to give her a better house. You're trying to give her new cars. You're trying to give her new clothes. Can I

say this to you men? That's not what she really wants. What she really wants is you. Can I say this? Once she decides she's never going to get you, then she will take the benefits. But there's not a lady in here who wouldn't trade all the benefits of having a man who would give himself fully to her. Can I just stop and say this to you ladies? That's what your husband wants. He doesn't want a little time with you when you've given all your time to everybody else. He wants you. You say, "Now hold it Bro Ricky." No, there is enough of you to go around, because you've been loved with the love of God. The Bible says you have the love of God poured out in your heart by the presence of the Holy Spirit of God, who lives inside of you, Romans 5:5.

Therefore, my walk should be characterized with a love so that when I love those people in my world, guess what happens. The same thing happens that happened when Christ gave Himself up for us. It's a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. if you go back and read your Old Testament, whenever the children of Israel would bring a sacrifice to God, about fifty something times in the Old Testament, the Bible will stop and say, wow, this burnt offering. Now you've got to see that animal being consumed, it lays its life down, it gets burned, and the smoke is ascending toward the heavens, so here was the thought: God is in Heaven, smell the sacrifice. If the person who was offering the sacrifice the way God intended, then the worshiper knew that when God smelled that it was a good smell, and it pleased God and a big smile broke out on His face. That is the picture. Christ on a cross, laying his life down for you and me, the Father knowing the Son had been perfectly obedient to Him. When He saw Christ lay Himself down, give Himself up, ahhh, it was a beautiful smell to God.

Can I just be honest? Some of us stink. That thing you did didn't smell good to them. You hurt them. It didn't just stink to them. It stank to God. The life we live as we walk in love is an offering to God, but it's also an offering to your husband, an offering to your wife. It's an offering to your child. It's an offering to your parents. It's an offering to where you say, in this situation, it's not going to be about me, I'm going to mimic God. Therefore, you're forgiven and I'm going to give me to you. Yes, it's going

to hurt and it's going to cost, but that's what it cost Christ. And He is our pattern. He is our example.

Now, time's up, but like I said earlier, I had to say a lot of stuff extra because you didn't get it quick enough. So I'm out of time again, and we've got to say this last part. "But." You see, "therefore" connects and compares, "but" contrasts. "But all sexual immorality, all impurity, all covetousness should not even be named among you as is proper among saints." Tell me you get this. If I am going to walk in love, and I'm going to mimic God, and I have a love in my heart for those people in my world that it's not about me, it's about them, do you think I'm going to have an affair? Huh? Absolutely not! Do you think I'm going to be involved in premarital sex? Absolutely not! Do you think I'm going to be involved in a sexual affair with someone of the same sex? Absolutely not! Why? Because the root of sexual sin outside of the husband wife relationship is not rooted in love. It is rooted in lust, a need for self-gratification and self-satisfaction and it's all about me, and at that moment, I don't care who I hurt to get what I need because right now my need is the most prominent thing in my life, and I'm going to get that need satisfied! Here is what the Bible said, **THAT SHOULD NOT BE NAMED AMONG US AS SAINTS!** I don't ever want to hear it again in this body! It hurts! It damages! Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. We've been designed to be in oneness with Him. We've been designed to be in oneness with a spouse. You can't mimic God and walk in lust! Paul said I don't want to hear the jokes anymore. I don't want to hear the foolish talking. I don't want anything dirty to come out of your mouth ever again! What I want to come out of your mouth, because you're forgiving and you're giving, what I want to come out of your mouth is thanksgiving.

Then he says here is one thing you can count on, no sexually immoral, no impure, no covetous people, and then he pauses and says that's idolatry. Your insatiable need to have more and never to be satisfied with what you've got is proof that God is not your God. You are God of your own life. He said here is what you can count on; you have no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Did you hear me? Please tell me you get this.

Paul is going to say don't listen to empty words. We've got a whole culture that's listening to empty words saying same sex is ok. It's ok as long as you love the person you're having sex with. If you're going to start a relationship when your seventeen and you're not going to get married until you're twenty-five, you've got to be pure all eight years. Once you're into that marriage relationship, you've got to be pure. We don't even flirt. We don't even talk about it. Why? Because we are supposed to mimic God.

And guess what? We don't get words. We don't get to say...your words are taken away from you. Your actions are going to tell us about your relationship with God. Here is what you can count on; that message that's been told to you that's not based on the Word of God is empty. It's valueless. It doesn't mean a thing, because here is the truth; the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. Please tell me you've got it. Got it? Let's be clear before we walk out of here. Some of us have already messed up and Satan is going to take my words and beat you up the rest of this week. No, you did blow it, but now your relationship is where it's supposed to be. You're drawing your significance from Christ. Therefore, when Satan beats you up and reminds you of your past, you just remind him of his future, amen, and you let him know you've been forgiven. But you've not only been forgiven, you now know the truth and you've been set free, so you're not walking that way anymore because you're not a sinner saved by grace. You were a sinner, but then you got saved by grace, so now you are a saint of God and you are this new race of people. Let's imitate God.