
In Love in Memphis

In the last two weeks we have studied the amazing mercy, grace, and love that God has for His children. This mercy, grace, and love give us a new identity, a new “sonship,” that is meant to be lived out. Paul emphasizes this in his letter to the church at Ephesus when he opens by calling them saints who both are “in Christ” and “in Ephesus.” Now in chapter five he commands these “beloved children” to “walk in love.”

Ephesians 5:1-2

1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. **2** And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Called to “walk in love,” we must seek to understand what that means.

I. **What is the SOURCE of this Love? (v. 1)**

a. The opening command, “be imitators of God,” is pretty daunting. Eugene Peterson in his paraphrase of the Bible, *The Message*, puts it this way, “watch what God does and then do that.” In the face of such a lofty calling how do we keep ourselves from responding with moralistic efforts that fall short and leave us wallowed in guilt? The answer is in the phrase that follows, “as beloved children.” The source of our love is God’s love for us. We love because He first loved us.

II. **What is the METHOD of this Love? (v. 2a)**

a. As we seek to “walk in love” in the community in which God has placed us, what would that look like in practice? Do we just do what feels or seems “loving” to us? Is this love defined by our experiences with each other? No! This love is defined by the Cross of Christ. Paul says that we love “as Christ has loved us.” This is not simply a feeling or an idea or a philosophy. Christ’s love is an act of human history demonstrated in His incarnation. Christ’s love was an initiating love. He did not wait for us to seek Him; He sought us. It was an identifying love. He left the glories of heaven and took on human flesh and loved in the mess of this world. It was an invading love. Christ brought light into darkness. He came not just to heal our physical bodies, but to redeem our souls. Our love for others must be an initiating, identifying, and invading love.

III. **What is the Ultimate PURPOSE of this Love? (v. 2b)**

a. We are so prone, even as God’s “beloved children,” to make things about us. So it is that we might miss the ultimate purpose of Christ’s love for us and our love for others. It’s not about the needs. It’s not about the people. It’s not about us. The ultimate purpose of the Cross and of our “walking in love” is the glory of God.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the attributes of God that He has enabled us to demonstrate to others?
2. Looking at the verses that precede and follow Ephesians 5:1-2, how does “walking in love” fit the context?

3. Why is it so important that we understand ourselves as both “in Christ” and “in Memphis”? What are the tensions in this?

4. What are some specific ways that our love toward others can be an initiating love?

5. What are some specific ways that our love toward others can be an identifying love?

6. What are some specific ways that our love toward others can be an invading love?

Going Deeper

1. Where in your life and with whom do you think God is helping you succeed in “walking in love”? Where are the places that you are struggling?
2. What fears do you have about living out an initiating love? Identifying love? Invading love?