

What does it mean to imitate God?

Paul is not calling us to become a god. He is not saying that we should leave behind this world and all its petty mortals and somehow morph into something the Ancient Greeks worshipped like Zeus or Hercules. All Paul is saying is that in the same way that God is holy, so should we, be holy. In the same way that He is righteous, so should we be righteous. In the same way that He is merciful, so should we be merciful. In the same way that He does all for glory, so should we live for His glory.

Specifically, in our passage, the call is to imitate God along three lines. Since God is love, light, and wisdom, we are to walk in love, light, and wisdom.

How exactly is the passage divided about which we are talking?

5:1 – The command to imitate.

5:2-7 – Walk in love.

5:8-14 – Walk in light.

5:15-21 – Walk in wisdom.

This sounds really overwhelming! How is this even possible?

In thinking through this question we must start with the end of verse 32 of chapter 4 and the reality that God's people are forgiven. Keep in mind Paul is not saying "seek forgiveness." He is saying that if you are in Christ, you already are forgiven. He is simply making a statement about a spiritual reality for those who in Jesus.

So we start with forgiveness. We start with a declaration of what God has done through Christ for His people. Then, only then, do we move on to the command to imitate God. So first the statement, then the command. First the indicative, then the imperative would be another way to put. So the call to imitate God is not a call to do this for the purpose of earning His forgiveness, but in response to His grace. We can't earn God's favor. Forgiveness is what makes imitation possible in the first place.

If I want to look deeper into this subject are there any resources that might be of help?

Holiness by J.C. Ryle

The Dividing Line by Mark Sidwell

Be Ye Holy by Fred Moritz

Scripture does not emphasize a robot-like conformity to a list of prohibited and prescribed actions. Its emphasis rather is that a right attitude will produce positive actions which reflect the holiness of God. Fred Moritz