

Read: Ephesians 4:29-5:2

Forgive as Jesus Forgave You

Ephesians 4:32-5:2

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 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.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Little kids imitate their moms and dads. Like the little girl who put her hands on her hips and shook her finger at her older brother, "You are in big trouble!" Mom chuckled because she knew her little girl was imitating her. A little boy folded his hands and bowed his head to pray before dinner without anyone telling him. His Dad noticed that the little guy was praying just like him.

When children act, speak, or even stand the same way as a grownup or an older sibling, they are imitating what they see and learn because they respect them and want to be like them. Yet you do not have to be a little kid to imitate someone. In fact, we all imitate other people no matter who we are or how old we are.

Sometimes imitating a person is good. Sometimes it's not so good.

If you imitate someone who speaks in a sarcastic or hurtful way, such as tearing someone down rather than building them up, your words can harm the very people you love. If you imitate someone who is quick to argue or fight with someone who offends them, people may not want to spend time with you. If you imitate someone who lies about others, gossips about them, or says unkind things about them behind their back, people will not trust you.

God's Word gives us another option. Imitate Jesus. Jesus had every right to be bitter and angry against the many people who refused to listen to him or wanted him to suffer and die. Yet Jesus set all of that aside. Instead of imitating their sarcasm, Jesus spoke with kind words that built up others. Instead of being harsh, Jesus was compassionate. He cared deeply for every person that crossed his path. Instead of anger, Jesus forgave the sins of others. Instead of hatred, Jesus loved others, even giving himself up for their sins.

How will you imitate Jesus? Let go of your angry or bitter feelings. Build others up with kind words. Care for others and forgive them, even if they do not deserve it, with compassion and love. You can do this. In his Word, he builds you up. In compassion and love, he forgives your sins. He cares deeply for you. You can imitate Jesus, because he has forgiven you.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- Name someone that you would like to be like. Why do you want to be like them?
- Name one way you can imitate Jesus.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What is the difference between bitterness and kindness? Between anger and compassion?
- Read Ephesians 5:2. Jesus is described as a “fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Why is that so important for us?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Explain this statement: It is easier to imitate sinful activity than the love of God.
- Name two ways you can imitate “a life of love...as Christ loved us” this week.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, lead me to imitate you as your dearly loved son or daughter. I am forgiven and made holy by you. Cause me to live a life of love, showing kindness and compassion for every soul. Amen.

Hymn: CW 384:5 – By Grace I’m Saved

By grace! On this I’ll rest when dying; in Jesus’ promise I rejoice.
For though I know my heart’s condition, I also know my Savior’s voice.
My heart is glad; all grief has flown since I am saved by grace alone.