

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Deconstruction / Reconstruction of the Disciples' Life Part 7

Walk in Love

Ephesians 5:1-7

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 01.27-28.10

Good morning. Good to see you all here this morning. We have a lot to do this morning so let's turn right away to our passage Ephesians, chapter 5. We've been in a study for the last six weeks called Deconstruction / Reconstruction of the Disciple's life and we're just now turning out of chapter 4 into chapter 5 and we've got a lot to cover this morning. If you are new at Crossroads it's good having you here. There's a bible in the chair back in front of you. Turn to page 978. You can follow along in the text and that's what I encourage so that you can learn at the most optimum level, have the text in front of you and we'll work through it together.

Now, if you made your way here for the first time you're already probably trying to figure out what is this place? What's going on? It's not like the typical church. Well, actually, it may not seem like the typical church but we're just a modern, contemporary version of a really very ancient form of Christianity. There are two things that we do in our service. The first is worship, which we just got done doing. That's where we ascribe word, our adoration, there's an emotional connection that we give to God. He is the audience that we are singing to. And then we transition from worship into the Word where we turn and we look at the Word of God as the inspired source for instructions for living. So, what we do is we normally on any given Sunday when you come here we attempt to just work through a passage and try to understand it because we believe this is the Word of God. It means that it's not only the basic idea but right down to the very words and so we try to do our best to study it and to understand it very clearly, really, for a number of reasons. It helps us understand exactly what God would want out of our lives. We're not looking for man's opinion or man's view. We're really seeking what is it that God has to tell us. And when we systematically go through the scriptures we can understand that. We do that more than topical, although occasionally we'll do some topical but we systematically try to go through it because it helps us understand. There are some passages here that I probably wouldn't just pick up and start talking on or there's some aspects of the scripture that maybe, if we're doing a topical we may not hit but when you systematically go through it you can't ignore it and you learn the whole counsel of God's Word. Not only that, but it helps us to understand it in context. One of the things that drives me crazy is when I hear someone quote a passage of scripture and it's completely out of context. And do you know what happens when it's out of context? They misapply it to their lives. If we want to adequately know what the Word of God means so that we can apply it to our lives we have to understand it in context.

And so, that's what we've really been doing with this series. We've been working through one major concept from Ephesians 4:17. We're going to end up in Ephesians 5:21 because that's one contextual block of scripture that over and over again tells us the exact same thing. It tells us that there are certain things in our new life in Christ that we must deconstruct; we must stop doing; that should no longer be a part of our lifestyle. And that there are new things as followers of Christ that we reconstruct in our lives and that's what we've been covering through most of chapter 4. Now we transition into chapter 5 and it's the exact same theme. So, what I'm going to do this morning is we're going to read the text. We're going to

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muscle our way through it to understand it and then at the end we're going to bring it all together and we're going to provide an implication – how we can apply this to our lives.

Let's start in verse 1, chapter 5. Paul writes, 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, sexually immorality and all impurity, covetousness must not be even named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness or foolish talk or 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 he says, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them.

Alright, what do we learn in this text? Well, right away we're going to pick up an old, familiar theme and that is the theme of walking. This is the theme that we started in Ephesians 4. It's been traveled all the way through. We're going to see it specifically laid out for us in chapter 5. We're going to look at how to walk in love in verses 1 through 7; how to walk in the light in verse 8 through 14; how to walk in wisdom in verses 15 through 17 and how to walk in the spirit in verse 18 through 21.

There is an assumption in the text, right off the bat that we understand that walk represents a lifestyle. It's not the idea that you move from point A to point B but rather the idea that walk is a lifestyle. You say, how do you know that there is an assumption in the text? Because of the word therefore. That's a marker. That's a clue. When you see the word therefore you ought to ask what's it therefore? Nine times out of ten it's pointing backwards to what the author had just said. In this case he's pointing back to chapter 4 and he's saying therefore since you know to walk in a manner worthy of your calling, verse 1, or therefore since you know not to walk as the Gentiles do who do not know God verse 17 or therefore since you have taken off the old and put on the new verse 22 through 24. Therefore since you know all of that, watch this, verse 1 – be imitators of God. Be, an imperative. An imperative is a command so this is the first command. Be imitators. Imitates or the idea of mimics. It's a Greek word where we get mimics. Be imitators, be mimics of God. Right out of the shoot what is Paul saying in chapter 5? He's giving us a thesis statement for the whole chapter. Not only the whole chapter but the whole book. The whole book of Ephesians is right here summed up in verse 1 of chapter 5 – that your purpose in life if to be like god. Do you understand that? Do you know that? Do you realize that when you become a follower of Christ He gives you a purpose? You don't wander around life wondering why am I here. I don't understand what is my existence. What am I all about. The scriptures tell us what we're all about as followers of Christ. We ought to be mimētēs. We ought to be mimics of God. We ought to be becoming like Christ.

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Let me show you this. I'm going to turn to Romans chapter 8. Why don't you follow there with me. Romans 8. I'm going to turn to get to verse 29 but we have to pass verse 28 which is probably one of the most familiar verse in Romans. Romans 8:28 says and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. We all know that. But, verse 29 – key passage. For those whom He, this is God, for those whom God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son. Do you here what the scriptures are telling you? That God has a desire to conform you; that He has predestined; that He has pre-chosen; that this is the desire of God's will is that you would be conformed to the image of His son; that you would be like Christ.

Something very similar to what Peter says. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 14. Peter talks about holiness. He says here in verse 14, he says as obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance but as He who as called you as holy you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written you shall be holy for I am holy. Now when you read just a few passages out of scripture what are you starting to begin to understand as your purpose in life? That your life, your lifestyle, your conduct, all that is about you should represent that you are a follower of Christ. People ought to be able to look at you and say there goes someone who is mimicking, who is looking, who is imitating like Christ. That's what Paul means by walk. We are to walk like God. We are to walk like Christ and in this particular case we are to walk in love.

Now, as we look at the passage in Ephesians what we see here is that we see four major movements and you need to understand these to understand the text. There is first the passage gives us a command and then moves to an example. And then moves to a counterfeits of that example and then moves to the consequences if you follow the counterfeit. We're going to work our way through that so that you can understand it. First, is the command to follow. First we see a command to follow. Verse 1, therefore be imitators of God. That's the command. As beloved children. How do we do that? By walking in love. A very simple command. We are to imitate God like loving like God loves. We are to walk. Our lifestyle should be one of walking in love. Why can we do this? Let's look at the why before we look at the how.

Why can we do this? We can do this the text says, verse 1 because we are beloved children. You see that? You know, anytime I see that phrase in scripture I get a sense that God is trying to communicate to us at an emotional, concrete level how He feels about us. Do you ever wonder how God feels about you? As a follower of Christ, one who has put their faith in Christ God now calls you His beloved. Do you have a nick name for your children or your spouse, something that just speaks of intimacy, of closeness? This is God's intimate way of communicating with us how He feels about us. You are His beloved. This is said over and over again, a hundred and twelve times throughout scripture. God Himself says it in 2 Corinthians 2:18 I will be a father to you. You shall be sons and daughters to me. It's a rich term – this idea of beloved. It comes from the Greek word agape, which I'm sure that you're

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familiar with. Means love but this is **ἀγαπητός** which is a derivative of agape which says basically God loves us to salvation. Which is what it means. God has chosen us in Him in salvation. God has loved us to salvation and He demonstrates that is by now calling you His beloved. Isn't that fantastic? That means we can walk like Him because He has created us to be like Him. He calls us His children, His beloved. Which, by the way you are children of God as followers of Christ. That is the distinction given solely to you as people of faith. On a larger scale, yes. God is the father of all people in a creative sense, in a creation sense. But those outside of Christ can not the name as a child, as an adopted son or daughter like you can. You see, that's why He calls you, people of faith the beloved which means that if He calls that then He calls you into a lifestyle that you can live. Now he's saying, what is that lifestyle? That lifestyle is walk in love.

The easy is to answer the why. The hard is to answer the how. How do we do that? Well, the text tells us by moving to the next section. It moves from a commandment to an example. Christ is the example of how to walk in love. Look at the text. 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, a sacrifice to God. Now, when we're told to walk in love, when we're told to be as Christ, love as Christ you know what? It's easy at this point to slip into theory; to slip into some mystical ethereal concept of what it means to love. But the bible is not into theory. It's directive in its nature. It tells us how to go about walking in love. The example is Christ. How did Christ walk in love? Do you see the text? He says He gave Himself. Let's pick this apart – this word gave - **παραδίδωμι** meaning give. So, really literally it means He gave up what? He gave up Himself. What is Himself?

Alright, let me zip you back into high school English class for a moment. Himself is a pronoun. Now remember a moment ago I said every word is inspired by God? That means we have to study every word if we really want to understand the meaning of it. Well, this is a great example of that. Well, alright, what kind of pronoun is it? We have a lot of choices in the English language of pronouns. It could be demonstrative pronoun, an indefinite pronoun, a derogatory pronoun, a personal, possessive, reciprocal pronoun. All these pronouns. You're probably thinking what? You forgot it didn't you? As quick as it went in it went right back out. These are all pronouns that we once learned. But do you know what this pronoun is? It's none of those. It's a reflective pronoun. Why is that important? Let me give you the definition. A reflective pronoun is a pronoun that denotes mutual participation in an act on the part of the subject of the verb. So, what is this saying? It says that Jesus, Himself – reflective pronoun took an active part, a mutual participation in what? Giving Himself up. Another way of saying this is that Jesus took the initiative to hand Himself over to the cross why? For the beloved. He demonstrated His love by actively giving Himself over. He didn't have to be dragged into the court. He didn't threaten to bring the angelic host down. He could have. He willfully was led like a lamb to what? Slaughter. Which fits exactly the passage because what is Paul saying? He said that when He did this it was like a fragrant offering, a sacrifice to God. Do you know what that is? That is Paul is capturing the Old Testament

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Levitical ritual of sacrifice of the lamb. Jesus was our lamb. He didn't have to be led to slaughter. He willfully gave Himself up. 2 Corinthians 5:21. He freely became sin who knew no sin. Romans chapter 5, 8. God shows His love for us in that while we still sinners Christ took the initiative. Died for us. That's the example. That's the example of love. So ask yourself. How did Christ love? His love was sacrificial. His love was costly. His love was self initiating. How are we to love? How are we to walk in love? If Christ is the supreme example then our love ought to be costly. It ought to be self-sacrificing. It ought to be self-initiating. Wrap your mind around that thought.

Do you want a barometer of how you're doing in love? Then go to 1 Corinthians 13. 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. Just turn back towards the front of the New Testament. You're going to go past Galatians, 2 Corinthians you're going to hit 1 Corinthians so you're only a couple books away. 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 4 is the biblical definition for love. Do you want to do a little experiment and see how you're doing in this whole walking in love? Well, first understand the definition – love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast, it's not arrogant, rude, does not insist on its own way. It's not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong doing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Alright, now go back to the top. 1 Corinthians 13, verse 4. Look at it. Take the word love out. Insert your own name. Now you have a barometer of how you're doing in the whole area of biblical love. Just put your name there. I'm just going to pick a name out of the air. Susie. Susie is patient and kind. Susie does not envy or boast. Susie is not arrogant or rude. She does not insist on her own way. She's not irritable or resentful. On and on it goes. Do you really want to see how you're doing in the biblical standard of love? There you go. There's your standard.

So what do we see? We see a command – walk in love. We see an example – Christ as the example who gave Himself up. Now, we come to verse 3 and if you're not savvy in understanding how argument of Paul is laid out you would think he's changing course. You would think that there was such a major transition that verse 3 isn't connected to verse 2 but you'd be wrong. It's completely connected. Verse 3 says but sexual immorality, all impurity, covetousness must not even be named among you, etc. You say wait. We're just talking about love. Now he's talking about sex. What happened? There's a counterfeit to avoid in this passage. That's his idea. He's saying that you need to be careful. I'm telling you about biblical love. What you have to be careful of is counterfeit love that your culture knows all too well. See, here's the thing. Whatever God initiates as good Satan will try to counterfeit with evil. Do you understand that? If God's love is costly, sacrificial, self-initiating then Satan's love will be easy. It will be cheap. It will be self-satisfying. What Paul is saying is be careful because the culture will try to woo you into its kind of love and what is its kind of love? Well, he says it's immorality. It's the Greek word *porneia* where we get the word pornography. It means an illicit sexual activity. It also is impure or impurity. This is the broadest sense of a lewd, immoral act. So he goes from the most narrow to the most broad, everything in-between. Covetousness. He says don't covet what somebody else has. It has a

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sexual bent to it. All these words masquerade as true love when in reality they're the epitome of self-love. Right? I mean, sexual immorality, sexual impurity, the idea of coveting – wanting somebody else that you can't have. All that is the epitome of self-love. It's the furthest extreme of walking in love as Christ walked. For Christ was costly, sacrificial, self-initiating. The world's love is just the opposite. So what Paul is saying is be careful because the world counterfeits God's love. That's not how you should act. That shouldn't even be named among you.

Verse 4 he says you shouldn't even talk like that. He says you shouldn't even use lewd, crude language. We don't need to go into a lot of depth. We studied this last week. But you know why I think he put it here? I think he's saying don't talk like that because that leads to the action of immorality and impurity. That just demonstrates what's going on in your heart. Don't talk that way and you won't act that way. Put that away he says. But, and then he turns and he says you need to understand with this counterfeit if you choose that lifestyle there is a consequence. And we see the consequences in verse 5 and 6. He says for you may be sure of this. What are we sure of Paul? This is a great literal translation. You really want to literally translate this from the literal? It says you know knowing. We know knowing what? We know for sure, he's saying that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, that is covetousness, that is an idolater or someone who worships something other than God has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of these things, he says the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Have you picked up what he's saying? He's giving two very stern, severe warnings. Don't miss this. He's giving this to the church. He's giving this to people like me and you. He's saying don't fall into the world's trap of love. That's not God's love. You're not being an imitator or God when you're wrapped up in immorality and impurity. You're wrapped up in the world's love and if you stay there and you don't deconstruct that out of your life here's the consequences and he gives us two warnings.

Warning number one – the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God. He says, warning number one you can guarantee it that the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul is so serious about this that he says listen. I don't want you messing around with the world's love because it's really not love. It's all self-centered and it's so severe that if you do this you endanger your own soul. You will not inherit the kingdom of God. Which, by the way – jot this down. 1 Corinthians 6:9. 1 Corinthians 6:9. And then Galatians 5:19. 1 Corinthians 6:9 through 10 and Galatians 5:19 through 21. I'm not going to take the time to read that. You go home and you read those two passages. Do you know what Paul says in these two passages, almost identical? That if you're caught up in impurity; if you're caught up in immorality; if you're caught up in sexual love you will not inherit the kingdom of God. I bring this to your attention just so you know this is not just some isolated case. The scriptures speak of this over and over again. It's a stern warning.

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The second warning is just as stern. He says do not be deceived by the indifferent culture that we're a part of. Look at this. He says let no one deceive you with empty words. Let no one lure you in to the idea that this type of love, this impure love is how you should be living your life. Put it away. Take it off. What are we to do? We are to be people who walk in love.

About a hundred yards outside of Auschwitz, the Jewish concentration camp in Germany there is a Eternal Flame that is lit. It's burning to this day. It's for a man by the name of Father Max Kolbe. In 1939 when the Nazis invaded Poland and overtook the country Father Kolbe, Father Max as he was affectionately known was vehemently against the occupation and so he began to hide out and care for the Jews that were being carted off to the concentration camps. In fact, those Jewish people who were being assisted by Father Max would often say, in some what of a quandary we don't understand why he's doing this. Why would a Christian man help the Jewish people? He was doing this at his own peril and eventually in 1941 it caught up to him and he himself was sent away to the exact same concentration camp in Auschwitz. He was sent to barrack 14 which contained about one hundred men; six to eight to a bunk. No mattress, no blanket. Very little food. Very little water. You can imagine the deplorable conditions. You can imagine the psychological impact of the people. The best way to describe barrack 14 was despair, hopelessness. You've seen the pictures – walking skeletons, barely existing. They carried around this sense of despair and hopelessness.

When Father Max was put into barrack 14 he began to pray with the men; teach them the scriptures. He would encourage them while being out in the field when they were working saying God has a plan. Do not give up on God. God has a plan. He would share his own water and his rations to the point where in barrack 14 the whole atmosphere started to change and these men would actually be singing as they were working being led by Father Max. This was driving the Nazis crazy. They couldn't understand how their over control of people were not breaking their spirits. Well, on fateful day one of the prisoners escaped from barrack 14. The commandant brought everyone out into the central yard and said one of your own has escaped. Because of that ten of you will die. He was going to put them in barrack 13 which was the starvation block. There they would enter in and would be deprived of any type of food or water and in a very short time because of malnutrition they would perish in three, four days max. The commandant began to call people out from the ranks. And when he got to the ninth man the man broke down in tears and weeping, pleading for his life because he had children and a wife and he didn't want to leave them destitute. At that moment Father Max stepped forward. He said to the commandant take me. I am old he said. He wasn't. He was forty-seven. I am old. I can not work as well as the young. Trade me. The commandant didn't know what to do. Here was a very decisive, cruel man and the survivors speak of that moment as a moment that was surreal because it was if the commandant lost all ability to communicate. He stood there in silence just staring at Father Max.

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There was a sense of not knowing – would he just take both the men and throw them all in to the starvation block or would he relent and take Father Max? The commandant broke the silence simply by nodding, turned around and walked away. The ninth man who was pleading for his life was put back in the ranks. Father Max was led to the starvation block. But instead of wailing, crying, anguish that was normal; the idea that there's a sense of horror drifting through the camp which was normally what would happen when people were placed in the starvation block this time it was filled with singing, praising. It was these ten men quoting scripture. Father Max would encourage them in the midst of this not to hate their persecutor but to demonstrate love for them. And this went on not for two days or three days or six days or eight days but for two full weeks these men in standing position continued to sing, praise God, quote scripture, love their enemies. One by one they began to perish until finally four were left; three in absolute deplorable conditions, out of their mind in deliria. There stood Father Max. Finally the commandant could take no more. They needed the starvation blocks for other prisoners so he commanded that they go and do away with the last four prisoners. They were going to inject them with poison. The guard said that when they came to the gate, the door that bound the prisoners that Father Max willfully lifted his arm in acceptance of the injection, smiling all the time at his captor. Later that day when one of the Jewish resistant came to take care of the bodies of the prisoners there was Father Max leaning up against the blockade with a strange kind of peaceful smile on his face. To this day he is revered by many of the people in Poland who have family members who are still related to the Holocaust victims. Sacrificial. Costly. Love.

See, when you come to the end of a passage of scripture you have to say how can I initiate this into my life? Not just application. I can make application but it would be so limited. What the Spirit of God directs us to do is to move beyond application to implication. How can you take this love and apply it to your situation? You may never be in a situation where you have to give your life but you're in a situation right now, today with your family; with your friends; those you work around; your neighbor; those who are committed enemies of yours where you can love them as Christ loved them. Costly. Sacrificial. Love.

So what do we do? We go to the Lord and we say teach me how to do that. Give me clarity of how you want me to walk in love. Let's do that right now. Let's just bow our heads and in the silent, in the few moments just say God, how do you want me to walk in love?