

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. [www.dtmwebsite.org](http://www.dtmwebsite.org)

## Imitators, Partners and Participators

by Dan Trygg

**“Therefore *become imitators of God*, as beloved children and walk in love, according as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”**

Ephesians 5:1,2

**“Therefore do *not become partners/fellow-partakers with them*.”**

Ephesians 5:7

**“And do *not participate* in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.”**

Ephesians 5:11

When you are doing Bible study, pay careful attention to the words and phrases that connect sentences and paragraphs. They usually reveal the logical flow of the argument. Words like “therefore, because, for” or phrases like “for this reason, on account of this, or in order that”. **These are ligaments and connecting tissue that holds the “bones” of the argument together to make a recognizable form.** The apostle Paul’s writing is usually very logical and straight forward, when you begin to identify and take note of these connectors. For example, as I have pointed out before: **When you see a “therefore”, you need to ask yourself, “What is it *there for*?” It is a logical connector, indicating a conclusion that the author has made, or is drawing from the preceding statements.** It means that you need to look at the reasoning in the paragraphs above, in order to follow the author’s thought. You can work your way backward from this point to the beginning of the letter, where Paul describes everything God has done for us, and has in mind for us. **For our purposes here, however, it would be helpful to backtrack to 4:1, where Paul introduced the “practical section”.** Notice that *this* verse starts with a “therefore” as well.

To summarize, “therefore”, because of all that God has done for us, and intends for us, Paul urged us (implored, encouraged, exhorted) to walk worthily of our calling in Christ. What does *that* entail? We are to interact with our brothers and sisters in Christ with humility and acceptance, bearing with one another in love. Why? Because **God has called and equipped us to be a team, an interactive learning-laboratory and support-network to help one another grow and mature in Christ.** We have been given spiritual gifts, and we are to be seeking to grow all aspects of our lives into Christ, so that we would be led by Him to express truth-in-love to build up one another to become mature, active and effective disciples of Jesus Christ. **We are to come to understand the fundamentals of the faith, come to recognize Jesus actively working in our lives, and become like Him in our character. This is the heart and center of this book.**

In 4:17-19, Paul wrote, “therefore” (since *that* is true), don’t live any longer as people who do not know God choose to live. They are living without God in their experience, and are choosing to “stuff their pain” and pursue sensual experiences to escape or cover-up this inner emptiness or *angst*. Paul says, “This is not how you learned Christ.” What “learning Christ” means is to “put aside your former identity and the ways you used to live”, and renew how you understand and look at life. You are to “put on the new person you are in Christ” (vss. 20-24).

God has shown you His grace and purpose for your life. **Embrace that, by putting aside old ways, and consciously choosing to live in agreement with His inworking power and this new purpose.** Again, this new purpose for your life is to work with others as a team that is dedicated to help one another grow and effectively follow Jesus.

Then, in 4:25-32, we have another “therefore”. Since *this* is your calling and purpose, put aside the “mask” you created to hide your genuine self and emotions. **Speak what is honest with one another.** Recognize healthy anger, and learn to deal with irritations and aggravation in a productive and short-term manner. **We only get better as we share and process with each other.** At the same time, put aside unhealthy and negative speech, along with all the destructive, explosive and poisonous forms of anger that escalate arguments, and cause hurt, or tear people down. Instead, we are to be expressing grace toward one another, even as God showed us grace in Christ.

This brings us to 5:1, where our study for today begins. There are three key ideas that I want to highlight in this passage, ...three key words: *Imitators, partners and participators*.

**An imitator is one who does what someone else does, ...a copyist, ...one who follows someone else as a model of right behavior.** In Ephesians 5, we are exhorted “come to be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a good fragrance.” The verb indicates that we do not start out as imitators of God, or as ones who walk in love. **We become, or come to be, imitators of God.** This is something to grow into, ...to aspire to, ...to incorporate into our lives, ...to come to be. This brings us right back to 4:20-24, ...*learning Christ*. The word for “learn” here is not describing intellectual learning. It is about practical implementation. It is about learning to do. It is the same root word that “disciple” comes from. A disciple is a trainee, an apprentice, one who is developing skills and know-how. From this perspective, it is easy to see that *imitation* is a key part of the learning process. A disciple watches what the ones who are more skilled do, and imitates them. As the disciple copies what they are doing, they begin to develop

awareness, thoughtfulness, coordination and skills. **The goal is to *become like* the Master Himself.** This may seem kind of nebulous, and maybe even unreachable. We don't have Jesus or God in a down-to-earth, tangible example for us to learn from or imitate. To help us with this, **God has placed others in our lives to be more immediate examples and role models.** Again, we come back to the importance of our relationships in the Body of Christ. ***We are to learn from each other.*** The word "imitate" occurs six times in the NT. **Paul urged those who he worked with to "become imitators of me"** (1 Cor. 4:16). How could he say that? Because he was following Christ. "Come to be imitators of me, according as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). **Because Paul was actively pursuing and imitating Christ, he became a reliable and more skillful role model for other people.** In 1 Thess. 1:6, he pointed out how these new believers had become imitators of Paul, his team, and even the Lord Jesus, by receiving and welcoming the word of God with the joy of the Holy Spirit in the face of trial and affliction. In this, even their group of believers were imitating other churches of God, who were also faithfully enduring persecution (1 Thess. 2:14). In Hebrews 6:11,12, the writer charged the wavering Hebrew Christians to show diligence, so as to realize the fulfillment of the hope until the end, in order that they might not be sluggish or lazy. **Instead, they were to become imitators of the ones who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises.** We are also to remember our leaders and examples, those who have spoken the word to us, and have helped us along the way. We are to consider their walk, and imitate what is "the faith" (Heb. 13:7). **Not only are we to look to others for a good example, and imitate what is healthy and beneficial toward growth and maturity in Christ, we are also to become such people for others in the Body of Christ. That is what discipleship is: encouraging, teaching and modeling faith. Like Jesus, we are to present ourselves to God to make our lives to be a sweet fragrance.**

If that is our goal, to become like Jesus and present the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place we go (2 Cor. 2:14), then we cannot be mixed with the unclean and tainted attitudes and practices of this corrupt world system. That is what Paul is referring to in Eph. 5:3-5. Sexual immorality, moral uncleanness, or greed (desire for "having much"), indecent or foolish talk, or coarse jesting (sexual innuendo) should not be part of our lives. **They are not fitting for ones who are following Jesus. Instead, we ought to be joyful, full of thanksgiving.** Paul makes the point to say that it is because of these kinds of things that the wrath of God is coming on the disobedient. **We are not to be *partners* or joint-sharers with those who act, talk and think in these ways. We have a new identity, a new purpose, and we can have a positive impact, if we put these things aside.** Verse 5 is poorly translated. It sounds like legalism. Instead, it is a declaration of what can frustrate our present experience of the kingdom of God. **It is saying that those who are harboring and participating in such practices are *not* having or experiencing the kingdom now! The kingdom is available now! These things get in the way. Do you want to experience the reign and rule of God, and the leading of the Spirit? Then don't partner with those who are thinking and acting in these ways (vs. 7). Do not be a joint-sharer with them.** Turn aside from such things, so you can experience the freedom of Christ *now!* **We used to be of the darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light!** The fruit of the light is in goodness, righteousness and truth, ...testing, discovering and approving what is *pleasing to the Lord* (5:8-10). ***That should be our pursuit, ...finding what is pleasing to God, and partnering with Him!***

Finally, Paul exhorts us to *not participate* in the fruitless works of darkness. The word for "participate" means to "share together with". It implies participating with someone else in those practices that are unhelpful, unproductive, or useless. Again, the apostle had been writing about how we are to no longer live as people who do not know God. Their minds are foolish, darkened, and their thinking is vain or profitless (4:17-19). **Paul comes around to this again. Why? Because it is a very real temptation. There is a lot of social pressure from outsiders to join them in their empty pursuits.** Some of these activities are not just fruitless or innocent. Some of what people do in the darkness is shameful and degrading. **We are not to participate in these unfruitful works of darkness, but even expose them** (vs. 11). The apostle is not encouraging us to spy on other peoples' activities, or gossip about them. The word for "expose" is literally to bring to the light. **As we are living lives that are different, ...wholesome, helpful, productive and positive, the light of Christ that is in us will begin to expose the emptiness and meaninglessness of the lives of these other people.** Everything exposed by the light will be made evident. *The light will do the work.* **We don't have to preach condemnation. Our job is to display illumination! God has appointed us to display a life that is radically different from the lives of those who don't know Christ.** In 2 Cor. 4:6, Paul wrote, "God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts toward the shining-forth of the experiential-knowledge of the radiant-glory of God in the face of Christ." **When people meet us, the intended potential should be that they see the radiance of God's life within us. It should be as clear and evident as light in the darkness.** Here, in Ephesians 5:14, Paul likens it to us being dead ones who have been brought to life. He wants us to rise up to our calling, our potential. "Wake, sleeper, and rise out from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

**So, what is your focus? Who are you imitating? Who do you *partner with*, and what activities are you *participating in*?** You can live in a shadow-land of empty fruitlessness, or you can choose to walk as a child of light!