

THE BIG IDEA: When you're God's kid, you'll do what God did.

The Take-Off

If you're with us for the first time, we're on the last half of a journey through a letter that Paul wrote to Christ followers in Ephesus.

We know that letter as Ephesians, one of the 66 books in the Bible, and the main theme throughout the letter is ONE. That's important because Paul (the guy who wrote it) can get a bit wordy at times, and so he will often try to boil everything he's saying into ONE simple statement or reason why he's writing what he is.

Confused? Good, then it's time for me to do what the other Paul does.

Let's simplify.

I told you a few weeks back that the last half of Ephesians is the practical user's guide for how to live out the truths we learned in the first half, and the biggest truth of all - the ONE THING that we learned at the very beginning - is that we are IN CHRIST if we've chosen to believe in Christ.

Not believe like "I've heard of Jesus and he's cool" but believe like "I agree that Jesus had to pay the price for my sin and now my life matches that belief."

Here's why that matters today: the last section of chapter 4 and all of chapter 5 reads like a list of things to do and not do, and it's so easy to feel the pressure of religious works, and so right in the middle of that, Paul writes 9 very important words to help us simplify what this is really all about: "be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children."

Oh great! One more thing to do, right? Imitate the God of the universe!

That sounds daunting, but what Paul's really saying is that this happens naturally because we're dearly loved children.

Let me give you the Big Idea and see if that helps clarify what Paul is saying: **When you're God's kid, you'll do what God did.**

That may not be educated enough for some of you, so if you want to say the same thing but sound smarter, you can say it like this: **the children of God reflect the character of God.**

Pick one of those - the college or the kindergarten version - and let's dig a little deeper into why and when and how we can look like our heavenly Father:

1. Why do we look like God? We have the same DNA.

- a. There's one obvious reason why children look like dads - they have the same DNA
- b. Just look at some of these father-son lookalikes (PICTURES)
- c. We possess the same DNA as our heavenly Father if we're in Christ
- d. Remember how we learned at the beginning of the ONE series that the one choice we must make is to choose Jesus?
- e. That's the step that replaces our old nature with a new nature.
- f. Here's how that process works:
 - John 3:3 - it requires being born again
 - John 3:6 - it is a spiritual birth that imparts something spiritual to us - a new spiritual DNA
 - John 3:16 - it happens because we believe ("agree and act according to truth")
 - 1 Peter 2:9 - the result of that birth - we're a chosen "people" - lit "genos" - offspring, gene
- g. Let me say this again: the reason why acting like God seems hard to so many is because they've never been born again
- h. Religion IS hard. Resemblance to your Father ISN'T.
- i. If you're born of the Spirit, you WILL begin to resemble God.
- j. Parker and Will and Sydney shared my DNA from conception. The resemblance has grown over time.
- k. Trust the process. If you're born of God, you'll remind others of God.

2. When do we look like God? When we have the same love.

- a. That's really what we're after, isn't it? That our lives would remind others of Jesus?
- b. That's what it means to be a Christian - a "mini" Christ
- c. Verse 2 shows us when we look most like our Father - it's when we love others with the same love He has

- d. Here's what we can learn about the Father's love:
 - It has to be received before it can be given away ("live a life of love JUST AS Christ loved us")
 - It is active - Jesus don't just SAY he loved us; he GAVE his love to us
 - It is sacrificial - the Father's love costs - so will ours when we love like him
- e. Sometimes it can seem difficult to love each other and we can cop out by saying that we're human so we can't love like Jesus loved
- f. But 1 John 4:7 tells us plainly that if we have our Father's DNA, then we'll love. Period.
- g. I'm not pushing for some utopia here, but I do want to explain something clearly that all of us who grew up in a family will agree is true: LOVING EACH OTHER is easy. LIVING WITH EACH OTHER isn't.
- h. So how do we continually love like our heavenly Father? By continually receiving love from our Father.
- i. The more dearly we're loved by God, the more clearly we give love to others.
- j. Of course, there are obstacles that can block us from experiencing that love and giving that love.
- k. Paul mentions 3 specific things to watch out for.

3. **How do we look like God? By obeying 3 simple, practical commands.**

- a. Stop hinting (vv. 3-7)
 - To hint is to suggest something indirectly, to be covert
 - We "drop hints" about gifts we want without coming out and saying it directly
 - This is basically warning us of trying to see how close we can get to impurity without consequence
 - The answer is: not very (Proverbs 6:27)
 - Notice that it starts with a hint and it ends with partnership (v. 7)
 - Our response to these things? 2 Timothy 2:22
- b. Turn the light on (vv. 8-14)
 - One way we can stop hinting is to turn the light on
 - vv. 8-9 tell us that living in the light is how we can find out what pleases the Lord
 - Hinting is not fully disclosing something, which is not compatible with a kingdom of light
 - In fact, Number 12:8 tells us that God's desire is to speak to us clearly - face to face - in light
 - We say it like this in our house: God doesn't move in the shadows
 - You'll find disobedience in the shadows, and shame, and death (vv. 12-14)
 - But God is ALL ABOUT SHINING LIGHT, and his children will be, too
- c. Wise up (vv. 15-20)
 - Stop seeing how close you can get to sin, stop hanging back in the shadows, and finally, Paul says wise up
 - Proverbs 4:7 - At all costs, get wisdom
 - So many of us spend everything we have on the very things that WON'T help us wise up
 - Verse 18 shows the price of that choice: debauchery
 - Now, a little drinking may get you buzzed, but debauchery will get you arrested
 - When we wise up, we realize that no one lives like this and thinks it resembles God
 - We also realize that no one wises up on their own - speak to each other (v. 19)
 - Proverbs 13:20 - walk with the wise and get wiser

The Landing

As we close this thing out, a word of caution: it's too easy to look at this stuff and decide that we aren't really saved But the truth is that there is a PROCESS to all of this: my kids had my DNA at conception, but they grow to look and act like me more and more every day
They may have looked like me at 2, but they act like me at 11 and 15. It all takes time.
But it will happen. You and I will look like Him
He didn't hint at sin; He died for it.
He didn't stay in the shadows; He sent the light.
He isn't kind of knowing; He's all-knowing.
He loves and He gives.
And if you're God's kid, you'll do what God did, and the world will know who your daddy is.
Chances are good, they'll want Him to be their daddy, too.