

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# DEVO

FEBRUARY 10 - 14, 2025

# THE STORY OF US

Sermon Series  
Jan 5 - Mar 2



# MONDAY

Read **Ephesians 5:1-2**

In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul continues his instructions for Christian living that we are to follow Christ's example. For example, in Luke 7:36 Jesus went to the house of a Pharisee for dinner. Jesus goes to the house of one of the people who is against Him and ridicules Him. When is the last time you went to someone's house or invited someone over to your house whom you didn't like or who was contentious toward you?

Following the example of Christ is not simple or easy. Imitating Jesus is not for the faint of heart. He sacrificed Himself for mankind. Are you ready to do that? "Non-Christian writers of Paul's day could not cite the example of a god who had lovingly sacrificed himself for his people." (Craig Keener) In Paul's day, following Jesus meant identifying with Him not only in His life but even in His death.

We follow as "*dearly loved children*" (Ephesians 5:1). When a child is dearly loved, that child will follow his/her parent closely and want to imitate him/her. How often have we seen a little boy walk the way his dad does? Or a young girl have the same mannerisms as her mom? They do so because they trust their parents and want to be just like them. These parents would do anything for their children. They sacrifice their wants and needs for their children all the time. In the same way, we are to imitate Jesus walking in the ways He did and following the instructions He gave.

Paul speaks to people who have no knowledge of the one true God or Jesus. All they knew were the Greek and Roman beliefs and the gods with which they have been raised. They knew of the Titan Prometheus who suffered for giving fire to mortals and betraying the other gods. He was punished, but he did not die. He was not a pre-Christian paralleling the suffering and death of Jesus, who voluntarily offered Himself for humanity.

Paul spoke of the only true living God in the person of Jesus, the only One who can save us from our sin and who is worthy of imitation.

## QUESTIONS

As an image bearer of God, how is your imitation of Jesus looking these days?

## PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen and GlobalGrace Missions

Pray that God will sharpen Bryant and Anne's eyes as they watch for refugees who need special attention. Ask God to give them wisdom and show them practical ways to help and bless these people. Pray that Jesus will be seen with crystal clarity as the Wilhelmsens express the love of the Father in heaven.

# TUESDAY

Read **Ephesians 5:1-2**

Paul says, “*Walk in the way of love*” (Ephesians 5:2). The Father’s love. *Agapé* love. Not our typical idea of love. Our first thought of love is a selfish thought, a worldly one of transaction and feeling. “*Agapé* is a term used in the New Testament to describe a selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love. It is the highest form of love, often associated with the love of God for humanity and the love that believers are called to have for one another.” (Strong’s Lexicon) Unlike other Greek words for love, such as *eros* (romantic love) or *philia* (brotherly love), *agapé* is not based on emotions or feelings but is an act of the will, characterized by a commitment to the well-being of others.

In the Greco-Roman world of Paul’s time, *agapé* was distinct in its emphasis on selflessness and sacrifice. First century Christians adopted this term to describe and identify with the love that God demonstrated through Jesus Christ. “*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). This concept of love was revolutionary in a culture that often valued power and self-interest.

But it is still revolutionary today, isn’t it? We think we know what love is, but how do we know love at all? “*We love because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). John, the beloved disciple, tells us that we

only know love at all because God first loved us! And what kind of love did He love us with? *Agapé* love. God is the author of love. He IS love! Everything He has ever done for us has been out of this love of a Father for His children. And just like a Father who loves His children, sometimes that means giving. Sometimes that means withholding. Sometimes that means taking away. In order to deal with what life throws at us, we must first understand that He loves us first and foremost. That is unchanging. Immutable.

Only when we can grasp this truth, can we begin to accept what comes and goes in our lives and be able to truly love one another.

## QUESTIONS

What is something about God that you would like to understand more fully? How will you go about doing that?

## PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen and GlobalGrace Missions

Almost every refugee whom the Wilhelmsens meet has a long story to tell. They always try to find out about their families back home. This opens a window for them to see what they have left behind. Pray that God continues to show Bryant and Anne how to draw close to these people, one at a time. This means being patient and willing to hear what God is saying to them. May Jesus be seen clearly in purposeful detail.

# WEDNESDAY

Read **Ephesians 5:1-2**

This side of heaven we are imperfect/incomplete. Our limited knowledge will never match the perfect wisdom of God. Our holiness cannot be like His, though we are called to be holy as He is holy. Our faith is not like His faithfulness. Our obedience is not like His authority. Our emptiness is not like His fullness. But what is left? Love is left. However different it might be in scope, passion, or degree, our love is of the same quality and nature as His.

“Notice how the Apostle in the context fastens upon a certain characteristic of that divine love which we are to imitate in our lives; ... God-like love will be love that gives as liberally as His does. What is the very essence of all love? Longing to be like. And the purest and deepest love is love which desires to impart itself, and that is God’s love.” (Alexander MacLaren)

God’s love has a quality of giving up as well as of giving. We read in Romans 8:32 of the Father who “*spared not His Son.*” He could have kept Jesus for Himself, but He did not shrink from giving Him up. God surrendered His Son up to death ... for us. He gave up and gave to ... us. This is the kind of love that Paul is talking about here that we should be demonstrating in our Christian living.

We need to be soberly considering if there is something wrong with us when we possess this great love but are not moved to imitate

this love of God toward others. Even a godless society and secular philanthropy nips hard at the heels of Christian charity today. Believers should be first among all others to show love and charitable acts.

We should not be enjoying “our morsels alone, and hugging ourselves in the possession of the love which has redeemed us.” (MacLaren) We should be imitating His love in our relationships with others, believers, and unbelievers. “*For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen*” (1 John 4:20b).

## QUESTIONS

How is our God-given ability to love different than our capacity regarding God’s other attributes (e.g., wisdom)? How is “love” often misappropriated or misrepresented in American culture?

## PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen and GlobalGrace Missions

Almost all refugees are dealing with depression of some sort. They arrive in fear and then face fear for what lies ahead. At times the Wilhelmsens visit people in the hospital who are dealing with severe depression. Thank God that most of them improve and that refugees are always open to Bryant and Anne praying with them and for them.

# THURSDAY

Read [Ephesians 5:1-2](#), [Galatians 1:4, 2:20](#); [Titus 2:14](#); [1 Timothy 2:6](#)

Paul states in Ephesians 5:2 (and other places in Galatians 1:4, Galatians 2:20, Titus 2:14, and 1 Timothy 2:6) how “*Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us.*” He gave Himself—all that He was as God, all that He became as Man, a complete Self-surrender, and a whole burnt offering.

“The supreme Act of self-devoting love for others which, as a fact, the Atoning Death was, is here used as the great Example of all acts of self-devoting love in the Christian Church. As the Father has just been named as the Ideal for the forgiving Christian, so here the Son is named as the Ideal for the self-sacrificing Christian.” (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges) This is the way of love for us as believers. What a beautiful and terrifying example to imitate!

Jesus loved us and gave Himself up for us. Not merely on our behalf, but in our stead. He gave His life that we might live. He was the atonement and shedding of blood to cover all our sin: past, present, and future generations. This is the way of love. He is the Example we must follow. He is the Chief Cornerstone and our standard of measure and alignment. We must match, imitate, and model our lives after Him. What a beautiful and terrifying example to imitate!

“In the New Testament, ‘thusia’ primarily refers to a sacrifice or offering made to God. It encompasses both literal sacrifices, such as those made in the temple, and metaphorical sacrifices, such as acts of worship, praise, and service to God. The term underscores the concept of giving something valuable to honor and worship God.” (Strong’s Lexicon)

We often get stuck on the thought of what Christ sacrificed for us; however, think about what Christ was *offering up* to God on our behalf. Christ’s sacrifice was not only for the atonement for our sin but also for the reconciliation of man and God. Out of the Father’s love, He gave up His Son in order to regain relationship with us! What a beautiful and terrifying example to imitate!

## QUESTIONS

How can you model forgiveness and reconciliation to others?

## PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen and GlobalGrace Missions

Most refugees are only with them for a short time. They’ve observed over time that the refugees are most attentive, with minds and hearts most open, when going through crises. They often see how God brings people through hard times to open them up for Bryant and Anne’s efforts to plant and nurture Eternal Seed. May God show the Wilhelmsens those He wants them to spend time with, those whose hearts He has prepared.

# FRIDAY

Read [Ephesians 5:1-2](#); [2 Corinthians 2:15](#)

Certain smells are most pleasing to us. Passing by In N Out or The Habit can make our mouths water with anticipation of partaking in the food being prepared. Receiving flowers can be a pleasant-smelling gift of appreciation, love, or repentance. These foods and flowers become a delight to smell.

When Jesus died, Paul says He was “a *fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*” (Ephesians 5:2). This is metaphorically speaking, of course. Many times in the Bible, sacrifices are described in just this way (Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18, 25; Leviticus 1:9, 2:2). Paul also refers to us this way in 2 Corinthians 2:15: “*For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.*”

“In ancient Greek culture, fragrances and aromas were significant in daily life and religious practices. ... In the Jewish tradition, the aroma of sacrifices was considered pleasing to God, signifying the worshiper’s devotion and the acceptance of their offering.” (Strong’s Lexicon) Out of the Father’s incredible love for us, He offered up His Son Jesus to be our blood sacrifice of atonement to save us. What kind of love is this?

One of my favorite Christian artists is Margaret Becker. In her song “What Kind of Love is This?” she says, “Before I knew Your name/ You knew my every breath/Before I knew my way/You walked my every step/Before I understood what love could be/You gave Yourself to me. CHORUS: What kind of love is this?/That You would lay down Your life/For someone such as me/I’ll spend my lifetime wondering why/The beauty of heaven chose here in my heart/To pour out His perfect gift/What kind of love is this?” I encourage you to listen to the song. We cannot fathom this kind of love, but thank the Father that He loves us like this!

Remember Paul’s words: “... we are to *God the pleasing aroma of Christ.*” Oh, brothers and sisters, let us live like this is true and that we know it deep down in our bones!

## QUESTIONS

Do you not feel the compulsion to give thanks from the depths of your being that the Father has such love for you? How will you spend time giving Him thanks and the sacrifice of your praise that He might smell the pleasing aroma of Christ coming from you?

## PRAYERS

For [Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen](#) and [GlobalGrace Missions](#)

Pray for Jamal, a Kurdish Persian, who has been waiting six years in great tension for a response to his request for political asylum. Though the doors seem closed, ask the Lord to open a special window for Jamal. He believes in Jesus and has been a faithful part of their group. Many, like Jamal, live one day at a time. Pray that they are able to stay patient and not grow bitter toward government authorities.



## Sources

- Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
- Tuesday's quote from *Strong's Lexicon* can be found at <https://biblehub.com/greek/26.htm>.
- Alexander MacLaren's quote is taken from *MacLaren's Expositions of Holy Scripture* and can be found at [https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/mac/ephesians-5.html#google\\_vignette](https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/mac/ephesians-5.html#google_vignette).
- The quote from the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* can be found at <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/ephesians/5.htm>.
- Thursday's quote from *Strong's Lexicon* can be found at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2378.htm>.
- Friday's quote from *Strong's Lexicon* can be found at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2175.htm>.

*These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at [KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org](mailto:KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org). If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.*

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