

- ii. The early church fathers emphasized the importance of imitation of the Father as His adopted children.

- C. Everything which Paul calls us to do in Ephesians is rooted in our adoption back into his family as imitators of God to the world.

Conclusion

Rankin Wilbourne, in his book *Union with Christ*, wrote: "One way to think about the Christian life—not the only way, but a powerful and too-little-used way—is that believing the gospel means having your imagination taken captive and reshaped by a new story."



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LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- What are some of the ways the world (church included) misunderstand glory? How do these contrast with true glory?
- Why might telling the Gospel by starting from our personal need lead to an inadequate understanding of the Gospel?
- How important is the story of God creating us in His image and likeness to the grand Gospel drama? Explain.
- How does this calling to be imitators, image-bearers of God as King, change how you imagine your life?
- What are some of the ways you've followed the world-in-rebellion's story of glory? How can you adjust into being an imitator of God?
- Reflecting on the Rankin Wilbourne above, how might you work on reshaping your imagination with the Gospel?
- Explain the Irenaeus quote: "The glory of God is a living human."
- What do you think Smith means when he says, "The gospel is the way we learn to be human"?

Imagining the Kingdom – 13: Restored Imitators of God

Jerry Cisar — September 3, 2023

Text: Ephesians 5:1-2

Introduction

A. Glory

- i. The image and glory of God.
 - a) 2 Cor. 4:4
 - b) 2 Cor. 3:18

Irenaeus: "The glory of God is a living human."

James K. A. Smith: "The gospel is the way we learn to be human...."

- ii. True glory comes when, because of God's great love for us, He adopts us as children in Christ and then transforms us into His image and likeness.

- B. The imitation of God is intrinsic to the Gospel and, in particular, our response to it.

I. Created for Imitation

- A. Humans were created to rule in God's kingdom by imitating Him.
 - i. In the ANE story, humans were slaves for the gods.
 - ii. Genesis tells a counter-story of *God as a servant-king*.
 - iii. Humans were made to imitate this servant king as servant rulers who would expand Eden to the ends of the earth... for all creation.
- B. What does it mean to be in God's image and likeness?
 - i. God would only be represented by humans which could speak, and see, and act *just like Him. Imitators!*

ii. To bear God's image, *to imitate Him*, is to:

a) Eph. 4:2

b) Eph. 4:25-32

C. The Uniqueness of Our God Produces Uniqueness of Lives.

D.

i. Psalm 115:4-8

ii. We become like what we worship. Imitation is the highest form of *praise*.

E. Imitation is image-bearing. Image-bearing begins with the Gospel because the Gospel tells us what God is like!

II. Rejection of Imitation

A. Humans were created to rule in God's kingdom by imitating Him but rejected that rule and invaded God's kingdom trying to build their own kingdoms. (Gen. 3:1-5)

B. What are the effects of sin?

i. Sin's effects are total. Sin's effects are personal, social, and cosmic.

ii. A true Gospel must therefore address sin's personal, social, and cosmic affects. It must restore us to imitators of God!

C. The essence of sin is *human rejection of what God created us to be: imitators (image-bearers)*. Representatives of His good rule.

i. *Sin is living in contrast to image bearing.*

ii. Romans 3:23

III. Christ the Imitating King

A. In the grand drama of the Gospel, God was rejected as King.

i. The world needed a flawless human king who can restore God's glory amid humanity's brokenness.

ii. As both God and man, Jesus could restore true human rule.

iii. Jesus imitated the Father by laying down His life for us. He was the consummate servant-king.

B. Imitate the Father just as the King did.

i. Eph. 4:20-24

ii. The essence of imitating God is doing so by imitating the perfect imitator... Jesus Christ.

IV. Imitators of the King

A. The Gospel restores us to a people who display the glory of God.

i. 2 Cor. 3:18

ii. Where do we behold the Lord's glory most clearly? In Jesus.

B. Paul is likely inferencing Matthew 5:44-48.

i. We act as the children we've been adopted to be when we love our enemies. Why? Because He loves His enemies.