

Fullness of God

by John McGregor

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living out biblical principles in our families, focusing on Ephesians chapters 4 and 5. It highlights the need to be different by showing kindness and forgiveness, to imitate God as beloved children, to be careful in our actions and words, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit for empowerment and guidance in our relationships and daily lives.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:32, Ephesians 5:1, Ephesians 5:15, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Family Dynamics", "Living Out Biblical Principles"

Description

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Transcript

What a joy to be back with you once again and such a pleasure and a privilege when Pastor Henry called and we were able to set aside the date and we've been praying and here we are joined together worshipping the Lord in a beautiful setting and you know I don't know how you made out for supper but I certainly overdid it and you know there are three things that's very difficult to do and the first one is to climb a wall that's leaning toward you very difficult to do that second one is to kiss a girl who's leaning away from you and the third one is to talk to a group of people after they've had a really good meal and I've had limited experience you know climbing walls that lean toward me but I've had a great deal of experience speaking to people after they've had a good meal so we'll leave the middle one out there and little Roberta is not with me and this trip she is looking after some grandkids in Winnipeg so she sent me a text this morning to say had a great day yesterday praise the Lord so she's being spoiled and hopefully the grandkids are too so as we come together in family camp we have the opportunity here to be away from all the things all the things that distract us all the things that press upon us for time and for all of those kind of events that press in and for the next two and a half three days we have the opportunity just to be away and to be in a strong Christian fellowship and that's a wonderful wonderful time so this evening as we start things off I wanted to speak to you you know family camp it's normal at some point to speak on the last part of Ephesians chapter 5 when we see the you know the text that's written for wives and the text that's written for husbands and the texts that are written for children and so on that I like the book of Ephesians the first three chapters tell us a lot about God and him and his purpose and so on and the last three

chapters tell us a lot about us and what we are to be doing and what we are to be about and I'd like to just think tonight for a few moments how many of you need that cup of coffee ah yeah yeah that Christian drug always comes through yeah so before we get that good cup of coffee and fellowship together let's just think from Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32 and done through chapter 5 and verse 21 and one of the things I want to say to you is you know when you start out to have a biblical model for your home and for your family there are some verses that come as you read through you know husbands love your wives and so on but these four things that we want to look at this evening are really foundational if we don't become these four things we'll never be able to see a really strong biblical family and home situation so as we start off this evening let me just read these verses and then we'll look for a few moments at four things together be kind to one another tender-hearted forgiving each other just as in God in just as God in Christ also has forgiven you therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma but immorality or any impurity or greed must not be named among you as is proper among saints and there must be no filthiness and silly talk or coarse jesting which are not fitting but rather giving of thanks for this you know for certain that no immoral or impure person or covetous man who is an idolater has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God let no one deceive you with empty words or because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience therefore do not be partakers with them before you were formerly darkness but now you are light in the Lord walk as children of the light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness but instead even expose them for it is disgraceful even to speak of these things which are done by them in secret but all things become visible when they are exposed by the light for everything that becomes visible is light for this reason it says awake sleeper and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you therefore be careful how you walk not as unwise men but as wise making the most of your time because the days are evil so then do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is and do not get drunk with wine for that is dissipation but be filled with the spirit speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God even the Father and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ Father thank you for your word would you take this word by your Holy Spirit's power and strengthen our lives and our homes and our families through it and just speak to each one of us this evening in that very personal way as you take your word and address it to us may we be so conscious of your presence thank you Lord that you are here you have a plan and a purpose for each one of us through these days to meet with you in very special and tender ways so Lord may you just take full charge now and speak to us in Jesus name amen sometimes certainly out in the west people will say to me Christians do good things Christians feed the poor Christians fix up people's houses Christians do all kinds of things like that and that's true but you find that there are four times in this text where the Lord is saying to us not something about what we are to do but about what we are to be or to be come and as we go through we'll just take a few moments and think about each one the first one comes to us there in verse 32 of chapter 4 and I would say the Lord is saying to us as his children be different be different you see how that text speaks to us about being tender and forgiving kind and so on to one another to each other now this world that we live in is I think getting harder all the time how about you when you listen to the news do you see a lot of tenderness you see a lot of tender-hearted things do you see anything like that no we see hardness and harshness and and all of the abuses and all of those kind of things that go on and so that's the world into which the Lord calls us as his church to be tender-hearted and forgiving and so on encouraging one another all of those things mentioned there in verse 32 be different now I have a couple of friends they are first nations couple Bert and Liz Jenile and I

think they've been in Fort Burwell no maybe someday well Bert is taking some cancer treatments at the moment they're musicians and they share the word of God as they go and sometimes when we are on the northern reserve you see people gather and you can feel all the sense of criticism and hardness and all the rest you can sense there's some who've come to that meeting and they're sort of saying what's this all about what are these folk gonna say or do you know I have watched a bible principle so often in those kind of circumstances where Liz will get up with her guitar and start to sing just as Joel led us in some worship a few moments ago and as she stands there she's exhibiting this being different you see the world expects that kind of harshness and that kind of atmosphere and attitude that that's how it's supposed to be but the Lord calls to us and says no no be different so when Liz gets up with that guitar of hers and she sings a song or two here's this little lady and she'll say you know the reason that we're here is really Jesus came to my house one Thursday afternoon at four o'clock and he came into my old shack over there on the reserve four o'clock one Thursday afternoon and then she'll say hey you know Jesus brought a couple of missionaries with him and I have watched the hardest of situations as she just talks about when Jesus came into her heart and the intensity of his forgiveness and the strength of the joy of his salvation begin to pour through her. I've watched sometimes the faces that have been so hard and so ready to judge and so ready to criticize and the tears are just rolling back this world you see desperately needs the Christian family to be different to be living in the sense of the word of God and in the call of God and in the way of God so as we gather this evening wouldn't it be something through these days for you and I just to call out to the creator himself here in the midst of his creation and say oh God would you make me different show me the things in my life that need to be tenderized show me the things that need to be broken off and taken away show me oh God how to live with a difference show me how it is oh God that you want me to live that I might be able to live and walk in the presence of the living God you know people ask me all over the place what kind of a program can the church get that would really make a difference in the family today and I just say this you'll find it in Zechariah chapter 8 and the very last verse it talks about the day that will come when 10 men will lay hold of a Jew and say to him we're going with you we have heard that God is with you that's what makes the difference when we are in the presence of the living God so we are called by the Lord to be different be kind to one another you know sometimes people don't know what to do with that it just stops them in their tracks I remember a fellow who came to my door one night in Ireland and said I've come to tell you we're going to shoot you and I watched his face when I said friend before you leave can I just pray for you and he didn't walk away he ran that's a radical difference isn't it that's not what's expected now just think about this too in the family setting now I know that there's nobody who's Irish here in the late house gospel church but you know in Ireland once in a while when couples don't agree they do this kind of thing and you can cut the atmosphere with a knife you know and uh what is that that's that hardness that comes through the flesh and the word of God says be kind and tender-hearted and forgiving and when we get into that oh my goodness all of those kind of things that are so harsh fall away and they have no effect upon us you know a guy could preach on that all night but I think I'll move on to number two here chapter five verse one says be imitators of God be imitators of God nine do you ever imitate anybody I spent 14 years with the Billy Graham team and everybody on the team learned to say start now the buses will wait what were we doing we were imitating Mr. Graham when he did that invitation right you ever imitate anybody our former pastor's daughter gave a testimony in church two weeks ago and when she got up she said I just want to say a special welcome to each and every one of you and when pastor Tom was our pastor that's how he started every single service yeah be imitators of God as dear and dearly loved children we have a friend Dr. John Wesley White he's actually from Saskatchewan but his theological training was in England and so he has a very distinctive accent and I did lots of crusades with him over the years and you know he had a habit of preaching with a newspaper from the

local time and the word and he talked about how things were going in the world and why we needed Christ and he would maybe say something like I read in today's globe and mail that a certain eastern premier says he has the devil in his heart and if you're from Alberta you'd say that's the best place for the devil to be you know he caught me saying that oh dear do you ever get caught when you've done something you shouldn't have done I was imitating his voice that distinctive voice of his and he looked at me you know and everybody who was standing around me went like this it's interesting how quickly people stand with you when you're in trouble you know so they all went like this and Dr. John Wesley White he he looked at me and he put his hand up like this and he pointed right at me you know and then there came a little smile just a little smile and he never said a word he just walked away and he said to me afterwards John you're not supposed to spend your time imitating me you're supposed to spend your life learning how to imitate your father now you think about this what a call that is to you and me be imitators of God as dearly loved children and children imitate us don't they my little granddaughter on Canada Day evening came plomping along with her mommy's shoes on and walked right over my bare feet with them what's she doing she's imitating that's what mom does now can I say this graciously so much of what our world desperately needs is to see us imitate our father and in and through our children who have learned to imitate the father as dearly loved children so many of the difficulties and things that families face today if we were to draw in with everything that we could to become like him now I was able to imitate John Wesley White's voice because I spent a great deal of time with him so if you and I are to be imitators of God the father how will we ever do that unless we spend time with him how will our character ever become like him without that time together as you think about Jesus isn't this what he did when he is asked in John chapter 8 and verse 28 about the things he's saying he says I just say the words that my father gives me oh there's Jesus doing exactly what is written to you and I in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 1 the imitators of God as dearly loved children you think about his character how will we become imitators if we don't spend any time thinking upon his character his walk in first John 2 verse 6 it tells us that you and I are to walk as Jesus walked in third John and verse 4 it says I have no greater joy than this that my children walk in the truth isn't that what we long to see as parents that our children walk in the truth it's all part of learning to imitate him I think I was 12 years old in Christ before it finally dawned on me one day what is it that I'm supposed to be come and finally in Romans 8 it hit me like a ton of bricks more like Jesus oh dear friends you see as you think about these scriptures and you think about being imitators of God there are many attributes that the Lord has Arthur we theologians divide them into two categories those that are incommunicable and those that are communicable the incommunicable is simply things that are God's alone and he shares with no one things like the fact that he is transcendent and he is infinite I am not infinite the days when I could run 100 yards in 10.8 seconds seem to have disappeared I think there's a reason for that and over the years I have had some help to begin to see things differently and we were talking earlier about some teacher who had teeth like stars like mine they come out at night he is infinite and we are not time moves us along doesn't it he is eternal he is the creator he is present everywhere he is immutable he does not change oh how thankful I am that in the midst of this constantly changing world where in seconds messages can dash around the world and change everything there is one who is changeless and I can stand in him secure and those attributes that are communicable the Lord shares with us because we are made in his image my second daughter Margaret used to be given a hard time at school and eventually one day I noticed going past her room we had had a discussion she and I about the fact that we are created in God's image and I saw this nice painting that she had done as probably a grade two student and this is what it said on it I know I'm okay because God doesn't make junk oh you know created in his image and many of the things that the Lord has shared with us we see and sometimes forget that they are his attributes shared with us the imitators of God he is loving you and I can walk in that

love and become imitators of his loving heart he is holy when we think about his holiness how do we imitate that how do we allow him to take over every single thing I have a friend who went to university in India in Madras in India and as a young Christian this man called Ambrose would come by every Tuesday just coming up to lunch and he'd say TV are you busy he'd say no not at the moment let's go and pray okay and they'd go to the top of the science building and Ambrose would pray for an hour as if God was deaf and at the end of an hour he'd say okay and after they had done that for four weeks on the fifth week he said to TV when they got to the top of that building why don't you pray today and TV says I prayed everything I could think of and I was done in less than three minutes and Ambrose took over and prayed the rest of the hour as if God was deaf just belting it out now if you listen to TV pray today why does he pray well we have a saying you know when we want to clean out the sign system around the church we get TV to preach where did he learn that he learned it in imitating the one who was discipling and instructing him and oh we are called to be imitators imitating God that closeness that we need with him has to be there or we'll never discover that he is just we'll never discover that he is jealous did you know that to me God is jealous in his love for you I thought about that one day and it broke my heart to just stop and realize I can fritter away my time and get nothing out of it that God is jealous in his life that I would come and spend that time with him and instruct my family so as well oh we could look through many of his attributes but again let me just move us on we see the Lord is calling us to be different and to be imitators of God his beloved children walking in love just as Christ left us and gave himself for us there's a third one for a few moments we'll just stop on it it's in verse 15 of chapter 5 it says therefore be careful how you walk be careful walking as wise walking with the Lord understanding his will and seeking that which is pleasing to him speaking encouragement to one another be careful be careful little hands what you do be careful little feet where you go that is a great piece of theology because there is always somebody following a lot of people many years ago I had the privilege of leading a man to Christ on a Tuesday evening his family was falling apart and after he prayed to receive Christ he was going to head out to try to meet with his wife who had left him and his four girls and you know the next day when he came and we got together he said there's a chance there's a chance I I you know I didn't get the door slammed in my face there's a chance God makes a difference and then he said to me I know one Christian song can I sing it in church on Sunday I have a 12 string guitar I learned this song in the bar and I gulped hard and said are you going to invite your wife and girls he said yeah I'll invite them to come but can I sing a bit of this song I'm not sure if I know it when Sunday came Francis and the girls came they sat in the back and Jim came at the right point in the service with his 12 string guitar he started to play he started to sing and he sang this were you there when they crucified my lord and the presence of God filled that place there wasn't a dry eye in the place Louise the youngest one of those girls has only two fingers on each hand and the next Sunday she sang be careful little hands what you do and the Lord filled the place again with this glorious presence be careful that's his call to us isn't it and as we think about it it is so easy to just run on by we live in the busiest of worlds and we are the busiest of people and I remember building a building we were church planting in Alberta and we built a building and a man called Ken was shingling and there should have been somebody else there with him that day but there was nobody around except the pastor and I remember saying I need to go and study and Ken wasn't at church on Sunday and I went to see him and he said you know pastor I know you need to study but sure was lonely up there on that roof and that's a fair pitch it would have been nice to know if somebody had my back and this little pastor learned a lesson God loves people more than anything be careful and parents we have a great charge from God to build that family and to grow them in the things of Christ and to share his love with them I worked with a man in the Billy Graham team Belfazig he was in charge of all the sound equipment and stuff and a young man came on board who was brilliant absolutely brilliant at that stuff and he was asked by Bill to do something one day

and pride got in the way and he walked away and two years later I saw him back in the team and I said oh man it's so good to see you we have missed your expertise so much and this is what he said well you should go and talk to Bill Belfazig because Bill met me about three months ago and said good to see you what have you been doing for the last year and a half or so well he said I've been doing this I've been doing that I've been getting important work from this place and that place and so on and Bill said to him Gary this is what you've been doing for those 18 months this is a job that you went to this is what you're doing now and there hasn't been a day in those 18 months where I didn't get on my knees and beg the Lord to touch you and break the pride that gets in your way so Gary said John I often heard you talking about you need to have a come-to-Jesus meeting Bill and I came to Jesus and he mended the relationship be careful careful of one another there is one last thing that I want to touch on didn't Paul preach to Midnight and Eutychus fell out the window we don't have any windows to worry about so we need that cup of coffee though yeah verse 18 of chapter 5 is the last of the four things I'd like to just think about tonight be different be imitators be careful be filled with the spirit be filled with the spirit you see you cannot do the other three without a deep intimacy with him and without being controlled by the spirit of God in every part of your being we're powerless to forgive without the work of the Holy Spirit we cannot get that kind of intimacy that we're longing for without the Holy Spirit we cannot and will not be careful or encouraging without the prompting of the Holy Spirit we need to be filled to be surrendered it's him who gives us courage to risk things it's him who gives us love when we're being slapped in the face it's him who gives us the enabling to know what to do and what to say my daughters always told me dad will never marry a pastor so they both married pastors so my oldest daughter is married to the only black pastor in our denomination he's from the caribbean he grew up in a home with no dad and we were at a conference a pastor's conference one time and there was a call to surrender one's heart and life for the sanctifying filling work of the Holy Spirit and I watched as my young son-in-law stepped out from where he was and moved toward that altar and I heard the service leader say some of you pastors would you come and stand behind these people and as the service closes pray for them I waited a few moments and nobody came to stand behind him and you know after a few moments even an Irishman can kind of get the message and I walked down there and put my hands on his shoulders and as that service finished the Spirit of God was speaking to my heart and a verse of scripture could not leave me it was just there this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased as my son-in-law finished praying and he turned around I put my hands again on his shoulders and said German it is said in scripture that God the Father said of God the Son this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased I want you to know you are my beloved son and in you I am well pleased I don't know if you've ever seen two men just stand and hold on to each other and weep for a long long long time that's the enabling work of the Holy Spirit I want friends to see successful family life and a successful walk with the Lord we want to be different kind tender-hearted forgiving we want to become imitators of God as dear children walking in love self-sacrificially like Jesus we want to be careful how we deal with others but until the Holy Spirit is in charge of it all we just keep stumbling and if I could plead with you in the days of this weekend take the time while you're here and just saying to him spirit of the living God fall fresh on me break me mold me marry me make me dear heavenly Father we thank you for your word we thank you that you call us to be different to be imitators of God as dear children to be careful how we live with one another you call us to be filled with the Spirit Father may it be that every one of us who have come to this beautiful place would leave here on Saturday not just as the people of God but so full of God that each step we take we know your presence your peace your promise your power your love in Jesus name we pray amen bless you it is great to be back here couldn't we move Fort Burwell closer to Regina

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