

Being Imitators

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Introduction

Relevant English Words

Webster defines **imitate** as:

- to follow as a pattern, model, or example
- to be or appear like (someone or something): resemble
- to produce a copy of: reproduce
- to mimic, counterfeit

The word **mimic** refers to:

- a mime, or one that mimics (noun)
- one who is imitative (adjective)
- to imitate closely (verb)

The English word *mimic* derives from the Latin *mimicus*, from the Greek *mimikos*, from *mimos*.

Relevant Greek Words

The verb *mimeomai*, occurring 4x, derived from *mimos* [a mimic], means “to use as a model, imitate, emulate, follow.”

The noun *mimētēs*, occurring 6x, derived from *mimeomai* [to imitate] refers to “an imitator.”

We must follow the Biblical pattern. We must imitate God, Christ, and the inspired apostles.

Defining Relevant Words

English Terms

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines imitate as “(1) to follow as a pattern, model, or example; (2) to be or appear like : resemble; (3) to produce a copy of : reproduce; (4) mimic, counterfeit: he can imitate his father's booming voice.”

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary offers the following definitions of “mimic.” Used as a noun, the word refers to a mime, or one that mimics. Used as an adjective, it refers one who is imitative, in mockery, as a mime, or using someone as an example. Used as a verb, it means to

imitate closely, to ridicule by imitation, to simulate, to resemble by biological mimicry. [The English word derives from the Latin *mimicus*, from the Greek *mimikos*, from *mimos*.]

The Greek Verb Mimeomai

Thomas defines μιμέομαι [*mimeomai*] as from *mimos* [a mimic], meaning “to imitate” [3401]. BDAG say it means “to use as a model, imitate, emulate, follow.” This word occurs 4x in the NT (2 Thess. 3:7; 3:9; Heb. 13:7; 3 John 11).

*2 Thessalonians 3:7 ... 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to ***follow** our ***example**, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, (NASB95)*

*2 Thessalonians 3:9 ... 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would ***follow** our ***example**. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 13:7 ... 7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, ***imitate** their faith. (NASB95)*

*3 John 11 ... 11 Beloved, do not ***imitate** what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. (NASB95)*

The Greek Noun Mimētēs

Thomas defines μιμητής [*mimētēs*] as from *mimeomai* [to imitate] meaning an imitator” [3402]. BDAG say it refers to an “imitator.” This word occurs 6x in the NT (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; Heb. 6:12).

*1 Corinthians 4:16 ... 16 Therefore I exhort you, be ***imitators** of me. (NASB95)*

*1 Corinthians 11:1 ... 1 Be ***imitators** of me, just as I also am of Christ. (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 5:1 ... 1 Therefore be ***imitators** of God, as beloved children; (NASB95)*

*1 Thessalonians 1:6 ... 6 You also became ***imitators** of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, (NASB95)*

*1 Thessalonians 2:14 ... 14 For you, brethren, became ***imitators** of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 6:12 ... 12 so that you will not be sluggish, but ***imitators** of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (NASB95)*

Biblical Usage

The God of Heaven

We must imitate the God of heaven (Eph. 5:1-2; cf. 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 1 John 4:7-14).

*Ephesians 5:1-2 ... 1 Therefore be ***imitators** of God, as beloved children; 2 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. (NASB95)*

1 Peter 1:13-16 ... 13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (NASB95)

1 John 4:7-14 ... 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. (NASB95)

The Inspired Apostles

We must imitate the inspired apostles (1 Cor. 4:14-17; 11:1-2; 1 Thess. 1:6-10; 2 Thess. 3:6-15).

*1 Corinthians 4:14-17 ... 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I exhort you, be ***imitators** of me. 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (NASB95)*

*1 Corinthians 11:1-2 ... 1 Be ***imitators** of me, just as I also am of Christ. 2 Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. (NASB95)*

*1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 ... 6 You also became ***imitators** of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of*

the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. (NASB95)

*2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 ... 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to ***follow** our ***example**, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would ***follow** our ***example**. 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (NASB95)*

The Faithful

We must imitate those who are faithful: churches (1 Thess. 2:13-16), OT heroes (Heb. 6:9-12), and NT teachers (Heb. 13:7-9).

*1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 ... 13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 14 For you, brethren, became ***imitators** of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, 15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 6:9-12 ... 9 But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you will not be sluggish, but ***imitators** of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 13:7-9 ... 7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, *imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. (NASB95)*

Good vs Evil

We must not imitate what is evil, but rather that which is good (3 John 11; cf. Ps. 34:8-18; 37:27-34).

*3 John 11 ... 11 Beloved, do not *imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. (NASB95)*

Psalm 34:8-18 ... 8 O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! 9 O fear the Lord, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want. 10 The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing. 11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. 12 Who is the man who desires life And loves length of days that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil And your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the Lord is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry, and the Lord hears And delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit. (NASB95)

Psalm 37:27-34 ... 27 Depart from evil and do good, So you will abide forever. 28 For the Lord loves justice And does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off. 29 The righteous will inherit the land And dwell in it forever. 30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, And his tongue speaks justice. 31 The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip. 32 The wicked spies upon the righteous And seeks to kill him. 33 The Lord will not leave him in his hand Or let him be condemned when he is judged. 34 Wait for the Lord and keep His way, And He will exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you will see it. (NASB95)

Follow not the crowd in the paths of evil (Exod. 23:2; Prov. 1:10-16; 4:14-15); rather, follow the Christ in the way of righteousness (Matt. 4:18-22; 8:18-22; 16:24-27).

Exodus 23:2 ... 2 "You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice; (NASB95)

Proverbs 1:10-16 ... 10 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. 11 If they say, "Come with us, Let us lie in wait for blood, Let us ambush the innocent without cause; 12 Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, Even whole, as those who go down to the pit; 13 We

will find all kinds of precious wealth, We will fill our houses with spoil; 14 Throw in your lot with us, We shall all have one purse,” 15 My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, 16 For their feet run to evil And they hasten to shed blood. (NASB95)

Proverbs 4:14-15 ... 14 Do not enter the path of the wicked And do not proceed in the way of evil men. 15 Avoid it, do not pass by it; Turn away from it and pass on. (NASB95)

Matthew 4:18-22 ... 18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (NASB95)

Matthew 8:18-22 ... 18 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea. 19 Then a scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” 20 Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” 21 Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” 22 But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.” (NASB95)

Matthew 16:24-27 ... 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 25 “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds. (NASB95)

Conclusion

Let us remember to imitate God the Father and Christ the Son, the inspired apostles and prophets, and also faithful brethren, both of times past and the present. In contrast, let us avoid imitating the world, evil companions, customs, manners, and styles that violate principles of truth.