

# Imitator or Imitation?

by Kathy Davis



“**B**e imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Ephesians 5:1-2

There’s a fine line between being an imitator and an imitation. I desire to live a life of love until I realize it means Christ-like sacrifice. The qualifier in our text is in the phrase “just as Christ loved us”. Love gives; love sacrificially offers itself to God and others. No matter how loving I try to be, the idea of sacrifice makes me want to settle for a cheap copy of the original. I mime my way through the Christian life expressing love in gestures only, devoid of the fragrance of reality.

Some imitations are hard to distinguish from the real thing. Silk flowers look so real, so life-like. They don’t lose color or petals and require nothing to sustain life. Their stems have wires enabling them to be bent into positions they hold forever. Loveliness, convenience, and sadness are there. For all that beauty there’s no fragrance, no growth, no life.

Many Christians have ceased being living sacrifices, exchanging abundant life for a cheap imitation. Avoiding risks, we look beautiful, but give off no fragrance of the living God. Our stems are filled with rigid wire instead of living water. Spiritual nutrients aren’t absorbed, resulting in a gradual hardening of our spiritual arteries. Like the old song goes “Paper roses, paper roses; oh how real those roses seem to be; but they’re only imitation, like your imitation love for me.

Is our love for God real, or does it just seem to be? Maybe it’s time we checked ourselves for signs of life. Do we gravitate toward

the Light? Are spiritual nutrients being absorbed? Are we growing in Christ-likeness? Are we willing to bloom where we're planted giving off the fragrance of Christ to a world that desperately needs to see the real thing?

Second Corinthians 2:14 says "But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him.. This victorious parade belongs to those willing to be planted, pruned, and used by the Chief Gardener. Nothing flows through a lifeless stem. But the glorious fragrance of extravagant sacrifice surrounds those spreading the knowledge of Him.

That same sweet aroma filled the home in Bethany where Mary anointed the feet of Jesus. He said "she did what she could" and it would be a memorial to her wherever the gospel was preached. I want my memorial to be she did what she could;. Considering the love-sacrifice of Jesus for me, imitation love and token gestures of devotion to Him just aren't enough. So, if you will excuse me, I have some serious imitating to do.