

R & R BIBLE STUDY 2019-20



breath-taking grace

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

LESSON 14

Welcome back to our discussion of Romans 12. Last week we took the first 8 verses, and probably could have done another entire lesson on them. While I was writing, I kept flashing back to a poem Brian wrote many years ago on Romans 12:1-2 that I really liked. As hard as I looked, I couldn't find it! For those of you who have been around our church for a long time, if you remember it or kept it, let me know! It was about being a "living sacrifice" and our tendency to keep crawling off the altar. (Trust me, it was better than I'm making it sound!)

First Day

1. Today let's begin by reading Romans 12:1-21. Remember that the first two verses talk about our responsibilities towards God, and the rest of the chapter focuses on how we are to treat others. After Paul talks about using our gifts diligently to build up the church, he continues on by sharing some important general principles about how the Gospel of Grace is lived out in our everyday life. Please focus on verses 9-21. Observe the facts. Are there any repeated thoughts, phrases, or principles? How would you summarize this section?

2. How does Paul address his readers in verse 19? (So, who is his audience?)

3. I read that in verses 9-16, the emphasis is on the attitudes of those who exercise their spiritual gifts. What's the first thing he says in verse 9? Why is that first? How is everything else he says expressions of it?

4. Of all the things Paul is exhorting us to "do" in these verses, which ones are directed to our "enemies"?

5. Verses 9-21 can seem like just some "random" good things to do, but it's important to remember that Paul is writing them to the church in Rome with specific issues and needs. How do verses 9 and 21 serve as "bookends" to this section? How do they tie it all together?

Chris Ash makes an interesting observation. He wrote, "One puzzle in the passage is that it will not allow us to make a simple distinction between love within the Christian family and love towards those outside. The passage goes to and fro between behaviors towards our fellow Christians (vv. 10-13, 15, 16) and behavior towards those who treat us badly (vv. 14, 17-20). We cannot tidily separate these. This reminds us that bad behavior happens inside the church as well as outside. Persecution and evil towards believers is done by religious people as often as it is done by those outside the visible church. It also reminds us that we cannot confine our obligation to love to Christians alone. The love that grows under grace within the church fellowship naturally overflows towards those outside the fellowship (Galatians 6:10). A church should never just look after their own."

6. What are your thoughts on the paragraph above? What happens when a church "just looks after their own" and neglects those outside of the church?

7. Personally, do you tend to neglect those outside of the church and only serve those within? Or do you neglect the church and only focus on the needs outside the church walls? What's the balance, according to Paul?

We'll stop here for today. I pray that as we go through these verses, we stop and take time to check our own hearts on the principle he's teaching, allowing the Holy Spirit to examine us. And may we learn to love others better as a result!

Memory Verse of the Week: "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good." Romans 12:9

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Also work on clinging to what is good. 😊

1. Read Romans 12 again, focusing on verses 9-16. What does it mean to "love without hypocrisy"? How do we truly love "sincerely"?
2. What are some examples of how people within the church love hypocritically?
3. Sometimes within the church, a culture of "niceness" can prevail, disregarding what is often called "tough love," which allows us to confront sin, hold each other accountable, and deal with problems. How is "tough love" part of loving without hypocrisy?

"Think of how we feel when we see someone we love ravaged by unwise actions or relationships. Real love stands against the deception, the lie, the sin that destroys." (Rebecca Manley Pippert)

4. Has anyone ever taken a risk and shared a hard truth with you that you didn't want to hear? How did you receive it? Did you understand they loved you, or did you take it negatively?
5. On the other hand, do you tend to try to be "nice" and avoid sharing truth with someone, even when it's for their benefit or spiritual wellness? What do you think is the balance here?
6. How do we love those we don't love? How can we be unhypocritical in our love, yet love someone whom we really don't like or has done us harm? Does this verse still apply?
7. What does Jesus say about love in John 13:35? Does love mean "having warm feelings" for someone? How did Jesus "show" His love for us? Are we supposed to wait to "show love" until we feel it? (How can we "show" love to others without having the warm fuzzy feelings that we wish were there?)
8. Are you having trouble "showing love" to someone in your life? Ask the Holy Spirit to soften your heart and allow you to see and love the person as Christ does.

“A Christian goes about ‘doing love’ while repenting, softening the heart through the recollection of Christ’s sacrifice for us (12:1-2). How does this work? The Gospel is this: We are not loved because we are intrinsically lovely or because we have made ourselves worthy of love. We are loved because Jesus died for us when we were unattractive in order to make us attractive. If Christians think of this as they are serving unattractive people, they will find a repentance grow. A person who does not understand the Gospel cannot do this. A person who is just generally moral and nice cannot do this. They have to choose between the two inadequate alternatives: either phony love (niceness toward people you dislike), or sporadic love (kindness only toward people you like). But if you show love as you repent, your heart is softened as you serve. Your service is sincere toward God at that moment and becomes more sincere toward the person as you go along.” (Keller)

9. Paul gives us a positive and a negative in verse 9. Where do we get our definition of what is good and/or evil?

10. Read what David said in Psalm 34:14. Compare it to Romans 12:9 and 18.

11. I must ask. Do you abhor evil? All evil? Is there something you watch, think, do, or participate in that God wouldn’t approve of, and you know it? That would be considered “evil.” Thoughts?

Uh oh, we only got through one verse today. But boy, was it a good one! Lord, help us learn how to love people, all people, inside and outside the church. Help us love the lovely and unlovely in the same way ... as You love them ... as You love us.

Third Day

Work on your memory verse. Are you showing love with sincerity?

1. Read Romans 12:9-16 again. These verses show us what love is. What “family” words does Paul use in verse 10? Why would that be so important at that time, considering what Paul has been saying in the last few chapters?

I think it’s so important to see what Paul is trying to say. It’s much deeper than just “be kind” to one another. He’s basically saying to love each other as family. We are one in Him. We are part of each other because we are united in Christ. The body of Christ, this “community” of believers, will always be family. Forever. Life isn’t “all about us” anymore, or, at least, it shouldn’t be. It’s about Christ; it’s about others.

2. How does Philippians 2:3-4 and Romans 15:1-3, relate to Romans 12:10? (How does it also relate to verse 16?) How do we actually “honor another above ourselves”?
3. How does humility involve or relate to love?
4. A navy Seal named Eric Greitens said this, “Arrogance is the armor worn by hollow men.” Write your thoughts ...
5. “Not lagging in diligence” can be translated as “Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.” Seems a bit of a random thought. How do you think it ties in with the context of what Paul is saying?
6. Verse 12 seems to refer to patience ... having hope, enduring persecution patiently, and praying steadfastly. How do joy, patience, and prayer relate to each other? When we “do” this verse, how can it be a witness to those who don’t believe?

I love the following statement, referring to this verse. "This supernatural fellowship will not be complacent, comfortable, or self-satisfied, but a people under pressure rejoicing in hope and praying unitedly for the promised future for which they, and the creation, and God Himself, groan (Romans 8:22-27)." (Christopher Ash)

7. Are you rejoicing in hope? Are you enduring your afflictions patiently? Do you pray steadfastly? Which of these areas in your life need the most growth?

8. Read verse 13. How "eager" are you to help meet the needs of others? Are you willing to help anyone, or are you "selective"? The word "given" is better translated as "pursuing." Do you "pursue" showing hospitality, which is more about meeting needs than merely "socializing?"

9. Do you struggle with the truth found in verse 14? (Also read Matthew 5:44.) How does this seem to be contrary to our human nature? How was Christ an example of this in Luke 23:34? Is there someone who you need to "bless and not curse"?

10. Read verse 15. How would remembering that we are a "team" as far as being one in Christ, help us do this? Why do we struggle with rejoicing with those who rejoice sometimes? How does our Western culture tend to sway our thoughts and feelings in the opposite direction?

11. What "thinking" words are found in verse 16? How is verse 16 only possible through a renewed mind?

That's enough for today. (Gosh, I have a lot of work to do!) I pray that you are being challenged by each and every verse. But I also pray that if you're convicted, you just don't "feel bad" or feel guilty, but you repent and then make the change that's needed. Thank God for His grace and His mercies that are new every morning!

Work on that great memory verse. Ponder it throughout the day.

1. Read Romans 12:1-21 again, then come back to verses 17-21. How would you summarize this section in your own words?
2. By our human nature, how do we tend to feel about wanting to repay evil when it's done to us? How is it possible to overcome these feelings?

3. In verse 17, “have regard for good things in the sight of all men” can also be translated as “Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.” What does this word “be careful” suggest?

4. How “careful” are you to respond in a Godly way when you’ve been wronged? Why is it so important? How does our response to others reflect on God?

I read that the word “overcome” in verse 21 is a military word that means to “overpower.” Paul is saying to overpower the evil with good. In other words, the only way to defeat evil is by doing good to the one who has harmed us. So, if we hate or remain bitter towards someone who has wronged us ... they win. The only way to overpower the evil is to forgive and love them. This, my friends, is a tough one.

5. Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21-22 in verse 20. We are told to do even more than forgive. What does Paul say to do?

Paul says that the evildoer may be “softened” by our love. Our actions of love can “heap burning coals on their heads.” Weird expression, but it’s a way of saying that repentance may occur. The evildoer may be led to shame, remorse, or feel rebuked by our kindness, thus causing them to repent.

6. What can happen if we decide to take justice in our own hands rather than leaving it in God’s hands?

7. Read verse 18. Why do you think that verse is sandwiched in the middle of 17 and 19?

8. What do you think it means to live peaceably “as much as depends on you”? Does it mean peace at all costs?

9. Are you living in peace with others, as much as depends on you? Are you choosing to stir up strife or continue an evil battle with someone else? Ask the Lord to show you any “unrest” that you are the root cause of and ask Him to show you what to do about it.

10. When you have been wronged, do you just “avoid” the person? Do you think this is what Paul is suggesting?

11. Returning evil for evil and good for good is really how most people live. Paul is calling Christians to live on a higher plane than that. Going back to verse 9, how is love the key to all this?

Let’s end here for today. I pray that if you have wronged someone, you will make it right. I pray if you’ve been wronged, you’ll allow God to handle it. And I pray that if we think this is an impossible task, we remember that we can’t do this on our own. This, ladies, is why we need Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Today we’re going to review some of the truths we focused on in this chapter. Let’s start with this question. How does allowing God to repay evil require faith?

2. We are basically told never to avenge ourselves, so sometimes we think we'll just ignore or avoid them. There might be some cases when danger is involved and that might be the best answer, but usually not. Could the motive still be some type of "payback"? Thoughts? What else can motivate that type of response?
3. Read 1 Peter 2:23. What does Peter say about this topic?
4. The Gospel promises us justice, but we are not the ones who give it. Does it promise that we will see the justice take place?
5. Have you ever responded wrongly to a wrong that has been done to you? I know I have, many times. Is there a way to "fix" the damage your response did? (Even if the damage was simply being disobedient to the Lord?)
6. Think back on all the expressions of sincere love that Paul gave in this chapter. Which one challenges you the most?
7. "Any love that is afraid to confront the beloved is not really love." Thoughts?
8. Are there any needs around you that you're aware of that you've been choosing to ignore? Has the Lord spoken to your heart about any of them?

9. Regarding verses 14-17, Ash wrote, "That verses 15 and 16 follow verse 14 may also suggest that we should treat those who persecute us in the same way, rejoicing at their joys, weeping at their sorrows. It is hard enough to do that with those in fellowship with us. To live with such a sympathetic loving understanding with those who persecute us really is a work of God's grace." Do you tend to rejoice when something bad happens to someone who has hurt you, thinking they deserve it? Do you struggle in this area? Do you think there is ever a time to rejoice when someone is weeping?
10. Does sincere love have an agenda?
11. What does it mean when someone uses the phrase "playing God"? Do you ever "play God" when it comes to showing love, repaying evil, or meeting needs?
12. What has been the most challenging truth or thought from this chapter?
13. Has the Spirit shown you any changes that need to be made as a result of this chapter?

