

## Romans 12

## Four Christian Relationships

“Christianity has been the most powerful, transforming force in human history – and the book of Romans is the most, basic, most comprehensive statement of true Christianity”

James Boice

## Ch 12: 4 Christian Relationships

vs. 1,2 God

vs. 3-8 Ourselves

vs. 9-16 Believers

vs. 17-21 Enemies

## 12:1-2 – How to relate to God

God’s Demand: v. 1 “present your bodies as a living sacrifice”

How: “by the mercies of God” (ch 1-11)

What: “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God”

Why: “your spiritual /logical worship”

v. 2 Be transformed

What: “Do not be conformed to world”

Do: “transformed by renewal of mind”

Result: “that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good acceptable and perfect”

Worship is body, mind, and soul - practical and total - a “living killing!”

a) Actively: Willing to obey God in anything he says in any area of life

b) Passively: Willing to thank God for anything he sends in any area of life.

How do we offer ourselves to God?

Mercy = God does not give us what we deserve

Grace = God does give us what we do not deserve

Spiritual / Rational (Greek: ‘logican’) worship.

Offering ourselves fully is logical response to mercies of a Sovereign God (ch 9-11). Clear thinking & devotion.

“be renewed in the spirit of your minds”

Ephesians 4.23

Psalm 15: O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent?... *who swears to his own hurt and does not change...*

12:3-4 – How to relate to ourselves

v. 3a Assess yourself with humility and accuracy: “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but with sober judgment”

“think with sober judgment” - rigorously accurate, in touch with reality, avoid exaggeration and bragging

v. 3b We are the same: “each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned”

“Measure of faith” is a standard of measurement, not an amount; i.e. “All of you have been given saving faith in Christ crucified, and that is how you are to measure yourself.” In our standing before God in Christ, we are the same.

v. 4 We are different: “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function.”

12:5-8 – Relating to others in the church

v. 5 We are one – “we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another”

v. 6 We are distinct “having gifts that differ according to *grace/gift* given us”

v.6b Some prophesy “if prophecy, in proportion to our faith”

v.7a Some serve people’s material needs “if service, in our serving”

v.7b Some teach “the one who teaches, in his teaching”

v.8a Some counsel “the one who exhorts, in his exhortation”

v.8b Some give generously “the one who contributes, in generosity”

v.8c Some lead “the one who leads, with zeal”

v. 8d Some work with the poor and sick “the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness”

## 12:3-8 Discern our Spiritual Gifts

### 1. Self-examination “take a sober look at yourself”

- a. Commitment: Sunday keeps showing up! People must eat! Bills gotta be paid!
- b. Needs: In church and community? — what problems do you most notice? Is God is calling through your sensitivity?
- c. Effectiveness — are we any good at what we enjoy? What do others think?
- d. Feelings: What do we enjoy doing? Is ministry is satisfying and attractive?

2. Experience. v.6 “having gifts that differ... let us use them” We learn more about gifts and ministry as we serve.

3. Biblical lists. vv.6-8 – Illustrative list of spiritual gifts. (see also I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, not exhaustive!) spiritual gift lists can help us better process our experience.

“Ability to speak or act in a particular way — performing ability, as we may call it—is only a charisma [spiritual gift] if and as God uses it to edify... What constitutes and identifies a charisma is not the form of the action but the blessing of God.” J.I. Packer,  
 “Keep in Step With the Spirit”

## 9-21 Relationships: Friends & enemies

### 12:9-16 – Love Toward Christians

God’s Radical, Sacrificial, Undeserved Love > New Word Coined “agape”

5.8 “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

v. 9a Love without hypocrisy: “Let love be genuine.”

v. 9b Love with truth: “Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.”

3 Imperatives about Truth: “be sincere,” “hate (abhor) evil,” “hold fast to good”

1. Love must be true to our heart. “sincere” / Greek = “unhypocritical”

Within the church a culture of “niceness” can develop in which a veneer of pleasantness covers over a spirit of backbiting, gossip, prejudice. We need “tough love” - people love each other enough to confront and be direct about problems and sins in oneself and friends.

Hypocrite is a PLAY ACTOR

“The Church must not turn itself into a stage. For love is not theater; it belongs to the real world. Indeed, love and hypocrisy exclude one another.” John Stott

2. Negatively (hate) and Positively (cling) that our love must be true to God’s will.

We sometimes love on our own terms, our view of good and evil must be shaped by Scripture; operating on the basis of the moral order of God

“O Lord...The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong” Psalm 5.5

“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him... Proverbs 6.16-19

Love Hates what God Hates /  
Love what God Loves

Real love “is so passionately devoted to the beloved so that it hates every evil which is incompatible with his or her highest welfare.” John Stott

v. 10a Love with affection: “Love one another with brotherly affection.”

v. 10b Love with respect: “Outdo one another in showing honor.”

v. 11 Love with zeal: “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.”

v. 12 Love with patience: “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

v. 13 Love with practical generosity: “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”

v. 14 Love without bitterness: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.”

v. 15 Love with empathy: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”

v. 16a Love with unity of mind: “Live in harmony with one another.”

v.16b Love with humility: “Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”

East African Revival > “Believers should live in a house with no walls and no roof”

12:10-16 Biblical definition of love.

1. Real love is truthful v. 9 “Let love be genuine”
2. Real love is patient. v.10a “Love one another with brotherly affection.”
3. Real love is putting others first. v.10b “Outdo one another in showing honor”
4. Real love combines feeling with action. “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” v.15

“Love is the circulatory system of the body, which enables all the members to function in a healthy, harmonious way.”  
Warren Wiersbe

v. 14 Control of the tongue: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.”

v. 15-16 Control of the attitude

v. 15 Empathy: “weep with those who weep”

v. 16 Humility: “Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”

v. 17-21 Control of the actions

v. 17a What to avoid: repayment: “Repay no one evil for evil”

v. 17b,20 What to do: plan good deeds: “but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all... To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”

“Heap burning coals on his head” - Various Interpretations

God holds the ‘final coals’ of hell, trust His justice

Your active goodness will painfully shame peace-hating enemies

Literal: Keep their fire going to - stay warm, cook food, necessary

v. 18 What to do: seek peaceful relations: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all”

v. 19 Why to do it: only God is judge: “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

v. 21 Summary: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”  
 “overcome evil with good” - military word, it means to “overpower”

The only way to defeat evil is with doing good to the one who has done harm. In other words, if you hate a person who has wronged you, that person has won! The only way to defeat evil is to forgive and love the person.

What this means practically:

1. To not avoid the hostile person. v.18 “as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all.”
2. To express loving words and actions. v.14 “bless” and v.20 “feed... your enemy.”
3. To forgive, and forego any repayment. v.19 “never avenge yourselves”

Both the power and the model for this is the gospel. Christ died for us while we were his enemies. (Romans 5:6-10)

“leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written: ‘vengeance is mine... says the Lord’ v.19

All resentment and vengeance is taking on God’s role as judge. It is playing God.

1. Only God is qualified to be judge (we are imperfect and deserve judgment ourselves) If God decided to square all accounts with us, where would we be?
2. Only God knows enough to be judge (we don’t know all about the offender, what he/she has faced and deserves)
3. Jesus took the judgment of God.

Either these persons you are angry at will repent some day and Jesus will take their judgment, or they will not, and God will deal with it. But in either process, we are not involved.

“People...were constantly befuddled by (Jesus) choice of companions. He became known as a friend of tax collectors...the foreign exploiters ...Though he denounced the religious system of his day, he treated a leader like Nicodemus with respect, and though he spoke against the dangers of money and of violence, he showed love and compassion toward a rich young ruler and a Roman centurion. Jesus honored the dignity of people, whether he agreed with them or not. Anyone, even a half-breed with five husbands or a dying thief on the cross, was welcome in his kingdom. He would not found his kingdom on the basis of race or class or other such divisions. The person was more important than the category or their label.”

Philip Yancey

“If you cannot free people from their wrongs... you enslave yourself to your own painful past, and by fastening yourself to the past, you let your hate become your future. You can reverse your future only by releasing other people from their pasts. Lewis Smedes (1921-2002)

“Forgive and Forget”

“Love alone has the power to release memory’s grip on yesterday’s evil ...Love does not demand explanations and apologies or keep accounts. Love does not take pleasure in remembering how much we have coming from people who hurt us. Love is the power whose only direction is the help, healing, and salvation of the other person.”

Lewis Smedes, “Love within Limits”

“There is no greater drama in human record than the sight of a few Christians, scorned and oppressed by a succession of emperors, bearing all trials with a fierce tenacity, multiplying quietly, building order while their enemies generated chaos, fighting the sword with the word, brutality with hope, and at last defeating the strongest state that history has known. Caesar and Christ had met in the arena, and Christ had won.”

Will Durant