



Romans 12-16



CENTRAL SYDNEY
Presbyterian Church

Learning to Live by Heart

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Introduction

As we finish off the year, we return to finish off Paul's letter to the Romans. Romans begins with a bang—the declaration that in the Gospel about Jesus is the announcement that God is not bringing all his plans and purposes and promises to near completion in Jesus. The Gospel is the proclamation of God's righteousness—his faithfulness in fulfilling those plans.

That fulfilment is the establishment of the promised new covenant in Jesus. Why did we need a new covenant? The testimony of the old covenant is clear, human beings, even Israel with all her advantages is inherently disobedient no matter how many encouragements and helps she is given.

Jesus comes and lives the way God intended to be what Israel was meant to be—the Saviour of the world—but Jesus needs to be Israel's Saviour as well. By his death and resurrection Jesus lives the life of Israel and makes a new beginning so that all who trust in him become part of the true Israel and this is all on the basis of faith in what Jesus has done not in what we do.

If we look to Jesus we can look forward to a new beginning—but that new beginning begins now. God's people have God's Spirit and, now freed from having to obey the law, we can now fulfil the law in the power of Jesus' Spirit.

Romans 12-16, called *Living in Christ, Living in the World* explores the new life we are called to live in community.

My prayer is that this will be a way into us as a community living the life of Jesus more actively where we live.



Free translation

Learning to Live Again

Romans 12.1-8

Therefore, I encourage you brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your considered service to God.

²And don't be moulded by this present age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mindset, so you can work out and demonstrate God's good, pleasing and perfect will.

³For by the grace given to me, I say to you: Don't think above what you ought to think about yourself but think in wise ways, according to the standard of faithfulness God has given us.

⁴Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and all these parts don't have the same function, ⁵so also, we being many, are one body in Christ, and each member belongs to the others.

⁶We have different gifts according to the grace given us:

The one gifted with prophecy should use it appropriate to the faith; and so

⁷Servers should serve;

Teachers should teach;

⁸Encouragers should encourage;

the one who shares, should do so with generosity;

the one leading, should do so with diligence;

the one showing mercy, should do so with cheerfulness.

Sincerely Yours in Christ

Romans 12.9-13

Love should be sincere. Detest what is evil, cling to what is good.

¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; out-do each other in honouring each another; ¹¹don't be slow in being diligent, but keep your spirit burning, serving the Lord.

¹²Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, steadfast in prayer.

¹³Give to the needs of the saints; practice hospitality.

Bless the one who persecutes you,
bless and do not curse.

¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

¹⁶Be mindful to share in the common lot of others.

Don't play to the 'important' but rub shoulders with the lowly; don't become self-important.

¹⁷Don't return evil for evil. Do good in the eyes of everyone.

¹⁸If possible, as far as it depends on you, seek peace with all men.

¹⁹Don't avenge yourself, but leave room for God's wrath. As it is written, "Vengeance is mine," says the Lord, "I will repay," says the Lord."

²⁰But if your enemy is hungry feed him, if he thirsts, give him a drink.

In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head.

²¹Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.

13 Every person must be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except that which is from God. They exist by God's command.

²So that he who rebels against the authorities rebels against God who ordained. Those who have done so will bring judgement on themselves.

³For the rulers are no threat to those doing good but to those doing evil. You don't want to fear the authorities? If you do good, you will have the authority's praise.

⁴For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for it is not for nothing he has a sword. For he is God's servant, an agent of retribution to those practising evil.

⁵Therefore, it is a duty to submit (to authority), not only because of retribution but also because of conscience.

⁶And that is why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's ministers who devote themselves to governing.

⁷Pay everyone what you owe: if taxes, pay them taxes; if tribute, pay them tribute; if respect, pay them respect; if honour, pay them honour.

⁸Owe nothing to anyone except to love each other. For he who loves another fulfils the law.

⁹For, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet', and whatever any other commandment says is summed up in this: 'You will love your neighbour as yourself'.

¹⁰Love does no evil to a neighbour. Love, therefore, is the fulfilment of the law.

¹¹Do this knowing the time it is. The hour to rise up from sleep is here. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

¹²For the night is far gone, the day has come. Take off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light.

13. How does v20 present us with a new Adam and Eve and the fulfilment of the promise made in Genesis 3.15?

Read 16.25-27

14. What themes in this section were introduced in Paul's introduction to his letter to the Romans?

Meditation

Paul's letter that details the grand plan of God in Christ ends with the praise of God. What is a praise response that you can make from Paul's letter?



¹³Let us, in our walk, act respectfully as is fitting for the daytime, not in orgies, or drunkenness, or sexual impurity and indecency, nor in quarrels and jealousy.

¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and give no attention to the desires of the flesh.

Living With Differences

Romans 14.1- 15.13

Welcome him who is weak in faith, without disputing on disputable matters.

²One man's believing allows him to eat everything, though another's weak (believing) allows him to eat only vegetables.

³The man who eats must not treat with contempt the one who does not eat; the one who does not eat must not judge the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

⁴Who are you to judge another's household servant? To his own Lord he will stand or fall. But he will stand because the Lord enables him to stand.

⁵Some judge one day above another; another judges all days (the same). Each should be fully convinced in his own mind.

⁶He who considers one day (special) does so to the Lord. The one who eats, eats to the Lord for he gives thanks to God; and he who does not eat does not eat to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

⁷For none of us lives for himself, and none of us dies to himself.

⁸If we live, we live to the Lord; if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or die we belong to the Lord.

⁹For this Christ died and returned to life so that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.

¹⁰So why do you judge your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God.

¹¹For it is written: 'As I live', says the Lord, 'every knee will bend and every tongue will confess to God'.

¹²So then each one of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

¹³Therefore let us no longer judge one another. But rather judge this; work out how to not put a stumbling block or obstacle in front of a brother.

¹⁴I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in and of itself; except that someone considers it unclean, then it is unclean.

¹⁵For if your brother is grieved through (your) eating, you are no longer walking according to love. Don't let what you eat destroy the one Christ died for.

¹⁶Don't let what you consider good to be slandered.

¹⁷For the kingdom of God isn't about eating or drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Spirit.

¹⁸For whoever is a slave to Christ in this is pleasing to God and approved by men.

¹⁹So, therefore, let us pursue the things that bring peace and build up one another.

²⁰Don't tear down the work of God for the sake of food. Sure all food is clean but it is evil to eat anything that causes a man to stumble.

²¹It is better not to eat meat nor drink wine nor anything else rather than causing your brother to stumble.

²²So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not judge (condemn) himself by what he approves.

²³The man with doubts about what he eats is condemned because his eating does not come from faith; and everything that is not from faith is sin.

15 We who are strong ought to bear with the weaknesses of the weak and not please ourselves.

²Each of us should please his neighbour for his good and his building up.

³For even Christ never pleased himself, but as it is written, 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.'

⁴For all that was formerly written was written for our instruction, so that through patient endurance and through the comfort of the scriptures we may have hope.

⁵Now may the God of patient endurance and comfort give you a united mind according to Christ Jesus, ⁶so that, united in one voice, you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord.

⁷Welcome one another then, as Christ welcomed you, to the praise of God.

⁸For I tell you, Christ has become a servant of the circumcision (Jews) for the sake of God's truth, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) ⁹so that the nations may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written, "Therefore, I will praise you among the nations and I will praise your name in song." (2 Sam 22.50; Ps 18.49)

¹⁰And again he says, "Nations rejoice with his people." (Deut 32.43)

¹¹And again, "Praise the LORD all the nations, and all the peoples sing him praise." (Ps 117.1)

¹²And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall rise up to rule the nations, on him the nations will hope." (Is 11.10)

¹³Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing in him, so that you overflow in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Read 16.1-16

10. How many men and how many women are mentioned as colleagues of Paul in verses 1-16?

MEN	WOMEN

11. What does this tell us about the nature of the church and ministry in the church in the first century?

Read 16.17-24

12. How would 'smooth talk and flattery' be an indication that those who were 'causing divisions and putting obstacles' in the way of the Romans were not speaking the gospel Paul preached?



think & apply

Living with uncertainty by faith

In Romans 16:28-33 and in Philippians 1:25-27 Paul the apostle gives us a little window into how he made his plans.

Did Paul always know what the future would hold?

How did he deal with the uncertainty of living a life of faith?

How do you deal with uncertainty?



For Paul, the self giving of Jesus became the

dominant paradigm that shaped every Christian's interaction.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

For Paul, this action is the reality behind words we translate as fellowship, sharing partnership and contribution.

In Rom15.24-33 there are at least two examples of this gospel partnership. What are they?

What other examples can you name?

4. What is Paul's motivation in this ministry expressed in v18-23?

5. What does v22 tell you about Paul's working habits?

Read 15.24-33

6. From v26-27 describe the nature of gospel-partnership?

7. How does v24 and v32 describe the proposed gospel partnership between Paul and the Roman Christians?

8. How was Paul's specific request for prayer in 15.30-31 answered in Acts 21.17-40?

9. How did Paul get to Rome in the end?

Paul on the Move Romans 15.14- 16.27

I am, myself, convinced my brothers, that you are full of goodness, having been filled with all knowledge, and capable of instructing one another.

¹⁵On some points I have written freely, as a reminder of the grace God gave me ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, presenting (as a priest) the gospel of God, so that the nations will be an acceptable sacrifice, consecrated by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in this service to God.

¹⁸I will not dare speak of anything but what Christ has accomplished through me, in word and deed, for the obedience of the nations — ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit, from Jerusalem around to Illyricum to fulfil the gospel of Christ.

²⁰And so it has always been my earnest desire to preach where the name of Christ was not known so that I do not build on another's foundation.

²¹But just as it is written: "Those who were not told will see, and those who have not heard will understand." (Is 52.15)

²²That is why I have been hindered many times from coming to you.

²³But now I have no other place to work in these regions, and since I have had a desire to see you for many years, ²⁴whenever I go to Spain, I hope to pass through (Rome) so you can assist me on my journey after I have seen you.

²⁵But now I am on my way to Jerusalem ministering there to the saints.

²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia thought it good to become gospel partners (make a contribution) to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

²⁷They delighted to do it, for they are debtors to them. For if the nations share (are gospel partners) in the spiritual things of Israel they should serve them (the Christian poor in Jerusalem) in material things.

²⁸So when I have completed this task and made sure the delivery of this tribute, I will go to Spain via you.

²⁹I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of Christ's blessing.

³⁰I urge you brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, join with me in praying for me to God.

³¹Pray that I may be delivered from the disobedient in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem will be acceptable to the saints there, ³²so that by God's will I come to you with joy and refreshment to you.

³³The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

16 I recommend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church in Cencrea, ²in order that you receive her in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you will support her in whatever she has need from you, because she has been a supporter to many including myself.

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their own necks for me. Not only I but the churches of the nations give

thanks to God.

⁵Greet the church that meets in their home and also my beloved Epenetus, the first fruit for Christ in Asia.

⁶Greet Mary, who has done hard labour for you.

⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives and my fellow-captives, who are well known among the apostles, who were in Christ before me.

⁸ Greet my beloved Ampliatus in the Lord.

⁹ Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ and my dear Stachys.

¹⁰ Greet Apelles, the genuine thing in Christ. Greet those who belong to Aristobulus.

¹¹ Greet my relative, Herodian. Greet those who belong to Narcissus who are in the Lord.

¹²Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa who labour hard in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis who laboured much in the Lord.

¹³Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord as well as his mother who has also been a mother to me.

¹⁴Greet Asyncritus, Phlego, Hermes, Probatas, Hermas and the brothers with them.

¹⁵Greet Philologus and Julia. Nereus and his sister Olympias and all the saints with them.

¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send you their greetings.

¹⁷Now I urge you, brothers, to watch out and avoid those who cause divisions and put down stumbling blocks in the way of the teaching which you have learned.

¹⁸For such men do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own hunger and by fair speech and flattery deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

¹⁹The news of your obedience has come to all men, and so I rejoice over you. I want you to be wise in what is good but innocent as to what is evil.

²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

²¹Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you as does Luke, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

²²I, Tertius, the writer of the letter, greet you in the Lord.

²³Gaius, my host and the host of the church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends his greeting as does brother Quartus.

²⁵Now to the one who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden in the times past ²⁶and now made plain through the prophetic writings and commands of the eternal God to make known the obedience of faith to all the nations.

²⁷To the only wise God be the glory through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

5 Paul on the Move

Romans 15.14-16.27



kick off

If you were going to die what would you want people to remember you by?



key verse

Romans 15:17
Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.



big idea

Paul's passion for Christ and his kingdom motivated him to do extra ordinary things. What about us?



digging deeper

Being Passionate: Philippians 1

Philippians 1:21-25

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²²If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.
hh

Being passionate is something we sometimes admire in our world. But only sometimes, because some passions drive people to be irresponsible and neglect other responsibilities. There is no doubt the apostle Paul's passion for the Christ, Jesus meant there were things he could not do, but loving and caring for those he knew was not a casualty. Loving God and his Son Jesus connects us with others—it never disconnects us from others.

Read Romans 15.14-16.27 in the Free Translation

1. How does Paul describe his God-given apostolic task in 15.15-16?



investigate

2. How is this the fulfilment of the 'old, old story' Genesis 12.1-3?

3. In verses 18-24 Paul describes Rome as a centre point between two spheres of ministry, the past and the future. What are those spheres and how does Rome fit into the equation?

community challenge

Plan your Christmas party and make sure you invite some extras.

Read v5

11. What is the relationship between the scriptures and what God is bringing about in us?

Read v7-13

12. Paul now gives us some scriptures. How might they teach us endurance and encouragement, so that we can follow Christ with one heart and mouth?

Meditation

Define the freedom that Christ gives us.

1 Learning to Live Again

Romans 12.1-8



kick off

When have you experienced something that has really changed your life?



key verse

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
Romans 12.2



big idea

Being a follower of Jesus is a matter of learning to live again but now towards God not away from him.



digging deeper

In the book of **Hebrews** (10:5-7), the writer quotes the Greek version (LXX) of Psalm 40.6-8:
"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 'with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷Then I said, 'Here I am- it is written about me in the scroll- I have come to do your will, O God.'"

Read the rest of Psalm 40. In what way does this Psalm find its fulfilment in what Paul says God is doing in us?

When a person is recovering from a stroke that has affected their abilities, they need to learn how to think and act again—they need to relearn what was once second nature to them. We must never allow being a follower to be reduced to a matter of preference. Trusting in Jesus is nothing less than learning how to live—not again—but for the first time.



investigate

Read Romans 12.1-8 in the Free Translation

1. What are the mercies that form the basis of Paul's encouragement?

2. Why can we now offer a living sacrifice?

The Greek word (logiken) normally translated here as 'worship' can, as the NIV suggests in a footnote, also be translated 'reasonable'. The word translated 'worship' is most often used of 'service' to God, especially in the context of the Temple i.e. of priests.

3. What changes when you read the NIV translation, 'this is your spiritual worship' as 'this is your considered service'?



Look at:
Deuteronomy 6:4-5
 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

This passage is called the *Shema* - it is like a mini Jewish creed and is foundational for the Jew—it was and is the beginning of their daily prayer. It reminds them of who the Lord is, that he is unique and they are to love him with all they have.

Jesus reiterates the Shema in his ministry

Mark 12:30-31 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no c o m m a n d m e n t greater than these."

Can you see any similarities between the Shema and Jesus in what Paul is saying in Chapters 12 & 13?

4. What are the characteristic, moulding forces at work in this age?

5. What are the characteristics of the mindset made present in the 'good, pleasing and perfect' ministry of Jesus?

We need at times to appreciate how ethnically focussed the Old Testament is. It is addressed to the people of Israel and only indirectly to us Gentiles. We Gentiles, were without God and without hope in the world, waiting on Israel to show us YHWH, the true God. With the coming of the saviour of the world for both Jew and Gentile, Jesus, and the subsequent reduction of ethnic significance (there is in Christ neither Jew or Gentile), the Old Testament 'rules' which never had directly applied to Gentiles certainly don't now.

Paul, is speaking to Roman Christians about the need to live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ. They are called to live authentic Christ like lives in Rome but not without guidance or direction. They were to listen to the gospel; the gospel that not only saved them but showed them that Jesus is the fulfilment of the long Israel story and that in him they can live lives of transforming purpose through the power of the Spirit.

6. In what ways do these principles represent the life of our Lord Jesus for us?

7. What do you understand by 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' in this context?

Paul, in v19-21 summarises his argument so far encouraging the Romans to be united and encouraging one another but in v22-23 the person who has weak faith is addressed.

Read v22-23

8. How could someone condemn themselves?

Read 15.1-4

9. Here the Christ-likeness that the strong are to show the weak becomes explicit. How?

10. Why were the scriptures written?



think & apply

Issues, Issues, & Issues.

Can you list five areas of behaviours which are contentious for the Christian community now but are not 'gospel' issues?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Can you list any that have become confused as gospel issues?



When is an issue an issue?

We would be wrong to think that Paul always thought that the issues connected with eating were areas of indifference.

Look at Galatians 2.11-21.

Paul got stuck right into Peter when he stopped eating with Gentiles and saw it as a fundamental issue.

How do you explain the difference in reaction?

Read v5-12

3. Who should the focus of our behaviour be?

Maybe the question we need to ask ourselves when we are confronted with an issue is not, 'What would Jesus do?', but 'Is this done to please my Lord?'

4. What do we need to keep in mind rather than finding fault with our brother v11,12?

Read v13-18

In v13 Paul is saying something like, 'If you want to judge something, judge how not to cause your brother problems'.

5. In v14-18 there are seven statements of principle that guide our actions in regard to 'disputable matters'. What are they?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

6. How do you feel about the fact that you have to work out and demonstrate God's good, pleasing and perfect will in your family, your suburb your work?

7. In v3 if we think of 'the measure of faith' as a quantity we have we become introspective and begin comparing ourselves to others. This would be unhelpful! What happens if 'the measure of faithfulness' is the self-sacrificing love of the Lord Jesus for his people?

8. What is Paul saying in v4-5 and how does it relate to the 'measure of faithfulness of Jesus in v3 and in v6-8?

9. Read through the list of gifts v6-8. What do you notice about them?

10. Think about Paul's emphasis is it on the gift or how the gift is used? What is significant about this?



think & apply

Choose one of these two areas to think about:

1. How can I serve the church community in a way that is not self seeking but is serving the body?

2. What is an area where I need to work out and demonstrate the good, pleasing, perfect will of God?

Share it with the group. One of our most counter-cultural activities is not to develop an

Meditation

No one's life is easy if we are living authentically but it can be joyful. What is more extraordinary is that according to verse 1 it can also be pleasing to God.

Sometimes the god of our imagination is so austere, it is beyond belief that he could experience any pleasure at all. We misrepresent the true God if we think the God of the Bible is like this. God's capacity for pleasure is infinite.

Sometimes, our doctrine of sin is so pronounced that we dare not think that God could take pleasure in us. We misrepresent ourselves when we think like this; we were made to bring God deep pleasure and salvation is the invitation to live in this way.

This week dare to believe that, in the detail of living to God, He is pleased with you in Christ and that your choices to live for Him thrill His heart.

Organise an event for the church family for next year that involves and uses the gifts of your whole HOMEchurch group.

Plan it in detail and submit it to the Session.

4 Living with Differences

Romans 14.1-15.13



kick off

How does the attitude, 'do what you think is right' work out in our western culture?



key verse

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 14.17



big idea

In the world the rule is, 'might makes right.' In God's kingdom love is right.



digging deeper

Romans 3:10-18 says: As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹²All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ¹³"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." ¹⁴"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵"Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷and the way of peace they do not know." ¹⁸"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Read Romans 12.8-21. What has happened in Christ?

We live in a culture where two opposing forces are at work; the authority of the freedom of the individual and the longing for community. The problem is, as we come close our freedom will be affected, and so we move apart until we feel disconnected and we move close again. This is the recipe for an unhealthy lifestyle. Being in Christ introduces us to the body of Christ. It therefore also introduces us to mutual obligations which bring with it a radical redefinition of freedom.

Read Romans 14.1-15.13 in the Free Translation



investigate

1. In 14.1-5 Paul describes in eating terms what he means by 'weak' faith and 'strong' faith—what are they and who do you think might be represented by the different diets? What must each avoid in regards to the other?

2. What sort of matters are 'disputable matters'?

community challenge

Is there someone in your community, your work, neighbourhood or home who could do with some encouragement. It might be just taking some time to get to know them.

Think it through

In the city of Gwynty-Storm: "No man pretended to love his neighbour, but everyone said he knew that peace and quiet behaviour was the best thing for himself, and that, he said, was quite as useful, and a great deal more reasonable."

"The Princess and Curdie" by George MacDonald

12. How is the sentiment expressed in the quote above representative of the way our culture works and how does it fall short of what Paul is encouraging?

13. How could you create some community in your neighbourhood? Share your ideas.

14. How can you make a positive contribution to the community of your work place or another environment in which you live?

2 Sincerely Yours in Christ

Romans 12.9-13



kick off

When have you experienced the extraordinary love of God from his people?



key verse

Love should be sincere. Detest what is evil, cling to what is good.

Romans 12.9



big idea

Our relationships in church are to show the transforming character of God's work in Christ.

DO IT!

Paul's pattern of writing is always the statement of the gospel truth about what God has done and is doing and will do in Christ and then the call to live this out in the present context.

Being followers of Jesus requires our whole being—Jesus said, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your soul and all your mind.'

Our response to God is head and hands and heart—if it doesn't move into action we don't know it.

Anyone can read a book about how to hit a back hand top spin lob in tennis, but it is only when you get out on the court and practise and practise that the words really make sense.

'Knowing' in the Bible is never purely a matter of the mind. It involves the mind and matter. It is doing the truth. This is underlined early on in Genesis 4.1 in the Hebrew where it says 'Adam knew his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.'

One of the greatest images Jesus gave to his disciples about hearing but not doing, was the man who built his house on the sand. When the flood came, the house collapsed. Knowing but not doing isn't knowing in the Bible.

Being saved, is not some legal fiction where we are put right with God and just keep on going with what we were doing. Being saved is an invitation to a new way of living—knowing God in Christ.

This passage invites us into a radical way of living that as a church we need to take seriously and struggle with the power that God provides in Christ to put into practice.

Could it be that we will not really know God as well as we want until we do.



investigate

Read Romans 12.9-13 in the Free Translation

1. Have you ever experienced insincere 'love'? What impact did it have on you?

2. How can we ensure our love for others is sincere?

Sincerely Yours ...

Being like Jesus is no easy matter. In the first four centuries you could literally wind up on a cross but even if you didn't, there was still the call to die to self. Being like Jesus is learning to live the way that he lived.

Jesus lived sincerely—neither manipulating nor manipulated he loved and served not to get, but to give. At times loving someone required a sharp rebuke; at other times a lifting up and a word of forgiveness. None of his actions sprang from weakness but in his strength he was able to be weak for us.

The book by Herrington, Creech and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey*, explores living like Jesus in this way.



3. The rest of vv9-13 paints a picture of sincere love. Why can we say that these expressions of love are sincere?

4. What evil things should we detest (this is a very strong word) and why?

5. Why do you think Paul says, 'cling to what is good', what is he implying?

6. What things do you think are good that we should cling to and how do we cling to them?

7. What would your HOMEchurch look like if you devoted yourself to brotherly love and outdid each other in showing honour? (v10)

The Ruling Roman Authorities Chapter 13

8. Read 13.1-5. In this section Paul outlines God's reality behind governing powers in this world. What are they?

Read verses 6-10

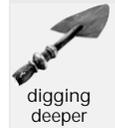
9. What set of attitudes is Paul encouraging the Christians to have in Rome toward the authorities in v6-7?

The Christians at Rome were not only not to avoid tax, they were meant to give what they owed, demonstrate their new life that went beyond law keeping in the life of the community.

10. For Paul how did being saved work itself out in the local neighbourhood?

Read Romans 13.11-14

11. Paul is using the image here of getting up from being asleep and then getting dressed appropriately for the day. How does that image relate to how we should act in the present?



Read 1 Peter 3:8-18

Peter and Paul are in complete agreement with each other in regards to the way Christians—the followers of a different LORD to Caesar—were to conduct themselves in the empire.

How does the instruction of Paul and Peter and pre-eminently, the example of Jesus accord with the radical critique of the kingdom of man?



digging deeper

Look at Philippians 2:5-11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In what way does this passage form a backdrop to Romans 12.14-13.14?

4. How did Jesus live out the v15-16?

5. Paul is not naïve. In v18 he seems to be considering the possibility of persecution. In such a case what do Christians need to be sure of ?

It is probable that v19 is to be read in the light of chapter 13 i.e. we are not to take justice into our own hands if we are wronged but leave it to the ruling authorities. Rather what we should do is to feed our enemy if he is hungry and give him a drink if he thirsts. The very opposite to the way the world works.

6. What do you think it means that when we do good to our enemy we 'heap burning coals on his head'?

7. When do you most often take justice into your own hands?

8. 'Being slow in being diligent' is a bit of a contradiction in terms, but that's the point. And that's why it teams up so well with, 'keep your spirit burning in serving the Lord'. Why are slackness and lazy attitudes things that dog our individual and corporate Christian lives?

9. Can you identify areas that you are slow at being diligent in? Can you see any reasons for the slowness?

10. Can you see a pattern in v12. What point is Paul making?

11. How is v12 an expression of the life of the Lord Jesus?

12. What is shared in the two encouragements in v13?



Making a Move

think & apply

Sometimes people are slow to do something good not because they're lazy but because they're not sure if they have the right to do or say something or because they're not sure how people will react.

If that's you it's time to make a move—risking is what living and maturing in Christ is all about. If you're doing it out of love then that will cover any number of inadequacies.

How could you move forward in the maturity that comes from loving others.

community challenge

Meditation

Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.

Gilbert K. Chesterton

Is there someone in your HOMEchurch that really needs a hand in a big way?

Is it you?!

How can your HOMEchurch work together to lovingly serve a brother or sister?

The world in the West has been rejecting the message of Jesus for a very long time and has been hardening its heart.

What they haven't had much of a chance to reject is a community of people who believe and live out the life of the Lord Jesus — a community of life shaped by the Lord who died and rose again and lives out his life in their daily lives.

3 When in Rome... Romans 12.14-13.14



kick off

When have you experienced any hostility toward you because you were a follower of Christ?



key verse

Owe nothing to anyone except to love each other.



big idea

Paul encourages the Roman Christians to live lives that enhance their community and respect its God appointed rulers.



digging deeper

The Letter to the Exiles Jeremiah 29:4-7

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

How does the instruction Jeremiah gives to the Exiles parallel to the instruction Paul gives to the Christians at Rome?

The old saying runs, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do'. While there is much going on at Rome (and where you live) that the followers of Jesus couldn't go along with, Paul still expected Christians to share in the life of the city; more than that, they were to be a vital ingredient in the neighbourhood community where they lived.

Read Romans 12.14-13.14 in the Free Translation

1. How is 12.14,17 an echo of the crucifixion of Jesus c.f. Luke 23.34?



investigate

2. What would be the impact of reminding Christians at Rome about the death of Jesus?

3. In 12.15-16, Paul encourages the Roman Christians to not be disconnected from the neighbourhood in which they live. How?