

ALTARED STATE

"THE REAL DEAL"

ROMANS 12:9-16

There are so many commandments in the New Testament—more than 1,000 by one count—should you decide you just can't keep them all, make sure you pick the most important one and keep it! Romans 12 alone has a bunch of good ones to choose from: "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God" (v. 1); "do not conform to the pattern of this world" (v. 2); "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (v. 2); "do not think of yourself more highly than you ought" (v. 3); "hate what is evil" (v.9); "cling to what is good" (v. 9); "be devoted to one another in love" (v. 10); "honor one another above yourselves" (v. 10); "keep your spiritual fervor" (v. 11); "be joyful . . . patient . . . faithful" (v. 12); "share with the Lord's people" (v. 13); "practice hospitality" (v. 13); "bless . . . rejoice . . . mourn" (vv. 14-15); "live in harmony with one another" (v. 16); "do not be proud" (v. 16); "do not be conceited" (v. 16); "do not repay anyone evil for evil" (v. 17); "do what is right in the eyes of everyone" (v. 17); "live at peace (if possible) with everyone" (v. 18); "do not take revenge" (v. 19); give your enemy food and water" (v. 20); "overcome evil with good" (v. 21).

Or you can just focus on the one Jesus gave in Matthew 22:39, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and applied more specifically to his disciples in John 13:35, "Love one another . . . By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." All the commandments in Romans 12

Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

– Romans 12:13 MSG

seem to revolve around this one. As one commentator says: "Love is the circulatory system of the spiritual body, which enables all the members to function in a healthy, harmonious way" (Warren W. Wiersbe, "Romans," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:555). To the extent you obey this one, you will find you have obeyed the others.

This Week's Core Competency

Love – I unconditionally and sacrificially love and forgive others.

Scripture sees hospitality as an expression of love. Romans 12:9-13, a paragraph devoted to the relationship of believers to one another, begins with the words, "Love must be sincere" (v. 9) and ends with the words, "Practice hospitality" (v. 13). On the biblical mandate to practice hospitality, Greg Atkinson writes:

"While hospitality may sometimes be perceived as a unique gifting for some people, Scripture is clear: loving strangers is a biblical mandate to *anyone* who follows Jesus. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God specifically commands his people to practice hospitality. He tells the Israelites to 'love the stranger' like they love themselves—reminding them that they, too, were once strangers:

"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 19:33-34, ESV).

Jesus talks about the hospitable behavior of those who will inherit the kingdom: 'For I was

cont. pg. 2

hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a *stranger*, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me' (Matt. 25:34-36, NASB, emphasis mine).

When we welcome the newcomer and the least of these, and treat them as valued guests, we welcome Christ himself. And like so much of 1 John shows us, when we love others, we show our love for God.

Hospitality is also a specific hallmark for pastors and church leaders. In 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7-8, Paul lays out important guidelines and criteria for church leadership. He tells the leaders of the church that they must be known for their hospitality.

Scripture repeats this emphasis: 'Seek to show hospitality' (Rom. 12:13). 'Be hospitable to one another without complaint' (1 Peter 4:9). 'Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to *strangers*' (Heb. 13:1-2, emphasis mine). Read Acts chapters 16, 21, and 28. The Bible is full of stories illustrating the importance of practicing hospitality.

Because the command to love strangers is so prevalent throughout Scripture, we discover that showing hospitality is one of the primary signs of a follower of Jesus—and a church that follows Jesus. In fact, Jesus says that by loving others, others will know we are his disciples (John 13:35).

So there's the biblical mandate as to why hospitality matters"

(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2016/september-web-exclusives/hospitality-matters.html>).

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 12:9-16

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Cf., another translation

9 Love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another. 11 Do not lag in zeal, be enthusiastic in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, endure in suffering, persist in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints, pursue hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Do not be conceited. (NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight "Love must be sincere" in v. 9.
- * Circle "hate" in v. 9.
- * Underline "devoted" and "love" in v. 10.
- * Bracket "honor" and "above yourselves" in v. 10.

- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 11, 16.
- * Circle "bless" in v. 14.
- * Bracket "people of low position" in v. 16.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Put what "love must be sincere" means in your own words (v. 1; cf., 1Jn 3:16-18).
2. What has "hate what is evil" and "cling to what is good" got to do with *sincere* love?
3. Verse 10b can be translated: "Outdo one another in showing honor" (ESV); and "Honor one another above yourselves" (NIV). Explain the difference in meaning.
4. Verse 11 speaks to a problem long-time Christians face (cf., Gal 6:9). Identify it and describe how it affects you.
5. Of the three commands in verse 12, which one do you find most difficult to obey and why?
6. Describe your most recent opportunity to "share with the Lord's people who are in need" (v. 13).
7. Pride undermines living harmoniously with others. How so?
8. Explain the *contrast* in verse 16.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about how contemporary Christians can recover the lost art of practicing hospitality.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

It is striking how in his letter to the Romans, Paul can move from a discussion of justification, sanctification, and the future of Israel to the practical implications of that discussion. He writes, on the one hand: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death" (8:1-2), and on the other hand: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited" (12:14-16).

On the content and division of Romans 12:9-21 one commentator explains: "Verses 9-13 deal with the importance of demonstrating love to fellow believers, and verses 14-21 broaden this responsibility to include wider application to non-believers" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 2017 ed., 181, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/romans.pdf). Several of its features are noteworthy and challenging: its rapid-fire style, lacking finite verbs, together with its loose structure, lacking words indicating *logical* relationships, makes it very difficult to pinpoint the message of the section. On the matter of *structure*, many commentators see "Love must be sincere" as a heading for the entire section, which deals *exclusively* with the relationship of believers to one another in verses 9-13, *both* to one another and to unbelievers in verses 14-16, and *exclusively* to unbelievers in verses 17-21.

As far as the first paragraph is concerned (vv. 9-13), another writes: "Nowhere else in Paul's writings do we find a more concise collection of ethical injunctions. In these five verses are thirteen exhortations ranging from love of Christians to hospitality for strangers. There are no finite verbs in the paragraph. There are, however, ten participles that serve as imperatives. In the three other clauses (vv. 9, 10, 11) an imperative must be supplied. Each of the thirteen exhortations could serve as the text for a full-length sermon. What they deal with are basic to effective Christian living" (Robert Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, 236). Paul opens the paragraph cryptically in Greek, "Love

sincere," his idea being insincere or hypocritical love is no love at all. The exhortations that follow amount to little more than a listing of the traits of genuine *agape* love. "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" speaks to actions rather than emotions. Put differently, genuine love never leads to doing what is wrong, only to doing what is right, that is, it leads to the kind of "brotherly love" that characterizes supportive members of the same family. It leads to an effort to outdo other family members in according recognition and showing appreciation. It also leads to spiritual fervor, the antidote to becoming weary in doing good (Gal 6:9), a common malady of those who have been Christians for a long time.

The relationship of the three admonitions in verse 12 isn't obvious. One commentator relates them this way: "Hope, endurance, and prayer are natural partners. Even as we 'rejoice in hope,' gaining confidence from God's promise that we will share the glory of God, we recognize the 'down side': the path to the culmination of hope is strewn with tribulations. Paul, ever the realist, knows this; and so here, as he does elsewhere, he quickly moves from hope to the need for endurance. At the same time, we realize that our ability to continue to rejoice and to 'bear up under' our tribulations is dependent on the degree to which we heed Paul's challenge to 'persist in prayer.' (Note that Paul moves from hope to endurance to prayer also in Rom. 8:24-27)" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 779).

Paul closes the paragraph with the command, "Share with the Lord's people who are in need" (v. 13), that is, put into practice the love and concern for one another already mentioned—faith that fails to provide for the material needs of others is *ineffectual* (Jas 2:17); likewise, love that fails to do the same is *insincere*. Genuine *agape* "pursues" hospitality, the lost art of modernity. Just to be perfectly clear, "Hospitality is not about impressing others with well-decorated homes and gourmet cooking. It's not simply for the gifted or those with clean homes. Neither is it just for women. Hospitality is a way of loving our neighbor in the same way God has loved us" (Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 139).

Paul opens the second paragraph (vv. 14-16) by

alluding to what Jesus said. In Matthew 5:44 he said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," and in Luke 6:27-28 he said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Paul combines these two forms of Jesus' saying for Christians to obey. His commandment to "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse" marks a break in the passage indicated by a shift in style to the use of imperatives, and a shift in topic to the relations of Christians with non-Christians as well. Demonstrating empathy toward and living harmoniously with everyone is certainly in the spirit of Galatians 6:10, "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those

who belong to the family of believers." On attaining the harmony about which the apostle speaks, one writer points out: "Paul stresses the necessity of rejecting the temptation to think high thoughts about oneself, as though one were a superior breed of Christian, and of coming down off the perch of isolation and mingling with people 'of low position' or of a humble frame of mind (the Gr. has simply 'the lowly'). And lest one consent to do this while still retaining heady notions of his own superiority, Paul puts in a final thrust: 'Don be conceited' (v.16). Conceit has no place in the life ruled by love (1 Cor 13:4)" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Bible Expositor's Commentary*, 10:134).

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Genuine agape love obligates believers to do good and live in harmony with one another as well as others who are not Christians.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

What does it take to put love into action in a big church?

Describe someone you find remarkably hospitable.

Paul tells believers to "live in harmony with one another" but doesn't tell them how. What's the secret to getting along with others?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 9 **love** "Paul says, literally, 'sincere love.' These words are the heading for what follows, as Paul proceeds in a series of participial clauses to explain just what sincere love really is" (Moo, 774). "The phrase then would function almost as a heading (cf. Schlier, 373; against Kasemann)—'love sincere'; and with the sequence of participial clauses following (vv 9b-13), it would be clear that they should be understood as an elaboration of these opening words—'this is what love is like' (Nygren). The translation by means of an imperative (implies) slightly obscures this 'thesis character' of v 9a, but is a legitimate way of bringing out the imperatival force of the participles" (James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38b, *Romans 9-16*, 739).

v. 9 **sincere** Cf., "without hypocrisy" (NET); "genuine" (NRSV). The Gk. word [*hypokrites*], related to the adjective used here, "was the 'play-actor' who projects an image and hides his true identity behind a mask" (740). "Hypocritical or pretended love is no love at all as Paul describes agape in I Cor 13" (Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4, *The Epistles of Paul*, 404). "Paul is warning about making our love a mere pretense, an outward display or emotion that does not conform to the nature of the God who is love and who has loved us" (Moo, 775).

v. 9 **hate** Cf., "abhor" (NET); "detest" (HCSB). "Paul uses very strong language here: loathe what is evil, cling to what is good" (Ben Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 293). "Love is not genuine [sincere] when it leads a person to do something evil or to avoid doing what is right—as defined by God in his Word. Genuine love, 'the real thing,' will lead the Christian to that 'good' which is the result of the transformed heart and mind (v. 2)" (Moo, 776).

v. 10 **devoted, love** "He uses a special term denoting brotherly love (*philadelphia*). 'Devoted' is appropriate, since it customarily denotes the family tie. Believers are members of the family of God" (Harrison, 10:132). "Both key terms in this exhortation, which share the *philo-* stem, convey the sense of family relationships" (Moo, 777).

v. 10 **honor, above yourselves** Or "Outdo one another in showing honor" (NRSV, TLV, ESV). "To honor is to accord recognition and show appreciation" (Harrison, 132). "The verb Paul uses here means 'go before,' often with the additional nuance that one goes before to show the way to someone else. Taking the verb in this basic sense, many early translations and commentators as well as more recent ones think Paul means something like 'surpassing one another in showing honor' [RSV, NRSV]. Others, however, suggest that the verb might here have an unusual sense, 'consider better,' and so translate 'in honor preferring one another' [KJV, NASB, NIV]. Each interpretation has its weaknesses; I, however, prefer the former since the second assumes an otherwise unattested meaning for the verb" (Moo, 777).

v. 14 **bless** Cf., Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27-28. "In the Scriptures, 'blessing' is typically associated with God; he 'possesses and dispenses all blessings.' To 'bless' one's persecutors, therefore, is to call on God to bestow his favor upon them. Its opposite is, of course, cursing—asking God to bring disaster and/or spiritual ruin on a person" (Moo, 780).

v. 16 **people of low position** Lit., "but associate with the lowly" (NASB); cf., "but accept humble duties" (GNT). "The adjective 'lowly' could be neuter, in which case Paul might be urging Christians, in contrast to being haughty, to devote themselves to humble tasks. But 'lowly' could also refer to persons, in which case Paul would be exhorting believers to associate with 'lowly people,' that is, the outcasts, the poor, and the needy" (Moo, 83). "The ambiguity of *tapeinois* (neuter or masculine) cannot be resolved, and may have been deliberate (Barrett), and is usually left open—menial or lowly tasks, or people held in low esteem by the influential and powerful (see, e.g., BGD, *sunapago*; Schlatter; Lagrange; Wilckens)" (Dunn, 747).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Romans 12:10). Maybe Paul should've come to my house before he wrote that. Brotherly love doesn't always look and feel much like love when kids are involved. In fact, sometimes it requires deep breaths, intervention, and maybe even separation from said brother. To be fair, my crew grew up treating each other pretty well, but with four kids in a tiny house, there were definitely a few times where punches were thrown, and words were said. I didn't grow up in a church home, so raising small humans to love Jesus and each other is all new territory for me. Our goal as parents has always been to have siblings that like each other enough to be in each other's weddings. So how do we get to that point from where we are today? I don't have a magic answer. What I do have is Jesus, His word, and an ongoing prayer that my kids love Him and each other fiercely. Brotherly love as described in this passage is sincere, humble, and costly. Creating a home filled with this kind of love is a minute-by-minute task not for the faint of heart. Parents, don't give up! I'm firmly convinced one day we're going to see our kids walk down aisles celebrating each other as best friends. I'm praying Jesus' blessing of peace in your home and that your family is unified in brotherly love.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 12:9-16

1. How is love described in Romans 12:9?
2. From this passage, how is love demonstrated?
3. How should we respond to people who mistreat us?

What Do You Think

Is love an action, feeling, or both? Describe.

What R U Going To Do

Write a letter to each member of your family telling them why you love them. Share your letters over dinner and celebrate each other!

Core Comp

Love – I love and forgive others no matter what.

Memory Verse

Romans 12:2a – *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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