

Live in Harmony With One Another Week of November 7, 2021

Intro Discussion Question(s):

- *How have you grown in your study of God's Word this week?*

Read Bible Study Summary:

As we learned in our last study, Chapter 12 of Romans is considered by many to be second only to the Sermon on the Mount when it comes to instructions on how to live a Christian life. The first eleven chapters of Paul's letter to the church at Rome shares the **reality** of all that God has done for humanity, but specifically for those who enter into an everlasting relationship with him by faith (His Church). Chapter 12 is the turning point of the letter where Paul begins to issue commands for the believer's **response** in view of God's mercy. In this study, we will look at Romans 12:14-16, and the response of believers to the command to live in harmony with one another because of the reality of what God has done.

Main Scripture

- **Read Romans 12:14-16**

How does Scripture teach us to live in harmony with one another?

1. Answer Hatred with Love (Rom. 12:14)

- This is probably one of the hardest things to do or to not do. When someone curses us or speaks evil of us, our first instinct is often to go on the defensive. We want to speak back. We want to lash out. We want to defend ourselves. We want to fight. However, Jesus laid down His rights and did not defend Himself because He wanted to take our punishment for us. Perhaps we should do less fighting for our rights and more laying down our rights in order to live in harmony with one another.
- **Read James 3:6-10**
 - *6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8 but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father,*

and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

- **Ask Questions**

- *Share an example of when it has been difficult to show love when someone else cursed you or spoke evil of you. In what ways do you think your response could have better reflected the love of Christ?*
- *Are you currently dealing with a situation where you are struggling to respond to evil or hatred with love and grace? How can your group pray for you specifically to respond in a Christ-like way?*

2. Answer Joys and Sorrows with Empathy (Rom. 12:15)

- This verse is often quoted as a reminder for believers to come alongside each other in the highs and lows of life. If we are going to live in harmony with one another, we must learn to celebrate when others celebrate. But, why is this sometimes more difficult to do than we initially think? If we are honest, perhaps it is because we struggle internally with the sins of envy, jealousy, and competition which make it difficult to rejoice. Do we find ourselves saying, "I don't ever get the breaks." "They have all the luck." "Life just ain't fair." But, this is exactly the opposite of what our savior wants from his church. Instead, he desires believers to grow in grace so that we are able to rejoice in the success of other brothers and sisters.
- What about empathizing with the sorrows of others? How do we do that? Showing up is most of the job, right? You don't need a great speech. Just be present with the hurting. This would have been a radical idea in a hierarchical Roman culture: the elite weeping with the poor migrant worker. But that is how brothers and sisters exemplify Christ regardless of their background or standing.
- **Ask Questions**
 - *Is it easy or difficult for you to rejoice with those who rejoice? Why? In what ways can you grow to rejoice more with others?*
 - *Think about that exhortation to mourn with those who mourn. In what ways can you grow in your empathy for others? Share an example of how someone else's empathy has ministered to you during a time of suffering.*

3. Answer Pride with Humility (Rom. 12:16)

- **"Be willing to associate with people of low position."** - Perhaps the greatest obstacle to living in harmony with one another is pride. Paul urges Christians to avoid pride and conceitedness by embracing humility as the key step toward genuine unity. "People of low position" is a translation of a Greek word referring to either "humble people" or to "humble things." Therefore, Paul is either exhorting believers to identify with "down and outers" in the community or being willing to give themselves to menial work (accepting humble duties). In either case, the believer should not think of him or herself as being of higher status or position than we really are. A Christian should never say, "This task is beneath me," or "This person is beneath me."¹
- **Philippians 2:1-4**
 - *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish*

¹ Douglas Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 411-412.

ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

- **Ask Questions**

- *How would you counsel someone who exhibits pride in identifying with people of low position?*
- *In what ways can your willingness to give yourself to humble duties contribute to harmony in church?*

Closing

- **Ask Question** - *What is the greatest challenge you are facing right now? Is there some way our group can help you specifically?*
- Pray together over those requests.