

## Right Living/Right Relationships

### Romans 12

After eleven chapters of some pretty heavy theology, Paul turns his eyes to the "So what?" In light of the miracle of God's mercy to once hopeless sinners, in light of the wonder of grace that frees us from our former way of living and relating, in light of the sovereignty of God throughout history, what does that mean for us, today? How then shall we live? Welcome to Romans 12-16.

#### Day One: Relationship to God-Part 1

*Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.*

1. The first word of the passage is "therefore." Think back through all the things we have studied in the previous 11 weeks about our sin and the Law, about God's surprising remedy for our sin, about the lengths He has gone to reconcile us to Himself, about our lack of condemnation now as believers, and all that God has already given us. In light of all that God has done, "therefore" what should be our response?

2. What does the idea of presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, mean to you? How can we make our bodies a living sacrifice?

3. What does being "holy" mean to you?

4. Holiness has two ideas. (a). It means to be set aside for God's purposes. (b) It means to be clean, pure in our actions, words, thoughts, behavior, attitudes, purposes, etc. Is there something that comes to your mind as to how you need to grow in being holy? What is it?

5. Becoming holy is often looked at as doing something I "have to do" (meaning, I don't really want to do this, but I guess I *need to*). But Paul gives us several motivators as to why, as men and women who have experienced the new life in Christ *want* to be holy! What are several motivators you see in Romans 12:1?

6. How are "presenting our bodies," and being "acceptable to God" acts of worship? Is this how you think of worship?

7. What strikes you most from Romans 12:1?

## Day Two: Relationship to God-Part 2

*Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1. Yesterday, we talked about giving God our bodies. Today, we are looking at giving God our minds and our will.
2. "Do not be conformed..." In the following list, pick one way the world exerts pressure on you to conform to its ways. (At work, school, while on the computer, at home, at the mall, or other).
3. Paul tells us not to "conform" to the pattern of this world, the values and purposes we used to live by. Instead of "conforming" we are to be "transformed." What does Paul mean?
4. How is being "transformed" different than just not being "conformed?"
5. How does a transformation, a changing from within of the essence of who you are, begin by a "renewing of your mind?"
6. Paul first addresses our mind. Next he takes up our will. When we yield our will to God, we will "prove" His will to be right. A new car or a new product is often taken to a "proving ground" so it can be tested and tried out, to make sure it is genuine and of a high quality.
7. Look at the very last part of verse two again. What are three things we can say about God's will?
8. Yielding our will to God is not easy. Our pride puts up a terrific battle. How would one of the truths in this verse help you to yield your will to God?

## Day Three: Relationship to Brothers-Part 1

1. **Relating well** to **others** begins with an **honest evaluation** of **ourselves**.

*Romans 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

2. In verse 3, look for one way we should NOT think and one way we SHOULD think.

*Romans 12:4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,<sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

3. Once we have looked realistically at who we are (v. 3), it helps us relate to others as we work together in ministry. How does Paul address this issue in verses 4-5?

4. What is the usual way you deal with differences between you and others?

Feel superior

Question them (in your head)

Critical spirit

Appreciate their strengths while being annoyed by their weaknesses

Appreciate their strengths while accepting their weaknesses

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. In the following verses, **underline** seven spiritual gifts Paul mentions.

<sup>6</sup> *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

<sup>7</sup> *If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;*

<sup>8</sup> *if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

6. Do you have one or more of these particular gifts? What does the phrase “exercise them accordingly” in verse 6 mean, in light of our honest evaluation of ourselves?

7. “Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with.”

## Day Four: Relationship to Brothers-Part 2

1. Relating well to our brothers and sisters in Christ doesn't come easily. It goes against the grain of our old nature. Relating well involves determined effort against our natural bent, and reflecting something of the wonder of how God relates to us in spite of once being His enemy!

*Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

2. "Love must be 'sincere.'" Our secular culture interprets this to mean, "I won't love someone unless it feels genuine or sincere." If we waited until we "felt" loving, our love bucket is going to dwindle.

Instead, "sincere" means "pure," free of our ugly self that insists on getting something in return for our love. Do everything you can to act in a loving way without regard for getting anything in return or "feeling" "loving."

3. The next few verses describe ways that help us build relationships and community with others. **Underline** the ones that strike you as important.

*Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

<sup>11</sup> *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

<sup>12</sup> *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

<sup>13</sup> *Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

4. Building relationships and building community is hard stuff. This should not be surprising! Sometimes, you treat someone poorly. Other times, someone treats you poorly. The world's general approach to misunderstanding, hurt feelings, or someone taking offense at something is "fight or flight." "Give someone a piece of your mind," (fight) or say to yourself, "Who needs *this?!*" and pull away (flight).

5. What's called for is a **radical other-centeredness** that only Christ can make possible.

<sup>14</sup> *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

<sup>15</sup> *Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*

6. What would it take for you to respond in these ways in your challenging situations?

7. Paul address our attitudes.

*Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

8. What is one thing from today's study that you need to apply?

## Day Five: Relationship to "Enemies" (difficult people)

1. When we think of "enemies" we may think of people who are out to get us. But "enemies" come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes, an enemy is someone with whom it is difficult to relate, let alone love. Remember, even Jesus had enemies!

2. In the next verses, underline Paul's action steps for how to think about difficult people and how to relate to them.

*Romans 12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*

<sup>18</sup> *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

3. The drive "to get even" can be a consuming drive within us that can destroy us. Resentment and bitterness can strangle the very life out of us. No matter how badly we may want someone "to pay" for what they did, if we are the executioner, how we could make someone pay would be too small!!! (read that again!!)

*Romans 12:19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

4. If we let God be the executioner of justice, what role are we supposed to play? Here's Paul's surprising answer!

<sup>20</sup> *On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

5. The ironic and puzzling principle is this: our role is to offer undeserved kindness. This seems so counterintuitive. It is.

When I was a teenager, I once told my mother to go to hell (It wasn't one of my better moments!). Much to my amazement, she remained calm, engaged, and a tear came to her eye. What I tasted that day was her kindness in the face of me "spitting" at her. The effect on me was to never, ever want to say something so horrible to *anyone*, ever again.

6. Have you ever tasted undeserved kindness from someone else? What effect did it have on you?

*Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

7. What is a situation or relationship where you can be the bearer of an act of undeserved kindness?