

How to Overcome Evil

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Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 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." 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."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:14-21

1. Introduction

We don't just avoid evil responses –
we must actively replace them with righteous ones.

What is your natural response when someone hurts you? What rises up in your heart?

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

This is not a suggestion.

That is a command.

2. The Biblical Pattern for Change

Ephesians 4:22-24

You don't overcome evil by just stopping bad/sinful behavior.
You overcome evil by replacing it with good/righteous behavior.

3. Understanding Evil Biblically and in Real Life

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

Paul redefines the battlefield and changes the weapons.

A. Understanding the Nature of the Battle

Romans 12:14 *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”*

1. Recognize who the enemy is not.
2. We are called to a spiritual counterattack.
3. Blessing is not the approval of wrong; it is the refusal to let evil dictate your response.
 - a. You always have a choice in how to respond. Whose kingdom are you choosing to build?
4. In this passage, “evil” shows up in very personal ways.
 - a. It can look like:
 - i. A harsh word
 - ii. A broken promise
 - iii. Being overlooked or excluded
 - iv. Being misunderstood
 - v. Being treated unfairly
 - b. In other words... relationships.

- c. Paul gives clear instructions on how to respond.

Romans 12:17 *“Never pay back evil for evil...”*

Romans 12:19 *“Never take your own revenge...”*

Because when we respond to sin with sin, we don’t solve the problem – we become part of it.

4. God’s Strategy: Overcome Evil with Good

A. Entering the Battle with Christlike Empathy

Romans 12:15 *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”*

What pain might be shaping this behavior?

Practice presence instead of judgment.

Choose compassion without compromising truth.

B. Refusing the High Ground of Pride

Romans 12:16 *“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.”*

Pride escalates conflict. Humility defuses it.

Am I more interested in being right or Christlike?

Evil gains ground when pride hardens our hearts. Humility closes that door.

C. Laying Down the Weapons of Retaliation

Romans 12:17-19 *“Repay no one evil for evil ... never avenge yourselves.”*

Retaliation feels powerful, but enslaves us to the offense. Paul reminds us that justice belongs to God, not us.

Refusing revenge is an act of trust in God’s sovereignty.

Letting God judge frees you to live unburdened.

Peace is impossible when you insist on being the judge.

Vengeance keeps the wound open; trust allows healing to begin.

Do you believe God sees what was done to you?

Do you believe He cares?

Do you believe He will act justly?

5. Practical Counseling Application

A. Actively Doing Good to the One Who Harms You

Romans 12:20 *"If your enemy is hungry, feed him ... you will heap burning coals on his head."*

This is not passive goodness – it is intentional, costly love.
Kindness exposes the poverty of evil without mirroring it.

Goodness disarms hostility.

Unexpected kindness can interrupt cycles of abuse and resentment.

Even if repentance does not occur, your heart remains free.

B. The Path to Victory and Peace

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

Victory is not winning the argument.

Victory is not changing the other person.

Victory is remaining faithful, whole, and at peace with God.

Evil wins when:

1. You become bitter.
2. You mirror cruelty.
3. You lose joy.
4. You lose tenderness.
5. You repay evil with evil.

Good wins when:

1. You speak kindly when wronged.
2. You serve someone who hurt you.
3. You pray for those who oppose you.
4. You respond in the Spirit.
5. You trust God with outcomes.
6. You walk in a manner worthy of the call placed on your life.

Renew your mind by:

1. Memorizing Romans 12:12-14
2. Praying out loud for the person
3. Confessing your own sins in this situation
4. Kicking out the evil thoughts and replacing them with **Philippians 4:8**: *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”*

6. Heart-Level Change and the Gospel

The reason this is so hard is because of what’s in our hearts. In these moments, what is coming out of you is what God wants to sanctify and change. But the gospel changes us! Take time to preach the gospel to yourself.

Study different attributes of God and apply them to your own heart.

7. Christ Overcoming Evil: The Ultimate Example

When we look at Jesus, we see the perfect example of this command. Think of the cross. If anyone had the right to retaliate, it was Him. What did He do instead?

The greatest evil ever committed – the crucifixion of the Son of God – became the greatest good: our salvation.

8. Call to Action: Practicing Romans 12 in Real Life

When dealing with difficult people:

1. Recognize the real enemy → evil not the person
2. Reject retaliation → trust God with the justice
3. Respond with intentional goodness → choose love as warfare
4. Guard your heart → peace is part of the victory

The strongest spiritual warfare is Christlike love and the greatest triumph is a heart that remains uncorrupted by evil.

In God's kingdom, goodness is not weakness. It is the weapon that wins.

Who is your difficult person?

What evil are you tempted to return?

What good is God calling you to do instead?

You are never more like Christ than when you respond to evil with good.