



# July 5 – Together

Weekly Reading – Romans 11-15

This Week's Passages – Romans 12:1-21

## Main Point

The gospel transforms believers into a community marked by genuine love, humble service, and Christlike care for one another.

## Key Verse

Romans 12:10 – Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (ESV)

*Try to emphasize this verse throughout the lesson, building up to the Weekly Challenge to memorize the verse this week.*

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## Life Group – The Flow

- 15 minutes – Conversation and relationship-building
  - 5 minutes – Looking back
  - 5 minutes – Introduction (icebreaker, activity, or illustration)
  - 30 minutes – Study and apply the Bible
  - 5 minutes – Application exercise
  - 10 minutes – Pray Through the Passage & Prayer Requests
  - 5 minutes – Conclusion
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## Looking Back (5 min)



Use this time to celebrate obedience and encourage growth. Invite members to share how they sought to apply last week's challenge and what God taught them along the way. Focus on God's faithfulness and the progress He is making in our lives, not on perfect execution. Scan or click the QR code for last week's challenge.

Say:

"Last week, we challenged ourselves to identify situations where we are tempted to doubt God's goodness, provision, or love and to replace those doubts with the promises of Romans 8:31-39."

Discuss one or more prompts:

- Did anyone have the opportunity to memorize last week's verse, Romans 8:38-39?
  - What situation or circumstance most tempted you to doubt God's goodness, provision, or love this week?
  - Did you notice your perspective change as you intentionally focused on God's promises?
  - Did you have an opportunity to encourage someone else with the truths of Romans 8?
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## Introduction (5 min)

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Ask:

- Think of a group you've been part of that felt especially connected and unified. What made that group different?

Examples:

- Athletic team
- Military unit
- Work team
- Church group
- Close group of friends

Follow-Up:

- What causes groups to drift apart or become unhealthy?

Say:

“Many groups are built around common interests, personalities, or goals. Christian community is different. The gospel creates a new family whose relationships are shaped not by convenience or preference but by Christ’s love and sacrifice.”

#### **Transition to Background:**

“Before we look at how believers should relate to one another, let’s consider where this chapter fits within Paul’s larger argument.”

## **Background**

**The Background and Christ Connection sections are designed to provide context and a gospel lens for the lesson. Feel free to summarize these sections rather than reading them word-for-word.**

Romans 12 marks a major turning point in Paul’s letter. After eleven chapters explaining humanity’s need for salvation, justification by faith, and God’s mercy through Christ, Paul began showing how believers should live in response to the gospel.

The Roman church consisted of people from different ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds. Jews and Gentiles worshiped together in a city marked by status, competition, and division. Against that backdrop, Paul described a radically different kind of community – one shaped by humility, sacrifice, and genuine love.

#### **Transition to Christ Connection:**

“Paul’s instructions in Romans 12 might sound like a list of commands, but they are much more than that. Before we consider how believers are called to live in community, we must remember the gospel foundation that makes this kind of community possible.”

## **Christ Connection**

Jesus not only saved believers individually; He created a new people. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated perfect love, humility, service, hospitality, forgiveness, and compassion. Romans 12 calls believers to reflect the character of Christ in their relationships with one another. The community Paul described is only possible because Jesus first loved and served us.

#### **Transition to Passage 1:**

“Before Paul described how believers should treat one another, he reminded them of the foundation that makes such relationships possible.”

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## Study and Apply (30 min)

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says and how we can apply it in our lives this week.

### Passage 1 - Romans 12:1-11

**READ THE PASSAGE - Have a volunteer read Romans 12:1-11.**

#### *A Living Sacrifice*

[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

[2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

#### *Gifts of Grace*

[3] For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

[4] For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

[5] so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

[6] Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;

[7] if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;

[8] the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

#### *Marks of the True Christian*

[9] Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

[10] Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

[11] Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. (ESV)

### Commentary

Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

#### **Romans 12:1**

Paul urged all believers to present themselves as a living sacrifice. Jesus had given Himself as the once-and-for-all Sacrifice for sin on the cross. Believers thus were to live in light of

Jesus' all-sufficient sacrifice, bringing glory to God. Paul further explained that living as a holy, pleasing sacrifice was a believer's spiritual worship. Paul taught that in light of God's gracious redemption (by the mercies of God), living as a sacrifice was the logical and pleasing way for Christians to serve God.

### **Romans 12:2**

As Christians, we're also to please God with our minds. The temptation is to go along with the dominant attitudes of the age, to adopt the prevailing cultural worldview characterized by self-worship (sin). The apostle urged his readers to reject worldliness and to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Transformation of our thinking and attitudes is an ongoing, lifelong endeavor. The result of having our minds renewed by the Spirit is to grow in our ability to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. The word translated discern literally means to prove by testing. God wants His people to know what pleases Him because by living according to His ways we will experience the most abundant life possible (see John 10:10).

### **Romans 12:9**

The final thirteen verses of this chapter defy outlining. If a single theme is to be identified, it would have to be "love in the face of evil," as that is Paul's first word—hate what is evil; cling to what is good—and his last—"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (v. 21). Almost every other evidence of love he mentions will fit under this theme.

The love of which Paul speaks is, of course, agape, the selfless, unconditional expression of grace and compassion exemplified by the love of God for sinners (John 3:16; Rom. 5:5, 8). Just as nothing can separate the believer from the benefits of God's agape (Rom. 8:35, 39), so nothing should be able to come between a believer and his or her love for sinners (Rom. 13:10; 14:15). By dissecting sincere, it is easy to see what Paul means. Anupokritos is simply the negative of hupokrites, from which derives our "hypocrite." Therefore, sincere is not hypocritical. "Hypocrite" was used in the Greek world of the actor who wore masks to portray the emotion of his character—sincere Christians wear no masks. What you see is (should be) what you get, and Paul says that others should see love. It would be hypocritical to hate what is good and cling to what is evil; therefore, hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

### **Romans 12:10**

Only those who are living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1) could possibly carry out the exhortation to honor one another above yourselves. "Looking out for number one" may be a modern mantra, but it was written in the Garden of Eden. Considering others better than yourselves (Phil. 2:3) is just as offensive to the ancient carnal mind as it is to the modern one. Only a renewed mind can tell that it is the "good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2) of God. Paul's special commendation of the believers in Thessalonica for how they loved "the brothers throughout Macedonia" is worthy of note (1 Thess. 4:9-10), especially since

Paul seems to indicate that they learned to do so from God (as opposed to a human instrument such as Paul or another apostle).

### **Romans 12:11**

Here Paul touches on a theme mentioned to the Corinthian church after a long exposition concerning the future resurrection of the body, the putting on of immortality for eternity. Though that is not the subject here, maintaining zeal in service is, especially in the face of persecution or partisanship. He told the Corinthians, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

### **Guide Discussion**

You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage. I do encourage you to use the Reflective question to provide more engagement from your Life Group.

1. **Good for Students.** What does it mean to present yourself as a living sacrifice?
2. **Discuss.** Why is it easier to conform to the world than to be transformed by God?
3. **Deeper Dive.** How does humility help strengthen Christian community?
4. ★ **Reflective** - write answers on an index card. Which aspect of genuine Christian community described in this passage is hardest for you to practice consistently, and why?

### **Teaching Insight**

The Teaching Insight is intended to help you identify and emphasize the main truth of the passage. Consider using it as a brief summary after discussion or a way to clarify the lesson’s central message if your group gets off track.

Say:

“The commands that follow in Romans 12 are not a checklist for earning God’s favor. They are the natural outworking of lives transformed by God’s mercy.”

### **Transition to Passage 2:**

“Having established the foundation, Paul now painted a picture of what gospel-centered community looks like in everyday life.”

## Passage 2 - Romans 12:12-21

**READ THE PASSAGE - Have volunteers read Romans 12:12-21.**

[12] Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

[13] Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

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

[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. Never be wise in your own sight.

[17] Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

[18] If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

[19] 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."

[20] 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."

[21] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (ESV)

### Commentary

#### Romans 12:12

While Paul refers to life in the church in verse 10 (referring to "brotherly love"), here is the first hint of persecution—Be ... patient in affliction. Only the believer who has made a decision to be a living sacrifice can maintain zeal and patience in affliction. Joy in hope was a theme in Romans 5:2, as was prayer in Romans 8:26-27. Once again we see Paul going back to the doctrinal part of his letter and making an application for the present situation. The knowledge that the Holy Spirit is able to intercede through us in times of trouble can be a lifeline to the other side of the quagmire.

#### Romans 12:13

Another evidence of a living sacrifice is a person who gives generously. Does sharing with God's people who are in need, and the exhortation to practice hospitality, refer just to materially poor believers in Rome, or to those who have been made poor or destitute through persecution and affliction? Here is a good example of a practice that has been mentioned as a grace-gift in some believers' lives—giving (v. 8) to meet the needs of others—being presented as a responsibility of the church at large. Certainly some believers have been gifted and resourced by God so as to be able to give more than others, but all believers have a responsibility to practice hospitality and meet the needs of God's people.

#### Romans 12:14

Now comes the hard evidence that believers in the church were being persecuted, and with it the need for evidence that these believers were responding as living sacrifices. Paul paraphrases Jesus' words to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," and

“bless those who curse you” (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27-28). Jesus Himself was the chief example of blessing the enemy when He prayed for those who were torturing and crucifying Him: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

### **Romans 12:15**

Identifying with others in their joys and sorrows is evidence of love flowing from one who is a living sacrifice. These are admonitions that Paul had made in his lengthy writing on body dynamics in 1 Corinthians 12 (cf. v. 26). He also touches the subject in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 and Galatians 6:2.

### **Romans 12:16**

This verse provides evidence of possible internal conflicts within the church in Rome—class and racial distinctions that caused some to look down on others in contempt. There were no doubt slaves in the church, as well as people of means (cf. Paul’s personal greetings to members of the church in Rom. 16). Also, there was the possibility that Jews in the church were maintaining a position of superiority over the Gentile believers (see Rom. 2:17-24). Paul’s teaching in places such as 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; and Ephesians 2:15-16 confirm the principles underlying all of Romans 12: all have been leveled by sin, and any who have been redeemed have been so by God’s mercy. Therefore, anyone who would look upon another believer with contempt or conceit because of status or position in life has not grasped the enormous implications of having been redeemed solely by grace.

### **Romans 12:17-21**

Finally, Paul concludes the chapter with the most lengthy, and perhaps the most difficult to manifest, evidence of being a living sacrifice: loving when wronged. The clear command is, Do not repay anyone evil for evil—whether a fellow believer or an unbeliever outside the church. There are at least two reasons for not taking revenge into one’s own hand. First, it puts an individual, a part of the creation, in the place of judge over another part of creation. The second reason is that it could bring disrepute and harm to the cause of the gospel. Paul tells the Roman believers, If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. That would include peace with believers and nonbelievers, those in the church and outside the church. Since it takes two to fight, if the believers do not seek revenge, there will be no long-lasting disruption of peace.

The point of this last section is to do toward others what God has done toward us: forgive as we have been forgiven (Eph. 4:32). God loved us when we were enemies (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21). Though Israel is an enemy of the gospel still (Rom. 11:28), God loves her. And we are to love those who are our enemies. We are not to be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good.

## **Guide Discussion**

1. **Good for Students.** Which command in this passage stands out to you most?

2. **Discuss.** Why is it often easier to love people from a distance than to walk closely with them?
3. **Deeper Dive.** How does rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep strengthen a church family?
4. ★ **Reflective** - write answers on an index card. If everyone in our Life Group obeyed one command from this passage more consistently, which would most strengthen our community?

### Teaching Insight

Say:

“Healthy Christian community is not built primarily through programs or events. It grows when believers consistently practice ordinary acts of love, encouragement, hospitality, service, and care.”

**Transition into Application Exercise:**

“Romans 12 gives us a compelling picture of gospel-centered community, but healthy relationships don’t happen by accident. They are built through intentional choices, consistent habits, and ordinary acts of love over time. Before we move into prayer, let’s take a moment to evaluate how these truths are being lived out in our own lives and in our Life Group.”

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## Application Exercise (5-7 min)

### Community Audit

**Time:** 5-7 minutes

**Supplies:** None

#### Instructions

Read the following statements and invite members to privately evaluate themselves:

- I regularly encourage other believers.
- I know when members of my group are struggling.
- I celebrate others’ victories without jealousy.
- I willingly make time for people who need help.
- I initiate care rather than waiting for someone else to act.

Then discuss:

- Which area feels strongest?
- Which area needs growth?
- What would it look like for our group to improve in one of these areas over the next month?

### **Transition into Pray Through the Passage:**

“Romans 12 challenges us to be more than attenders. It calls us to become a family marked by Christlike love. Let’s spend a few moments asking God to grow these qualities in us.”

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## **Pray through the Passage (10 min)**

### **Led by the Prayer Champion:**

Read the verse/passage, then read the prayer prompt out loud. Allow a few moments between prompts for reflection and prayer. Encourage members to personalize each prayer by filling in the blank with their own response.

#### **Prompt 1 - Confession**

Romans 12:2 - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (ESV)

- Lord, help me to not be conformed to this world in the area of \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Prompt 2 - Response/Obedience**

Romans 12:10 - Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (ESV)

- Lord, help me love and honor others more intentionally by \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Prompt 3 - Response/Obedience**

Romans 12:15 - Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (ESV)

- Lord, show me someone I can encourage, support, or care for this week through \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Prayer Requests, Praises, and Follow-Up**

1. Take a few minutes to ask the group for updates from the previous week's prayer requests. Encourage the group to celebrate answered prayers.
2. Next, identify specific needs that can be prayed for throughout this coming week. Encourage members to be vulnerable and open in their needs so members can better and more fully support each other in prayer and in tangible ways.
3. Record requests and praises, share them with the group during the week, and follow up on them at the next gathering.

#### **Transition into Conclusion:**

"Gospel-centered community doesn't happen automatically. It grows as believers continually surrender themselves to God and intentionally love one another as Christ has loved them."

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## **Conclusion (5 min)**



Scan or click the QR code and share the link in your Life Group's group chat (e.g. GroupMe, text or email thread, etc.) so they can see This Week's Challenge. Encourage your group to keep these questions in mind, review/memorize the Key Verse during the week, and engage in the Year of Prayer reading plan this week.

## **Final Takeaway**

After discussion concludes, read the takeaway statement:

**Healthy Christian community is built when transformed believers consistently choose to love, serve, and care for one another in the power of the gospel.**

## **This Week's Challenge**

### **Act**

Choose one person in your Life Group or church family and intentionally encourage, serve, or care for them this week.

This could include:

- Sending an encouraging text
- Making a phone call
- Writing a note
- Delivering a meal
- Praying with them
- Visiting them

Don't wait for someone else to do it. Take the initiative.

## Reflect

- Who in my church family may need encouragement right now?
- What keeps me from taking the initiative to care for others?
- How has someone else's care impacted me during a difficult season?
- What would it look like for our group to become known for genuine love?

## Memorize

Review daily and/or memorize the **Key Verse** from this passage to remind yourself that you can do nothing to earn your way to heaven, and that God's love alone is what saves you.

**Romans 12:10 - Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (ESV)**

## Read

This week's reading is **Romans 16 - 1 Corinthians 4**. You can access the Year of Prayer reading plan [here](#).

## Prayer

Either pray something like the guide below, or invite someone in the group to close in prayer.

Father, thank You for Your mercy and for bringing us into Your family through Jesus Christ. Continue transforming our hearts and renewing our minds so that we reflect Your love in the way we serve, encourage, and care for one another. Help us move beyond simply attending church to genuinely living as a family of faith - rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep, and taking the initiative to love others as Christ has loved us. May our Life Groups display the beauty of the gospel and strengthen one another for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.