

LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

Romans Chapter 12

Introduction.

In the first eleven chapters of Romans, Paul set forth a large amount of spiritual truth. This section of the letter has been mainly composed of “doctrine” (teaching). Starting in Romans chapter twelve, Paul moves onto the “duty” section, the practical section of the letter, in which he explains the Christian’s obligations in response to the teachings which he has given in the previous chapters.

God never gives us His truth merely to inform us. He always wants His truth to transform us in everyday practices, and living.

Read.

Read Romans 12 at least twice during the week and meditate on it.

VERSES 12:1-2.

The first two verses of Romans chapter 12 are important transitional verses in this letter. These verses teach us some very important decisions which every Christian must make if he or she hopes to live a life pleasing to God.

In verse 1 Paul urges the Christians in Rome to present themselves to God. This is a decision Paul believes every believer needs to make. It is not simply an option but a decision of the will to become totally committed to being the kind of person God wants each of us to be. We see how important this decision was in Paul’s mind as he strongly “urges” each reader to make this commitment.

What is the reason for each person presenting his or herself to God?

ANSWER:

It is in response to God’s great love for us that we should be completely committed to Him. The word “therefore” at the beginning of the chapter points back to the content of the previous eleven chapters. Paul is really saying this: “Based upon all the great truths concerning salvation which I have taught you regarding God’s mercy toward you, I urge you to present yourselves to God”.

The greatest motivation to live the Christian life is the love which God has shown toward us. We do not “present” ourselves to God because we “have to”, but because we “want to”. When we really understand all God has done for us, there is only one proper response: to give ourselves completely to God.

What should people present to God?

ANSWER:

They are to “offer your bodies.... to God”. God wants our bodies. He wants our head, our heart, our feet, our hands, our mouths, all of us, everything. Commitment to God is, therefore, an “all or nothing” proposition. Now that we understand “why” we should present our bodies to God, this is the “what” that is involved in our lives as we commit to God.

Paul also says we are to “offer [our] bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God”. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel offered animal sacrifices to God.

These sacrifices were offered on an altar as a temporary means of covering their sins until Christ came. But God does not want us to present ourselves as “dead” sacrifices! He wants us to be LIVING and HOLY sacrifices on the altar of commitment. This is the kind of offering that is acceptable to God. In other words, God want you to lay your very life on the altar of commitment.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

When we first receive Jesus as Savior, we reach out and accept the free gift of God. We receive free and full forgiveness of our sins AND the reward of eternal life. Receiving Christ is a relatively simple decision. But, as we grow in our understanding of the meaning of salvation, we need to make further, willful, commitments of our lives to God. There comes a time in the life of all Christians where we face a difficult decision: Will we commit ourselves to yield totally to God? Are we willing to be anything, do anything, or go anywhere for God? Are we willing to lay down everything we are and have at the altar of God? Are we ready to follow Him fully?

This is the decision Paul is encouraging his readers to make. We will never experience the “abundant life” which Christ promised until we present ourselves totally to God. Once we yield completely to Him, He will begin to lead us into the great things He has in store for us. Those who never fully present themselves to God will remain spiritual babies.

In verse 2 Paul tells us how we can maintain our commitment to God. He gives us some daily things we can do to keep our lives on the altar of commitment.

What two things does Paul say we must do to stay committed to God?

ANSWER:

Do not be conformed to the world and be transformed according to God’s will.

First, Paul tells us something we should not do: We should not “conform any longer to the pattern of this world”. This means we should not let our lives be molded by the standards of the world in which we live. The world has its own set of values which we should not conform to. The world has its own way of doing things and we should not do things the same way. In short, the Christian should not look like the ordinary person who is of the world. We should look and act differently. We should be a unique people set apart to do things God’s way. We are “in this world” but we should not be “of this world”.

Second, instead of being “conformed” to this world, we are to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” or transformed according to God’s will. We are to be continually changing and growing to be more like Jesus. Transformation in the Christian starts the moment he or she receives Jesus, but transformation continues daily for the rest of our lives.

What should the Christian do to “renew” his or her mind?

ANSWER:

Be in the Word of God; reading it, meditating on it and memorizing it. These disciplines are critical to renewing our minds and thoughts. As we study God’s Word, we are using our minds to think God’s thoughts. As we put God’s thoughts deeply into our minds, it will transform the way we think and act.

What will the end result of renewing our minds be?

ANSWER:

As we are being transformed, the end result will be that we will “prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”. In other words, we will know the will of God and we will walk in the will of God. As we spend time in God’s Word, we will find out exactly what He requires of us or what we need to “obey” to be His followers. And as God shows us His will, we will begin to live according to His standards; we will walk in His will.

Living the Christian life is a daily process. We are to be transformed (changed) more and more each day into the likeness of Christ. This is how we will be able to maintain our commitment to Him: by daily making sure we are refusing to conform to this world and choosing to conform to Christ. To do so we must spend daily time in God’s Word filling our minds with it and focusing on Him.

SUMMARY:

Let’s review the main points of this section...

1. We should present ourselves to God because of all the wonderful things God has done for us.
2. We must present every area of our life as a living sacrifice to God.
3. Christians must never conform themselves to the world’s standards.
4. We are to continually be transformed in our daily lives according to God’s revealed will.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Applying these main points to our lives:

1. Think back over the first eleven chapters of Romans. List some of the great things God has done for you; things that should motivate you to commit your life totally to Him.

2. Have you ever made a conscious decision to lay your entire life on the altar of commitment to God? Have you ever given yourself to Him completely as a “living sacrifice”? If you have never made this important decision, what is preventing you from completely laying your life on the altar of commitment to God? Why not make it the decision to lay your life on the altar of commitment to God right now?

(Leader of the group might want to lead in a prayer of dedication and ask people to indicate their decision in some way)

3. Is there some area of your life in which you have been conforming to the standards of the world? Is so, write down the area and how you have been conforming to the world.

4. What do you need to do to be transformed in this area according to God’s standard? What specific steps do you need to take in order to bring this area of your life into conformity with the revealed will of God? (If you don’t know, you may want to share with a trusted Christian friend, your small group leader, or a pastor.)

In the New Testament, the Church is called the “body of Christ”. Paul uses the human body as a figure to describe how believers should work together. Believers compose the various parts of the body, while Jesus Himself is the “Head” of this body.

For the human body to function properly, each part must perform its own function. Similarly, in the body of Christ, each person must perform his or her proper function if the entire body is to work effectively.

In several of his letters, Paul discusses the issue of “spiritual gifts”. Apparently, Paul felt that the proper use of our spiritual gifts was one of the most significant ways that we could work out our commitment to Jesus. Using our gifts is one of the best ways we can express our gratitude to God in a practical way. Paul discusses spiritual gifts and their use in the body of Christ in Romans 12:3-8.

VERSES 12:3-8.

What is the proper attitude for serving in the body of Christ (v.3)?

ANSWER:

The only proper attitude for serving in the body of Christ is an attitude of humility.

Why should we have an attitude of humility when it comes to serving in the body of Christ?

ANSWER:

First: God is the giver of gifts; we have nothing to do with what gifts we have. A “spiritual gift is a special ability or talent which God gives to each believer at the moment they are born again. While there are many spiritual gifts, each believer has primary gifts which God has given him or her to serve with.

We must realize is that these gifts are nothing to be proud of. God is the one who distributes the gifts to each member of the body of Christ to be used for His glory. Jesus was the most gifted man that ever lived yet He was humble enough to wash the feet of the disciples. Jesus set the example of an attitude of humble service.

Second: we all need each other. No part of the body is more important or less important than any other part. Take a moment and read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. In the body of Christ we must all work TOGETHER for the building up of the whole body. None of us can work independently. We all need each other.

How should you use your spiritual gifts (verses 6-8)?

ANSWER:

Each of us should use our spiritual gifts to glorify God, NOT for our personal success. In these verses it was not Paul’s purpose to provide a complete list of all the spiritual gifts. His purpose was to tell these Christians that whatever their spiritual gift was, they should be using it to bring glory to God.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Gifts are to be used for God’s glory, never for self-glory. There are two things to keep in mind if you want to glorify God with your spiritual gifts:

1. Gifts are to be used for serving one another. Read 1 Peter 4:10. Notice Peter says these believers are to use their gifts “in serving one another”. Gifts are given so we can serve the body of Christ effectively. If you are not using your gifts to serve the body, you are abusing your gifts.

2. Gifts are to be used in building up the body of Christ. Look closely at Ephesians 4:11-16. Notice the emphasis on the growth of the whole body. How does the whole body grow? When each person does their part.

It is important for every Christian to serve in his or her area of giftedness. The body of Christ is designed to function best when each of us is serving in line with our giftedness. If you don't know your spiritual gifts and would like to determine what yours are, you can contact the church office or your Community Pastor and we will help you determine what your gifts are.

SUMMARY:

Let's review the main points of this section...

1. We must maintain an attitude of complete humility in regard to spiritual gifts and their use.
2. We must realize that we are dependent upon one another in the proper working of the body of Christ.
3. We should seek to determine our spiritual gift but we should not limit ourselves to serving in only this one area.
4. We are to use our gift to serve one another and to build up the body of Christ, all for the glory of God.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Apply this to your life.

1. Some of us know our spiritual gifts and some of us don't. Regardless of your situation, are you ready to accept your gift, no matter what it is, with an attitude of complete humility? Do you recognize that God is the giver of all gifts and that He distributes them as He wishes? Take time to pray right now. Thank God for the spiritual gift He has given you. Ask Him to help you use your gift in humility.

2. We must always realize that we need one another in the body of Christ. Have you had a bad attitude toward another member of the body of Christ lately? Have you had the feeling you don't need that person or would be better off without them? Take some time and confess this attitude. Thank God that He has composed the body of Christ in such a way that we all need each other. Ask God to show you how you can benefit from the life of the other person.

Have you had the attitude that you are a "one man show"; that you can do everything yourself? Again this is a wrong attitude that must be confessed and put away.

3. Have you determined your spiritual gift yet? Have you made yourself available to serve in a variety of ministry situations? If you have not determined your spiritual gift, write out the steps you need to take in order to learn and understand your spiritual gift. Will you complete these steps? When?

4. If you already know your spiritual gift, then are you using your gift for the glory of God in the building up of the body of Christ? What do you think you need to do to be more effective in using your gift for the glory of God?

Of all the responsibilities of a Christian, the greatest may be summarized in just one word: LOVE. We are to love God and to love our fellow Christians and to love those who don't know Christ. The apostle John went so far as to say this: *But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* (1John 4:8 NLT) Love is what the Christian life is all about.

VERSES 12:9-21.

In Romans 12:9-21 Paul deals with the importance of love in our daily relationships. This section of Romans consists of many short commands (there are about 25 different commands in these thirteen verses!). But if you summarize the whole section, again, you could do it in one word: LOVE.

Where is the first place our love should be displayed (vv. 9-13)?

ANSWER:

Within the body of Christ, the family of God. It is most natural to love your own family members. Christians are members of the same spiritual family. We are "brothers" and "sisters" in Christ. Therefore the first place we should show love is within our spiritual family relationships. It is with our spiritual family that we will spend eternity loving them.

What is the basic characteristic of brotherly love?

ANSWER:

It is sincere (or without hypocrisy). In the opening phrase Paul gives us this basic characteristic of love between Christians. Our love for one another must be genuine, real, and sincere, from the heart love. Our love must not be fake. Read 1 Peter 1:22.

In what ways can brotherly love be shown or demonstrated?

ANSWER:

There are 12 ways listed here.

- 1. Hate what is evil,**
- 2. Cling to what is good (in God's sight),**
- 3. Be devoted to one another (a tender affection toward one another),**
- 4. Honor one another above yourselves (think more highly of each other than yourself),**
- 5. Never be lacking in zeal (for each other and the Christian life),**
- 6. Keep your spiritual fervor (our spirit for the Lord should be hot, be a good example of how to live for Christ),**
- 7. Serving the Lord (as we love one another we must remember we ultimately serve the Lord),**
- 8. Joyful in hope (while we serve we joyfully wait for the day we will go to heaven),**
- 9. Patient in affliction (endure trials and tribulations knowing God will reward us in the end),**
- 10. Faithful in prayer (constant attention should be given to prayer for each other),**
- 11. Share with God's people who are in need (help them physically),**

12. Practice hospitality (look for opportunities to take others into our homes, feed them and care for their needs).

Christian love is not something we should just talk about, it is something we should do. Christian love must be active. See 1 John 3:18; 4:21 and John 13:34, 35. The important thing to know is that our love for one another is evidence of our relationship with God, and the evidence we are disciples (followers) of Christ.

Beginning in verse 14 there is a slight change of direction in the passage. The phrase "bless those who persecute you" turns our attention to those outside the body of Christ; to unbelievers.

How does Paul say the Christian should relate to the non-Christian? More specifically, how should the Christian relate to the unbeliever who acts in an evil way toward Christians? Give specific ways.

ANSWER:

We should show love to the unbeliever. There are eight ways Paul gives to show love towards then unbeliever:

1. **"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." Our natural desire might be to curse those who persecute us but Paul says we should "bless" them. Jesus taught that we should pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). See 1 Peter 2:19-25 for additional study.**
2. **"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn". Genuine love for others should allow us to come along side them and share in their deepest emotions of joy and sorrow.**
3. **"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited". Paul is saying that we should avoid any attitude of pride in our relationships with others. We should not think of ourselves as being better, wiser, or more important. We should seek to foster oneness of mind with others and to associate with people of any position in society. Jesus was our model as he ministered to taxgatherers and all types of sinners including the poor and beggars. Jesus associate with those at the lowest level of society.**
4. **"Do not repay anyone evil for evil". Unbelievers will often mistreat us. They can say bad things about us, cheat us out of money, or simply be mean to us. But we should never return evil for evil to anyone. As verse 21 says, we should overcome evil with good.**
5. **"Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody". Christians should be concerned with the basic rights of all men. We should always do what is "right" in the sight of everyone.**
6. **"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone". Christians should be peacemakers. We should strive to have peaceful relations with all people. We cannot control the actions of others. They may not like us and want to be our enemies. However, we can be responsible for our actions. We should have peaceful intentions in all situations.**
7. **"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". If unbelievers cause problems for us, we must accept it as part of God's perfect plan for our lives. He is the One who will take revenge on His enemies. We must not take revenge into our own hands.**
8. **"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." This is just the opposite of revenge. We are asked to return good to those who do evil to us. We are to feed our enemies when they are hungry and give them something to drink when they are thirsty. By doing good deeds we are to outdo their evil deeds and demonstrate the love of Chris to them!**

In these verses there are two basic goals we should have in showing love towards unbelievers. What are they?

ANSWER:

1) Living at peace with all men (v.18) and 2) overcoming evil with good (v. 21). Some people always seem to be at war with the whole world. This is not the way Christians are to relate to people. Christians should seek peaceful relations with people. This does not mean we hide our Christianity if people don't like it, it means that we conduct our lives in a mature way being sensitive to the needs of people around us. We want to attract people to Christ, not drive them away. It also means we use good deeds to overcome the world and win others to Christ.

SUMMARY:

Let's review the main points of this section...

1. Our love for fellow believers must be genuine, not pretend or fake; it must come from the heart.
2. We can show love for one another in a wide variety of ways – the key is that we must do it.
3. We are to show genuine love towards unbelievers, seeking to win them to Christ by means of our good deeds.
4. The goals of love towards unbelievers should be peace with all men and overcoming evil with good.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Apply this to your life.

1. In the space below, write one way that you will show genuine love for a fellow believer today.

2. In the space below, write one way that you will show genuine love for a non-believer today.

3. Is there someone who has been doing evil to you lately? If so, how might you return good for evil? What deeds of love could you do for this person?

For next time...

Read Romans 9-16 this week.

Download Bob's commentary and read it. Available the Sunday he preaches.

Complete Personal Application Points 1 and 2 above every day this week. Each day write out some new way that you will show love toward a believer and an unbeliever.

Memorize Romans 12:21.

If you haven't done so already, complete and review the personal application section from this week's study.

Download next week's study and complete it before your next Life Group meeting. Available online one week ahead of the sermon.