

ROMANS 12 | D-GROUP CURRICULUM

WEEK 1

REFERENCE PASSAGE

Read Romans 12:13-16, 18, & 20

CONTEXT

Romans 12:9-21 is about what love looks like in action, but such an important part of being called to love others is knowing *who* we are called to love. Throughout his ministry, Jesus sought out unexpected people or those who were cast out of society. Think about the men and women who followed Jesus mostly closely. Each disciple was drastically different from the rest, some possessing characteristics, identities, or ideologies that incited hatred from the other disciples they were shoulder-to-shoulder with. How were all of these different people able to hang together in Jesus' company? In Romans 12, Paul reminds the Church in Rome of the power of inclusivity and honoring different kinds of people through actions as a demonstration of our unified worship. Jesus' community is for all, not just for those we deem deserving or worthy of it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Read Romans 12:13-16, v.18 and v.20 again. What stands out to you about the types of people mentioned? Are these the people that society pays attention to?
- What does our passage teach us about who Christ goes out of the way to include?
- Has there ever been a time in your life when you did not serve or love someone well or fully because of who they were or what you perceived about them?
- Reread Romans 12:18. What do you think the phrase "live peaceably with all" entails? Does living peaceably mean avoiding conflict?
- How might loving, serving, and inviting people of all kinds into our lives broaden our perception of God, God's character, and God's community?

ACTION STEP

Take ten minutes to reflect on who is in your life. List the names of your friends, family members, roommates, classmates, coworkers, folks at church, etc. Now write out what makes these people similar and what makes them different from you and one another. Reflect on how each person adds value and impacts your life.

Additionally, consider who is missing from your circle. How can you place yourself in proximity with people that you currently lack relationships with? (For example, joining an ethnic org on campus or a church congregation of a different ethnicity than your own.)

NEXT WEEK | Romans 12:9-18

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WEEK 2

REFERENCE PASSAGE

Read Romans 12:9-19

CONTEXT

Last week we discussed the people we are called to love, serve, and bless (which is *all* people). But how do we actually go about doing that? What would this kind of life entail? In a culture of individualism and pursuing only our own needs, Paul directs us toward a way of living that creates *harmony* amongst both believers and unbelievers. This harmony is built on mutual affection, service, empathy, humility, and peace— which can only be achieved because of the redeeming and restoring power of Jesus Christ. There is a command to aid those who are in need, extend hospitality even to strangers, bless our persecutors, and empathize with one another both in times of weeping and rejoicing. And because we are prone to arrogance, Paul warns against acting wiser than we are, as it prevents us from having the type of compassion toward others we are called to pursue. Paul phrases it this way— we must “outdo one another in showing honor.” We are faced with this question: How do we exceed one another in showing honor without making it into a holy competition that leads to spiritual comparison? We do it as we “rejoice in hope; [are] patient in affliction; persevere in prayer.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How is God’s heart for our relationships with one another revealed in this passage?
- Why do you believe there is an emphasis on serving and blessing those around us, especially strangers and the lowly? (Note: Cross-reference Matthew 25:31-40.)
- What could it look like for us to outdo one another in showing honor?
- After reading this passage, how do you believe God is calling you to live differently? What would it look like to serve your community at APU?

ACTION STEP

Choose an exercise from the “Hospitality” section (pg.161) or the “Service” section (pg.167) of *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* to practice this week. Note your reflections, and come prepared to share with the group next time.

NEXT WEEK | Romans 12:14 & 17-21

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WEEK 3

REFERENCE PASSAGE

Read Romans 12:14 & 17-21

CONTEXT

Last week we focused on what it looks like to live in harmony with one another and how we are called to live differently in a way that honors and loves others well. For people like our friends or family, actions like this might come easy but for others that are different from us or who have hurt us it might be a lot harder to love and serve them. This is why Paul specifically spelled out the importance of blessing your enemies and acting counterintuitively in the face of adversity. Oftentimes when we get angry, hurt, or frustrated we tend to quickly react with defensiveness and desire vengeance or taking justice into our own hands. Instead of reaction based upon our natural instincts, Paul exhorts us to treat the ones who've wronged us with love and honor.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Read through Romans 12:14 and 17-21. What stands out to you? What reactions come up inside of you while reading this passage?
- How do you tend to react when you are angry, hurt, or frustrated? How does this passage call you to respond counterintuitively?
- Looking at Romans 12:20-21, why do you think we often have a want to avenge ourselves?
- Read James 1:19-20. What do you think the differences are between human righteousness and God's righteousness?

ACTION STEP

Create an action plan for the next time you become angry, hurt, or frustrated so that you can respond to adversity from a place of love and dependence on Christ to re-center you. You could consider taking a moment alone to do some deep breathing, journal out your frustrations, do a quick workout to release pent up frustration, or ask God to help you process through what made you feel the way you are feeling.

NEXT WEEK | Romans 12:19

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WEEK 4

REFERENCE PASSAGE

Read Romans 12:19

CONTEXT

Last week we discussed how we can be quick to frustration and anger, especially when we are called to serve, persecutors, strangers, and even our enemies. This week's passage makes an important note about vengeance for wrongdoings. When we are the recipient of an injustice, how are we to respond faithfully? Society permits (and even, at times, encourages) pettiness, seeking revenge, and withholding forgiveness. God, however, has a very different approach. Rather than completely taking matters into our own hands, we are told to "leave room for God's wrath." Though God is not expecting his people to be pushovers in the face of mistreatment, abuse, or injustice, God is calling us to create space in our active response for him to respond on our behalf as well. God is asking us to release all ultimate outcomes to him. Every human has a flawed and incomplete understanding of justice, therefore our efforts to enact vengeance will always fail to ultimately right wrongs. Thankfully, with God "all things work together for the good of those who love him and live according to his purposes." What would happen if we created space for God to fight on our behalf? What would happen if we released all outcomes of personal wrongdoings to God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What things cause people to be tempted to repay evil for evil and avenge themselves? What about these things causes us to fall into this temptation (eg. "fixing our image" and appearances, the belief that it will bring closure, etc.)?
- What does this passage reveal to us about the heart and character of God when it comes to biblical justice?
- Think of a time in which you experienced injustice. What was your reaction to such injustice? How did both your experience and your response make you feel?
- Read Romans 12:1-2 and notice what it says concerning submitting ourselves to God. How do these verses allow us to pursue God's will and not our own?

ACTION STEP

In response to today's discussion, choose an exercise from the "Submission" section (pg.135) of *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* to practice this week.

NEXT WEEK | Romans 12:9

ROMANS 12 | D-GROUP CURRICULUM

WEEK 5

REFERENCE PASSAGE

Read Romans 12:9

CONTEXT

As we wrap up Romans 12:9-21, take note of the use of instructional tone in verse 9. This verse is not a suggestion being offered; rather it is an instruction to be taken to heart and ultimately put into *action*. Paul calls us to love people of all kinds, serve each other generously, seek harmony amidst diversity in a world of hostility, bless those who persecute us, and make space for the establishment of biblical justice in replacement of our flawed, immediate desires for personal vengeance. Each of these components paint a picture of what the kingdom of heaven on earth looks like and also reveal God's perfect love through God's imperfect conduits, disciples of Jesus. Note the characteristic of this love in verse 9: "Let love be *genuine*." How can we display a love for people that is not fake, cheap, or hypocritical but authentic and real? We will need to continuously check both the *intention* and *impact* of our efforts to love people. *Are we extending love toward some but withholding it from others? Are we avoiding difficult social interactions by keeping away from people who are different from us? Are we creating hostility in group interactions by being argumentative and hard headed? When it comes to loving people well, what could our standard be?* According to the Apostle Paul, our standard is this: a love that ultimately matures and perseveres. Beyond Paul's instructions on love, we find the greatest example in the character, posture, and actions of Jesus to serve us well as our human model for the perfect love that God is calling his people to embody.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What reactions do you have to our verse this week? What stands out to you or resonates for you? What, if anything, is challenging for you to hear?
- What does genuine love look like in real life, and how have you experienced it?
- Who in your life models genuine love, what do you admire about how they do it?
- In reference to Romans 12:9, how can hypocrisy play a part in how we love people, even when we are unaware of it?
- As a result of this discussion, how do you believe God is calling you to live and love differently moving forward?

ACTION STEP

Create a realistic goal and two actions steps to put *genuine* love into practice from this day forward. (Hint: What is one tangible way you can serve or bless someone this week?)