

Romans 12:15-16
August 2, 2015

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Over the last two weeks, I suggested that Paul has put together a checklist of how our lives should be lived as children of God. There are multiple areas that he covers. I compared it to a performance review at the office. When your boss evaluates your work, you are being evaluated in different areas, e.g. skill level, people skills, the ability to problem-solve, identify strengths or weaknesses, etc.

Transition: As we go through Paul's checklist, I want to again give you a word of encouragement: We could easily read this chapter and see only our shortfalls, but let's remember that there are things we are doing right. Let's read this text and determine what our "next step" would be to help us become *well-rounded* as Christians. **All of us CAN strengthen our spiritual walk with the Lord BY honestly evaluating ourselves in each of the AREAS of our walk Paul identifies for us.** We will go through the text slowly and take each verse and process the meaning. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Rom 12:15-21]

V.15:

- Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

V.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.

Process Questions and Observations:

Observation v.15: The idea of "rejoice with those who rejoice"...Christians should be able to empathize with others, both believers and unbelievers.

Q v.15: Q: What's the difference between empathy and sympathy? [Empathy assumes that you have experienced what another has experienced. Sympathy is an act of caring toward another without necessarily having shared the experience.]

Q v.16: What does it mean to "live in harmony" with one another? [(lit., "having the same attitude toward one another"; cf. Rom. 15:5; Phil. 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8)]

Q v.16: Are you seeing how Paul continues to weave the idea that we should not be proud or conceited?! It keeps cropping up throughout these verses. There is yet another admonition from Paul in this verse. What is it? [Be willing to associate with people of low position. **X-REF James 2:1-4**]

Q: What do you think Paul means by "associate" with people of low position?

As we wrap up Chp 12, can you see that in order for us to strengthen our walk with the Lord, our DEFAULT MINDSET starts with: **consider others better than ourselves/honor others above**

self, which then leads to practicing hospitality (pursuing friendliness with strangers), bless (speak well of another, especially our enemies) and only repay evil with good.

Summarize: The key idea in this section is *relationships*. If we have a right relationship to God, we will have a right relationship to the people who are a part of our lives. “If a man says, I love God, but hates his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20).

Application Rhetorical Q: I have proposed today that All of us CAN strengthen our spiritual walk with the Lord BY honestly evaluating ourselves in each of the AREAS of our walk Paul identifies for us. What would be one baby step you could take based on these last set of verses that would strengthen your walk with the Lord?

LOOK:

We need to hear this because it’s time to do an assessment on how we are living out our calling as God’s children. Paul provided multiple scales to be measured by, but the goal is to do an act on the information you learn from it. Since our spiritual growth is a process, we need to think in terms of baby steps in areas we need to improve. If you haven’t been faithful in prayer, then figure out a small baby step that works for you to sharpen your prayer life. If it’s practicing hospitality, then figure out a baby step that works for you to sharpen your hospitality efforts. Let the Holy Spirit use this chapter to illumine the baby step(s) HE wants you to take and be open to it. You can’t lose!

See if someone wants to share:

Q: What is the one small baby step you can take this week that helps you strengthen your walk with the Lord?

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 555–556). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Loving participation (vv. 9–16). Here the emphasis is on the attitudes of those who exercise the spiritual gifts. It is possible to use a spiritual gift in an unspiritual way. Paul makes this same point in 1 Corinthians 13, the great “love chapter” of the New Testament. Love is the circulatory system of the spiritual body, which enables all the members to function in a healthy, harmonious way. This must be an honest love, not a hypocritical love (Rom. 12:9); and it must be humble, not proud (Rom. 12:10). “Preferring one another” means treating others as more important than ourselves (Phil. 2:1–4).

Serving Christ usually means satanic opposition and days of discouragement. Paul admonished his readers to maintain their spiritual zeal because they were serving the Lord and not men. When life becomes difficult, the Christian cannot permit his zeal to grow cold. “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12, NIV).

Finally, Paul reminded them that they must enter into the feelings of others. Christian fellowship is much more than a pat on the back and a handshake. It means sharing the burdens and the blessings of others so that we all grow together and glorify the Lord. If Christians cannot get along with one another, how can they ever face their enemies? A humble attitude and a willingness to share are the marks of a Christian who truly ministers to the body. Our Lord ministered to the common people, and they heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37). When a local church decides it wants only a certain “high class” of people, it departs from the Christian ideal for ministry.

Witmer, J. A. (1985). *Romans*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 489). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

12:15–16. Christians should be able to empathize with others, both believers and unbelievers. Paul commanded, **Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn**. Related to this is the next command, **Live in harmony with one another** (lit., “having the same attitude toward one another”; cf. Rom. 15:5; Phil. 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8). Being in harmony with other Christians is basic to being able to empathize with them. This idea is then presented in negative and positive details: **Do not be proud** (lit., “not thinking highly” of yourself; cf. Rom. 11:20; 12:3) and **be willing to associate with people of low position** (cf. James 2:1–9). These orders are summarized in the command, **Do not be conceited** (lit., “Do not become wise concerning themselves”; cf. Prov. 3:7; Rom. 11:25), an attitude that makes empathy impossible.