

LIFE MADE NEW

*A Self-Study on Excerpts from
the Book of Romans*

LESSON 8

"In Response to His Love"

This Bible Study Series Provided By:

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Lesson 8
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HERALD OF TRUTH
His Word for the World, Every Day.

"It's possible to be competent in theology and, at the same time, blind to the central message of Christianity; we've been called into relationship with God so we can relate more deeply with others."

- Larry Crabb

Warm Up

Brennan Manning tells the story of a young boy who was fascinated with the image of a face that was part of a mountain near his hometown. Every day he would walk up the hill and stare for hours at the face. He soon believed that this face reflected someone who would come to his town. For years he looked for this man with the kind and gentle face. He would hang around the docks of the harbor, examining the face of each passenger that got off the boat. Years later, when he was very old, he asked a person at the docks, "Are you the face on the mountain?" The traveler stopped and looked at the man for a long time. Then he said, "No it's you." This young boy stared so long at the face on the mountain that he had taken on its image.

This reminds me of what it means to be a child of God. When God justifies us, He calls us to become conformed to the image of His Son (see Romans 8:28 and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). This is our destiny that Jesus calls us to - to be imitators of Him. As you recall from our study of Romans 8, we all need the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to follow Jesus and be like Him.

In Romans 12, Paul gives us practical ways we can apply this Jesus-style of living within the body of Christ.

Getting Into the Word

Read Romans 12.

Keep in mind Paul's entire argument as he leads up to this chapter. As in many of his epistles, Paul lays a foundation of what

5. Write down some specific ways you can extend acceptance to others, especially those very different from you just as Christ has accepted you (Romans 15:7).

Further Thoughts

Write down any questions you have regarding this lesson.

Prayer Corner

If you have specific prayer concerns, please feel free to list them.

Our staff will pray for you and the matters you mention at our weekly prayer meeting.

Discussion Questions

1. As you read Romans 12:6-8, what do you understand your gift to be in the body of Christ? How are you presently exercising that gift? (Example: you may feel gifted in teaching young children in a Bible class.)

2. Think of the most difficult person in your life at the present time. What are some ways you could, by Christ's power, honor and bless their lives?

3. Describe three ways in which sincere, Christ-like love differs from the world's definition of love (Romans 12:9-13).

Digging Deeper

4. How does the doctrine of justification by faith (that we are made righteous not by status or race or works but through faith in Jesus Christ), affect how we treat others in the body of Christ?

God has done for us in Christ before giving us the practical ways in which to live out God's grace. Romans 12 is the beginning of this application section.

Recall the lessons from earlier chapters. We are helpless and desperately lost without Jesus. The only way we can be made right before a holy God is through receiving the gift of His grace. This gift comes to us through the atoning blood of Jesus. In trusting response to that gift we turn from sin and are baptized. God empowers us with His Holy Spirit, giving us the means to live out a Christ-like life.

Romans 12 begins a section on how to live out the Spirit-filled life within the body of Christ, His Church. James Thompson states clearly how vital this theme is in the book of Romans:

“The most fundamental question about Romans is what kind of church we're going to be. It's not an individual question, but a community of faith question.”

Everyone is Important (Romans 12:4-5)

You will notice how Paul uses the human body as an illustration of how members of Christ's body are to interact with one another. Every part of the body of Christ is vital, just as all the organs and limbs of our bodies are vital.

God's Gifts to His Church (Romans 12:6-8)

God endows special gifts upon individuals to be used to build up the body of Christ and serve others. Neither this list, nor the one in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, is meant to be exhaustive.

A significant aspect of this list in Romans 12 is that four of the seven gifts have to do with helping people in need of assistance and sympathy. Serving the strugglers and less fortunate are certainly a large part of our response to the grace of God. This is the Jesus-style of living. It is a contrast to the world's way of thinking, but it is one significant way we glorify our Lord.

Love in Action (Romans 12:9-21)

The love God calls His children to is unlike the self-centered love common in our world. It is an other-centered love. God loved us this way and demonstrated it so vividly in the cross of Jesus Christ. Those who have Christ living in their hearts are called (and empowered) to love like God loves.

Romans 12:17-21 reflect much of the heart of Christianity. As you read these words you will hear an echo - the Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 5:38-48.

These last five verses emphasize forgiving and blessing our enemies. Why is it so important that we forgive others over and over?

1. We help break the cycle of retaliation.
2. We reflect God's nature.
3. We protect our own hearts from being filled with resentment.
4. We leave revenge in the hands of the Lord - where it belongs.
5. God can use our acts of forgiveness to turn others to Jesus.

Wise Words

“In Christ we are privileged to share our lives in a unique way with other believers who have been baptized into one body.” (1 Corinthians 12:13). But it's a privilege easily taken for granted. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who would spend the last years of his life in the isolation of German prison camps, begged the believer not to take Christian fellowship casually: ‘Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with the Christian brethren.’

- Ken Durham

Reflection Questions

1. The motivation Paul gives for offering our bodies as living sacrifices is God's _____ (Romans 12:1).
2. God's Word says in Romans 12:2 that Christians will be able to discern His Will. What are two qualifications for seeing God's Will fulfilled in our lives?
 1. _____
 2. _____
3. Paul says that we are _____ body, made up of _____ members, and yet we are all members of _____ (Romans 12:4-5).
4. However we serve, whether it involves public speaking or behind-the-scenes helping others, we are to serve the Lord _____ (Romans 12:8).
5. In Paul's short sentences on the Jesus way of living (Romans 12:9-16), he tells us to:
 1. Love and honor _____.
 2. Hate _____.
 3. Bless those who _____ us.
6. List at least 5 ways we can respond to our enemies in a Christ-like fashion (Romans 12:17-20).
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____