



## First Baptist Church Fair Oaks Ranch

**Romans 12:15-21** “Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Be in agreement with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone’s eyes. If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone. Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord. But If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head. Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.”

Continuing with the examination of the instructions in Romans 12 to individual Christians and the Church, there is several additional commands to Believers in how to have oneness and unity in the home and the church.

First is a call for believers to be empathetic with each other, urging them to share in the joys and sorrows of others. This reflects the communal nature of the Body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:26, it states “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” This interconnectedness means that Christians are not isolated individuals but parts of a larger whole. This means being present with and for others, celebrating their successes, and offering comfort in their grief. Being present is something this world so desperately needs considering that so many relationships are now virtual and distant. It challenges believers to step outside their own experiences and myopic perspectives and enter the lives of others, fostering a deep sense of community and mutual support.

Second is the command for unity. Having examined this principle several times, verse 16 expands on the principle by including the responsibility to ‘not be proud, but to associate with the lowly.’ This is not a pride of spirit or accomplishment but a call to humility that rejects social hierarchies, embracing all people regardless of their status, valuing others above oneself, and being willing to engage with those who might be marginalized or overlooked by society. It is a call to live out the radical inclusivity of the Gospel.

Third, verse 17 emphasizes the importance of integrity and non-retaliation in our dealings with others. As the saying goes, “revenge is a meal best served cold”; ‘non-retaliation’ is a meal best served when you are scolding hot from being treated unjustly. Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount reminds us to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39). This radical approach to evil challenges the natural human inclination towards revenge and retribution. Instead, believers are called to respond to wrongdoing with grace and righteousness. Believers should be striving to maintain a good reputation, acting honorably in all situations, and trusting God to handle justice. Taking this command further the text makes this amazing assertion to ‘live in peace with everyone...as much as depends upon you.’ Conflict has been the reality of fallen humanity since Cain rose up and killed Abel; however, believers must be peacemakers whenever possible. This does not mean that Christians are merely ‘pushovers’ as peace may not always be possible, but the responsibility lies with the believer to pursue it earnestly. We live with the promise that God is always aware and will bring justice in His time and way.

Finally, verse 20-21 the text finishes with the solution to harmonious relationship by introducing hospitality. The word for hospitality is ‘love-of-stranger’. Next is what truly separates Christ-followers from others through a radical call to demonstrate love towards enemies, reflecting the heart of the Jesus. Jesus’ command to love one’s enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44) is central to



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the gospel. This kind of love is transformative, breaking the cycle of hatred and revenge. This means actively seeking the well-being of those who oppose or harm us, by responding to hostility with kindness and generosity. Apart from Christ completing a complete transformative work in one's heart, this radical view will remain impossible. The passage encapsulates the overarching theme with the final statement to 'not be conquered by evil, but to conquer evil with good. This means choosing to act in ways that reflect God's goodness, even in the face of evil. It is a call to be proactive in doing good, trusting that God's goodness will ultimately prevail in the face of wrong treatment and wickedness.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, time after time, your word and spirit call us to the impossible, impractical and the often painful. We confess that turning the other cheek and showing hospitality is the last thing we want to do when we are wronged, especially by those who should show us love. The example empathy, unity, integrity and hospitality is what we have in Christ Jesus and what you require of each of us. By your grace may it be so. In Jesus Name.