

# Romans 12:9-21 “Living and Loving Like Jesus”

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**Thesis:** As you appropriate and appreciate the gospel, and discover God’s love, forgiveness, restoration and life in Christ it stirs you to yearn to be transformed to be more like Jesus. In this portion of Scripture, Paul is teaching Jesus’ followers (at Rome) how to live their faith, and describes several traits of Christlike love. Living and loving like Jesus glorifies God, satisfies you, and blesses others. So, let’s discover how.

**Subject:** Traits of Christian love

**Object:** Live and love like Jesus

*<sup>9</sup> Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; <sup>11</sup> not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; <sup>12</sup> rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; <sup>13</sup> distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the*

Lord. <sup>20</sup> Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### 1. Be true to God [9] *Let love be without hypocrisy.*

Jesus repeatedly rebuked hypocrites [Matt. 7:1-5, 23:133-29]. Love with hypocrisy is not love at all. The Greek *agape* translated love refers to committed, devoted, selfless, sacrificial and unconditional love. The Greek term translated hypocrisy referred to masks worn by Greek actors. The Roman *san ceros*, which yields the English sincere, literally means without wax. The term was used in the marketplace for sculpture that was genuine and had not been repaired with a mixture of wax and marble. True love is genuine and sincere.

*Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.* We should be drawn to what God loves. Conversely, we should be repelled by what evil. In the last chapter of this letter Paul concludes, “Be wise in what is good, and innocent concerning evil” [Rom. 16:19].

### 2. Be in authentic community [10] *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.*

The Greek term *philostorges* is often translated brotherly love and refers to kindness. We are to called to put the needs of others ahead of our own, *in honor giving preference to one another* [Ph. 2:1-8]. The term *one another* is repeated, and emphasizes that Christian life is experienced in authentic community.

3. Be passionate for God [11] *not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. God's people are to be *diligent* or work hard in learning the Bible [1Tim. 2:15], teaching our children about God and His ways [Deut. 6:4-9], and in the workplace [Eph. 6:5-8, Col. 3:17-23]. We are to be *fervent in spirit* or passionate. The Greek term was associated with boiling over. We should be more excited the gospel and the things of God than anything else. "It is good to be zealous in a good thing always" [Gal. 4:18]. *Serving the Lord* is displayed by worshiping Him with your life, and serving others.

4. Be enduring in prayer [12] *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer*.

Jesus' followers rejoice in hope, because YHWH is the God of hope, Jesus is your hope, the Holy Spirit empowers hope, and the Bible is given to us to reinforce our hope [Rom. 15:4,12,13]. In the midst of *tribulations* or difficult times, we are to be *patient* or steadfastly endure. God will allow difficulty to develop perseverance, character, hope, and to conform us to Christ-likeness [Rom. 5:3, Ja. 1:3]. Even during the most difficult seasons, you can be comforted knowing that eternity with Christ in Paradise awaits.

We are to *continue steadfastly in prayer*. We are pray and not lose heart during difficult times. Difficult times often stimulate us to pray differently than good times. As people of prayer we declare our dependence and devotion to God. Prayer helps to produce perspective and peace [Matt. 26:36-42].

**5. Be generous and hospitable [13]** *distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.* Authentic love shares resources and cares for the community of faith, and the community generally. *Hospitality* is literally “love for strangers” [1Tim. 3:2]. Jesus’ taught that showing kindness to those in need is just like showing it to Jesus Himself [Matt. 25:35-40].

This type of generosity and hospitality was modeled by the early church [Ac. 4:34-37, 6:1-7, 1Cor. 16:19].

I love how this is being done in our Neighborhood Groups [NG], where God’s people are caring for the needs of one another. And I love how we are showing love in tangible ways to our community by caring for students, their families, and teachers in the community as well as supporting several other needs.

**6. Be kind to enemies [14]** *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* Showing kindness to enemies rather than seeking to harm, or avoid, is a uniquely Christian virtue. Twice, we are urged to bless. In the Sermon on The Mount, Jesus declared that we are to bless, do good, and pray for our enemies [Matt. 5:44].

**7. Be empathetic [15]** *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

Empathy is the ability to understand and feel what another is feeling. When one suffers, feel their pain; and when one rejoices, share their honor [1Cor. 12:26]. Empathy is like dominoes in the sense that you match the other piece and give away as much as possible.

**8. Be humble [16]** *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.* Jesus shows no partiality to people. The lowly Samaritan woman at the well, and Nicodemus the chief rabbi both receive the same treatment from Jesus [Jn. 3-4].

The early Church was the only place in the ancient world where social divisions between men and women, Jew and Gentile, masters and slaves were eliminated [Gal. 3:28].

**9. Be gracious [17-21]** *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.* Rather than seeking to avenge wrongs inflicted upon you, be gracious, and don't repay evil with evil. Jesus, remarkably typifies this trait when He prayed from the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" [Lu. 22:34]. Similarly, Joseph displays great grace towards his brother who had sold him into slavery when they stood before him as the prime minister of the Egyptian Empire [Gen. 42]. *As much as possible, live peaceably with all men* [18]. Jesus taught, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God [Matt. 5:9]. God's people can trust that God will avenge, *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord* [19]. God will bring perfect justice in a perfect way. So, don't seek revenge. Instead, repay evil with good: *Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."* <sup>21</sup> *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* [20-21]. *Heaping coals of fire on someone's head* doesn't sound like a blessing to our ears, but the historical context helps us to understand the idea.

When someone's fire went out it could be difficult to kindle a new fire to cook and supply heat. So, if you went to your

neighbor with a clay jar and your neighbor put hot coals in your jar they were blessing you, and then you would carry the jar balanced on the head to transport the coals.

### Study Guides Qs

*Q1. What are some of the traits where you have made progress in the last year?*

*Q2. What are some of the benefits that you've experienced?*

*Q3. Describe a trait that is challenging, and why it might be challenging to you and others.*

*Q4. How would you like to apply this lesson in this season of your life?*

### Digging Deeper

1. Here is a thought-provoking sermon from John Piper from Romans 12:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/let-love-be-genuine>

2. Take the time to truly ponder the list and consider how you are making progress in developing and demonstrating the traits of Christian love and service described in Romans 12:9-21

