

HOW TO GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE

TEXT: ROMANS 12:9-21

INTRODUCTION:

1. Last week we considered the gifts of God – “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...” (12:6).
2. Tonight we will consider the grace of God – “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...” (12:6; cf. vs. 3).
3. Christians should be gracious.
4. Christians should be loving (12:9a).
5. And when Christians are gracious and loving they will be able to get along with others. Not just fellow Christians, but with “all men” (12:17, 18).
6. This is a very practical passage of Scripture. I have entitled it, “How to Get Along with People.” It reads like a chapter from the book of Proverbs.

I. LET LOVE BE WITHOUT DISSIMULATION (12:9a)

1. Love must come first.
2. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22, 23).
3. Love must come first. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (12:10).
4. Our Lord said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30, 31).
5. Our Lord said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35).

6. First John 4:8 says, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”
7. “Dissimulation” means “hypocrisy.” Love must be sincere, not hypocritical. First Peter 1:22 refers to “unfeigned (sincere, without dissimulation) love of the brethren,” and loving one another “with a pure heart fervently.”

II. ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL; CLEAVE TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD (12:9b).

1. Psalm 97:10 says, “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil.”
2. Isaiah 1:16, 17 says, “Cease to do evil; Learn to do well.”
3. Last month, a “pastor” in Texas by the name of Jordan Brown, who admits to being a homosexual, sued the supermarket Whole Foods for allegedly writing “FAG” on a cake he bought there.
4. Brown claimed he did not notice the offensive slur until after he left the store. Brown is the pastor of a homosexual “church” called Church of Open Doors. It ought to be called, “The Church of Wrong Doors.”
5. He claims he asked the bakery to write “Love Wins” (a popular homosexual slogan) on his cake, but when he got home he saw “FAG” was written underneath “Love Wins.”
6. Brown made the accusation in an Internet video and launched a lawsuit shortly thereafter.
7. But alert viewers quickly pointed out that the icing style used to write “Love Wins” and the gay slur appeared to be different, and Whole Foods released surveillance video showing the cake being purchased with the UPC code in a different location than Brown's video, suggesting the cake had been opened and tampered with.
8. It was only when people started investigating his claim that it was learned Brown had actually written the word “FAG” himself, using a slightly different colored frosting.

9. Brown then closed the box with a Whole Foods pricing sticker he mistakenly affixed in a spot on the box that was different from its original location.
10. Whole Foods defended its baker and launched a counter lawsuit, alleging Brown's accusations were nothing but a hoax aimed at extracting money from the company.
11. A later investigation also revealed Brown was facing financial troubles, in the form of a lawsuit to recoup \$28,000 in student loans.
12. Brown then withdrew his lawsuit and apologized to the supermarket chain for perpetrating the hoax.
13. "The company did nothing wrong," Brown wrote in a Monday statement. "I was wrong to pursue this matter and use the media to perpetuate this story...I want to apologize to the LGBT community for diverting attention from real issues. I also want to apologize to my partner, my family, my church family and my attorney."
14. There are so many things wrong about this man and this hoax. First of all, the whole idea of a homosexual pastor and homosexual church is unscriptural. God says homosexuality is an "abomination"(Leviticus 18:22).
15. Romans 1 says homosexuality is unclean, lustful, dishonorable, vile, unnatural, and unseemly.
16. Romans 1:27 says those who engage in this perverted behavior receive "in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet (which is necessary)." (AIDS, for example.)
17. The Bible is very clear – "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9b).

III. BE KINDLY AFFECTIONED ONE TO ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY LOVE (12:10)

1. Hebrews 13:1 says, "Let brotherly love continue."

2. First John 3:14 says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”
3. “In honor preferring one another” (12:10b). This is true humility (cf. 12:3).
4. Over the years I have read and I have heard many wonderful statements attributed to General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. One of my favorites was when he was too sick to attend a conference so he sent a telegram with one word: “Others.”

IV. NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS (12:11a)

1. We can apply this verse in many ways, but the context refers to the Lord’s business – winning souls and preaching the Gospel, etc.
2. “Slothful” means “sluggish.”
3. John Phillips said:
“Not slothful in business” –that’s the *outward look*.

“Fervent in spirit” – that’s the *inward look*.

“Serving the Lord” – that’s the *upward look*.

V. FERVENT IN SPIRIT (12:11b)

1. Not lukewarm or wishy-washy, but “fervent in spirit.” Our Lord rebuked the church in Laodicea because they were lukewarm. He said, “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:16).
2. James 5:16 says, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
3. “Serving the Lord” (12:11c).

VI. REJOICING IN HOPE (12:12)

1. Paul expounded upon this back in chapter 5 (cf. 5:1-5).

2. No matter what our present circumstances may be, we can and should rejoice in hope – the return of our Lord (our “blessed hope” –Titus 2:13), eternity in heaven, etc.

3. “Continuing instant in prayer” (12:12b). “Pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17).

4. Prayer isn’t everything, but everything must be done with prayer.

5. John Phillips said: Praise! Patience! Prayer!

“Rejoicing in hope”

“Patient in tribulation”

“Continuing instant in prayer”

6. Our Lord said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

7. Acts 14:22 says that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

8. Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, “For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know” (I Thessalonians 3:4).

9. We must be “patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

VII. GENEROSITY AND HOSPITALITY (12:13)

1. This is vitally important. Hebrews 13:2 says, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

2. Our homes should be like the home of Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary, in Bethany, where our Lord was always welcome.

3. Pastors in particular must be hospitable – “given to hospitality” (I Timothy 3:2); and “a lover of hospitality” (Titus 1:8).

4. We shouldn't just be generous and hospitable when asked, we should be looking for ways to help others and be a blessing.
5. A Scripture that has always blessed me is II Samuel 9:1, where King David asked, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"
6. Then when Ziba came to King David, David said, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him?"
7. Referring to Mephibosheth, Ziba said to King David, "Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet" (II Samuel 9:3).
8. Let us pray like King David, "Is there not yet someone, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him?"

Out in the highways and byways of life,

*Many are weary and sad;
Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife,
Making the sorrowing glad.*

Make me a blessing, Make me a blessing --

Out of my life May Jesus shine;

Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray,

Make me a blessing to someone today. — Ira Wilson

VIII. BLESS THEM WHICH PERSECUTE YOU (12:14).

1. In the flesh, we are tempted to retaliate. But that is not the godly way.
2. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:44, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."
3. Paul said in I Corinthians 4:12 and 13, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."
4. First Peter 2:23 says that when our "was reviled, (He) reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

5. In his commentary on the book of Romans, John Phillips refers to the cruel persecutions suffered by Adoniram Judson and his wife in Burma.
6. For nearly two years, Adoniram Judson was tortured in a filthy, barbaric prison, but he never got bitter. He “blessed and cursed not” (12:14).

IX. REJOICE WITH THEM THAT DO REJOICE

1. Some Christians can weep with them that weep, but cannot rejoice with them that rejoice because they are envious. Envy is a sin of the flesh.
2. Proverbs 27:4 says, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?”
3. Mark 15:10 says that Pontius Pilate “knew that for envy” the chief priests had delivered Christ to him.
4. Acts 7:9 says Joseph’s brothers “were moved with envy” when they sold Joseph into Egypt.

X. WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP (12:15b)

Our Lord is our great example. He went to the wedding feast in Cana and He rejoiced with them that rejoiced, and later He stood beside the grave of Lazarus and wept with those that wept.

XI. BE OF THE SAME MIND ONE TOWARD ANOTHER (12:16)

1. I said last week that unity is not uniformity. We have different personalities. Many of us come from different countries with different languages and different cultures.
2. We will not always see things the same exact way, but on matters of importance we must be like-minded. On minor matters we must be gracious (cf. I Corinthians 1:10, 11).
3. When we consider these words – “Be of the same mind one toward another” – we are reminded of our Lord’s example. He was just as gracious and courteous to the woman at the well, who had five husbands, and living with a man who was not her lawful husband,

as He was with the great religious leader Nicodemus, “a master of Israel” (John 3:10; cf. John 4:7-27).

4. “Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits” (12:16b).
5. Proverbs 3:7 says, “Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”
6. Proverbs 26:12 says, “Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.”
7. In other words, be humble – not haughty (cf. 12:3).
8. We are to seek the company of lowly and humble people— “condescend to men of low estate” (12:16). John Phillips said, “In a world where everyone is scrambling for position, prominence and recognition, it is rare, even in the ranks of the redeemed, to find those who are deliberately courting the lowly and the meek” (*Exploring Romans*).

XII. RECOMPENSE NO MAN EVIL FOR EVIL (12:17a).

1. Years ago I made a remark about a bumper sticker I saw, “I Don’t Get Mad – I Get Even!”
2. A first time (and only time) visitor spoke up and told me he had that sticker on his car.

XIII. PROVIDE THINGS HONEST IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN (12:17b).

1. Second Corinthians 8:21 says, “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”
2. Proverbs 3:4 says, “So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.”
3. “All men” (Romans 12:17, 18).
4. One of the qualifications for a pastor is that “he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (I Timothy 3:7).

XIV. LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN (12:18)

1. “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you” (12:18a) indicates some people are very difficult to get along with.

2. When Nabal's workers told Abigail, Nabal's wife, about the trouble Nabal stirred up with David and his men, they said, "For he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him" (I Samuel 25:17). Sadly, there are many people like him in this world.

XV. AVENGE NOT YOURSELVES (12:19, 20).

1. The expression, "give place unto wrath" (12:19), means to leave things in God's hands.
2. "For it is written" – The first part of the quotation is from Deuteronomy 32:35 – "To me belongeth vengeance and recompence." This Scripture is quoted again in Hebrews 10:30.
3. Romans 12:20 is taken from Proverbs 25:21, 22. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head."
4. This is an unusual Scripture, and I have heard various interpretations. William MacDonald said, "To heap live coals on a person's head means to make him ashamed of his hostility by surprising him with unconventional kindness."

XVI. BE NOT OVERCOME OF EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD (12:21).

1. This is not always easy. J. Vernon McGee told a story about an Irishman that was hit on the cheek. So he turned the other cheek. Then his assailant hit him again, this time so hard he was knocked down.
2. The Irishman picked himself up and proceeded to beat the man to a pulp. A bystander asked him, "Why did you beat him up? You turned the other cheek, why didn't you just leave it at that?"
3. "Well," the Irishman said, "the Bible says to turn the other cheek, and so I did that. But the Bible doesn't say what to do next so I just did what I thought I ought to do."
4. Actually, the Bible does tell us what to do next (Romans 12:17-21).
5. By the way, these Scriptures are for individuals, not for governments. Governments have the responsibility to protect their

citizens. Soldiers and policemen, who represent the government, are not required to turn the other cheek.
6. Furthermore, people have a right to defend themselves.

CONCLUSION:

W.H. Griffith Thomas says the key word is “love.”

- *The Sincerity of Love* — “Let love be without dissimulation” (12:9)
- *The Sensitiveness of Love* – “Abhor that which is evil” (12:9)
- *The Purity of Love* – “cleave to that which is good” (12:9)
- *The Reality of Love* – “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (12:10)
- *The Humility of Love* – “in honour preferring one another” (12:10)
- *The Faithfulness of Love* – “Not slothful in business” (12:11)
- *The Earnestness of Love* – “fervent in spirit” (12:11)
- *The Genuineness of Love* – “serving the Lord” (12:11)
- *The Buoyancy of Love* – “Rejoicing in hope” (12:12)
- *The Endurance of Love* — “patient in tribulation” (12:12)
- *The Devotion of Love* – “continuing instant in prayer” (12:12)
- *The Unselfishness of Love* – “Distributing to the necessity of saints” (12:13)
- *The Large-heartedness of Love* – “given to hospitality” (12:13)
- *Love blesses our persecutors* – “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not” (12:14).
- *Love interests itself in others* – “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (12:15).

- *Love finds points of agreement* – “Be of the same mind one toward another” (12:16).
- *Love spurns unworthy ambitions* – “Mind not high things” (12:16).
- *Love consorts with the lowly* – “condescend to men of low estate” (12:16).
- *Love avoids self-esteem* – “Be not wise in your own conceits” (12:16)
- *Love refuses to take revenge* – “Recompense to no man evil for evil” (12:17).
- *Love endeavors to attract* – “Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (12:17).
- *Love keeps the peace* – “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (12:18).
- *Love entrusts its cause to God* – “avenge not yourselves...” (12:19).
- *Love returns good for evil* – “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him...” (12:20).
- *Love wins the true victory* – “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (12:21).