

LifeGroup

resource guide

for the week of February 5

*But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain." (Exodus 3.11-12).*

Hudson Taylor wrote: “All God’s giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on his being with them. They counted on God’s faithfulness.” The whole history of God working through his people illustrates this. Moses was a most reluctant missionary. David seemed pathetically young and inexperienced to be God’s champion against Goliath. Nehemiah and friends were dubbed “those feeble Jews” by their enemies. Jeremiah was frightened and overawed by God’s call. The disciples were a motley band of ordinary folk— nervous and fearful. Even Jesus was “despised and rejected by men.” All these, with the exception of Jesus, were men with rather obvious weaknesses, who sometimes fell into serious sin of one sort or another.

Yet God used Moses to rescue two million people from Egypt, David to slay a giant, Nehemiah to rebuild a city, Jeremiah to prophesy to a nation, the disciples to bring about the greatest revolution the world has ever known, and Jesus to procure the world’s salvation.

J. B. Phillips wrote a book a number of years ago whose title is still apt for many of us— Your God Is Too Small! Because our vision of God’s greatness and faithfulness is so infinitesimally small, we see only a little of his power and glory. Remember! We are *the next big thing!*

Loved ones, take a moment now and join me in praying, “Lord, I am available for you today. I understand that I am never too weak, never too ill-equipped, or never too impoverished in resources or talents. Please use me in the way you want and please give me a gift of faith to believe that you want to use me to be a difference in the lives of people around me.”

… and remember: all giants start off small…

Enjoy your LifeGroup!



Getting to know one another better…

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of “being loved”?

Romans 12.9-21

*9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

*Rom. 12.14   Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20 To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Commentary

Romans 12.9-21 is a list of lightning sketches of community building, life-giving, world-resisting behaviors Paul exhorts believers to embrace. It may be best to read these verses not as commands about the internal life of the church, but as suggesting how Christians should live alongside their pagan neighbors. They should not keep themselves aloof; if someone in the next street dies, they should be prepared to sympathize and join the funeral procession, and if someone is celebrating, they should throw their hats in the air as well. It will not do, just because the society around is potentially or actually hostile, to adopt a snooty attitude; much better to know how to establish common ground and to find ways of making friends. “Live in harmony with one another” (v. 16) is literally “thinking the same things toward one another,” which sounds like the kind of bracing command Paul can sometimes issue to Christian groups (for example see Philippians 2:2); but here it seems to refer, more generally, to the call to Christians to get alongside their neighbors and fellow citizens (“associating with the lowly,” or possibly “taking on menial tasks”) instead of hiving off to a Christian ghetto or echo chamber.

In closing let us look at 12.21 which both concludes and summarizes 12.14-21 which contain allusions to the Sermon on the Mount, and to the gospel events themselves – Jesus’ death and resurrection. Yes, there is evil “out there” in the world. But God’s people are to meet it in the way that God met it in Jesus: with love and generous goodness. When God came to defeat evil, this was not achieved by using an even greater evil, but by using its opposite– the surprising and counterintuitive weapons of goodness, love, and grace. To be consumed with vengeful thoughts, or to be led into putting such thoughts into practice, is to keep evil in circulation, whereas the way to overthrow evil, rather than perpetuating it, is to take its force and give back God’s goodness and grace instead. It is doubtful anyone with a Torah-birthed zeal for Jewish heretics, like Paul was engaged in, would have arrived at this perspective if it had not been for a life-changing encounter with Jesus and the subsequent embrace of His example, teaching, and revelation.

In these 12 verses alone we see how counter-culture our faith and the lifestyle that flows from it truly are.

Reflecting on Romans 12.9-21

Why do you think Paul wrote these verses (12.9-21)? What response do you think he is looking for from the Roman community?

How would the kind of love Paul describes in Romans 12:9-16 transform your relationships with others?

How would Paul's advice in Romans 12:17-21 help us to overcome our enemies? Do you think Paul expects our enemies to change? Why or why not?

Below is Pastor Mark’s “2017 checklist to challenge the world and change lives” based on Romans 12.9-21. Please review. Do you think this list Is doable? Why or why not?

Which items on this list come easier for you? Why?

Which ones are more challenging? Why?

On Sunday, 29 January, Pastor Mark said: “At issue is NOT ‘can I will to do this perfectly;’ but ‘do I will to say, “Yes”.’ What does it mean for you to say, “Yes” to Jesus when it comes to living the life Paul encourages in Romans 12.9-21 — especially the people and/or situations you struggle with?

Pastor Mark also said: “It is not a matter of trying harder; it is the challenge of surrendering all.” What is the relationship between effort and surrender as we endeavor to love sincerely as Paul describes in 12.9-21?

We learn best from others. Come to your LifeGroup ready to share personal experiences— successes or challenges of trying to express the behaviors Paul exhorts us toward in Romans 12.9-21.

My prayer requests (write in advance what you want your group to pray for…)

Praying for my group…