

Rejoice in Hope

(ROMANS 12:12)

This study looks at the same Bible passage as the sermon outline (pages 20-21). It can be used before or after hearing the sermon. If it is used without the sermon, it may be useful for the group leader to read through the sermon outline beforehand. You may also like to read the SCAAW 2020 eight-day devotional booklet, which is enclosed with this magazine and can be ordered from barnabasfund.org/scaaw or contact your nearest Barnabas Fund office (details inside front cover).

The section headed "Digging Deeper" is for those who would like to explore the theme in more depth.

READ ROMANS 12:9-21

1. In this passage, Paul expresses himself in a rapid stream of short, sharp staccato phrases, and sprinkles his message with unusual and striking words. What do you think is the reason that Paul writes like this, so differently from his normal style of long complicated sentences?
2. Paul commands us to love (v.9-10) and uses three different Greek words for love. In verse 9, he writes *agape*. This is the love which he describes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. The same word is used for love in Matthew 5:44 and John 3:16. How does the love described in 1 Corinthians 13 apply in the other two verses?
3. In verse 10 Paul uses two more words for love: *philadelphia* (brotherly/sisterly love) and *philostorgos* (devotion or tender affection as naturally occurs between close relatives). This is the only place in the New Testament where the word *philostorgos* appears. Why do you think Paul uses it here?
4. Part of loving is to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (v.15)? Which of these do you find easier to do?
5. Paul tells us to hate evil (v.9). How do you feel about being commanded to hate?
6. What can we do to be keep our spiritual fervour (v.11)? The word that Paul uses is sometimes translated "aglow" but it literally means "boiling". What do you think it means to be "spiritually boiling" and how is that different from being merely aglow?
7. Paul also commands us to rejoice (be joyful) in hope (v.12). How can we obey a command to be joyful, especially if we are suffering? (Hint: the following three verses give three different reasons for rejoicing in the midst of suffering – Romans 5:4; Acts 5:41; Philippians 4:4 – and maybe you can think of more.)
8. Why do you think Paul's mind moves from rejoicing in hope to being patient in affliction and then to being faithful in prayer?
9. In verse 13 Paul uses a familiar word, *koinonia* (fellowship), in an unexpected way. He uses it to mean meeting the practical needs of other Christians. What are the implications of Paul using this word?
10. Paul was writing to Christians for whom enduring persecution was an everyday part of Christian living (v.14). What experience do you have of suffering for Christ? Does the world hate you (John 15:18-19)? Are you at home in the world or are you a stranger here (1 Peter 1:1)? Where is your true home?
11. Is it possible to live in harmony with all our fellow-Christians, as Paul commands (v.16)? Does this happen at your local church? If not, how could greater harmony be achieved?
12. Is it possible to live at peace with everyone (v.18)? Did Jesus live at peace with everyone? In what kind of situations might His followers be unable to live at peace with some people?
13. What does Paul tell us in this passage about the way we should relate to people who harm us or seek to harm us – our enemies? How does this compare with the way we actually do relate to our enemies?
14. What does it mean to be overcome by evil? What does it mean to overcome evil with good (v.21)? Have you experienced either of these situations?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Evil (*poneros*) means more than a morally inferior character; it means an active, malignant evil, causing effects of destruction, sorrow and pain. It is the same root as the Greek word for the evil one, Satan. Do you hate evil itself, or just the consequences of evil? Paul is describing an intense and passionate hatred, a shrinking in horror, a shuddering with revulsion. (v.9b) How strongly do you hate evil?
2. *Poneros* is the opposite of *chrestos*, the gracious kindness that is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Is your life characterised by *chrestos*?
3. As we turn away from evil, we turn to what is good – morally, spiritually and savingly (v.9b). Many English translations of the Bible say that we should “cling” or “hold fast” to what is good. What Paul actually wrote is that we should be joined firmly and permanently to what is good. If he had known of superglue, he would probably have used the word here. It is not something we do ourselves, but something that is done for us. Who does this for us? What difference does it make to you to know that this is something that is done for us, rather than something we do for ourselves?
4. What does it mean to honour someone (v.10)? How is honour shown in the society in which you live? Is honouring someone part of loving them or something separate? Is it related to the commands in v.16?
5. Paul says we should be eager to show honour to our fellow Christians, almost competing to outdo each other in showing respect and esteem. Are there any exceptions to this?