

# One Another

## Lesson 3: Live in Harmony with One Another -- Romans 12:14-21

Imagine an orchestra tuning before a concert. For a few moments it is chaos, dozens of instruments sawing and tooting in every direction, no two notes agreeing. Then the oboe sounds a single clear pitch, and one by one the instruments bend toward it until the whole room rings with a single, settled tone. That is harmony. It is not everyone playing the same note; the violin and the cello and the trumpet keep their own voices. It is many different voices tuned to one center, so that together they make something more beautiful than any of them could make alone.

When Paul tells the Romans to “live in harmony with one another,” he is not asking for uniformity. He is not asking everyone to think alike about every matter, or to have the same temperament, or to lose their distinctness. He is asking a roomful of very different people, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, rich and poor, to tune themselves to one center, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to keep their hearts in agreement with one another. And then, in a startling phrase, he tells them how: “Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” The road to harmony runs through humility.

But Paul is a realist. He knows that the people around us are not always playing in tune. Some will mistreat us. Some will persecute us. Some will rejoice while we are weeping, or carry on with their lives while we are bleeding. And every wronged heart feels the same pull, the deep, instinctive desire to even the score, to give back what we got. So Paul takes the most natural reaction in the human heart, the desire for revenge, and he confronts it head on: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath.” Those words cut against everything in us.

And then he hands us a weapon, though it does not look like one. He tells us to bless those who persecute us, to feed our enemy when he is hungry, to give him a drink when he is thirsty. “Do not be overcome by evil,” he writes, “but overcome evil with good.” Here is a way of living so out of step with the world that it can only have come from heaven. It is the way of the cross, the way of the One who prayed for the men who were nailing him down. As we study these verses, we are learning to live at peace in a world that often will not, and to overcome the evil around us not by becoming like it, but by drowning it in good.

**Group Discussion:** When you watch how our culture responds to being wronged, insulted, or attacked, what does it celebrate as the right and satisfying response, and how is that different from what Paul tells Christians to do in these verses?

**Personal Reflection:** Whose face comes to mind when you read “do not repay evil for evil”? As you begin this lesson, what would it mean to stop rehearsing that wound and to honestly bring your desire for revenge before the God who judges justly?

*Read Romans 12:14–21*

## **Study Questions**

1. Paul writes, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (Romans 12:14). Why would the gospel call Christians not merely to endure their persecutors but actively to bless them, and where do we see the Lord Jesus himself living this out?
2. Be honest about your own reactions. When someone wrongs or belittles you, what actually rises in your heart and onto your tongue, a blessing or a curse? Name one recent moment where you cursed, in word, in thought, or in silent wish, rather than blessed.
3. Paul says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15). What does it reveal about the nature of the church as one body that we are commanded to share both one another’s joys and one another’s sorrows?
4. Search your heart honestly. Which is harder for you, weeping with those who weep, or rejoicing with those who rejoice when their blessing exposes your own envy? Name one person whose joy or sorrow you have kept at arm’s length.
5. Paul commands, “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position” (Romans 12:16). Why does Paul make humility the path to harmony, and what does this teach us about the real cause of division in the church?

6. Consider your own circle in the church family. Are there people of “low position,” whether socially, economically, or in the eyes of others, that you quietly avoid or overlook? Name one person you have kept at a distance because associating with them felt beneath you.
  
7. Paul writes, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil” and “do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath” (Romans 12:17, 19). How does trusting God as the just Judge who will repay free a Christian from the burden of avenging himself?
  
8. Think of a specific wound you are still carrying. Where are you secretly serving as judge, jury, and executioner in your own heart, rehearsing the offense and plotting how the other person should pay? What would it mean to hand that case over to God?
  
9. Paul concludes, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21), and even commands feeding our hungry enemy. How is overcoming evil with good rooted in the cross of Christ, and why is returning good for evil a victory rather than a defeat?
  
10. Look back across Romans 12:14–21 as a whole: blessing persecutors, weeping and rejoicing together, pursuing harmony through humility, refusing revenge, and overcoming evil with good. Name one specific way you sense Jesus calling you to grow through this passage, and what concrete step you will take this week.

**Now or Later**

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 5:43–48, where Jesus commands us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, that we may be children of our Father in heaven; 1 Peter 2:21–23, where Christ left us an example, not retaliating when he suffered but entrusting himself to him who judges justly; Luke 23:34, where from the cross Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”; Proverbs 25:21–22, the very passage Paul quotes about feeding your enemy and heaping burning coals on his head.