

How to be a
Covenant
Community
of Believers

A Study of Romans 12:9-21

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The believer is not called to live an isolated life. Rather, the believer is called to be a member of a Christ-community. One of the clearest and most profound passages in the Bible on how God expects His children to live together in a Christ-community is found in Romans 12:9-21. Within this passage there are some 27 imperatives (instructions that *must* be carried out). By examining and considering these imperatives we can learn to live more fully as the Church God intended.

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Let love be genuine...

Romans 12:9a

Having just explained the Gospel throughout the Epistle to The Romans, the Apostle Paul now begins to detail what the implications are committing your life to Christ. Here's what it means to live as a Christian - and being a part of a local church is integral to it.

The English Standard Version renders this phrase *Let love be genuine*. "Let" might sound like the New Testament is saying "don't prevent" (*Let him through.*) But the New Testament conveys "Let" as an *imperative* (something we must or *should* do) The kind of love we *should* show is not "pretend", "hypocritical" or "insincere". We might call this *fake* love. As followers of Christ we are called to show a different kind of love.

1. What are the attributes of "genuine" love mentioned in First Corinthians 13:4-7? Which one of these attributes of genuine love do you find the most challenging?

2. Does "genuine" love necessarily involve a *feeling* of love? Discuss.

Genuine love for others at least involves a positive attitude toward others. This will at times involve disciplining our minds to prevent negative thoughts towards others from running their course.

3. Can you "do" genuine love without *feeling* loving?

4. How did Jesus change the concept of *love* in Matthew 5:44-46?

5. How did Jesus say the entire Law could be summed up in Matt. 22:37-39?

(Note Romans 13:10)

The New Testament describes the love that believers are to have each other (1Peter 4:8 with the Greek adjective, *ektenay* (ἐκτενῆ), which means *constant, earnest, intentional*.

6. In what way does genuine love “cover a multitude of sins”? (First Peter 4:8)

(Love) ...does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

First Corinthians 13:5 NLT

In any local church, striving to be an authentic New Covenant community, there *will* be misunderstandings, disappointments, hurts, and even offences. Genuine love toward others requires having to forgive those who aggravate us.

7. Why do you think most Christians struggle to show genuine love?

8. In what way is Romans 5:5 good news for those believers who feel they cannot meet this Biblical standard of genuine love?

Amen