

Romans 12:9-21 (NKJV)

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

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Rom. 12:13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

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18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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- Title: Rules for Revolutionizing Home and Church
- Reminder: We are not using the word RULES in a legalistic sense
- *Legalism* is the ritualistic observance of *man-made rules* (e.g., fundamentalism's "standards") or laws that have been nullified by God (e.g., the Mosaic rituals); the rules are based on preferences and the focus is **OUTWARD**

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- *Obedience* is faith-filled, Spirit-enabled observance of God-given *spiritual rules*, as mandated by the Scriptures, not matters of preference mandated by man; the focus is **INWARD**
- The rules in Rom. 12-13 are about obedience – rules of a spiritual nature that God gives, by which He expects His children to live

Rule #1: Get off your high horse and become a team player (12:3-8)

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Rom 12:9a Let love be without hypocrisy.

Rule #2: Make sure your love is genuine

- *love = agape* = "the quality of warm regard for and interest in another, esteem, affection, regard, love" (BDAG)
- A detailed description of *agape* love is given in 1 Cor. 13
- This rule implies that love can be put-on, that it can be hypocritical
- But put-on love is false at worst or impure at best

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- **Moody called it “Talking cream and living skim milk.”**
- **Paul later says in 13:10 that “love is the fulfillment of the law.”**
- **Isn’t that exactly what Jesus said?**

Matt 22:37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

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- **Those who are truly loving are fulfilling the spirit of the entire OT, including the Mosaic law!**

1 Cor 13:13 Now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- **Showing genuine love toward God and man is, by far, the greatest thing you can do in life; it is the ultimate virtue in the Christian life**
- **However, love can be faked – you can act as if you love someone when you really don’t**

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Wm. Barclay: There must be no hypocrisy, no play-acting, no ulterior motive. There is such a thing as cupboard love [a British idiom for greedy love], which gives affection with one eye on the gain which may result. There is such a thing as a selfish love, whose aim is to get far more than it is to give. Christian love is cleansed of self; it is a pure outgoing of the heart to others.

- **As Barclay suggests, Christians sometimes have impure motives for demonstrating love toward others**

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- **Perhaps insincere love is shown for “political” reasons – that is, what the believer can get out of it**
- **Maybe Christians who know they should love others, nevertheless, attempt to do so out of their own strength and flesh, but it is not energized by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, is hypocritical love**
- **That kind of hypocrisy can actually deaden others spiritually, rather than enliven**

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1 Pet 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.

- **Notice the only way that Christians can show genuine, sincere love to others: THROUGH THE SPIRIT – Paul emphasizes this same truth**

Rom 5:5b The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- **You can only love others genuinely when you are filled with the Spirit (Gal. 5:22)**

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Rom 12:9b Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Rule #3: Detest evil and hold on to what is good

- ***abhor* = the idea of *hatred* – “Hate evil and embrace good”**
- **Evil runs rampant in our culture, so we must be especially vigilant to despise it**

Barclay: Our one security against sin lies in our being shocked by it. Thomas Carlyle ... said that what we need is to see the infinite beauty of holiness and the infinite damnability of sin.

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- Don't merely hate the consequences of sin; hate sin itself
- If you are unsure what is sinful and evil, then ask yourself this question: *What would God think of it?*
- Many Christians violate this rule by not moving themselves away from evil friends or evil entertainment or evil literature
- Instead of detesting it and purging it from their lives, they become comfortable with sin around them, eventually tolerating it in some cases and welcoming it in other cases

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- God commands that we detest it, for He is holy and He wants us to be holy (1 Pet. 1:16)
- Then embrace that which is good
- This requires daily choices to think on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, of good reputation – things that are virtuous and praiseworthy – think on these things! (Phil. 4:8)

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- Rom 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;
- Rule #4: Show strong affection to brethren in Christ
- *kindly affectionate* – comes from a Greek root word that conveys the idea of love within a family
 - The problem in our age is the overwhelming presence of dysfunctional families, even with churches

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- As a result, people don't understand this terminology, because they haven't experienced it in their homes
- But imagine a loving, harmonious family of blood relatives – that is what your relationship with your brothers and sisters should be like in the church
- Literally, your church family should be as close to you as your blood relatives
- *brotherly love* = Gr. *philadelphia* = "the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren" (BDAG)

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- In other words, don't be superficial with your brothers and sisters in Christ, but truly value them, putting their preferences above your own
 - *in honor giving preference to one another* – the idea of leading the way in showing honor
- Hodges: The believer is encouraged to be a "presenter" of honor, rather than a recipient.
- Is that how you treat other Christians?

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- If you presently are upset with another church member or if you have animosity in your heart toward someone in your church family, then you are unable to fulfill this command
- You must reconcile with your brother or sister and move forward in victory, showing strong affection to your Christian brethren, your church family

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Rom 12:11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

Rule #5: Don't be lazy about your service for the Lord

- Prioritize your service for the Lord, and particularly within the local church, for that has been the context all along
- Don't drag your feet; don't hesitate; don't dilly-dally; don't be a spiritual couch potato
- Get busy serving the Lord with diligence, having a fervency of spirit

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- Be ZEALOUS for God and for His people and for His work

- Have a fire in your soul that drives you to want to be a help and blessing in the church
- People like this are contagious; others want to be around them
- You don't have to be young to be zealous, because zeal is rooted in the soul
- The point is that if your soul is on fire for God, you can accomplish much for the Lord

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Rom 12:12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

Rule #6: Rejoice while enduring the trials of life

- God wants you to persevere in obedience and faithfulness, come what may – that is, despite the hardships and frustrations and any persecution you might face
- Choose to rejoice in the Lord as the habit of your life

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1 Pet 4:13 Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Jas 1:2-3 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Jas 1:4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

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- All of God's children experience trials, but the key is the response
- Those who choose to rejoice while persevering amidst trials will be so much happier and will have an infectious spirit that others want – think of Paul and Silas in prison and the Philippian jailor ultimately being saved
- "Grumps" and "cranks" are those who have made a habit of complaining and griping throughout life instead of rejoicing

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- HOW we can rejoice in persevering: through prayer (end of v. 12)
- Those who remain *steadfast* (i.e., *persevere*) in prayer, will persevere in their trials
- Notice: Rejoicing is to be IN HOPE – i.e., with confident expectation that a brighter future is ahead for those who persevere – knowing that God will give reward and glory for those who maintain a joyful spirit amidst trials

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Rom 12:13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
Rule #7: Choose to be giving and hospitable to others

- All Christians should be concerned about the needs of other Christians, and doing their best to help to meet those needs
- We don't want to see other members of our body suffer
- Going one step further, God wants you to be hospitable (entertain guests, even strangers)

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- When was the last time you had someone else from church over to your house for dinner, or coffee and dessert, or out to a restaurant to share a meal together?
- Our lives need to be restructured so we can all enjoy being with other Christians from time to time
- Don't focus on your home; that is not what is important; don't overemphasize the food; it doesn't have to be perfect or gourmet, just simple food shared in love
- Invite someone you don't know very well

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- Imagine how close we could get with one another if we regularly fellowshiped with others in our church on other days in addition to Sunday

1 Pet 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

Barclay: A home can never be happy when it is selfish. Christianity is the religion of the open hand, the open heart and the open door.

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Rom 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
Rule #8: Bless those who persecute you

- When people persecute by wrongly accusing or saying evil things about you, the tendency is to want to blast them
- Rather, God wants us to wish them well and pray for them, don't wish them evil or (worse yet) do something evil to them
- Remember the spirit of Jesus on the cross, when He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"

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Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
Rule #9: Empathize with your brothers/sisters in Christ

- To *sympathize* is to feel or express pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune
- To *empathize* is to actually put yourself in their shoes – understanding and actually sharing their feelings
- In so doing, you actually *feel* their pain, and your heart mourns with them

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- This can only happen if you are in close connection with your brothers and sisters in Christ
- On the flipside, rejoice with them when they are rejoicing – which some say is more difficult

Eccl 3:1 To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:
Eccl 3:4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

- Paul admonishes that we experience these joys and sorrows of life *together*, not alone

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Rom 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another [Hodges: “Have the same aspirations for each other”]. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Rule #10: Be humble and relate to others

Hodges: To have the same aspirations for each other instructs us to desire that others should experience what we ourselves would like to experience. This contrasts sharply with what often actually happens in a church, where one’s own ambition is to “get ahead” of others.

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- That means you cannot set your mind on high and lofty things
- You must choose to be humble and on the same page as your other brothers and sisters in Christ
- Not wise in your own opinion, that is, wise in your own eyes – there is a pridefulness in that

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Rom 12:17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

Rule #11: Do unto others as you would have them do to you

- Is this not the Golden Rule?

Matt 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

- The negative version is sometimes called the Silver Rule: Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you

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- Barclay said this form of the rule “is not an essentially religious rule at all. It is simply a common-sense statement without which no social intercourse at all would be possible.”
- In fact, societal laws are in large part based on this principle
- Though Jesus did not teach the so-called Silver Rule, it is often how Christians apply His Golden Rule – by softening it in this way

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Hodges: The impulse to get even is intrinsic to our sinful nature, and rationalizations for retributive actions are easy to come by. Paul knows this, of course, so he emphasizes that such actions are not justified toward anyone at all.

- Paul goes the extra mile
- He says that believers should not pay back those who have done them wrong with wrongdoing
- Rather, they should give back good for evil

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Rom 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Rule #12: Do your best to be at peace with others

- It is not always possible to be at peace with others, even other Christians
- The reason is that others may have no desire to reconcile or come to terms of peace, and you can’t force the issue
- That is why Paul conditions being at peace with others with the admonition – “if it is possible, as much as depends on you”

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- Make sure to do *your* part to restore the peace – confess your fault in the animosity, whatever it is
- Seek to restore the friendship; be forgiving

Hodges: The Christian attitude should be: “I, for my part, have no hostility against him/her.”

- There is much at stake – If the hostility is between brothers or sisters in Christ, then division and disunity has been brought into the church

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- At the end of the day, being at peace with others is a two-way street
- The other party has to agree to forgive and move forward in peace
- And they need to confess their faults in the process
- But if they are unwilling, you cannot do anything about that

Prov 13:10a (KJV) Only by pride cometh contention.

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Rom 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. (quote from Deut. 32:35)

Rule #13: Don’t seek revenge

- Throughout life you will surely be insulted and treated poorly by others and perhaps even hurt in some way, likely even by other Christians
- God wants you to know that He will take care of injustices; in fact, He will REPAY = “pay back” those who hurt you

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- You are not to seek revenge; that is God’s role and responsibility
- Stay out of it and let God work – do not attempt to settle the score

Hodges: Our own ill-considered or inappropriate revenge can short-circuit what God would otherwise do Himself.

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Rom 12:20 Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Rule #14: Treat enemies with kindness

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Barclay: To treat people with kindness rather than vengeance is the way to move them. Vengeance may break the spirit; but kindness will break people’s hearts. ‘If we are kind to our enemies,’ says Paul, ‘it will heap coals of fire on their heads.’ That means not that it will store up further punishment for them but that it will move them to burning shame.

- I’m not so sure that is what happens in the real world – I don’t think Barclay’s interpretation is correct

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I prefer Hodge's understanding:

Hodges: To perform such kindness to one's foe is to "heap coals of fire on his head" and thus to augment divine wrath against him. Some people may feel that it is totally inappropriate for Christians even to think of God's vengeance as a substitute for their own. But Scripture gives no support to this humanistic idea. The God of the Bible is a God of justice and His providence ordains that "whatever a man sows, that will he also reap" (Gal 6:7).

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- **Barclay thinks by doing good to an enemy, you will bring conviction upon him to the point of shame**
- **While Hodges thinks by doing good to an enemy, you will invoke God's wrath upon the evildoer**
- **Either way, your duty is to be kind and do good to enemies, not evil**
- **God wants you to be overcome with good, not evil**

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Rule #1: Get off your high horse and become a team player
Rule #2: Make sure your love is genuine
Rule #3: Detest evil and hold on to what is good
Rule #4: Show strong affection to brethren in Christ
Rule #5: Don't be lazy about your service for the Lord
Rule #6: Rejoice in persevering while enduring the trials of life
Rule #7: Choose to be giving and hospitable to others

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Rule #8: Bless those who persecute you
Rule #9: Empathize with your brothers/sisters in Christ
Rule #10: Be humble and relate to others
Rule #11: Do unto others as you would have them do to you
Rule #12: Do your best to be at peace with others
Rule #13: Don't seek revenge
Rule #14: Treat enemies with kindness
If believers were to live like this, division and disunity would instantly disappear

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