

Bible Studies for Life: August 14

Honor Your Neighbor • Romans 12:9-21

By Clay Anthony



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This week's text is the epicenter of this principle. In writing to the Christians in Rome, the Apostle Paul understood he was writing to people who were surrounded by a population

that did not always want them around.

Christianity was not accepted in the culture of that day. Those believers had their work cut out for them if they desired to introduce a dark place to Jesus. To do so, they were going to have to work on their hearts. The love that they held for each other would have to be viewed as genuine (v.9).

Rome was familiar with fake love. Marriage was held in low esteem. Children were more of a nuisance than a gift. Friendships were based on political ties and one-upmanship rather than heartfelt love. Christians had an opportunity to display what true love for others looked like.

Along with this genuine love came the call to abhor all that was evil. This is a word that we do not use often. Think of the last really scary movie you saw. Remember hiding your eyes at that one most scary scene that made you jump? That is what abhor means.

Hide yourself from what is evil and as you do this you will learn to hang on tightly to that which is good (v.9). Each of these actions reveal to a lost world the difference that Jesus can make.

The Roman Christians were going to have to work with their hands. Paul calls for a holy competition of caring for one another (v.10). Even though many believers were not related by DNA, they were indeed blood related. They were brothers and sisters in Christ by His sacrificial death. We are to love each other as siblings.

Growing up with three older brothers, I can testify that there were many times we attempted to outdo each other but hardly for the right reasons (v.10). Brothers do not naturally enjoy giving each other places of honor and regard.

Again, Paul is reminding the Roman believers that this is how pagans operate and that they were called to a much higher

standard.

They were going to have to work on their service. Let us be honest here. If you ever need to prove this text in real life, just hold a church-wide cleanup day on any given Saturday morning. You will probably see only a handful of people arrive ready to work, and even in that number there may be some who would rather be elsewhere.

This is a weak example only when not held up against verse 11. Paul is not making suggestions here. These are imperative tense verbs: do not be slothful, do be fervent, and do be serving the Lord.

When you use such language to tell your children to clean their room, you expect obedience and not back talk. Paul expected the Roman Christians to do away with being lazy in their service to God and undertake all actions with full fervor.

They were going to have to work on their worship. Whenever my church gathers, I like to remind as many as possible to be happy because we made it one more week. One more seven-day span in which God provided for needs and moved us one week closer to heaven. This is the very idea that Paul is getting at when he calls on the Romans to live in hope, patience, and prayer.

Every person breathing air will eventually face a form of persecution for following Jesus. Rome was not a bastion of Christian popularity. Nobody understood Christians and very few wanted these strange new beliefs to be spreading in their city. The best bow to tie up a heart full of hope and patience is prayer. Never lose that heavenly connection.

Verse 13 speaks for itself: be giving when it comes to the needs of others. Do what you can to alleviate suffering. Look at the word *hospitality* here. It gives us the English word *hospital*, and we all understand the mission of a hospital.

*Anthony is director of the Collaborative Missionary Network,
Oxford/Holly Springs.*