

**May 31, 2020**

**Speaker:** Eric Naus **Series:** This I Believe – The Book of Romans

**Passage:** Romans 12:9-21

Community Group Questions: “The Non-Ignorable Church”

Read Romans 12:9-21 aloud as a group and then work through the following questions.

1. Verse 9 introduces the topic of Christian love, which seems to be the background of the many commands given in this larger passage. Paul says here that Christian love for one another must be “genuine” (without hypocrisy). Our love must also be expressed through what we hate (evil) and what we love (good). In your opinion, how are we doing as individuals and as a church when it comes to hating what Jesus hates, and loving what Jesus loves? Where can we do better?
2. Verse 10 says we as Christians should love one another with “brotherly affection” – this term describes a kind of love between siblings in a family who care deeply for one another. There should also be a healthy competition to try and “outdo” one another in showing honor to others around us. Brainstorm and dream together on the following: what would our church community look like if we *really* loved each other with family affection? What would our church community look like if we showed honor to each other in this competitive way? Do you think such a church community would be compelling for the onlooking culture to see? How so?
3. Verses 11-13 suggest several ways that Christian love for one another should express itself, including zeal in service, patience and prayer in the midst of suffering, financial giving to meet each other’s needs, and hospitality. Which of these ideas especially grabs your attention and why? Which of these commands, if we kept them well, would grab our culture’s attention, and make the church really stand out in our witness?
4. Verse 14 turns an eye toward the Christian’s behavior toward the outside world. To “bless” someone, means to prayerfully wish God’s blessing on them, and to “curse” someone means to wish that God would bring ruin on them. Echoing Jesus’ words (see Matt. 5:44 and Luke 6:27-28), Paul tells us to bless those who persecute us, and never to curse them! How should this verse convict us as Christians, when we look at the way we often “demonize” and malign those who disagree with us socially and politically? How does this verse correct the way we often use social media to rail against those with whom we disagree? How does this verse correct our hearts when we secretly wish judgment on those who offend us?
5. Verse 15 speaks of the power of empathy between Christians. We should truly rejoice in each other’s blessings, and weep with one another’s sorrows. This kind of empathy is modeled by Jesus himself, who humbled himself by taking on humanity that he might save his people and then relate to them as an empathetic high priest (see Hebrews 2:14-18). In imitation of Jesus, how could we do better at empathy? In what specific and tangible ways could members of our church do a better job of rejoicing with others in

their successes and blessings, and mourning with those who are going through pain and trials? Where have you seen members of our church doing this well? In a day where most issues quickly turn to an “us versus them” political divide, how do these verses about empathy guide Christians as they enter into discussions about racial and social injustices?

6. In vs. 16, Paul says that humility should drive us to live in harmony with one another, and to associate with those who the culture considers “below us.” How should the humble culture of the church look entirely different from what people experience out in the world? How can each of us contribute to creating a truly humble culture in our church?
7. Verses 17-18 prohibit Christians from taking revenge, and these verses encourage us to consider our reputation with the broader culture (“do what is honorable in the sight of all” and “live peaceably with all”). Why is our public reputation as Christians so important? What would it look like for each of us as believers to proactively make peace in our community? How do these verses guide us as Christians as we enter into our culture’s most pressing issues like racial injustice, the nature of protest, and the place of law and order?
8. Verses 19-21 elaborate on the idea that Christians should not take revenge, but rather, they should do good to their enemies, as Jesus taught in Matt. 5:38-41. How can Christians find the strength to love like this? First of all, they must know that they are “beloved” of God (vs. 19), and this love-fueled identity eliminates the need for revenge. But secondly, Christians should know that, ultimately, God will hold all wickedness to account on the final day of judgment (see Rom. 2:6-11); and therefore, Christians can “leave it to the wrath of God” (vs. 19) and do good to their enemies instead (v. 20). What does it look like for Christians in this modern day to put this teaching into practice? Can you think of examples, like that of Martin Luther King Jr., where Christians have been able to “overcome evil with good”? What does this look like on the smaller scale, in our relationships with one another in our workplaces, families, and communities?

Prayer suggestion: Pray about our Christian response in light of the headline issues of the day (racial injustice, peaceful protest, violent riots, political discord, etc.). Pray that we would have a Romans 12 love that makes the church non-ignorable to our culture for all the right reasons.