



WHEN LOVE IS HARD: DON'T GIVE UP, KEEP LOVE ALIVE!

NOVEMBER 27, 2022

WORSHIP

Endless Praise, Shout His Holy Name, Emmanuel, God With Us, Unending Love, Reliably True, The Anthem

WELCOME

What was the most challenging task or decision that you had to make the past week that had to do with doing what is best for someone you love?

WORD

ROMANS 15:1-7,13

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. ³ For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME.” ⁴ For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... ¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When love is hard, the Lord wants us to accept one another, abstain from judging each other, and avoid being a stumbling block to those who have “weak” faith. The Bible does not stop at just giving us Doctrine, but also teaches us Duty. Our behavior and the importance of dedicating our lives to God in the practice of Christian love, is at the center of this last series.

Sooner or later, we will disappoint others, and will be disappointed by others. We are going to have relationship issues, believe it or not. The Bible is so focused on how we should relate to each other. Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers (**1 Corinthians 1:10-12**) to avoid divisions among them. Satan is a divider (Gk. diabolos), and the believers were divided because of essentials and non-essentials of the faith and there were quarrels in the Corinthian church.

As we continue with **Romans 14 to 15**, we are told not to give up, and instead, to **KEEP LOVE ALIVE**. How can we keep love alive? Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:1-3 to “**walk in a manner worthy of the calling**”, having tolerance for one another in love. God’s heart is for unity (not uniformity) in love. Always remember the command of Jesus in **John 13:34-35** – to love one another, not by feelings, but by making a choice to love them so that by this, we will be known as Christ’s disciples. How do we do this?

1. PURSUE BUILDING UP

Romans 14:19-21 continues the instructions of the Apostle Paul. He put great emphasis on the building up rather than allowing others to stumble. The principle of love is not based on emotions – it is action -- motion before emotion! To pursue means you give your full energy to build up others. You must be conscious about their needs. In the next verses (**vv. 22-23**), Paul mentions about conscience – our faith must dictate our conscience, and knowledge impacts faith and conscience. You don’t have to announce to the world about your conviction – as you mature in the Lord, you will develop beliefs that you feel so strongly about. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (**1 Corinthians 8:1,4, 7-13**) reminding them about the importance of knowledge, and the danger of it making someone proud. True spirituality is becoming more like Jesus, loving and caring for others more. Paul instructs mature Christians to limit their liberty since a true follower of Jesus thinks of others, we are not supposed to wound the conscience of those who are young in the faith.

In **1 Corinthians 10:28-29**, Paul reinforces that for conscience’s sake, be more willing to build up others. Strong believers must be able to love those weaker in the faith. The goal of discipleship is love from a pure heart from a pure conscience and sincere faith (**1 Timothy 1:5-6, 19**). Learn to calibrate your conscience because your conscience is not infallible. Are you recalibrating by studying the Bible? Let His Word guide your conscience.

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2. PRIORITIZE OTHERS

Romans 15:1-3 reminds us to prioritize others. The strong ones must be able to help the new or weak believers. As the saying goes, in essentials, unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in everything else, charity. **Galatians 6:1-2** teaches us to bear one another's burdens (carrying the load of others, like a father helping a son), not to cancel or judge them. To love is to bear with them and help them be restored! We are to aim for our neighbor's good and edification. Paul points them to the example of Christ who did not prioritize His own pleasure, but instead prioritized our needs. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul taught them to not do anything from selfishness or pride (**Philippians 2:1-5**). Christianity is supernatural, it's never easy, we can only do this if we follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

3. POWERED BY GOD

The mark of a mature Christian is that he majors on the major. Some Christians make a mountain out of a mole hill – making big issues out of small matters. What issues will you focus on? Fix relationships. Don't allow it to just die. If you need to apologize, do so, and if you need to talk to someone, do it! Value relationships; forgive and ask for forgiveness. This is hard to do! Paul in **Romans 15:4-6** points out that perseverance, encouragement, and hope come from the Word of God. You don't get it out of people – you get it from God. Find your strength from God Himself! Paul referred to Old Testament scriptures to point them to find strength in God alone. Sometimes it is hard to love people. But if we are powered by God – His love, His example through Christ in the flesh enables us to be in one accord and enjoy a harmonious relationship with others through Christ alone.

Christ is our ultimate example – He served willingly as a fulfillment of the prophecies and promises of God (**Romans 15:8-10**). Paul also quoted Old Testament verses that declare that Gentiles will hear the gospel and that they will hope in Christ as well (**Psalms 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:10**). Find your strength when you meditate on God's Word. Paul also adds in **v.13** the importance of HOPE which we gain by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hope is the confidence in the certainty of God's promises. When you look at the world today, there are many problems. We live in unstable times – so where do we find peace and hope? Only from God. If our hope and security are in God alone, He gives us joy and peace. We are empowered by God as we read and practice His Word, living a blameless life and conscience (**Acts 24:15-16**), and as we submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. **Colossians 1:17** clearly tells us where this hope comes from – CHRIST IN US, the hope of glory! This hope enables us to not give up when loving others is hard and to keep love alive!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

When love is hard, what do you do?

2. Setting It Right.

How do you build up others?

3. Living It Out.

How can we be empowered to love others more?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray especially for "hard to love" people in hard-to-reach places! They may be part of your family who are away from you, or people groups living in countries where the gospel has not been widely preached. For those you can interact with, do your part in doing what is best for them. Do not give up on them by continually extending God's love and offer of forgiveness to them through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's provision for families deeply affected by inflation.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; escalating tension in East Asian countries to stop.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE

ROMANS 15:2

Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.