

Romans 12:9—Let Love Be Without Hypocrisy

Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Revision for Romans 12:3-8

1. The most important ingredient in any good relationship is humility (v 3)
2. The next most important ingredient in any good relationship is valuing and respecting people's different gifts and abilities (vs 4-5)
3. We are called to use our God given gifts for the benefit of others in the body of Christ because we need each other and belong to each other (vs 6-8)

Outline for Romans 12:9

1. Let love be without hypocrisy (v 9a)
2. Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life (v 9a)
3. How do we speak the truth in love? (v 9a)

Romans 12:1-21 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

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 honour 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; 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. 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.

1. Let love be without hypocrisy

Romans 12:9a NKJV

Let love be without hypocrisy.

Romans 12:9a NLT

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them.

Romans 12:9a AMP

[Let your] love be sincere (a real thing)

v 9 **Let [agape] love be without hypocrisy:** The ancient Greek word translated “**without hypocrisy**” means “genuine, sincere, unfeigned, undissembled (undisguised, not pretended or feigned), and without dissimulation (without hiding your thoughts)”.

What does love *with* **hypocrisy** look like? There will be pretence, misrepresentation, deceit, dishonesty, duplicity, lying, guile, subterfuge, feigning, falsification, shamming, faking, bluffing, counterfeiting, posturing, double-dealing, concealment, concealing, masking, disguising, hiding, veiling, and shrouding. Simply put, hypocritical love is a pretend or make believe love; there are often emotions with it, but the underlying motivation is selfish. Therefore, *Hypocritical love is shallow and basically meaningless. If we are going to have real relationships, then we must say what we mean and mean what we say. We must be clear in both what we are saying (tell the whole truth), and also why we are saying it (be clear about our motive, the real reason we are saying what we are saying).*

Agape love is not a feeling, it's a choice of the will

It has been well said that “love without truth is hypocrisy, and truth without love is brutality”. Love is so much more than being nice or doing what is considered nice. Love is not a feeling, rather it's a decision of the will. We can only obey God from the heart (sincerely) if we love Him, so when we don't obey God, it shows that we don't love Him. Our sincere obedience to God is like a thermometer that measures how much we love God.

2 John 6 AMP

And what this love consists in is this: that we live and walk in accordance with and guided by His commandments (His orders, ordinances, precepts, teaching). This is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you continue to walk in love [guided by it and following it].

John 14:21-24 NKJV

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?”

²³ Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. ²⁴ He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

“**Walk according to His commandments:** Real love will walk this way. Perhaps John warned against those who thought the only important thing in the Christian life was a vague love that had no heart for obedience.” (David Guzik)

“Perhaps you fail to distinguish between love and the emotion of love. They are not the same. We may love without being directly conscious of love, or being able to estimate its strength and passion. Here is the solution to many of our questionings: They love who obey.” (Meyer)

Agape love does what is best for the person, even if it doesn't feel good

True or sincere love does what is best for the other person, which isn't always going to be what feels good for them or for you. For example, giving our kids everything they want, and letting them do what ever they want, is not loving: in reality it is hateful, as a lack of discipline will end up destroying them. Disciplining children consistently would have to be one of the most difficult tasks there is for parents—we are often low on energy, and it's so much easier in the short term just to let some things slide. It's like the easiest thing to do is to give drugs to a drug addict to make them happy and stop badgering you for money—life is easier and happier for both you and them in the short term—but you are slowly but surely killing them. We should measure the love that others have for us by considering the long term effect; do they make us stronger as they encourage us to draw close to God, or are they just helping us to live according to our sinful nature—helping us to indulge in many instant gratifications that make us feel good for the now, but will end up ruining our lives.

Proverbs 27:6 NKJV

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Defining genuine agape love, what it is and what it isn't

“Of course, **love with hypocrisy** isn't real love at all; but much of what masquerades as “love” in the Christian community is laced with hypocrisy, and must be demonstrated against.” (David Guzik)

Society has various names for those whose consistent way of life is to love in pretense only: psychopath, sociopath, narcissist. Simply put, hypocritical love is not love at all, it is sin because it is not giving but taking—it is selfish. Here is a summary from the healthline.com website concerning *Psychopathy or Antisocial personality disorder* (ASPD). Observe how these attributes or traits are simply the opposite of real agape love.

"ASPD is a pattern of unconcern or disinterest in the rights and needs of others, often paired with a tendency for impulsivity and lack of remorse. It has also been called psychopathy and sociopathy.

It may affect aspects of your life, like the way you think, how you feel, how you interact with others, and your ability to control your impulses.

- behaviour that often conflicts with social norms, particularly not following laws and regulations
- disregarding or violating the rights and feelings of others
- difficulty feeling remorse or empathy, or justifying actions that have hurt others
- tendency to lie, manipulate, and deceive others, often for personal enjoyment or gain

Lack of awareness is also often present in antisocial personality disorder, which means most people with the condition don't realize they have it or see anything problematic with their behaviour. As a result, few people seek treatment.”

So what is the opposite of the hypocritical love we just read about? *Real love is kind, tenderhearted, and seeks reconciliation* (see Romans 12:10-13, Ephesians 4:32). *Real love will submit to authority, including that of the state, the church, and God* (see Romans 13:1-10). *Real love will put the needs of others ahead of their own, following the example of Christ* (see Philippians 2:1-11).

Ephesians 4:32 AMP

And become useful and helpful and kind to one another, tenderhearted (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), forgiving one another [readily and freely], as God in Christ forgave you.

Philippians 2:1-5 NLT

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? ² Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Speaking the truth in love

It's important that we understand the effect of hypocritical or insincere love—it hurts others, not helps them.

“Whether or not we intend to, when we aren't loving sincerely, we are actually lying and manipulating the other person so we can get what we want.”

So what does it mean to love someone sincerely? Is it just enough to have good intentions, to “not want to hurt someone”? No. The Bible gives us the answer, “**speak the truth in love**” (Ephesians 4:15). The only way to change from being self-centred, deceptive, and manipulative, is to love others sincerely by actively thinking about the other person and how to bless them. *Speaking the truth means that not only what we say is true, but there are also no hidden motives—we also make it clear why we are saying what we are saying.*

Speaking **the truth in love** is the key to strong, God honouring friendships, and is also how we mature as a believer. Why? Because how we speak to others is also how we speak to God—the way we relate to others is a perfect reflection of how we relate to God.

1 John 2:9-11 NLT

If anyone claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

Paul in Ephesians makes it clear that *learning to speaking the truth in love, or loving without hypocrisy, is the very definition of what it means to be a mature Christian. It is only as we come to the place of genuine and honest communication that we can really love each other.*

Ephesians 4:11-16 NLT

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. **As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.**

These verses from Ephesians show two main points: Firstly, we all need to grow up or mature into the image of Christ, and secondly, how we grow and mature is by learning to **speak the truth in love**. Look at the contrast between verse 14 and 15. In verse 14 people are being manipulated and deceived and remain immature in their walk with God. Then in verses 15-16, people are solid in the truth, are speaking the truth in love, and as a result the body of Christ works together, matures, grows, is transformed into the image of Christ, and it is **full of love**.

This is why maturing in our walk with God is not just a "nice to have", but rather a "must have". Immature believers pull others down because they have not yet learned to "love without hypocrisy" and "speak the truth in love". In contrast, mature believers build others up. This is probably why Ray Comfort titled his new believers booklet, "Save yourself some pain", because he knows that the longer believers stay immature, the more pain they will cause themselves and others, just like what happened in the Corinthian church.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 AMP

However, brethren, I could not talk to you as to spiritual [men], but as to nonspiritual [men of the flesh, in whom the carnal nature predominates], as to mere infants [in the new life] in Christ [unable to talk yet!]

² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not yet strong enough [to be ready for it]; but even yet you are not strong enough [to be ready for it],

³ For you are still [unspiritual, having the nature] of the flesh [under the control of ordinary impulses]. For as long as [there are] envying and jealousy and wrangling and factions among you, are you not unspiritual and of the flesh, behaving yourselves after a human standard and like mere (unchanged) men?

2. Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life (Proverbs 4:23)

Have you ever wondered why there are so many selfish people out there today, why so many people are getting burned by narcissistic parents, children, friends and church members? Jesus said it would happen, and He also told us why.

Matthew 24:9-12 NKJV

"Then they will deliver you [the Jews] up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Cold, loveless hearts are to be expected when sin abounds because there is much hurt and pain. The easiest thing to do is shut down, build a wall around our hearts, and cease to really care other people—we become completely self-centred. We can learn a lot from Scripture about how to guard our hearts so that they don't grow cold.

Proverbs 4:20-27 NLT

My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. ²¹ Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, ²² for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body.

²³ Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

²⁴ Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. ²⁵ Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. ²⁶ Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. ²⁷ Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.

What are the three things that Proverbs tells us that need to be done to **Guard your heart above all else?**

1. Make spending a lot of time meditating on the word of God your highest priority

“My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. ²¹ Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, ²² for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body.” Proverbs 4:20-22 NLT

2. Speak the truth in love

“Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech.” Proverbs 4:24 NLT

3. Make a conscious decision and effort to keep away from evil or worldly things and instead focus on what is good

“Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. ²⁶ Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. ²⁷ Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.” Proverbs 4:25-26 NLT

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. ⁹ Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:8-9 NLT

All the above will keep our hearts soft before God and help us to remain in fellowship with God and other believers.

In summary there are two types of love:

1. **Hypocritical or pretend love:** a selfish, uncaring, unforgiving, taking, manipulative, and destructive kind of love, motivated by and focused on what it can get, and how it will benefit it.
2. **Genuine and sincere love:** a selfless, honest, gentle, forgiving, giving, and edifying love, motivated by and focused on how much it can give, and how it can benefit the other person.

3. How do we speak the truth in love?

Here are some examples from the bible of some different ways we can speak the truth in love. Speaking the truth in love requires moment by moment wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit, as there is no one “right way” or “one size fits all” method to do it. Consider the following Biblical examples where people were led by the Spirit “to speak the truth in love” in various ways:

Jesus with Peter, reinstating him after his denial of Jesus

John 15:21 NKJV

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

Why was Jesus so gentle with Peter? Because Peter was a broken man. He was bitterly disappointed with himself for denying Jesus, and probably thought that his days as a disciple and his future as an apostle were over. Remember the principle, “grace to the humble, law to the proud”. In this case it was “grace to the humble”.

Jesus with Peter, rebuking Peter for being satan’s mouthpiece

Matthew 16:33 NKJV

But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Why was Jesus so abrupt with Peter? Because Peter was proud and probably a little full of himself after Jesus had told him that the Father had revealed the truth about Himself being the Messiah. Remember the principle, “grace to the humble, law to the proud”. In this case it was “law to the proud”.

Nathan confronting king David over his sins of adultery and murder

2 Samuel 12:1-12 NLT

So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: “There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. ² The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. ³ The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man’s own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. ⁴ One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man’s lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest.”

⁵ David was furious. “As surely as the Lord lives,” he vowed, “any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! ⁶ He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity.”

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, “You are that man! The Lord, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. ⁸ I gave you your master’s house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. ⁹ Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. ¹⁰ From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah’s wife to be your own.

¹¹ “This is what the Lord says: Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man before your very eyes, and he will go to bed with them in public view. ¹² You did it secretly, but I will make this happen to you openly in the sight of all Israel.”

Why do you think Nathan the prophet used a parable or story to get David's attention first (a gentle approach)? At the time, king David was a proud and hard man. It had been over a year since David had committed the sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, and he had been hiding the sin all that time. Therefore, he would most likely not admit to it if directly confronted. The story opened David's eyes to see how he had hurt others, and only then was the prophet Nathan able to confront king David with his sin.

Paul rebuking Peter at Antioch for his compromise with the Jewish legalists

Galatians 2:11-14 NLT

But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?"

Why did Paul publicly rebuke Peter, especially since Peter was an apostle? Because Peter's sin was public and had affected other people, and so the rebuke was also public. Peter's error had to be set straight.

Jesus convicting the Samaritan woman of her sin

John 4:16-18 NLT

"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.

¹⁷ "I don't have a husband," the woman replied.

Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband—¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!"

Firstly, why did Jesus expose this woman's sin? Because if He didn't, she would never have come to repentance. Secondly, why did He do it in a gentle way, by asking her an indirect question? It gave her an opportunity to confess her own sin, to take ownership of it. This is often a good way to see if people are really genuine about their repentance. By not forcing them to confess, you can see the state of their heart, if they are soft or hard.

Application: Am I a peace keeper or peace maker?

A peace keeper: Do I live my life avoiding necessary conflict? Do the offences against me to continue to occur, without me letting the other person know that they are hurting me? Do I let offences go unresolved, eventually building up into a root of bitterness. Do I ignore offences and just pretend that they didn't happen? Do I live in fear of other people and their reactions, and so don't confront them when I should. Do I compromise with sinful things because I am afraid to confront others?

A peace maker: Do I speak the truth in love? Do I deal with issues that are causing division and pain so there can be true or genuine reconciliation? Do I take a stand for what is right, even if it may offend the other person? Do I love people enough that I am willing to risk the relationship for the sake of the relationship growing stronger and being real and not fake?