



Sunday, February 15, 2015

ROMANS 13:8-10

Harmless

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SERMON NOTES: Romans 13:8-10

The first step in “Finding ME”: Realize I’m not God: I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable. (Romans 7:14-25)

The second step in “Finding ME”: Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me. (Romans 8:1-17)

The third step in “Finding ME”: Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ’s care and control. (Romans 12:1-2)

The fourth step in “Finding ME”: Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust. (Romans 12:3; 1 Timothy 1:12-17)

The fifth step in “Finding ME”: Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects. (Romans 12:9-21)

Romans 13:8–10 (NIV84)

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Love is the **dominant rule** of the Christian life

Mark 12:28–34 (NIV84)

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” ²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” ³² “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

- Love **defines** our relationship with God and neighbor
- Love is to engage all of our **faculties**: heart, understanding, strength
- Love is more important than our **religious activities** (cf. James 4:1-3; 1 Peter 3:7)

Can love be commanded?

1 Corinthians 13:4–9 (NIV84)

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

- Love is more than sentiment
- Love is expressed in actions
- Love acts for the good of “the other”

The sixth step in “Finding Me”: Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I’ve done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.

CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE: Romans 13:8-10

OPENING

- How easy is it for you to forgive? Can you share a time in your life when you received forgiveness? How about sharing a time when you offered forgiveness?

Leaders Note: Talking about forgiveness can be a sensitive subject for many people. Be careful during your discussion not to judge harshly people who are still working through the process of forgiveness. While Christ certainly wants us to forgive one another, this forgiveness must be genuine. It should not be forced. We do not want people simply to bury and deny the anger of being hurt. At the same time, people may be wrestling with a tremendous burden of guilt regarding harm that they have done to others. The weight of this burden may take a while for someone to accept. In each case, we want to encourage people to see clearly the power of God's grace and forgiveness. God's grace can help us to bear the pain that others give to us, as well as the pain that we have caused for others.

GOING DEEPER

- Read the following two passages and discuss how love is expressed:

Matthew 5:21–26 (NIV84)

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that **your brother has something against you,** ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Leaders Note: This verse has to do with harm that we have caused for others. There are two main emphases here.

The first emphasis has to do with owning the fact that we have in fact hurt others. The word ‘Raca’ means ‘fool, empty, worthless’. Jesus’ point is that any hatred toward one another has the potential to bring harm and hurt into our relationships.

The second emphasis has to do with the urgency of making amends for the hurt we have done. Harm has a way of escalating rapidly, so it needs to be dealt with as quickly as possible. Can you think of a situation where a problem has grown worse because of our failure to address it?

Matthew 18:15–20 (NIV84)

¹⁵ “If **your brother sins against you**, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶ But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

Leaders Note: This passage has to do with others who have hurt us. It may be helpful to break this passage down into two sections.

In the first section, verses 15-17, Jesus suggests a four-stage approach to resolving a dispute with someone who has hurt you. What are those four stages?

In the second section, verses 18-20, Jesus deals with the power and authority we share with Him in building His new community, a community based on love and truth. The authority to “bind and loose” refers to our God-given responsibility both to require obedience to the teachings of Christ (“bind”), and to extend grace to those that have fallen (“loose”). The point here is that the church, working together, can find practical and meaningful ways to hold one another accountable and to restore broken relationships within Christ’s family. Christ is in the midst of our efforts to apply His truth and love to these broken relationships.

CHALLENGE:

Make a list of those who have harmed you or you have harmed. What are you going to do about it?

Leader’s Note: This will be a challenging step for many. You may wish to recommend our Celebrate Recovery ministry that helps people walk through these difficult steps. We also have Stephen Ministry partners that will walk alongside people as they work through their process of forgiveness. See our Caring Ministry brochure, or our web site for more information on these ministries.