



WHEN LOVE IS HARD

NOVEMBER 20, 2022

WORSHIP

Joy, Shout His Holy Name,
For Who You Are, Mighty to
Save, Reliably True

WELCOME

Have you ever been wrong
about your first impression
of somebody? How did you
find out that you were
mistaken about that person?

WORD

ROMANS 14:13-19

¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way. ¹⁴ I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Living the full life is so counterintuitive; especially in Christianity, the focus is not on the self – but on others. The beginning of **Romans 12** commands us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord; therefore, as we live the fullness of life, in the perfect will of God, we need to learn to die to ourselves. Part of that is in loving others.

But **WHEN LOVE IS HARD**, what do we do? When you don’t like someone, what do you usually do? We avoid and “cancel” – but what about your family members and churchmates?

JOHN 13:34-35 is a commandment of Jesus to love one another – an instruction given even to those who were imperfect (Judas, Peter, James, and John). The question is: why is this important? Because this is a defining factor of our relationship with Him as followers (disciples) of Jesus! Jesus even prayed for all of us (**John 17:20-21**) to have unity (keeping in mind that unity is not uniformity).

Through **Romans 14**, we see these three steps we can take to love even when it is hard to do so:

1. ACCEPT

Romans 14:1-2 gives us a reminder to accept even those who are “weak” (spiritually immature). God tells us to accept the strong and the weak because they have all been received by God. The Roman church was a mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers. The context of Jews was used as an example because their Law forbids certain foods. When they became followers of Christ, they were set free – their positional status was not dependent on what food they ate or not eat. In a way, this shows us that there are certain things that are ESSENTIAL (salvation, deity of Jesus, God’s Word, etc.) and NON-ESSENTIAL (when is Jesus coming back, style of worship, stand on healing, baptism, God’s sovereignty and human responsibility, spiritual gifts, etc.). Our job is to accept one another, and transformation will be brought by the power of Christ as He moves in our lives.

Biblical acceptance is loving and respecting the person. It is not embracing his values or lifestyle choices.

Secular acceptance is agreeing and supporting the person’s values and lifestyle. It is believing all values and moral truths are personally determined.

Regarding the Sabbath, for example, the Law sets in **Exodus 20:8-10**, six days of labor and the seventh day as a day of rest – whatever is the seventh day. Days are secondary! We ought not to fight about the non-essentials. **Colossians 2:16-17** reminds us that we are not to judge one another!

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2. ABSTAIN FROM JUDGING

Romans 14:4 points us to an amazing declaration – the Lord is “able to make one stand”. This is God’s responsibility towards us. **Philippians 1:6** shows us that God is at work and is faithful in working in our lives. We can be patient as we wait for the changes from people around us who have just entered into a saving knowledge of the gospel – we can accept them and not judge them because as **Jude 24** says, He is able to keep us from stumbling. We try to be in control of people, even if we also know that we are not GOD. God can do something to change lives – as C.S. Lewis wrote, God shouts in our pain, and whispers in our joyful moments. Do not underestimate the power of God to change lives!

Romans 14:5-6 leads us to the essence of Christianity – whatever we do, we do it for the Lord! If our conviction tells us we are not to eat this or drink this, we do it for the Lord. As we are God’s followers, we are His responsibility (**vv.7-9**). This truth, while very comforting, also enforces us to be very careful in how we live. Christianity is not “I decide what I want to do with my life” – it is following what God wants for our best – therefore, we comply and obey to the standards of life He has directed us to follow. All of God’s rules are meant to protect us!

Romans 14:10-12 reminds us not to force one another to obey, nor to judge each other, because at the end of the day, we are all accountable to God and we will stand before the judgment seat of God. We judge each other in many ways; for example, while only hearing one side of the story, we judge a person’s motives. **Proverbs 18:17** points us to instruction on how to clarify issues and reconcile. We are not to promote division! **1 Corinthians 4:5** points who the real Judge is – it is God, the only One able to judge because it is only Him who sees the minds and hearts of people.

3. AVOID BECOMING A STUMBLING BLOCK

Romans 14:13 gives us a clear command: not to put a stumbling block or an obstacle along the path of fellow believers. Paul directs his readers again to eating (**vv.14-15**) and says not to destroy with food the person for whom Christ died for! For the sake of the “weak” Christians, we are not to let a good thing be a cause of stumbling for others. **Romans 14:16-18** (and **1 Corinthians 8:13**) reminds us that if something makes a person stumble, we must limit our freedom to engage in such activity so that these still-growing Christians will not stumble. In our hearts we say, “Others may, but I will not”; “I limit my liberty for the sake of God’s kingdom”; “I must be responsible for my brothers”. Jesus warns us in **Matthew 18:6** that if we cause someone to stumble, for example by living a life of hypocrisy, we destroy someone else’s walk. **Romans 14:19** tells us that our righteous living must build up others!

We all commit mistakes, so let us be intentional in practicing these three principles especially when judging and destroying one another is easier than it is to love each other!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. Self-Check.

What do you usually do when you find it hard to love someone?

2. Setting It Right.

Have you ever been a stumbling block to someone? How did you resolve the matter?

3. Living It Out.

What should you START and STOP doing?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for “challenging” people outside the family of God to experience the kind of love that gives Biblical acceptance when they “mess up”. Go out of your way to show that you care, even if you may not agree with their lifestyle choices. Share the gospel with them and let the power of Christ transform them into His image in His time.

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 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.