



THE HEIGHTS

CHURCH

LIFE GROUP TEACHING PLANS
THE SIMPLEST WAY TO CHANGE THE WORLD
LESSON 10

THE SIMPLEST WAY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

FROM REJECTED TO RESOLUTE

LESSON 10

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Romans 12:9-21. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > **Series Theme Aim:** Loving our neighbors means choosing to engage rather than unplug, open rather than close, and initiate rather than sit idly.
- > **Biblical Emphasis:** Because we all sin, we will face conflict in our relationships with our neighbors. Yet, sincere love through relationship with Christ helps us respond to conflict and rejection in a way that continues to prioritize and demonstrate the gospel.
- > **Teaching Aim:** When we love our neighbors, we move from feelings of rejection to feelings of resolute determination to live and love like Jesus.
- > **Memorize:** Romans 12:18

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

DO NOT SKIP THIS

1 You were challenged in last week's lesson to share your faith with one of your neighbors this week. Did anyone take an opportunity to do that? If so, share what happened. If not, what prevented you from doing so?

2 What would our city be like if every Christian made a decision to love their actual neighbors and share the gospel with them?

In weeks 2 and 3 of our study, we talked about the obstacles of calendar and comfort that keep us from loving our neighbors like Jesus calls us to. One "comfort" that is difficult for all of us to overcome is when we have bad feelings toward our neighbors for various reasons. The more we invest in our neighbors, the more opportunities exist to experience conflict with them and rejection from them. Yet, sincere love through relationship with Christ helps us respond to conflict and rejection in a way that continues to prioritize and demonstrate the gospel.

3 What is a conflict you have had in the past with a neighbor? How did you handle it?

4 How have your past experiences with neighbors impacted your attitude and behavior toward them now?

5 Ronald Reagan said, "Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means." Why is this an important truth for Christians who want to get to know their neighbors and invest in their lives?

Notes:

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> Ask a volunteer to read Romans 12:9-13.

- What does the statement, “Love must be genuine” (v. 9) indicate to you about the believers Paul wrote to? What are some differences between genuine (or “sincere,” NIV) and insincere love for your neighbors in the context of this study?
- When might it be necessary for you to “hold fast to what is good” and “be fervent in spirit” in relationships with your neighbors?

The call to love our neighbors is not for the faint of heart. Not everyone you love will respond positively. You will undoubtedly have conflict and you will experience rejection. But as Jesus demonstrated throughout His life, conflict and rejection do not change our mission. No one who is focused on self or continually wrapped up in how others respond to him or her can go about the business of changing the world for the glory of God.

- How are each of the commands from Paul others-centered? How does the gospel reshape our self-centered hearts?

Being a believer in Christ comes with expectations for how you are to treat other people. God desires for each of us to love people the way Jesus did. We do that sacrificially, by giving ourselves away for the sake of God’s glory.

- Personally, what commands in these five verses stand out to you the most as you consider ways to demonstrate love for your neighbors?

Notes:

> Ask a volunteer to read Romans 12:14-21.

- What do these verses teach is the right and wrong way to respond when you face rejection from or conflict with your neighbors?
- Name some practical ways you can bless neighbors who mistreat you.
- Are you in charge of your neighbor's response or is that something you are to turn over to God to sort out? Explain.
- What does it look like practically to entrust God with the hurts others have caused us?

Like most things in the kingdom of God, how Christians are to respond when they have been hurt is counter to the opinions and expectations of the culture at large. There is a redemptive purpose in believers treating well those who treat them poorly. Our commitment to respond positively to our persecutors may lead to their repentance, reconciliation, and true friendship.

- Put verse 18 in your own words. In the context of your neighborhood, what is challenging to you about this command?

- How does the gospel change everything about the way we respond to conflict?
- When Christians handle conflicts with others well, what message does that send to our neighbors? If we do not handle conflicts well, what message does that send?

Notes:

From the Romans 12 passage, we learn that a biblical response when neighbors reject us is not to sit in that rejection or to return it. We must remember our trust is in God, not people. We have to realize that God is working on our character and integrity through the situation, no matter how wronged we feel.

- How would you answer a believer who asks, “Why should I love my neighbor who doesn’t love me?”

The call to Christ is the call to love all people, and there are no exceptions to this rule. God has treated us so much better than we deserve. God was not obligated to save us or redeem us but did so out of His mercy, grace, and love. We embody this love when we live out the gospel in our neighborhoods.

NEXT STEPS

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- 1 Is fear of rejection, actual rejection, or conflict keeping you from being a good neighbor? How does Romans 12 challenge or encourage you as you consider loving your neighbors the way God calls you to?
- 2 Think about a neighbor who has rejected you or with whom you have had some sort of conflict. What is one step you can take to show that person you are willing to move toward living at peace?

DO NOT SKIP THIS

- 3 Continue looking for opportunities to build relationships with your neighbors and share the gospel with them. Walk around your block and pray for God to give you strength and courage to forgive any neighbors who have wronged you and for new opportunities to demonstrate and share Christ's peace.

PRAY

Thank God that your sin and rejection of Him did not change His determination to pursue you through relationship with His Son Jesus Christ. Ask Him to give you the same resolute determination to His kingdom purposes, even when you face conflict or rejection with your neighbors.

FOR NEXT WEEK

> **REMIND:** Before you dismiss, remind group members to read Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 7:36-50.

Notes:

> **EMAIL:** Midway through the week, send a reminder email with the following information:

- Read Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 7:36-50.
- Think through these questions before we get together again:
1) Are there any unresolved conflicts in your relationships with neighbors? Are you praying for God to give you peace in those relationships? 2) Are you taking steps that show you are moving past feelings of rejection to a place of resolute determination to live and love like Jesus?

ROMANS 12:9-21

12:9-16. Transformed thinking is explained in a series of short exhortations. Paul has expounded divine love in this letter; now he shifts to the disciple's "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). Christians are one family, and they should honor one another and display genuine affection. They should be fervent in spirit or let the Spirit kindle and motivate their service. They should also rejoice in the hope of Jesus' return; share what they have, and share the joys and sorrows of the church family. Keep praying—in the afflictions and persecutions of life, members of the body are to support one another. Pride is a great sin and humility is a great virtue. One shouldn't think too much of oneself. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1Pe 5:5).

Notes:

12:17-21. Christians often suffer hatred and persecution from society (1Pe 1:6; 2:11-12; 3:14-17; 4:12-16; 5:9). The normal response is to retaliate, but Christians are called to serve and minister God's grace to a lost and hostile world. Jesus is our model. As much as possible, we are to live at peace with everyone. God is the sovereign who can convert even a Saul who persecuted the church. God is the judge and the administrator of wrath. Our role is to display God's grace and love in our lives. God in Jesus conquered evil on the cross. We are not to let evil conquer us.