



**A Themed Devotional Series**  
*For CVM Students and Professionals*  
*By CVM Staff*



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This series of devotionals was created around CVM's annual theme "Transformed" from Romans 12:2. We hope you enjoy getting to know the CVM staff better while gaining a deeper understanding of God's instructions in Romans 12.

We encourage you to prayerfully journey through the study with your Bibles open, looking up the *Scripture* (in italics) and contemplating the **questions** (in bold). The devotionals are really just intended to be a jumping off point to go deeper in God's Word.

## Transformed

### *It's Only Reasonable*

Before we begin our journey through Romans 12 together, let's take a step back. In the previous chapters, Paul, the writer of Romans, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, explained how to become a Christian (Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, and Romans 10:9-10). He then uses this section of his letter to the Roman church to explain how Christians can become more like Christ.

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*

-Romans 12:1 NIV

When reading the first verse in Romans 12, the first word you encounter is the word "therefore." Here's a hint when reading the Bible. If a Biblical passage begins with the word "therefore", I would encourage you to read the passage before this verse to see what the word "therefore" is "there for." In this case, in Romans 11:36, Paul states that everything created by God "comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory." (Romans 11:36, NLT)

All of creation is meant to glorify God. With that knowledge, let's read Romans 12:1 again:

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*

-Romans 12:1 NIV

"A living sacrifice." Wow! Talk about a commitment. We often think of Christian service as doing "big things" for God. In fact, Christian Veterinary Mission is known for our short-term mission trips. If you have never gone on one of these, then I highly encourage it. It can be life changing. But how do we become a "living sacrifice" in the day-to-day setting of a veterinary clinic or as a veterinary student?

I often use the phrase "eternal mindset" when encouraging fellow Christians. To be a "living sacrifice" requires us to actively and intentionally reflect Christ as we go through our day. We need to realize that every second that we live can and often does impact eternity. It's the routine interactions in our day-to-day life in which our actions as a Christian stand out from the world. It will make others take notice. They may even mention it. If they do, then "always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you." -1 Peter 3:15

If we aren't intentional, then our sin nature shines through. My default was to be loud and brash. "Cocky Rocky" they used to call me. However, as my relationship with Christ developed, my Christlikeness began to develop as well. People around me started noticing the change. I began serving in Christian ministries. I began taking more short-term mission trips. But the day-to-day actions are what most of my friends and colleagues noticed. That's what will impact those around you the most as well.

Still, the devil is always active, and I developed new ungodly behavior. As a result of my "Christ-like" actions and activities, the guy who had shed the cocky persona began to feel pride in his heart that he had this Christian thing figured out. That's when one night, while reading the

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Bible on a short-term mission trip in Indonesia, when I was feeling pretty good about myself, God showed me Romans 12:1 again. Only this time He had me read it in the New King James Version.

*"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."* Romans 12:1, NKJV

It was as if God was sitting there right beside me and said, "Rocky, you are being obedient. You are allowing me to do some incredible things through you. There is no doubt that you have put yourself in some dangerous places and faced resistance with unwavering faith. However, offering your body as a living sacrifice is nothing to be proud of. It's only reasonable."

That fact washed over me as I realized what Christ had done for me. Jesus made a way to know Him, the source of pure Love and Peace, for eternity by becoming the ultimate sacrifice! Why should I be prideful of my actions when I sacrifice anything for Him?

- 1) **Have you committed to "offer your body as a living sacrifice"? What are some ways you can live that?**
- 2) **The Message version states Romans 12:1 like this:**

*"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him."*

**Does that change how you see it?**

- 3) **How do you dishonor the Lord when you don't have an "eternal mindset"?**
- 4) **Is there an area of your Christian life in which you feel like you are doing well that may be leading to pride?**



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### *Finding God's Will*

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will."*  
- Romans 12:2

I began serving as a youth pastor at age 21. My wife, Shannon (also part of CVM) and I joined the team of Winder First UMC after we got married, right after undergrad at UGA. I had limited knowledge of Scripture—the same with skills and experience, but passion for God and serving people carried us through. This verse was a regular for me – so much so, that when we left to serve another church, one of the youth made a shirt for me with this verse on it.

Looking back, I'm glad I routinely used this verse. It says a lot in a few words! How do we navigate the world as a Jesus follower? How does transformation happen? What's God's will for each of us? It's all there. While this verse is connected to what comes before and after, let's take a few minutes to unpack Romans 12:2.

Right away, Paul reminds the church at Rome to not conform to the pattern of this world. Conforming is easy. It feels like the road more travelled, with less hardship, that will allow us to fit in. Conforming is always calling to us. And while what conforming looks like changes year to year, generation to generation, it makes itself known.

That's the thing about God, though. God is consistent. Unchanging. Faithful. All loving. Always graceful. Fully in love with all persons, as God would call us all sons and daughters. When I look at people who have fully given themselves over to the pattern of this world, I don't see total love and joy.

At the same time, it can be tempting to conform to the patterns of this world a little bit, in order to draw people toward God. The term "Christian" carries baggage for some people. And, we've earned some of that. I could list some reasons and examples, but I don't have to do so – you can think of plenty, unfortunately. So, it's tempting to fit in a little just so we show people not all Christians are like "that" whatever that is. This is a tough line to walk, and I don't know the full answer here. But, as a Jesus follower, there will always be a part of us that won't conform. At the same time, we are to love the world, and the world isn't loved if we're hostile towards it and constantly telling it what it's doing wrong.

Let's do what Andrew did for his brother, who turned out to be the great disciple, Peter. *"The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus."* -John 1:41,42. Simple. Bring people to Jesus. Then Jesus, and them, and you can go from there.

So, we are also to be TRANSFORMED. That's an emphasis for CVM this year. And, according to this verse, it begins with the renewing of our minds. Our thinking drives a lot of our actions, words, and how we live our lives. I believe this verse is highlighting this, and how important it is

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to have an eternal perspective, a worldview with God at the foundation. Believing in God is a start, but we are not only to believe, but to follow Jesus. Following Jesus and being transformed is a lifelong process. Life can be like lab, where we test and approve of what God's will is. The good news is, there's grace all over this process. We will make mistakes along the way, but we will be transformed by the continual renewing of our minds. Then, we will be able to see what God's will is.

And that will is good, pleasing, perfect! What's better than perfect? I believe that's why I repeated this verse all those years ago, working with middle and high school students. There were many options before them as they began to take ownership of their lives. And no matter where you are today, there's always the chance to change. We see many options today on social media, TV, and those around us. And some of those lifestyles can look pretty good. But, do we trust God to be who God claims to be? This God has a will for our lives that is good for us, pleasing for us, perfect. That's what I want. I hope you'll join in on this transformation in your own life, and I hope many others will do the same. Maybe we'll even make t-shirts about it.

- 1) What does it mean to be *'conformed to the pattern of this world?'* How do we love the world well while not conforming to its patterns?**
- 2) What does *'renewing your mind'* mean to you? What are some intentional steps we can all take to being transformed by renewing our minds?**
- 3) How do you *'test and approve what God's will is?'***
- 4) Take some time this week to ask yourself if you know what's better for your life, or does God? Feel free to approach God with what you consider to be good, pleasing, and perhaps perfect. Listen for the Holy Spirit, and see if there are any next steps for you to take with the Lord.**



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### *Thinking of Yourself*

Today in my Bible Study Fellowship, our group leader asked why it's so hard to take a lowly position. I responded dryly, "I don't mind taking a lowly position as long as someone notices." And everyone laughed way too hard. Was I even joking? I hope so, but that was definitely a joke that had some underlying truth to it.

In our verse today, we'll see that Paul reminds us that everything we could possibly pride ourselves on has been given to us by God. He even starts by saying the grace (or in some versions "authority") to write this letter to the church in Rome, was from God.

*"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you." – Romans 12:3*

In what ways do you think of yourself more highly than you ought? What tempts you to be prideful? You worked super hard to get where you are now. Into vet school, through vet school, into practice, owning that practice. It probably took grit and determination, IQ and EQ to do what you've done. And if you're using it for God's glory, even better. Are you using veterinary medicine as a bridge to share Christ's love on campus, in your clinic, in your community, and around the world? If so, I'm sure God is grateful. Wait...maybe that's upside down...

Let's read it in the Message translation:

*"I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him."*

-Romans 12:3 (MSG)

I don't know about you, but I might need to read that again, because that is not how the world assigns value. That paradigm shift can sure be humbling. But isn't it also freeing? Even our faith comes from God. It's not up to us, it's not about us. So, maybe we should stop thinking about ourselves so much.

One sign that helps me recognize that I might be thinking too highly of myself is getting offended. A truly humble person is not easily offended.

My pastor said recently that people, or the church, sometimes try to categorize sin. We put ourselves in this circle over here with these struggles, but there are other people in that struggle circle over there and they are much worse. But Jesus doesn't look at us that way. To Jesus the most reprehensible sin was probably self-righteousness. We see over and over again that the only people He seemed to get frustrated with were the ones that thought too highly of

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themselves, the Pharisees. What an oxymoron. Just by thinking we're better than others, we become worse than them.

It is a delicate balance I have not mastered to want to be the best vet, mom, wife, friend, manager, neighbor, and servant of Christ that I can be, while living fully in the freedom that it is by grace alone. We have nothing to boast in. Our IQ, our EQ, our grit, our diplomas, our families, our practices, our awards, our skills, our accomplishments, even our faith are all gifts from God.

I love this passage about Moses and the veils:

*“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being **transformed** into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”*

– 2 Corinthians 3:16-18

The freedom and the transformation come from the Lord. Rest in that.

- 1) **How are you tempted to think of yourself more highly than you ought?**
- 2) **Have you been in a situation where you thought a role was beneath you?**
- 3) **Does thinking of yourself lead you to unhealthy comparisons with others?**
- 4) **How can you take your focus off yourself?**
- 5) **How can we participate in the transformation into His glory that the Lord is doing in us?**



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### *Where Do You Belong?*

*“For just as each of us has one body with many members,  
and these members do not all have the same function,  
so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*

– Romans 12:4-5

In Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome, he was asking for help from the western part of the Roman Empire. You see, Jesus had transformed Paul on the road to Damascus interrupting his Jewish Priestly assignment to persecute those belonging to “the Way” (Acts 9:1-16). Because many in Israel had failed to believe in the true Messiah, Jesus transformed Paul to begin a new life urging Gentiles to join him in being born again in Christ. He understood that Jesus had come to rescue both Jews and Gentiles through His death and resurrection, and that He invites everyone to belong to this newly created, worldwide family of believers.

Isn’t it wonderful to belong? Belonging is a sense of fitting-in or feeling accepted as a valuable member of a group. God created us with a natural drive to seek out and establish meaningful and profound relationships. A sense of belonging is crucial to our well-being, including our spiritual health.

Personally, I have not always felt that I “belonged”. Growing up, for example, I was self-conscious about my height. In my first-grade class picture, I was one of two tall girls standing in the back row next to our teacher. Lindy and I were the two tallest kids in our class (taller than the boys) and were drafted for basketball, volleyball, or other sports where height was an advantage. I continued to be self-conscious during those tender dating years when I was typically taller than most boys at the prom. But as I matured, I worried less about what people thought and realized that being tall could be an advantage. I could reach high shelves and most importantly in veterinary school, palpate large animals without standing on a bucket, and jump in the saddle of tall horses without a mounting block! Now, in my older and wiser years, Jesus tells me to focus on what He thinks (Ephesians 5:17).

Paul talks about a sense of belonging and forming one body in Christ. Whether we like a certain part of ourselves or not, we can’t discount a specific body part simply because we don’t think it belongs! We can take comfort in knowing that it was God who knit us together in our mother’s womb, and we should praise Him because we have been fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-14). You belong to him, and the Holy Spirit is within you. Oh, that God would help us believe and act on this promise.

Also, God did not create man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). He designed the universal church as His bride and all of us who are believers belong to Him. This reminds me of a time that I was traveling alone on business for two weeks in Rome, Italy, in preparation for an upcoming three-year assignment there. Although I was working with colleagues during the day, I was alone each evening and on the weekend. I work well alone and it did not bother me to be by myself....until Sunday came. I had searched and prayed the week prior for God to show me a church that my

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husband and I could join during our overseas assignment. There are hundreds of churches in the city Rome, so there were many choices. Then, God led my search to the Rome Baptist Church – honestly, I was intrigued by the name being Baptist myself (we later found out that the church was founded by Christians from Rome, Georgia). As I walked to the church on Sunday morning, I was surrounded by thousands of tourists visiting the Roman Forum and strolling the popular shopping district along via Del Corso. Although I was surrounded by crowds, I had a sense of loneliness. I felt as though I had little in common with the Sabbath vacationers. However, my feeling of seclusion immediately changed when I walked into the door of the Rome Baptist Church. Although I did not know a single soul in this church with members from 40-plus countries, the Holy Spirit gave me a strong sense of belonging. These people believed in Christ, as I did, and there was an instant aura of warmth as a fellow believer. As we sang familiar hymns in different languages, I thought, “this must be what heaven is like!” Since then, I treasure the opportunity to visit international churches. Each time that I do, the Holy Spirit welcomes me through fellow believers. Paul relayed this same message to the church in Corinth when he told them that, “*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it,*” 1 Corinthians 12:27. If we are in a relationship with Christ, we are in a relationship with each believer.

If you are reading this devotion, you are also a part of the body of Christian Veterinary Mission (CVM)! Your part may be prayer. Your part may be sharing the love of Christ in your school or workplace. Your part may be to serve on a short-term mission or as a cross-cultural fieldworker. Your part may be giving so others may go. Each of us belong and have a part to play. Go and be the church.

- 1) Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior so that you belong to Him?**
- 2) If Christ is in you, do you belong to a local church of fellow brothers and sisters?**
- 3) As a part of CVM, what roles does God want you to play – in prayer, service and giving?**



*Dr. Lee Myers has served in private practice, and many years with the Georgia Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Italy. She served as President of the U.S. Animal Health Association and President of the National Association of Food Hygiene Veterinarians. Together with her husband, Dr. Billy Myers, they have served as CVM Associates with Christian Vets in Europe, ambassadors for the University of Georgia CVF, and leaders for many CVM short-term mission trips to the Navajo and Apache Reservations. Dr. Lee transitioned into the CVM CEO role in early 2022.*

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### *You Are My Gifted Child*

*“However, since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them properly: if prophecy, in proportion to one’s faith; if service, in the act of serving; or the one who teaches, in the act of teaching; or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives, with generosity; the one who is in leadership, with diligence; the one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” -Romans 12:6-8*

If there be any comparison, let us compare what we as the Body of Christ can do together rather than without each other.<sup>1</sup> Compare what we can do by faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit, rather than in our flesh; Compare what we can do living as the Church, redeemed through Christ as light and salt in this fallen world.

Romans 12 speaks to our hearts about our personal responsibilities in sacrificial living and love. It’s a call to put theology to practice, as God’s unified family, not alone. If one suffers, all suffer.<sup>2</sup> It’s not an act of the will, but an act of worship. Worship that overflows from a surrendered and grateful heart, trusting His will is better than our will. God knew we needed a way out from the death penalty of sin.<sup>3</sup> So, He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for each one of us, so that we each may have eternal life by faith in what He has done.<sup>4</sup> Have you received this gift? Then live led by His Holy Spirit Whom, Jesus promised sealed you at the day of your salvation when you received His gift.<sup>5</sup> Live for an audience of One. Live loving Him and loving others, whom He created and loves.<sup>6</sup> The same power that raised Christ from the dead empowers you as a believer... Be encouraged to embrace this in action.<sup>7</sup> Live, loving as Christ loves us, first, right where we are.<sup>8</sup>

Live loving God and others by employing the Spiritual gifts God entrusted you with.<sup>9</sup> In Romans 12:6 *Gift* is translated *Charismata*, and *Charis* (Greek) is related to grace. So, these gifts are unmerited gifts of God’s grace. These gifts are not for our own benefit nor as symbols of spiritual power, but for the common good, building up the believers.<sup>10</sup> The Church is edified when each believer employs their gifts and in unity.<sup>11</sup> Uncover and utilize them! A jeweler *can* recognize various gems *after* becoming aquatinted with them! Encourage others to use their gifts by being able to recognize the gifts of the Spirit in other believers and point them out! Together Christ’s Church matures.<sup>12</sup> He gives the gifts, and we can take no credit.<sup>13</sup> While with every gift the Spirit has a sphere of service planned for you, He graciously and sovereignly gifted you.<sup>14</sup> Yet remember, these gifts used with great faith and great sacrifice without love, impact very little.<sup>15</sup> Graciously steward your gifts during your earthly time, for we will have perfection in Eternity.<sup>16</sup>

Are you convicted that each day is meant for living a sacrificial, worshipping life by knowing and employing your spiritual gifts? It changes the purpose of your day knowing you are sent forth equipped by the Holy Spirit for everyday ministry!

Embrace the Holy Spirit’s still, small voice through obedience in simple, ordinary ways to use your gifts.<sup>17</sup> Respond in prayerful conviction to use the gifts — Cast out expectations of convenience. Start by identifying heart inclinations that align with natural proficiencies. Do

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fellow believers state they observe a particular gift in you? Does a spiritual gift catch your eye? Maybe God has already given you its possession to discover... Seek to develop understanding of that gift! Notice in Romans 12 God's discussion of spiritual gifts immediately follows His call for a believer's dedication to sacrificial living? Perhaps stewarding spiritual gifts empowers one's sacrificial living. Will not your leg atrophy if you don't use it? So too, we are called to use our gifts.<sup>18</sup> Stewardship of one gift can lead to the discovery of another gift God has given you. Unemployed gifts squander the grace of God. Remember self-discontent of your spiritual gifts might be disguised criticism of how the Spirit employs His Church. Lastly, avoid confusing just attending church as stewarding your gift.<sup>19</sup> Consider what it would look like if attendance always employed your gift(s)? This call to action even embraces new believers (spiritual youth) to step out as 1 Timothy 4:12, 14 charges us to!

- 1) **As a believer in Christ, do you know any of the 19 spiritual gifts (see Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 4:11)? Which ones have you received?**
- 2) **Try one of these testing sites for some insights on your Spiritual Gifts: [GiftsTest.com](http://GiftsTest.com); [SpiritualGiftsTest.com](http://SpiritualGiftsTest.com); [Lifeway.com](http://Lifeway.com); [APEST](http://APEST); [FiveFoldMinistry.com](http://FiveFoldMinistry.com)**
- 3) **Find three other believers who know you well. Ask do they know any of their spiritual gifts? Speak out what passions and strengths you see in them. Seek out a few passages of Scripture on these gifts. Pray and seek the Lord's confirmation. Hold one another accountable to identify and begin to explore or further develop at least one spiritual gift to serve the Kingdom!**
- 4) **Ask a pastor to preach a series on *all* the Spiritual Gifts to encourage believers in your community! It may help put into action the Saints already filled with godly manpower, edifying the Church.**



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**Footnotes:** 1) Ephesians 4:11-16, 2) 1 Corinthians 12:26, 3) Romans 3:23, 6:23, 4) John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9, 5) Ephesians 4:30, 6) 1 John 4:12, 19-21, 7) Romans 8:11-13, 8) 1 John 4:19, 9) 1 Corinthians 12:11, 10) 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11) 1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:11-16, 12) Romans 8:6-8, 13) Ephesians 4:7, 1 Corinthians 12:18-20, 14) 1 Corinthians 12:11, 15) 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 16) 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, 17) 1 Timothy 6:20-21, 18) 1 Timothy 4:14-15, 19) 1 Peter 4:10.

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### *Sincere Love*

*“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.  
Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”*

-Romans 12:9-10

The verses above are beautiful, with a call to love others. It's often easy to see these verses and think, ok, I can do that... but then life hits and you realize that sometimes it's not so easy to love everyone around you. So how do we do it? When someone wrongs you or even when someone is just annoying you, how do you love them and love them *sincerely*?

We all have examples in our lives of people that we struggle to love with a sincere love. Admit it, right now I am guessing that someone comes to mind for you. I confess that someone came to mind for me. How do we overcome our own human emotions of hurt and anger and pain to love in the way that God is calling us to love?

Scripture poses the challenge or the question, but it is also the place where we can find the answer. Even in this verse we can begin to see the answer of how to love with a sincere love. The verse says to “hate what is evil; cling to what is good”, so perhaps that is our first step. To hate or flee from evil and to hold tightly or “cling” to the things that are good.

I think it is easier to know what is evil, but sometimes it's hard to know what is “good.” How do I know what is good? As I sat and pondered this question, I could come up with lots of things in my mind that I think are good, but how do I know what God thinks is good and how do I live that out? Again, the answers can be found in Scripture.

Luke 18:19 says,

*“No one is good-except God alone.”*

We must first recognize that we are not good, God is. So, when reading Romans 12:9 when it says to “*cling to what is good*” it is really saying to cling to God. When we struggle to love with a sincere love, we must hate or flee from evil and cling to God!

In order to pursue what is good we must understand that God is good and cling to Him. Now, as we meet with God and follow his Word, we begin to see what he says is good. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 it says to “*encourage one another.*” In Isaiah 1:17 it says to do good by defending the oppressed and taking up the case of the fatherless and the widow. Philippians 2:3-4 tells us to do nothing out of “*selfish ambition*” but to be humble “*and value others above yourselves.*” Throughout Scripture we can find instructions on how to see what is good and how to cling to God. These are just a few of the verses that I happened to find in my relatively quick search. When we pursue Him and trust Him, He shows us what is good.

Now that we know He is good and that he provides insight into things that are good, perhaps the task of loving others sincerely can feel less daunting. When I am struggling to love that

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### *Sincere Love*

person that comes to mind (or any person really), I know the first place I need to go is to Him, to be reminded of His goodness. Then I can think about ways that He calls me to be good and it shifts my perspective. I don't deserve sincere love, but I have it from Him. So, if I have it (undeservedly), shouldn't I also be able to give it? It is a daily practice, learning to love others sincerely. It doesn't happen naturally for me, but I am grateful for a God that has patience with me as I learn how to daily cling to Him so that I can have love and grace for those around me.

- 1) **How do you love those that love doesn't come as naturally? Have you ever developed a good friendship out of a relationship that had a rough start?**
  
- 2) **1 Thessalonians 5:11 says to “*encourage one another.*” Do you remember a time that someone encouraged you, and it really made a difference? Consider sharing or reaching out to make sure that person knows you appreciated their encouragement.**
  
- 3) **1 John 4:19 states that “*We love because He first loved us.*” We are unconditionally loved, so we must then turn and love others. What are some ways that we can show God's love to our classmates, co-workers, and people we see every day?**



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## Transformed

### *Transformed with Zeal*

*“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.” -Romans 12:11*

This time we'd surely caught him red-handed. Our troublesome local veterinary officer from the Ministry of Agriculture had, among other things, been stealing medicine from our little ten-foot tin-roofed shipping container we used for a vet clinic in the remote Ethiopian bush. So far, we'd never caught him; the medicine was there when he came, and gone when he left. Repeatedly.

But this time, Garisho whispered to me that he'd just seen him do it. Or so I thought.

Full of righteous zeal for animal health and justice, I fervently lit up with the best scold in Amharic I've ever personally been privileged to hear. From anyone. Words were just rolling from my lips in tsunamis. I never guessed I was that fluent. It was glorious, unforgettable! Pure awesome. Normally I'd be rehearsing a day ahead to figure out how I would say something in stumbling second-grade Amharic. But this! This was without warning, spur of the moment adrenaline-packed, zeal-fueled, fervent fluency!

Garisho and the vet officer watched wide-eyed until I ran down, like a clock coming unwound. Hey, even at lower altitudes you eventually run out of oxygen; even righteous anger has to pause for a gasp of air. I could tell they were impressed with my tsunami; I peered at them standing still as mice in the shade of the tin roof. What did I expect? Maybe the veterinary officer would fall to his knees and cry out with tears of repentance, promising to replace four-fold everything he'd taken.

Didn't happen. Instead, in the postlude of my outburst it was Garisho's soft voice I heard. "Uh, Dr. Fred, you misunderstood. It wasn't him." Ooof. Double Ooof. I had just wasted my most fluent, fervent moment in the entire Amharic-speaking universe. I humbly apologized.

Mr. Troublesome was subdued, abashed but gracious; and amazingly after that, God turned my mistake for good. For one thing, even though falsely accused in that instance, he never subsequently stole again; and from then on, we found ourselves as friends instead of contestants. He invited me to his wedding; I visited when he was sick.

God worked a miracle to help me love my ex-enemy. He had turned my misplaced zeal, somehow, into friendship.

I'm always amazed at how the Lord uses our mistakes, when surely, He should use our strengths, right?! It's kinda hard to be proud of myself when I blow it, and He turns it for good. It's like I miss my shot, badly; and He takes the offensive rebound for a slam dunk.

*Keep your spiritual fervor...* Picture a red-hot ember of charcoal tumbling away from the fire. It loses its glowing heat and grows cold, colorless.

So how do we keep our spiritual fervor? I love the story of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28. Why don't you pause and read it now?

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### *Transformed with Zeal*

Apollos was a learned Jew with a “thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.” That probably means he had memorized the entire Old Testament—as a child. He spoke with fervor, with passionate intensity—but though he had only been with John the Baptist, he spoke accurately about Jesus! That’s impressive. I spoke with fervor; but I was inaccurate.

More than that-- he was teachable when Priscilla and Aquilla explained things more fully to him. He was zealous as he vigorously proved that Jesus was the Messiah. He knew apologetics. His faith was firm.

The more we get into Scripture and really learn it—the more the Holy Spirit teaches us. Some of my most fervent sermons have been after getting excited about what the Lord is showing me by His Spirit through passages I’ve read and memorized. The Word keeps us spiritually fervent.

To my shame, I think I used to have an unconscious assumption that the main reason I attended Bible studies was to impart my awesome theological understanding to others—who surely didn’t know as much about it as I. So wrong!

As I’ve gotten older, I repeatedly find that after I have meditated on the passage, prayerfully mining every bit of wisdom to be found... I go to the Bible study ready to impart... only to discover I learn even more from others—from how the Lord spoke to them in the same passage! Things that in all my grand wisdom had never occurred to me. So cool. Fellowship with believers and being humbly teachable helps keep us spiritually fervent.

May the Lord grant that each of us follows the pattern of Apollos. May He enable us to never lose our zeal but keep our spiritual fervor, serving Him. And remember, our God is so great He can even use our mistakes!

- 1) How do you go about “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor”?**
- 2) What’s working for you getting into the Word every day? What’s not working?**
- 3) Where are you finding encouragement in fellowship?**
- 4) In addition to pondering the Word of God and fellowship, what keeps you close to the Source Fire, glowing with spiritual fervency?**



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## Transformed

### *Weathering the Worry*

*“Rejoice in our confident hope, be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.”*

*-Romans 12:12, NLT*

When friends or colleagues ask how you are doing, what is your response? Quickly we often say, “Oh hey! I’m fine. How are you?” The daily grind of studying for exams, seeing office calls from a packed appointment list, or driving to the next farm while slamming down a cold bologna sandwich is a way of life in our profession. The world around us spins so quickly in the daily hustle and bustle. But under the surface of our fast greeting, worry and anxiety often lurk and quietly consume our hearts. As followers of Christ, Romans chapter 12 calls us to transform the way we live and love.

As humans, we struggle with worry. We are worried about time spent away from our families, worried about student debt, and worried that we won’t be able to find an associate. This worry produces anxiousness and discontentment in our hearts. Romans 12:12 reminds us that we do not have to worry as the world does, what an encouragement!

When we transform our minds through prayer and meditation on God’s Word, we can **rejoice in our confident hope, be patient in times of trouble, and remember to keep on praying.**

What is our confident hope? How we each answer this question is integral to how we face the challenges that meet us daily. *Titus 2:13* reminds us that “...we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.” That is our hope! It is not blissful optimism; it is a promise found over and over in the Word of God. Jesus will return! He has defeated sin and death on the cross! The victory belongs to Christ! So, “we have this hope as a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls.” *Hebrews 6:19.*

If this is our starting point when facing darkness, it is cause for great rejoicing!

As much as this joy is part of our lives, we know all too well that problems and distress await us on this side of Heaven. As veterinary professionals, we not only experience personal hardship, but we carry those burdens for our clients, classmates, and the animals we treat. It is so hard to be patient in times of trouble! We are human, we want to fix it, solve it, and move on with our lives.

The Greek word for “patient” in this verse is *hupomenó*. In English, it means to remain, to persevere, and to endure. These translations make it even harder to consider being patient! Why should we endure?

We certainly cannot rely on our own strength to stay strong and patient during times of trouble. As followers of Christ, we have the Holy Spirit living in us. When we choose to endure, the Holy Spirit fills us with God’s grace to carry on! We deny our human tendency to run like a scared rabbit. God, in His infinite grace, walks with us through the trial.

A church marquis sign once read: “Don’t pray for a lighter load, pray for a stronger back.” The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to stay, endure, and carry the load through our trial.

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### *Weathering the Worry*

Persevering during times of affliction is a heavy burden but Jesus' words here nudge us to remember that His yoke is light. *"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) If we are so full of this joyous hope, we **can** continue through life's certain trials!

Our final charge in this verse: Keep on praying. Other Bible translations say, "faithful in prayer," or "continuing steadfastly in prayer."

Prayer is how we have direct communication with the Creator of the universe. What a gracious gift the Father has given us! In daily life though, has prayer become a less than exciting, one-way communication to God with seemingly no response? While considering CVM's theme of "Transform" this year, one of the best ways to renew our minds is to allow the Holy Spirit to transform the way we pray.

As we read and meditate on God's Word, we can pray the scriptures back to Him. We are praying God's thoughts – His agenda, not ours!

Are you facing persecution in your practice or on your campus? Here is one example of praying through God's Word. Consider praying these verses to the Lord:

*But I am trusting you, O Lord,  
saying, "You are my God!"  
My future is in your hands.  
Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly.  
Let your favor shine on your servant.  
In your unfailing love, rescue me. (Psalm 31:14-16)*

This intentional prayer will stay with you and His word will be in your heart. As Corrie Ten Boom said: "Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?"

- 1) How can you be joyful, patient, and faithful in a current situation you are facing?**
- 2) Recall a trial in your life. Give glory to God by remembering how He revealed Himself to you during that time.**
- 3) Does prayer guide each step of your day? Where in your daily routine can you be more intentional about praying?**



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## Transformed

### *Have You Loved a Stranger Today?*

*“Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”*

- Romans 12:13-14

As we read these verses our minds can be drawn to the great need around us, the time and resource costs of hospitality and the difficulty of being a blessing even (especially) with difficult people. It can be overwhelming to think that we have a role to play not only in our own transformation as followers of Christ, but also in the transformation of the world around us as we desire to see God’s Kingdom come (Matthew 6:10). This can lead to analysis paralysis: considering all the needs and freezing instead of engaging in this transformation process. I pray that as we look at these verses today, you are reinvigorated to action.

This is a very practical section of Scripture. In my Bible, the subheading over Romans 12: 9-21 is “Love in Action”. In these verses we see the transformative effects that mercy (12:1) and grace (12:3) should have on our lives because we believe that faith without works is not (living) faith (James 2:26). Let’s take a closer look at these verses.

*Share with the Lord’s people who are in need.* As believers, we can be confident that God will meet our daily needs (Matthew 6:11). One way that God meets his people’s needs is through the active participation of other believers. You and I are the hands and feet of Jesus.

It is important to both look for ways to share with those in need and to reach out when you are the one in need. In our culture that values extreme individualism and taking care of yourself, it can be difficult to admit when you are in need. What if, by admitting that need, you were actually giving someone else the opportunity to grow in obedience to Christ, as you grow in your trust of his care and provision for you?

*Practice hospitality.* This might seem like a reiteration of the previous statement but practicing hospitality in this context becomes more nuanced if we look at this verse in the original Greek. The root word of “practice” is “to pursue” and a literal translation of hospitality would translate as “love of strangers” which we can see if we break it down:

Hospitality = Philoxenia “philos” beloved friend + “xenia” strangers
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So, another way to look at this verse would be *pursue a love of strangers*. This now becomes a progression from the previous verse. *First*, look out for the needs of your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *then* continue to look for opportunities to love others (strangers) around you who are in need.

It is also important to note here that Jesus demonstrated hospitality without a house and without a salary. These are not requirements of hospitality. When we see hospitality as “a love of strangers” we can see that being hospitable does not have a salary (or house size)

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### *Have You Loved a Stranger Today?*

requirement, but a heart requirement. Jesus' heart was attuned to the needs of those around him and, as his followers, our hearts should be as well.

Wouldn't it be convenient if this message ended right here? How much easier it would be if we could focus our care on our friends and even strangers, but Paul's message continues one step further.

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* Blessing is a significant theme in Scripture and here we see that theme extended not just to those who are easy to bless, but to those who persecute us. This verse challenges us with the ultimate test of our transformed state and it's not an easy one: loving those who seek harm for us. We receive strength for this task when we remember that we were once enemies of God (Romans 5:10) until we were reconciled to him through Jesus.

The reality is this, through these verses we learn that God's people are meant to be a blessing to all people. As we practice hospitality, we are transformed to be more like our Heavenly Father whose love extends to both friend and enemy alike.

- 1) **Hospitality can look different through all the seasons of your life. What do you think is holding you back from practicing biblical hospitality? From being a blessing to those who persecute you?**
  
- 2) **How can you shake analysis paralysis today and practice love in action?**
  - a. **Do you have a Brother or Sister in Christ around you who needs help meeting their basic needs?**
  - b. **Do you need to make space in your life to "pursue" the love and care of strangers?**
  - c. **Do you have an enemy who needs to be blessed?**

**Feeling like you don't have enough to offer? Read Matthew 14:13-21 and remember that God uses what we have to be a blessing to those around us, no matter how small the offering.**



*Rachel graduated from Warner Pacific University with a BS in Business Administration in 2007 while working in non-profit management. She went on to teach 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade in Mexico City for a year. She met and married husband Daniel Graham and they moved to Soroti, Uganda in 2012 where they served for 9 years with CVM. Rachel and her family recently transitioned from Soroti back to Portland, OR. Currently she serves as CVM's Fieldworker Support Staff, where she is combining her love of spreadsheets, her penchant for witty emails, and her desire to see God's name proclaimed to the nations. Daniel and Rachel have one son, Nathan, who is 9 years old. Email: [rgraham@cvm.org](mailto:rgraham@cvm.org)*

## Transformed

*Coming Alongside – In Joy and In Sorrow*

*“Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep.  
As far as it depends on you, live peaceably with everyone.  
Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”  
-Romans 12:15-16, ESV*

Transformed. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as “a thorough or dramatic change in the form, appearance, or character of.” There’s a lot to take in about living a transformed life for Christ – a life of dramatically changed character – in these two short verses.

*“Rejoice with those who rejoice”* – this part sounds easy, but is it? I mean, if I’m honest, I don’t always do so well embracing other people in their joy. Things like self-pity, envy, and unhealthy comparisons get in the way. Sometimes it would be easier to just forget to acknowledge them. But as believers we are a body, and Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12:26 that *“if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”* Coming alongside others in joy and in sorrow nurtures empathy, and empathy nurtures the community which God intended, both for our comfort and for our growth.

What I find, without fail, is that rejoicing in another person’s good or success actually builds us both up, like Paul says. Joy is infectious, it tends to expand and multiply, and unselfishly celebrating others builds community, brings glory to God, and benefits us all.

*“Weep with those who weep”*. I understand the value of this action in a way that I wish I didn’t. You see, I have lost a child. My daughter, Thizbe, a vibrant first-year vet student with her whole life of animal care and missions ahead of her, died of a sudden cardiac arrest. It was April of 2020. One minute she was her joyful, athletic self, out for a run before settling in to study for finals, and the next minute she was on life support in the ICU.

It’s impossible to describe the shock, the depths of darkness and pain which followed. In the weeks and months after we lost Thizbe, there were very few things people said that brought actual comfort. It was sort of like living underwater. Most dialogue was inaudible to my grieving mind and heart. It was muffled, garbled, bubbling noise.

But once in a while, someone would break through – with a call, a visit, a message. Not to remind my family to be grateful for all we still have, or to attempt to cheer us out of our grief, or to ponder the possible reasons why God took our girl to heaven early, but to simply cry with us – sharing in our sorrow, vulnerable to our pain. That’s when I felt Jesus’ presence. That’s when I sensed the comfort of His words from Matthew 11:28, *“Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden. And I will give you rest.”* And that’s when I caught glimpses that maybe, just maybe, we could survive this.

It really shouldn’t surprise me. I mean, coming alongside is what Jesus himself did at Lazarus’ grave in John 11:35 – He wept. Deeply moved by the sorrow of Mary and others, He entered into the community of sadness and grief. He knew Lazarus would be raised, but in that moment

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*Coming Alongside – In Joy and In Sorrow*

He mourned. He didn't try to fix their feelings, rather He offered comfort through his empathy. I want to be that kind of friend.

*“As far as it depends on you, live peaceably with everyone. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”* Since Thizbe died, I can say I have a new awareness that relationships are precious, and time is short. I knew the words before, but now they're real. Unforgiveness, pride, blame, judgement – these only steal our peace and hurt our testimony. James 3:17 reminds us *“...the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.”*

Among the most beautiful things about my daughter's life is the impact she had on others. She was by no means perfect, but Thizbe lived in joy and peace in her relationships. And, she actively looked for ways to share God's kingdom with friends and strangers, here and now. She sought out the nervous new student, the one without a lab partner, the person alone at the party, the elderly relative, the less confident professor. She *“associated with the lowly”* – anyone who needed building up – and then did that. I believe this to be her lasting ministry, communicating more about the Jesus she loved and served than any lecture on theology could.

Each of us is a work in progress. And none of us knows how long we have to live the life we are called to live for Christ. May we use today to nurture empathy, to live peaceably, to build others up – our testimony and our life being ever transformed for the glory of God.

- 1. What gets in the way of you being able to rejoice with those who rejoice?**
- 2. How have you experienced community in times of your own pain and sorrow? Who needs you to come alongside them in their pain now?**
- 3. What do *living peaceably with everyone* and *associating with the lowly* look like in your life?**



*As CVM Canada's Executive Director, Lisa fulfills the role of Canada Region Rep serving in student ministry, workplace ministry, and supporting and mentoring members toward short-term and long-term missions. Prior to joining CVM, Lisa and her family spent 15 years in southeast Asia, serving in community development and refugee ministry. She is passionate about promoting and growing the reach of CVM Canada in the years ahead. Email: [lbalzer@cvm.org](mailto:lbalzer@cvm.org)*

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*Do Right, Let The Chips Fall Where They May*

It was a busy Saturday afternoon for my wife, Alicia, and me. We were hosting a cookout as part of our church ministry. In the south, we fry fish. And we take pride in it! Granted, anything deep fried is not good for your cholesterol level, but by golly, if I fry it, it's going to taste good.

I had prepared enough food for the 50+ college students that were beginning to arrive. Alicia was busy in the kitchen making homemade ice cream, and her famous Four-Layer Delight which is just absolute goodness in the form of whipped cream and chocolate pudding on a pecan base.

It was hectic, a little stressful, but we were smiling. That's when my cellphone rang. At the time, I owned two veterinary clinics. According to caller ID, on the other end of the phone was one of my best clients who professionally shows dogs. I knew that one of her dogs was near-term pregnant, and she had a waiting list of people lined up to buy one of the puppies. My immediate fear was that her dog was in dystocia, and there was no way I could do anything about it. At least, I knew that if I left my wife to finish cooking while I did a C-section that my marriage likely would not last!

So the next dilemma I had was whether to answer the phone at all. My voicemail gave the number of an emergency clinic, but hoping for the best, and thinking maybe I could give some advice, I answered the phone.

"No good deed goes unpunished." The dog was in dystocia and the client was not happy that I would not meet her immediately to do a C-section. I explained that I simply could not perform the procedure. She angrily hung up the phone and rushed the dog to the emergency clinic. None of the puppies survived the ordeal.

A couple of weeks later, I got a certified letter from the State Veterinary Board. The client had submitted my name to the state to have my license revoked. This incident was unfortunate, and it hurt my soul that this happened to this client. I had done nothing legally or ethically wrong, but I had to spend the next few months in legal proceedings to prove it.

*"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." -Romans 12: 17-18, NIV*

I can promise you that my immediate temptation to the certified letter was to react in anger. I wanted to call the client and give her a piece of my mind. Not only had she turned me in, but she turned the other veterinarians in the area too, because none of them were available either. The other vets encouraged me to write a letter signed by all of them telling the client she was in the wrong and should be ashamed of her actions. It was only through the grace of God, that I did not write that letter.

Instead, I sent a conciliatory letter expressing my sorrows and again explained the unfortunate set of circumstances that led to the event. I apologized, even though I had done nothing

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*Do Right, Let The Chips Fall Where They May*

wrong, and asked her to forgive me. The sole reason I did this was to uphold my witness because I was sure she was not a believer. She did not forgive me. And never came back to the clinic again.

Now, fast forward several years. I had since sold the clinics and began teaching at the local university. Due to a merger at the school, I got a new boss as dean of our department. The new dean was the husband of the client that tried to have my license revoked.

What do you think would have happened, had I not acted the Christian way a few years earlier? I likely would have been fired. In fact, I wasn't sure that it wouldn't happen anyway. But, I had come to peace with it either way. "Do right, and let the chips fall where they may." That's a piece of advice I give often, so I had better take my own advice when it came to this situation.

I didn't lose my job, and it took a few years. But now, I count this couple as friends. They are still not professing Christians, but I have gone out of my way to genuinely display Christ's love for them. Pray for them, would you?

- 1) **Has there ever been a time when you repaid evil for evil? What was the outcome? Do you regret it now?**
- 2) **Has there ever been a time that even though you weren't obligated to do so, you determined to do the right thing? What was the outcome? Do you regret it?**
- 3) **Have you ever done the right thing only to be punished for it? Do you regret it?**
- 4) **"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." Romans 8:17, NIV**
- 5) **Remember that Heaven awaits, Christian. We will spend a lot more time up there than we will spend down here. Keep striving.**



*Dr. Rocky Lindsey (LSU '98) and his wife, Alicia, live in southeast Arkansas. They have two teenage sons, Isaac and Jonah. Dr. Lindsey owned and operated two busy small animal practices until 2015. Even though the practices weren't for sale, the Lord led the Lindsey's to sell their businesses, then led Dr. Lindsey to teach at a local university. Dr. Lindsey serves as the South Central Region Representative for CVM. Email: [rlindsey@cvm.org](mailto:rlindsey@cvm.org)*



## Transformed

### *How to Love a Thief*

*“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

- Romans 12:19-21

My wife, Rachel, and I lived in Uganda from 2012-2021. Over these years, we spent many wonderful Christmas seasons with our community there. Every year though, we were always reminded by our Ugandan friends to be extra vigilant since the incidence of property theft always increased in December as some people became increasingly desperate for a little extra income leading up to the Christmas holiday. Only one time in those 9 years did we experience someone trying to break into our compound. A few weeks before our very first Ugandan Christmas, someone cut through the fence surrounding our house. We assume that our trusty pair of dogs succeeded in scaring off the wannabe intruders and nothing was actually taken from us. We heard reports from neighbors that multiple homes were targeted over the following days. A week later, we heard a report that the thieves were discovered hiding in an abandoned house a few blocks away from us. With the hoard of stolen items being the only evidence needed, a crowd formed and quickly beat the thieves to death, an unfortunately common form of mob justice in Uganda.

Verses 19-21 of Romans 12 instruct us to allow God to advocate on our behalf, defend in our place, and judge where judgement is due. While our perspective is often limited, and even clouded by selfish desires, we can trust that God’s perspective is not. God judges in infinite wisdom, based in his holiness, and expressed in his wrath. While the idea of God’s wrath is a divine characteristic that is uncomfortable for many to contemplate, it is a reality and vengeance certainly does belong to the Lord (Deuteronomy 32:35). This is consistent with God’s statement in Exodus 34:6-7 that he *“will by no means clear the guilty”*. While this is another seemingly harsh statement, it should be remembered that the context of this affirmation is that God is also merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love, and offering forgiveness of sins. We can certainly trust this God of great love and compassion to stand in our defense and trust his ability to judge the offending thieves better than any mob that thinks they know best.

We often use our time and energy to defend or justify ourselves to others and to make sure that our enemies are suffering what they ‘deserve’. Instead, how are we called to live as we navigate this broken and sinful world? Jesus instructs us to love the Lord our God and the people around us with all our effort, attention, and ability (Matthew 22:37-40). This practical demonstration of love and concern for the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual needs of others will be the result of obedience in following Christ’s teaching (John 13:35), will be

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### *How to Love a Thief*

evidence of the Spirit at work within us (Galatians 5:22-23), and is the normal and expected response to the salvation we have received by grace (Matthew 25:34-40).

How is it possible to live this kind of radically transformed lifestyle, to respond to those thieves with love rather than hate, to not *“be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”*? It is only possible by remembering that we are saved by and serve a king who has already overcome all the powers of evil in this world, putting evil to shame, and triumphing over it at the cross (Colossians 2:15). Some days this comes easily, but often we must make the conscious choice to live according to the reality of Christ’s victory over evil rather than concentrating on the struggles we see day by day. Let us not follow the mob in reacting to the troubles and offenses of this world, but rather be transformed by fixing our eyes on Jesus who teaches us the humility needed to turn the other cheek and pray for those who cause us heartache (Matthew 5:38-45).

- 1. Think of a time that you were wronged or faced injustice, why might it be easier to respond according to the ways of the world (following the mob) rather than responding to evil with good?**
- 2. Sometimes we may not be able to identify ‘enemies’ in our life, but more subtly you may have someone who is actively or passively challenging for you to interact with. How might it look for you to offer ‘food’ and ‘drink’ to someone such as this?**
- 3. This passage quotes Proverbs 25:21 in saying that treating an enemy in a loving way will *“heap burning coals on his head”*. What might this statement be referring to? What are ways that we might expect an enemy to react to our loving response? Should the way that they will potentially react influence our attitude and actions towards them?**
- 4. What might be the consequences if we let our responses to others/situations be overcome by the evil perpetrated against us?**
- 5. How does your relationship with Christ and the fact that you are saved by grace transform how you respond to others?**



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