

Harmonious Christian Living
Romans 12:15-16

How is your Compassion today?

A man put up a sign in his yard that read: "**Puppies for sale.**"

A young boy came to inquire. *"Please, mister," he said, "I'd like to buy one of your puppies if they don't cost too much."*

"Well, son, they're **\$25 each.**"

The boy looked crushed. *"I've only got two dollars and five cents. Could I see them anyway?"*

"Of course. Maybe we can work something out," said the man.

"I heard that one has a bad leg," he said.

"Yes, I'm afraid she'll be crippled for life."

"Well, that's the puppy I want. Could I pay for her a little at a time?"

The man responded, "but she'll always have a limp."

Smiling bravely, the boy **pulled up one pant leg, revealing a brace.** *"I don't walk good either."* then, looking at the puppy sympathetically, he continued, *"I guess she'll need a lot of love and help. I sure did. It's not so easy being crippled."*

"Here, take her," said the man. "I know you'll give her a good home. And just forget the money."

When we get to the point, that we realize we too are crippled, then we will demonstrate sympathy and compassion for others in their pain and suffering. (SermonCentral.com, Gene Edwards).

Today, our study is from Romans 12:15-16 *"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited."*

In this passage, we see **5 additional imperatives for living as a Spirit filled community.** We will divide these five imperatives into two sections. In the first two commands here in verse 15, we will see an emphasis on genuine Christian empathy. In the second three commands, we will see an emphasis on our mind and the importance of a having humble attitude in the way we think about others.

Seek Harmony Through Empathizing with Others (Rejoicing and Weeping). 12:15

There is poetry in the original Greek. (χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων, κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων)

χαίρειν (kairēn) is the root of the English name, "Karen" If that's your name, it means Joy! Paul instructs us to rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who

mourn. There is a time for both.

(Ecclesiastes 3:4) *"a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,"*

(Proverbs 25:20) *"Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart."*

(Proverbs 17:5) *"He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished."*

Mourning was an important cultural and personal emotion throughout all of scripture.

- Abraham mourned for Sarah (Gen. 23:2)
- Israel for Aaron (Num. 20:29)
- **Israel mourned thirty days when Moses died** (Deuteronomy 34:8) *"The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over."*
- Mary and Martha for Lazarus (John 11)
- The Church mourned for Stephen (Acts 8:2), etc. examples from Easton's Bible dictionary. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

There were PROFESSIONAL MOURNERS in Israel.

- (Jeremiah 9:17) - in a prophesy concerning Judah's judgment, the Lord declares. *"This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Consider now! Call for the wailing women to come; send for the most skillful of them." These wailing women were the professional mourners called to assist a grieving family when a loved one died.*
- In the NT, before Jesus resurrected Jairus' daughter we find professional mourners present as well. *"When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd," (Matthew 9:23)*

Let's look at The SOURCE of this kind of Christian Empathy

First, LOVE for OTHERS motivates us. (Romans 12:10) *"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves."*

Second, God's CARE for YOU provides the lessons you need to help others. It is through our own suffering, and God's comfort to us through our suffering, that we learn to comfort others. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."*

Third, we are motivated toward empathy when we remember that we are **ONE BODY**. When one part of the body hurts, the entire body hurts. Rejoicing with those who rejoice, mourning with those who mourn makes complete sense because in the body of Christ, we are not competing. We share equally in the blessings and the trials. (1 Corinthians 12:25-26) *"so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."*

But before we go any further, remember that there are Hindrances of Christian Empathy

- **Bitterness.** Garth Brooks has a song with these lyrics: *“We bury the hatchet but leave the handle stickin’ out; we’re always diggin’ up things we should forget about”* Bitterness will prevent you from rejoicing with those who rejoice.
- **JEALOUSY.** Do we really rejoice when others rejoice? Our natural, selfish instinct when something good happens to another person is to ask, “what will I gain as a benefit?” Sometimes we might question, “why didn’t this happen to me?” The opposite of EMPATHY is JEALOUSY.
- **SELFISHNESS.** Sometimes we cannot rejoice with those who rejoice because we are too busy to listen.

Bruce Hurt (Preceptaustin.org) writes, “Empathy is the capacity for sharing vicariously the feelings and emotions of others. Our tendency even as believers is to be jealous when others rejoice, and to pass them by when they mourn. God’s will is that His children become a family where the joys of one become the joys of all and the pain of one is gladly shared by all the others.”

A humorous story I once heard reminds comes to mind. It tells of a WIFE who complains to her husband, “you never listen to me. You’re always trying to FIX my problem instead of listening. Sometimes I just want you to LOOK ME in the EYES, GIVE ME A HUG, and TELL ME THAT EVERYTHING will be ALL RIGHT.”

The next day, the wife returns after leaving the house crying. She is upset. She tells her husband that she has a flat tire on her car, and she’s going to be late for her appointment.

Mindful of the previous day’s lesson, her husband STOPPED what he was doing. LOOKED HER in the EYES, Asked her ABOUT HER FEELINGS, GAVE HER A HUG, TOLD HER EVERYTHING WOULD BE All right, and left for work!

Remember that there is a time to put action to your sympathy!

Our Daily Bread tells the story of **a little boy with a big heart.** His next-door neighbor was an older gentleman whose **wife had recently died.** When the youngster **saw the elderly man crying, he climbed up onto his lap and simply sat there.**

Later, **his mother asked the boy what he had said** to their saddened neighbor. **“Nothing,”** the child replied. **“I just helped him cry.”**

Empathy means that we allow The tragedies and triumphs of others a greater significance than our own agendas.

We find our second major topic **contained in Romans 12:16 Seek Harmony Through Humility.**

“Live in harmony with one another. “

There are three commands in verse 16. One is positive, 2 negative. All center around the word think, which is contained three times in the original language, although we somewhat lose this emphasis in our English translations.

Romans 12:16 in the **NAS reads “Be of the same mind toward one another”**

This is very familiar to (Philippians 2:1-2). In fact, we find the same Greek words for thinking alike (like minded) the word for joy contained in Philippians 2:1-2. *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my **joy** (χαρὰν) complete by being **like-minded** (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖ), having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.”*

What then are we to be like minded about? If you read further in Philippians 2, the answer is that we are to be like minded, having the same mind, or attitude of Christ! The emphasis in Philippians 2, and Romans 12:16 is the Christ like characteristic of humility and concern for The needs of others above ourselves.

The second command in verse 16 is expressed negatively.

“Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position”

The word “Associate with” means “to lead away or carry off with, be led or carried away by cometh (BAGD). It is used in Gal 2:13 “even Barnabas was led astray”

This refers to people of lowly position.

the HUMBLES

Moffett describes it as “associate with humble folk” (Moffett, quoted in BAGD)

People “of position, power and esteem *of low position, poor, lowly, undistinguished, of no account*

The word associate has a more literal meaning of being led by someone. *“Do not think high of yourself, but **be led by the humble**”* (BAGD)

Mary, the mother of Jesus was this kind of humble person. In her prayer, she says, *“He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the **humble.**”* (Luke 1:52). This is one of the few NT references that this word for humility is used.

Are you willing to be led by the humble?

1st Century examples would include

- A SLAVE
- A POOR man or woman

- Uneducated
- A Child

James makes this point vividly clear chapter 2.

" My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!" (James 2:1-13)

Do not be Conceited. Again, the key word for "think" is used here. NAS = "Do not be wise in your own estimation." Paul earlier in this same chapter expressed the same idea when he wrote, *"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 measure of faith God has given you."* (Romans 12:3)

It would be a wonderful BLESSING if a local church was filled with those who have COMPASSION.

Sharing joy

Sharing sorrow

living in Harmony

being led by the humble

keeping our heads from getting too big

A sorrow shared is

But half a trouble.

A joy that's shared is

A joy made double. Quoted by Bruce Hurt, Preceptaustin.org