

Transformed: A Study of Romans 12 For Teen Girls

Lesson 1

The book of Romans contains a lot of complicated theological and philosophical elements. When studying through it, it can take a lot of work to find what Paul is getting at from a concrete point of view. However, if you know how to find the practical information, there are a few chapters that are absolutely packed with it. You can find these by looking at some of the Greek words Paul writes with. In Greek, the New Testament's original language, certain types of words can be used to convey specific ideas.

What we're looking for is what are called imperative commands. These are the most direct, strongest commands in the language, and we should pay attention when a writer uses them. Romans 12, 13, and 14 have many of these that we'll dive into, but first, let's look at one passage in particular.

Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

The first two commands Paul uses are "do not be conformed" and "be transformed." To understand how to do

that though, we're going to have to look closely at the list of commands Paul gives us through the course of the next couple of chapters. This begins in verse 14.

Read Romans 12:14.

List the two commands given in this verse.

During the time that Paul was writing the book of Romans, and these letters were being circulated, Christians and the Church were beginning to be persecuted in many ways. When these people became Christians, many of them gave up absolutely everything. Even their close friends and family who did not want to become Christians were mocking them, making fun of them, and doing terrible things to them because of what they believed. Even the closest people they had quickly began to persecute them. That's why the commands given here: bless those who persecute you and do not curse them are so important.

Read Matthew 10:34-36

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What does Jesus say will happen to those who follow Him?

Here, Jesus talks about the unrest that would come for the Church. He talks about how families would be torn apart because of their faith and how enemies would be made out of peoples' own houses. These persecutions should not surprise us because we see Jesus Himself telling us this would happen.

How would you feel if you became a part of the church, and because of that, you felt apart from your friends and family?

What can you do to ease some of that pain in others who have experienced this?

Read Luke 6:27-36

What are the four things Jesus commands us to do in verses 27-28?

Look at these commands Jesus gives. The first is to "love your enemies." This is hard enough, but it is even more interesting when we look at the word used for love here. In the English language, we use the word love as an umbrella term referring to different kinds of affection, but different words in the Greek language mean "love," and they all convey different ideas. For example, *philia* refers to the kind of love friends have for one another. Another is the word *eros*, which is romantic love.

The word here, however, is the word *agape*. This word is different from all the others in that *agape* love is a sacrificial love that is not just a warm fuzzy feeling or wanting to make someone happy but looking out for their best interests. To have *agape* love for someone is to want what is best for them, even when it may seem strange or undesirable, and you must give something up. This is the word that Jesus says we are to have for everyone, even our enemies. We must look out for them and always want what is best for them.

What makes showing this type of love difficult?

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How can we show this kind of love to other people? How can we show this kind of love to even our enemies?

Jesus's next command is to do good to those who hate us. What makes this command an even bigger picture is, once again, the Greek word used. The word for good here is *kalos*, which can literally be translated as "beautiful." Here, we are commanded not just to do good things to people but also to do beautiful things to them.

Our actions should be appealing so that even the people who hate us can see that there's something different about Christians. We are sent to seek and save the lost, and when we look at the people who hate us, we shouldn't see our enemies but the lost souls that we are called to bring to Christ. For this reason, Jesus commands us to do the things that are good, beautiful, and appealing to even our enemies and those who hate us.

How can living a good and beautiful life bring others to Christ?

What are some things Jesus calls "beautiful" that you can do more in your life for everyone?

Next, in verse 28, we read that Jesus says to bless those who curse us. This is exactly the same as Paul's first command in Romans 12:14. This is the heart of the matter. So, what does this mean? Looking at the Greek words, the first keyword is "bless." This is translated from the Greek word *eulogeo*. Does this sound similar to any words we have in the English language? It just so happens that this is the word we get our English word "eulogize" from. Even though the word eulogize is usually used in the context of funerals, both of these words have the same meaning. They literally mean to say good things about someone. So, we are to say good things about these people.

Let's look at the word here, translated as curse. This is the word *kataraomai*, which actually means "to declare to be evil," or "to detest," or in other words, to hate. So, from these last two commands, we are taught not only to do good actions for those who hate us, but to say good things about those who hate us.

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Have you ever been in a situation where the words someone was turned off of Christianity because of the way certain Christians spoke to and about others?

How can we make sure that we are guarding our words and speaking the way we should about others?

The last direct command we are told in this verse is to pray for those who mistreat us. This is straightforward and goes back to the idea that when we look at these people, we shouldn't see enemies but lost souls that we are sent to seek and save. So, from these two verses, we are commanded regarding the people who hate and mistreat us, who would be called our enemies. We are to have a sacrificial love for them, we are to do good and beautiful things with our actions towards them, we are to say good things about them, and last of all, we are to pray for them.

Who are some people that you should be praying for this week?

What are some of the things we can pray for about these people?

Now, let's go back and take a closer look at our verse in Romans, Romans 12:14. The first command is very similar to the one in Luke 6:28. Here, it says, "Bless those who persecute you." The word for blessing here is the same word, *eulogeo*, and it is one of Paul's imperative commands. The word we haven't looked at yet is the word translated persecute. This is the word *dioko*, which literally means to pursue or chase after. From this particular context, we can gather that this word refers to the people pursuing the believers to harm them. The second part of this verse once again says to bless but also gives another command. "Do not curse." This is the word *kataraomai* we saw in Luke describing the people who hated and declared Christians as evil. In this verse, Paul emphasizes this command to do good and kind things and say good things about even the people

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chasing after the church, who hated the Christians.

Why do you think this is Paul's first imperative command in his list?

How would following this command transform us to be more like Christ?

The fact that this is the very first thing that Paul chooses to mention shows how vital this idea was to him and how important it was that the holy spirit inspired him to write it. This is such an essential idea that six passages in the New Testament give this same direct command! What is the first thing that shows we are not conformed to this world? That we show love and kindness to even those persecuting us and those who hate us.

Think of a person you struggle with showing kindness to. How can you show them God's love this week?

This is an important concept, and it might seem hard to implement. Let's look at a few specific examples in which we might need to show this type of love and kindness. Let's say there's a girl, we'll call her Lucy, who finds herself in a scenario. She is going to school wearing modest clothes, but the other girls are laughing at her and making fun of how boring and uncool she is. So, what should she do? Her initial instinct is probably to badmouth those girls to her friends. It would be so tempting to wish them harm. However, the right thing to do isn't to give in or even just ignore them. If Lucy wants to live a life transformed into the image of Christ she should show them the love and compassion they never earned.

Have you ever felt like you're in a similar scenario, where you feel like an outcast who is looked down on for trying to serve God? How does the Bible say to respond to that? What are some ways you can show love in those situations?

Paul's first command is an important one: to show love to even our enemies, do good things even to the people who hate us; and say good things about even the people who persecute us. My challenge for

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you is to find every way you can to show the type of love we have seen in these passages to everyone you meet, especially those -mistreating you and saying bad things about you. Easier said than done right? But, that is what Christ did, and if we truly want to be Christlike, we should too.