

## Difficult Situations

There must be a lot of people facing difficult situations; I entered those words (“difficult situation”) onto my computer and received 11,100,000 responses from various internet sites. *Over 11 million responses!*

What difficulties do you face? For me, exercise is one area where difficulties can come up. Another big one is thinking, as in trying to control my thoughts. Sleeping and eating can be difficult too. Other problem areas are work; and family; and friends. And then there’s ... well, you get the idea.

It’s probably this last area – dealing with people – in which we feel the deepest sense of failure when we fall short. That’s because relationships are so important. They are important to God, and, since we are made in his image, it’s important to our well-being (whether we know it or not). If I drop the ball there, my whole life can seem out of whack. It’s no wonder Paul spends time teaching us how to treat others, even those we may not especially like very well. Let’s take time this week to see what he has to say.

### Monday – Dealing with the Difficult

*“I have found that there are three stages in every great work of God: first, it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done.”* Hudson Taylor - 19<sup>th</sup> c. English missionary

1. Please read Romans 12:14-21. Which of these situations are you least comfortable in? Most at ease?
2. Verse 14 tells us to bless those who harm us, and then reiterates it as “bless and do not curse.” How do the verses that follow (verses 15-21) paint a picture of this truth (blessing others, rather than cursing them).

**Digging Deeper** - Verse 19 quotes Deuteronomy 32:35, a passage written by Moses. Read Deuteronomy 12:1-6, a passage about a situation where Moses got to practice what he preached. How did Moses live out Deuteronomy 32:35?

### Tuesday – The Golden Rule

*“The golden rule for understanding in spiritual matters is not intellect, but obedience.”*

Oswald Chambers, [My Utmost for His Highest](#)

1. Please read Romans 12:14-21 and Matthew 5:38-6:4. How does the Matthew passage flesh out the Romans 12 passage?
2. Now look at Matthew 7:12. In what ways has someone treated you according to the Golden Rule? Have any of them been in situations similar to those listed in Romans 12:14-21? How?

**Text Insight:** Other philosophies and traditions have rules that sound similar, often given as a prohibition. For example, Confucius said, “Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself.” Jesus, on the other hand, stated the rule positively: he told us what we should do, not what to avoid doing.

**Putting it into Practice** - Read Luke 10:25-37. Ask God to help you follow the Golden Rule, no matter who needs your help.

### Wednesday – Playing Favorites

*“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.”*

Leviticus 19:15

1. Please read Romans 12:16. Why do you think people need to be reminded to be kind to others?
2. Read Galatians 5:19-26. How does this passage help us to understand what Paul is saying to us in Romans 12:14-21? Are there similarities between Galatians 5:26 and Romans 12:16?
3. Read Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:1-5. What practical instruction on treating others well does he give us?

**Making it Personal:** In what situations do you find you need to be reminded to treat others well?

### Thursday – Acts of Love

*“In Jesus and for Him, enemies and friends alike are to be loved.”* Thomas a’ Kempis, 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c. monk

1. Please read Romans 12:19-20, along with Proverbs 25:21-22. What conclusion is found in Proverbs 25:22? Why do you suppose Paul left it out of his quotation of that passage?
2. Matthew 5:43-48 and 6:12-15 have some very tough teaching on real love. Which verse is more difficult for you to accept, Matthew 5:48 or 6:15? Why?

**Text Insight:** The Greek word translated as “perfect” in Matthew 5:48 literally means “complete.” An earlier root of this word also gives us our English word “full.” For another example, see Acts 11:22-24.

**Digging Deeper** - What act of love did Jesus practice in Luke 23:34? Where was he at the time? How does this follow the teaching of Matthew 5:44-47?

### Friday – In Summary

*“Of two evils choose neither.”* Charles Spurgeon, 19<sup>th</sup> c. English pastor

1. Please read Romans 12:9-21. How do verses 9 and 21 act as bookends of this passage?
2. Compare verse 21 with Matthew 22:34-40. How can obeying the two great commandments (loving God and loving others) prepare you for carrying out Romans 12:21?
3. See 1 John 5:3-4 and Deuteronomy 30:12. What hope do these passages give you for being able to carry out Jesus’ commandments in Matthew 22 and Paul’s instruction in Romans 12:21?

**Prayer Focus:** The Church, Jesus Christ’s body here on earth, can use your prayers. Pray for us all to be different in how we respond to those around us, to be filled by the Holy Spirit, to love as our Father loves.

**For the Weekend:** Read Romans 12:18 and Matthew 7:12. Do these verses apply to any relationship you have? Pray, asking God to guide you in carrying out his rule, the Golden Rule, “as far as it depends on you.”