

Our Relationship with Unbelievers

Scripture: [Romans 12:14-21](#)

Big Idea:

Worship God: By how we live among unbelievers

Call to Action:

Do you know of any unbelievers? If not, then the mission of sharing the life-saving news with unbelievers is stopped.

Family Action:

Talk to your kids about serving in your church, which is the Body of Christ.

Explain that EVERY believer has a spiritual gift! What is yours?

Exposure to Exposition & Exploring the Scriptures: (10-20 mins)

- Bible Drills (Memorization of OT & NT Book order)
- Guide the children to [Romans 12:3-13](#) in the Bible. (Help them as needed, NT vs OT)
- Say: We are going to continue through Paul's letter to the church of Rome.
- We will learn that the gospel is God's power to save everyone who believes, and we should never be ashamed of Jesus.
- Read aloud. (Ask kids to see their pointers on V3)

Review:

vv. 11:1-27 God is not done with Israel; He is showing kindness towards Gentiles (Israel's Future)

vv. 11:28 — 12:2 God keeps His promises & Our relationship with God

vv. 12:3-13 Our Relationship with Believers & Serve the Body with spiritual gifts

vv. 12:14-21 Our Relationship with Unbelievers

Opening Question

How do you treat those around you that don't look like you? Aren't part of your group at school? Or don't believe what you believe?

→ Let children answer and discuss.

Notes:

In Romans 12–15, Paul shows us how to live in response to God's mercy. This is not a list of rules, but a plan for worship. Because God has saved us and nothing can separate us from His love, our lives should reflect gratitude and obedience.

Think of it like a target :

- The center is our relationship with God (12:1–2).

- Then comes our relationship with other believers (12:3–13).
- Then the world/ unbelievers 12:14-21).
- and finally, government and society. (13)

If living this way feels impossible, Paul already gave us the starting point. We become a living sacrifice, renewing our minds through God's Word. As our thinking changes, our behavior changes. This is where sanctification begins.

If we neglect our relationship with God, everything else weakens. But when we come to Christ and drink deeply ([John 7:37–38](#)), the Spirit strengthens us—and that strength flows outward to bless others.

Strength at the center makes faithfulness in the outer circles possible.

In [Romans 12:14-21](#), Paul moves from the center outward, showing how transformed hearts live among unbelievers or in the world.

[ROMANS 12:14-21 NLT](#)

14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. **15** Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. **16** Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

17 Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. **18** Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

"I will take revenge;

I will pay them back,"

says the Lord.

20 Instead,

"If your enemies are hungry, feed them.

If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap

burning coals of shame on their heads."

21 Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

- V14-18 How to Treat People Who Don't Believe
 - Now Paul moves to the third ring — how we treat unbelievers.
 - Unbelievers are not our enemies. They are our mission:
 - 1. Bless Instead of Curse. When people attack us for our faith, we (v. 14):
 - Don't fight back.

- Don't insult them.
- Don't seek revenge.
- Instead, we bless them.
- [John 15:20](#) — "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."
 - Jesus warned that the world would oppose believers.
- [Matthew 5:44](#) — "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."
 - This surprises people.
 - And surprise opens hearts.
- **Our goal is to give people the opportunity to know Christ.**
 - 2. Share in Their Joy and Pain. Even when we disagree with someone's lifestyle, we still care about their lives. (v.15):
 - Paul says: Rejoice when they rejoice.
 - Weep when they weep.
 - Jesus spent time with sinners without joining in sin. If we judge from a distance, we will never get close enough to share Christ.
 - 3. Stay Humble. Remember: We were once enemies of God too (v.16):
 - Paul warns: Don't be proud.
 - Don't think you're better.
 - Spend time with the lowly.
- Humility keeps our hearts soft and our witness strong.
 - 4. Don't Repay Evil for Evil. (v.17):
 - If someone wrongs you: Don't seek revenge.
 - Don't escalate conflict.
 - Don't destroy your testimony.
 - Instead:
 - Do what is right in the sight of all.
 - That means: Act with integrity.
 - Follow the law.
 - Represent Christ well.
 - 5. Pursue Peace — As Much As You Can (v.17b)
 - Paul says: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."
 - Sometimes conflict cannot be avoided if we stand for truth. But we must never be the cause of unnecessary conflict.
 - We are called to balance:
 - Personal holiness

- Loving witness
- Strategic kindness
- Standing firm in truth, while keeping doors open for salvation.
- **Kid Point:** Unbelievers are not our enemies — they are people Jesus wants to save!

[ROMANS 12:19-20](#) Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge;

I will pay them back,”

says the Lord.

[20](#) Instead,

“If your enemies are hungry, feed them.

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- V19-20 Let God Be the Judge
 - Paul now explains what to do when someone truly hurts you. Not just insults. Not just disagreement but real harm.
 - He says:
 - Do not take revenge.
 - Let God handle justice.
 - Show kindness instead.
 - This is about trusting God with what feels unfair.
 - 1. Revenge Belongs to God. God says: “Vengeance is mine.” (v. 19) ([Deuteronomy 32:35](#))
 - That means:
 - God sees everything.
 - God judges perfectly.
 - God knows what we do not.
 - If we take revenge, we:
 - Step into God’s role.
 - Sin in anger.
 - Interfere with God’s plan.
 - We don’t know what God may do:
 - He may save that person someday.
 - Or He may judge them justly.
 - Either way, it’s not our job to decide.

- 2. Kindness Is Powerful. Paul says: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him.” (v.20)
 - This doesn’t mean pretending nothing happened if wronged.
 - It means choosing kindness over retaliation.
- When we respond with goodness:
- It shocks people.
 - It softens hearts.
 - It leaves room for God to work.
 - Paul calls it “heaping burning coals.”
- That picture means:
 - Our kindness leaves the outcome in God’s hands — and God’s justice is always greater than ours.
- Protect Your Witness. We want peace “so far as it depends on you.”
- Sometimes standing for the truth causes conflict. If we:
 - Refuse to join sin
 - Hold to our conscience
 - Choose holiness over popularity
 - Conflict may still come.
- When that happens? Return to rule #1:
 - Bless those who persecute you. (v.14)
- *What does all this mean for us today, when conflict arises with a believer or unbeliever? Holiness Comes First!
- We cannot:
 - Compromise truth to avoid tension.
 - Join in sin to keep relationships smooth.
- The “inner rings” come first:
 - Personal holiness
 - Faithfulness to Christ
 - Then peace with others
 - Peace never replaces obedience.
- It’s a Win-Win
 - If the person is later saved, you will be glad you didn’t seek revenge.
 - If they reject God, He will judge perfectly.
- Either way:
 - You stayed faithful.
 - You protected your witness.

- You trusted God.
- **Kid Point:** When we refuse revenge and choose kindness, we trust God to handle it!

[ROMANS 12:21](#) Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

- V12:21 How to treat unbelievers in our life (Summary of v. 14-20)
 - Paul ends the chapter with this command: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (v.21)
 - As we engage the unbelieving world (the third ring), we must be careful not to be pulled down or corrupted by it.
 - We can only represent Christ well if we are strong in the inner rings—walking closely with God and loving believers well.
 - If we are spiritually weak, the world will influence us rather than we influencing it.
 - We must overcome evil by consistently showing the goodness of Christ and His Word, never allowing sin to gain the upper hand in our lives.
 - **Kid Point:** Overcome evil by showing kindness like Christ!

Observation Questions (What did it say?)

1. What does Paul command believers to do when they are persecuted? (Believers are to bless and not curse those who persecute them. v.14)
2. How are believers instructed to respond emotionally to others' circumstances? (We are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. v. 15)
3. What does Paul say about revenge? (We are never to take revenge but leave justice to God. v.19)

Understanding Questions (What does it mean?)

1. Why does Paul tell believers to bless those who persecute them? (Because unbelievers are not our enemies but our mission. Responding with kindness keeps the door open for the Gospel. v.14)
2. What does it mean to "leave room for the wrath of God"? (It means trusting God to handle justice perfectly instead of taking matters into our own hands. v.19/ [Deuteronomy 32:35](#))
3. What does "so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" teach us? (We are responsible for pursuing peace, but we cannot control others' reactions. We must maintain holiness even if conflict arises. v.18)

Application Questions (What should I do?)

1. How should I respond when someone mistreats me for my faith? (I should bless them, refuse revenge, and trust God with justice. v. 14,19-20)
2. How can I avoid becoming prideful or judgmental toward unbelievers? (By remembering that I was once God's enemy too and was saved by grace. v.16/ [Ephesians 2:4-5](#))

3. When peace and obedience conflict, what should I choose? (I must choose obedience to God while pursuing peace as far as it depends on me. v.9-18/ [Acts 5:29](#))
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Activities

1: Game

Kingdom Reaction Challenge

Supplies:

Hang two papers with the following phrases on opposite sides of the room:

“World’s Way”

“Kingdom Way”

Instructions:

You’ll read scenarios. Kids must immediately walk to the side that represents the response they would instinctively choose.

Scenario 1 — Someone insults your faith publicly.

- Fire back with sarcasm.
- Bless and stay calm.

Read [Romans 12:14](#)

Discuss: Why is blessing harder?

How could it open a Gospel door?

Scenario 2 — A friend spreads rumors about you.

- Expose them and get even.
- Refuse revenge and trust God.

Read [Romans 12:19](#)

Discuss: What does “leave room for God’s wrath” mean?

Scenario 3 — A neighbor damages your property.

- Retaliate.
- Do what is right and pursue peace.

Read [Romans 12:17-18](#)

Discuss: Is pursuing peace the same as being weak?

Scenario 4 — An unbeliever celebrates something you morally disagree with.

- Distance yourself and act superior.
- Stay relational without compromising holiness.

Read [Romans 12:16, 18](#)

Discuss: How do we balance holiness and relationship?

Scenario 5 — Someone who mistreated you is now in need.

- Ignore them.
- Feed them / help them.

Read [Romans 12:20](#)

Discuss: Why does kindness shock people?

2: Memory Verse

Come up with moves

[Romans 12:21](#) *Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.*

3: Discussion

For Older Youth students, see separate printable handout.

Remind them: What is the Gospel?

Jesus' perfect life paid for the sins of all who believe. Jesus died on the cross as the punishment for sin. But Jesus did not stay dead, three days later He rose to life (resurrection) defeating the power of death. Believe, and you will be saved!

- We are all sinful. We all deserve the consequence of sin- death.
- Jesus is what saves us from the sin we all have in our bodies. And one day, he'll even give us a new body.

Supporting Truths Kids Can Grasp:

- God assigns our spiritual gifts to serve the Body of Christ (believers). ([Romans 12:3-13](#)).
- No part of the Body of Christ is unimportant. ([Romans 12:4-5](#)).
- Our abilities to serve come from God, not personal merit. ([Romans 12:6](#)).
- Love must be genuine and sacrificial. ([Romans 12:9-10](#)).
- Faithful service requires perseverance and prayer. ([Romans 12:11-12](#)).