

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY THIRTY

Christianity 101

Romans 12:9–16

What are you leaving for the next generation? What are you leaving in the minds of those who will outlive you so their lives are deeper, richer, and better than yours has been?

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

COLLEGE LIFE 101, the course we took our freshman year, helped us acclimate to life on campus and learn the basic skills needed for academic and personal success. Similarly, we can think of the book of Romans as Christianity 101. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Professor Paul has been teaching us the practical skills needed for following Jesus as His disciples.

When we placed our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, God justified us—credited us with Christ's righteousness (Romans 3:23–24). Now our spiritual growth begins as we become more like Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds. This necessitates renewing our minds, thinking biblically about ourselves, about others, and about the spiritual gifts that God has given us (12:1–8)—subjects we explored in our previous studies.

Now we've come to the heart of Christianity 101: *learning to love like Jesus*. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Paul helps us understand the essential qualities of love in its highest expressions, as Christ modeled and as He invites us to emulate.





PREPARE YOUR HEART

*Teach us to realize the brevity of life,
so that we may grow in wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)*

Join Moses in asking for God's wisdom. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you understand and apply biblical principles from Paul's letter to the Romans.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In view of God's great mercy demonstrated to us in the sacrifice of His one and only Son, the apostle Paul urged us to live consecrated lives and to let the Holy Spirit reprogram our minds by means of His precious Word so we can know and live according to His will ([Romans 12:1–2](#)).

What is God's will for us? According to [Romans 12:3–8](#), God's will is for us to be who He made us to be and to do our part in the body of Christ. If we're gifted servants, we're to serve. If we're encouragers, we're to lift people up. If God equipped us as leaders, we're to point the way. The functions in Christ's body vary, but our *motivation* is always the same: love.

What does God's way of loving look like? How do we express love practically? Paul's golden list of love-in-action characteristics holds a set of specifics to guide us from now until that moment we breathe our last on this earth. At the heart of our core values, *love takes center stage!*



Observation: Love Lived Out!

During observation, carefully read [Romans 12:9–16](#).¹ Focus on each word that Paul used just as someone is looking for treasures buried under the surface. Note how love dominates the scene. We'll explore the meaning of *love* in the next step—interpretation. But for now, let's look at what the text says.

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The Two Major Qualities of Love—Romans 12:9

Specify the first quality of love according to [Romans 12:9](#).

The sentence begins, “Love un-hypocritical.” Right out of the chute Paul makes it clear: if it’s love, it must be real love. There’s no place for a mask. Love is real, gut-level real. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Now specify the second quality of love according to [12:9](#).

Love must also be discerning. Notice, “Abhor what is evil.” The word means “to shrink back, to detest.” When love encounters evil, it shrinks back. It doesn’t embrace it. It doesn’t look the other way. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Other Components of Love—Romans 12:10–16

Through the remainder of Romans 12, Paul portrayed love in action. The most challenging expression is loving our enemies. Drawing upon Jesus’ command from [Luke 6:27–28](#), Paul wrote it this way: “Bless those who persecute you. Don’t curse them; pray that God will bless them” (Romans 12:14). We’ll tackle this ultimate expression of Christlike love in the next *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study. For now, find seven components of love in [12:10–16](#) and list them below:

1. [12:10](#): _____
2. [12:10](#): _____
3. [12:11](#): _____
4. [12:12](#): _____
5. [12:13](#): _____
6. [12:15](#): _____
7. [12:16](#): _____

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Love in action! These core values ought to be on display in our lives—reflecting our Savior, Jesus Christ! Let’s define *love* so that we can understand its importance and priority.



Interpretation: Love Defined and Prioritized

What is the meaning of love? The New Testament writers used the Greek word, *agape*, to talk about Christlike love. The biblical definition is “seeking the highest good of the other person.” Contrast this expression of love with the types of love we see in our culture—whether good or bad.

Why is seeking the highest good of others so central to Christianity? Why would that be a priority for us?

Seeking the highest good is so valuable in life because it shapes and colors all the other virtues that we admit are important to life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Reread Paul’s golden list of love in action in [Romans 12:10–16](#) in various translations. Give a concrete picture or two of each one below. Feel free to dig deeper in your Bible-study resources.

Affection (12:10)	
Honor (12:10)	
Enthusiasm (12:11)	
Patience (12:12)	
Generosity (12:13)	
Sympathy (12:15)	
Humility (12:16)	

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With brotherly love, there is a kind of familial affection, in which we give preference to one another in honor. The word in Greek means, “respect.” It works its way out in listening when others speak, allowing them to disagree, respecting their opinions, and caring how they feel. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Seeking the highest good of others may require us to speak the truth to them, to warn them when they are teetering on the edge of sin, or to stop them from hurting themselves or others. In what ways did Paul allow room for “tough love” as well as “tender love” in our passage, particularly in [Romans 12:9, 12](#)?

Sometimes admittedly, love is tough, firm, stern, strong-hearted, and unwilling to look the other way. It’s not making someone comfortable. It’s not telling people what they want to hear. It’s not treating them like they’ve treated us. It is not looking the other way when we encounter wrong. This part of love is tough love. It’s relentless. There are other times when love must be tender, soft-hearted—marked by compassion, understanding, tolerance, grace, and forgiveness. Both sides of the coin make this love authentic, and you need both tough and tender. The best example who’s ever lived is, of course, Jesus of Nazareth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Love as Jesus Loves!

After washing the feet of His disciples and predicting His betrayal but before heading to the cross, Jesus spoke about a new commandment in [John 13:31–35](#). How would you restate this commandment? How do people spot disciples of Jesus?

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Compare our passage with the greatest treatise ever written on love (*Romans 12:9–16*; *1 Corinthians 13*). What do both passages communicate about what love is and what love is not? List one or two concrete examples of love we see from Jesus during His ministry.

When you're putting things together to leave to the next generation, remember love, which has to do with devoted affection, honor, respect, enthusiasm, passion, and certainly, patience. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Leave a Legacy of Love!

It doesn't take long to realize as we walk this earthly journey that life is fleeting. The seconds fly by, and what really matters is the legacy we leave behind. Beyond the financial portfolio, the material possessions, or the thousands of beautiful pictures capturing the remarkable moments, what people remember is not the tangible, the measurable, or even the audible. What lives on is the love we deposit in the hearts of the next generation.

Leaving behind a legacy of love is not just what we say we believe but what we practice. Why do you think we sometimes hold back this kind of love? How can you request the Holy Spirit's assistance to help you leave a legacy of love?

Why is this kind of love held back? Two things—neither will surprise you. First is pride. Too proud to stoop. Too proud to reach out. Too proud to notice. And the other is fear. We fear the risk. And it's that fear of knowing you'll be taken advantage of, that some may not respect you like they perhaps should. Give it up. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Among the many important truths you learned about love, which one did the Holy Spirit highlight in your mind that you want to focus on? Perhaps the first step is to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15 NASB). Who do you know who needs love in this way?

You want to be different in a world that’s missing love? Here’s an example. “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and don’t forget to weep with those who are weeping.” We had an old Swedish motto that hung in our home: “Shared joy is a double joy. Shared sorrow is half a sorrow.” You double a joy when you share it. You cut a tragedy or heartbreak in half when you share it.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Take some time to thank God for three people who have significantly touched your life by leaving a legacy of love. If they are alive, why not let them know the eternal impact of their lives?

You live a life like we’ve just described, and I can assure you: You’ll have no trouble telling others that Jesus is the Master who can transform their lives too.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me leave a rich legacy of love! In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen!

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2007, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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