

Cultivate Reflection Guide

When in Rome: How to Overcome Your Enemy July 10 & 11, 2021

If you missed this weekend's messages, watch at cultivate.sc/discussion

Since the start of 2021, we've been learning *what* we believe as Christians and *why* we believe it. As we continue our When in Rome series this summer, our focus shifts to *how* we live out what we're learning. When what we believe changes how we live, we experience REAL growth!

Use our Reflection Guide for personal study throughout the week, to start a REAL conversation with friends or under the direction of your community group leader. Choose the questions that challenge you to reflect and respond as you live out what we're learning. Keep in mind...*it's not about getting through the content, but getting the content through you!*

Reflect/Respond: How were you personally encouraged, instructed or challenged by the message? This could be a word, verse or point that got your attention or got you thinking. How can you cultivate that into your life SO THAT you begin to live out what you're learning?

Read Romans 12:17-21 ¹⁷Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. ¹⁹Dear 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. ²⁰Instead, "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." ²¹Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good."

{Dig Deeper} Read a few alternate translations or paraphrases of these verses for a different perspective.

The problem: Revenge isn't just an outward action; it can also be an internal process. Our thoughts, attitudes, ideas and opinions and the way we experience them [e.g.: anger, jealousy, bitterness, resentment, unkindness, unforgiveness] can create a vengeful spirit within us.

- How have you experienced or struggled with revenge in your heart, mind or life?
- What does this internal struggle do to your personal peace? You might experience this spiritually, emotionally or even physically.
- Romans 12:21 warns us to not let this evil conquer us – which means revenge is a REAL battle. If you're struggling with any vengeful thoughts, ideas or attitudes, confess that right now. Invite God to help you pursue peace in your heart and mind SO THAT you can walk forward ready to pursue peace with others.

The solution: Instead of repaying evil and seeking revenge, Paul challenges us to do honorable things – to pursue peace and do good. While this might feel impossible, impractical or even unfair, this is an act of obedience – a REAL solution – that can not only *do good* in our life, but *cause good* by "heaping coals" or creating recognition, remorse or change in the life of our enemy.

- Who is someone you consider an enemy? This might be someone you have real conflict with or someone who you are conflicted about.
- In verse 19, Paul instructs us to "leave that" to God. What is it that you need to leave, lay down or let go of so that you can begin focusing on peace? Are you willing to trust God to handle that for you?
- In order to pursue peace, what practical steps could you take to do good toward your enemy? Think outside the box – this might be something you do or something you choose not to do anymore.
- Remember – we are not responsible for our enemy's response, but for our obedience. Pray about the outcome you hope for, walk forward in obedience, then leave the rest to God.