

### **Content**

Up through Easter we are doing a series of sermons on the cruciform life, that is a life that is shaped by the cross. In the gospels, Jesus tells us ***“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:23-24).*** There is probably nowhere where this is more necessary than in living a life of love. For biblical, as opposed to worldly love, involves laying down one’s life, agenda, goals, ambitions for the sake of the one you are loving. How are we able to do that? Paul, in this most practical section of his letter to the Romans instructs on a life shaped by love. We will explore this from three perspectives. First, what we are calling ordinary love. That is love in the ordinary relationships of life. Then, second, challenging love. That is loving people when they are not so nice to you, don’t necessarily give you your way. And third, impossible love. And Paul lays out his principle here in v.21 “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

### **Gospel Connections**

Of course, the only way that we can truly live a life of love is through the gospel. We must remember that the only way to truly defeat evil is through the cross. How did Jesus defeat evil? By surrendering to evil’s worst on the cross and defeating it through weakness. The only way we are going to be able to grow in love is if we are utterly in awe of the fact that through the cross Jesus has accomplished our forgiveness. We have to remember that all of this in the context of how the Apostle Paul began chapter 12. He began it with the words, “In view of God’s mercy” (Romans 12:1). Then he goes on to explore various ways to live out of God’s mercy. Only by appropriating personally God’s mercy for yourself can you begin to approach living a life of love.

### **Application and Discussion Questions**

1. What did you learn from this sermon? Specifically
  - a. What insights did you learn?
  - b. What questions do you have? Are there any areas you don’t understand?
  - c. What areas of your life (be specific) do you sense God wants to change because of this passage of Scripture?
  
2. What would you title this section of Scripture and why? How is this section related to Romans 12:1-2?

3. Of the commands listed in vv.9-21 which are the easiest for you to follow and which are the most challenging? Why? How can growing in these areas enhance our community life? What is one step you can make to start growing in this area?