

**Rom. 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

“beseech” = implore, to ask or entreat with urgency

“present” = to stand beside, to exhibit....yield

“acceptable” = fully agreeable, well pleasing

“reasonable” – rational, logical

“service” = to minister to God, serve, worship

Paul introduces this section in a posture of urgency; it is instruction of the highest priority regarding how we are to live for God in this present life.

“therefore” – I’ve always been taught that when you come to this word you establish what it is “there for.” Personally, I think he is referencing all that has been established in the previous portion of this letter—remembering that he is addressing professing believers (“brethren”). We are all sinners, saved by grace, according to the love and mercy of God through the willing sacrifice of the Son. We all, whether Jew or Gentile, are part of the same family with the same mandate to testify of this good news to others and to live our lives according to God’s revealed will in unity of spirit.

Paul is pleading with the people based on their recognition of God’s proven mercy and compassion for them. In light of all that He has done on our behalf, the only logical response from the believer should be to yield your body a “living sacrifice” to God. I chose the word *yield* from the meanings for *present*, but I also was hit by the phrase “to exhibit.” When we are yielded to God, it will produce visible results in our lives that can be seen by others. “Living sacrifice” made me think of the term “die daily” that Paul uses in his letter to Corinthians.

*1Corinthians 15:31* I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

This is obviously referencing a frame of mind, a mindset, an attitude that affects the choices we make, the actions we take, the words we say, etc. When we respond to God in this way, our life will be holy and pleasing to God; we will be living in agreement with His revealed will. The word *worship* jumped out at me from the Greek for *service*. When we are living our lives yielded and in agreement with His will, it is an act of worship before God; it’s our opportunity to give back to Him in the only way available to us in gratitude for the amazing love He has shown us.

“your bodies” – As I continued to look at this verse, I realized that this phrase deserved attention. Much of his address in this letter has been regarding our spirit. As Paul so wonderfully expressed in chapter 7, it is the discipline of the

body that is the problem. The flesh exerts a powerful force in our lives. The more we can discipline our body to act in concert with the desire of our inner man to serve God totally, the more powerful will be our testimony to all—both believers and unbelievers.

**Rom. 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

“conformed” = to fashion alike; from a root that means “denoting union”

Not only is the believer to present himself a living sacrifice, he is not to live in a way that is in harmony with the world. To live in agreement or harmony with God is to be at enmity (a state of opposition) with the world. James affirms this truth in his epistle.

*James 4:4* *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

The Greek for *transform* includes “metamorphose, change,” a change from the inside that’s seen on the outside. This indicates that we are changing from a way of life that was in agreement with worldly dictates and are choosing to adopt a new way of life that is in agreement with God’s will. How does that transformation take place? “By the renewing of your mind.”

“renew” = Webster: “to make new again, to restore to freshness, to perfection, give new life to”

Obviously, we can’t accomplish that change in our own strength. It is because God has made us a new creation in faith that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit with the ability to use our intellect and understanding (from the Greek for *mind*) to make choices according to God’s will rather than yielding to the desires of the flesh.

“prove” = test, approve, discern, examine

The word *discern* is the one that jumps out to me. When we are yielded to God in obedience to His word, it stands to reason that we will more easily be able to discern His particular will or purpose for our life. The more our minds are transformed into thinking in agreement with God, the more naturally we will discern His will. As I continue to look at these words, the thought came to mind that the more we are yielded to Him and transformed into thinking in agreement with Him, we will be able to examine and test His promises and discover more about His character and prove His truth which will in turn increase our faith.

Paul describes God’s will for the life of the believer as:

- Good – of benefit, from a root that means “beautiful, valuable, worthy”
- Acceptable – fully agreeable, well pleasing

- Perfect – complete (free from deficiency)

**Rom. 12:3** For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Paul's message is a result of *grace*, "the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life." It's the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of Paul.

Paul's warning in this verse—that the believer not think of himself as "better" when compared to any other believer. I really liked the CJB translation for this verse.

*For I am telling every single one of you, through the grace that has been given to me, not to have exaggerated ideas about your own importance. Instead, develop a sober estimate of yourself based on the standard which God has given to each of you, namely, trust.*

I believe every believer starts with a "measure of faith." It is according to how we respond to that measure that determines how much our faith increases. The Greek for *faith* references "persuasion, moral conviction, assurance." Jesus pointed out examples of weak faith and strong faith or little faith and more faith. The Roman centurion was acknowledged to be a man of great faith (Luke 7:1-9), while Jesus' own disciples were often described as having little faith.

**Rom. 12:4** For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

**Rom. 12:5** So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

One of the main reasons that a believer can become prideful or arrogant is because of the *office* (function, work) to which God has appointed one to serve. Obviously, there are many types of work necessary for the church, the body of Christ, to function effectively. Not everyone can be in leadership positions (those most susceptible to pride); there have to be people in support positions of all types. Because we form one body in Christ (a unified whole), each person's function has an impact on the health of the whole body. In other words, everything we do as believers has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the ministry of the church as a whole and on the effectiveness of the message we declare.

**Rom. 12:6** Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

**Rom. 12:7** Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministering*; or he that teacheth, on teaching;

**Rom. 12:8** Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it with simplicity*; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

“gifts” = (divine) gratuity, (spiritual) endowment, miraculous faculty

“grace” = divine influence on heart and its reflection in the life

When I look at the Greek for *gifts*, it is clear that it is a reference to a God-given ability “according to grace.” The wording allows for more than one gift per believer. Paul goes on to identify seven different gifts in this section.

- Prophecy = a foreteller or forthteller, an inspired speaker
- Ministry = attendance (as a servant)
- Teaching = to teach (Webster: impart knowledge)
- Exhortation = to call near, invite, comfort, pray
- Giving = to give over, share
- Ruling = to stand before, to practice, preside, be over
- Mercy = compassionate (Webster: suffering with another, commiseration)

It seems to me that “according to the proportion of faith” is applicable to the statement about each gift. The Greek for *proportion* did not enlighten further, so, as I often do, I went to Webster.

“proportion” - Harmonic relation between parts, or between different things of the same kind; symmetrical arrangement or adjustment; symmetry

“symmetry” - A due proportion of the several parts of a body to each other; adaptation of the form or dimensions of the several parts of a thing to each other; the union and conformity of the members of a work to the whole.

It would seem to me that God is distributing gifts to the members of the body through the Holy Spirit in a manner so as to produce harmony and facilitate the unified function of the whole. The purpose of the gifts of God is to edify (build, instruct, improve) the church.

*1Corinthians 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*

*Ephesians 4:11-12 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

*Perfecting the saints* is a reference to repairing to make a perfect fit among the pieces of the whole—unity. The *work of the ministry* is a reference to service.

Though these gifts can obviously be used in sharing the gospel with the lost, the primary purpose of the gifts is for the edification of the body of believers. If the members of the church are healthy and functioning appropriately, new converts to faith will result naturally. I think one of the biggest mistakes that churches

make today is giving a priority to evangelization over equipping and nurturing the body of believers. A well-equipped, well-nurtured body of believers will have a love for the lost and will want to share their faith with others. They will be the ones to bring in new converts to be equipped and nurtured to keep the cycle going.

“inspire” – Webster: Moved or animated by, or as by, a supernatural influence; affected by divine inspiration; Communicated or given as by supernatural or divine inspiration; having divine authority...

### **Prophecy**

Prophecy that foretells the future with 100% accuracy is only possible through the inspiration of God to an individual. The revelation of truth and the ability to declare that truth with power according to God’s word is also an “inspired” trait. John tells us that the Holy Spirit is the one that will guide us into truth.

*John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth....*

Inspiration comes from God through the Holy Spirit to man. The inspired revelation of God’s truth is a basic need for the body of Christ, the church, to be effective. One of God’s unique characteristics is His ability to declare the future.

*Isaiah 42:8-9 I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.*

*Isaiah 48:5 I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.*

*John 13:19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.*

God’s ability to declare the future before it occurs is another way He so carefully encourages us to trust Him. Truth that is declared through the revelation of God to an individual will never be disproved; it will be 100% accurate. Spiritual truth as declared by man today can only be effectively proved by the word of God.

### **Ministry**

*Ministry* or service is another basic gift necessary to the health of the whole. Jesus was very careful to example the importance of having a servant spirit. Ministry is a gift that can be employed in so many different ways and areas. I’m assuming that Paul listed *ministry* as a gift in order to differentiate between an attitude to which to aspire and an attitude in which one delights. Those with the gift of ministry love to serve; it gives them great joy and fulfillment. We are all

instructed to have a servant spirit, but we are not all gifted with the gift of ministry.

### **Teaching**

The gift of *teaching* is the ability to impart knowledge, to instruct others. There is not one person who has gone to school who would not be able to identify which of their teachers had the gift of teaching. There are many who occupy that position in our schools today who have no business being there. This gift of teaching is specific to the body of Christ, though I am sure that any gifted teacher in the body of Christ would be a gifted teacher in other areas as well. Even as I finished that sentence, I was almost ready to erase it. I believe the gift of teaching is related to the subject being taught. Obviously, gifted teachers in the body of Christ will have an extraordinary interest in the things of God, in His word. They will possess a unique desire to share that knowledge with others and will also possess a unique ability to explain things clearly. Those gifted in teaching will have no problem getting students interested in spiritual things to attend their teaching sessions.

### **Exhortation**

I was surprised at the Greek for *exhortation*—to call near, invite, comfort, pray. The gift of *exhortation* seems to include the ability to identify another member of the body with that need and the willingness to call them near or invite them to share your fellowship, often with the intent of giving comfort, especially through prayer. Webster describes *exhortation* as the use of words to incite to good deeds or conduct. Giving comfort is the ability to impart strength or hope, to encourage, to console, to relieve or to cheer. Prayer is one of the keys to accessing God's power in one's life to the fullest. One who has the gift of exhortation plays the role of spiritual cheerleader, counselor, and intercessor—sometimes in one of those roles and sometimes in a combination of those roles. Again, one with the gift of exhortation should not shy away from the opportunity to use that gift, but should be confident in their ability knowing that the Spirit will empower and enlighten them as needed in the use of that gift.

### **Giving**

The gift of *giving* is much needed in today's culture of materialism and attitude that claims, "It's all about me." One who has the gift of giving will have the desire to meet the needs of others through the giving of their time and abilities as well as of their money and material wealth. I believe many believers with this gift have "set their affections on things above, and not on things of the earth." (Colossians 3:2) They realize that everything they possess is theirs as a blessing from God; it all belongs to Him. Those with the gift of giving are special vessels chosen by God to be able to meet the needs of others in the body of Christ in the most practical ways. I almost skipped over the phrase "with simplicity." This is a reference to singleness, sincerity (without dissimulation or self-seeking) and generosity (copious bestowal). Webster defines *singleness* as "Freedom from duplicity, or secondary and selfish ends; purity of mind or purpose..." and

*dissimulation* as “hiding under a false appearance...hypocrisy.” In other words the person with the gift of giving will not be looking for what he/she will get in return. He will be giving freely “as unto the Lord” and not with ulterior motives. He is also willing to give or share in abundance. I think we often think of people with this gift as those who have more money and things. Frankly, those with the most giving spirits are often those who have the least but are willing to share the most. They know that God will supply their needs and that you cannot outgive the Lord.

### **Ruling**

*Ruling* is basically the gift of leadership. For any organization or body to function well, there has to be a “head,” an overseer. Two things stood out to me from the Greek definition, “to stand before” and “to practice.” It implies a position that exemplifies one who is knowledgeable and is concerned about the growth and success of the organization or body as a whole. It also implies the wisdom to utilize that knowledge in determining direction and objectives as well as the methods to be used in achieving those objectives. This particular gift is most vulnerable to the development of wrongful pride since the possessor is more often than not in a very visible position that is likely to draw the continual praise of others—especially the more successful he/she becomes. If not carefully guarded against, the one in leadership can be deceived into thinking they are personally responsible for any success achieved. The one with the gift of *ruling* is directed to do so with *diligence*—eagerness, dispatch and care. The gifted leader is eager to get to the task at hand; he wants to complete what he starts (from the meaning of “dispatch”). The gifted leader will also perform his office with “care.” He will exercise watchfulness and caution because he recognizes that he has been entrusted with great responsibility before the Lord.

I was reading A. W. Tozer’s The Dwelling Place of God and found a quote that was worth considering at this point: “Not many are selfless enough to endure honor without injury to their souls.”

### **Mercy**

The last gift listed is that of *mercy*; the Greek defines mercy as compassion, which Webster defines as “suffering with another.” The one with the gift of mercy is to use his gift cheerfully. That seems to be a paradox; suffering and cheerfulness seem opposed to one another. The only way I can describe it is through what I have experienced personally. The cheer comes from the privilege and opportunity to be a ministering vessel to the one who is suffering. It allows you to look beyond the cause of the suffering and concentrate on what you can do to help alleviate the condition through personal ministrations or to encourage the spirit through the word of God. Most people tend to avoid or shy away from people who are suffering because of a feeling of inadequacy. The one with the gift of mercy realizes that suffering is a condition that often results in spiritual growth and special blessing. You don’t have to shy away from it; you focus on the fact that God has a good purpose for what He allows, especially in the lives of other believers (cf Romans 8:28).

Reminder—these gifts are primarily for the benefit of the body of believers.

**Rom. 12:9** *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

At this point Paul starts admonishing the body of believers regarding righteous living. These are things that apply to every believer that have no connection to special gifting.

*Love* (affection, benevolence, charity) should be sincere and pure of heart—not hypocritical. You might be able to fool man with your actions, but you cannot fool God. He knows the thoughts and intents of your heart.

*1Chronicles 28:9* *And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts:*

*Hebrews 4:12* *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

I am currently in a study of the book of 1Corinthians with a friend and am looking forward to chapter 13. Paul details what real love is all about in that chapter. In summary—It is patient, kind, not envious, not prideful, acts properly, is non-provoking, thinks well of the other person, takes pleasure in what is righteous and true, exhibits strong faith, and is dependable.

“Abhor” = detest utterly

We are to detest (denounce, condemn, hate intensely) utterly (to the full extent) that which is evil. The Greek for *evil* states “hurtful (in effect or influence)...”; it was specific to differentiate from evil character. That, I believe, is because this letter is to believers. They are new creatures in Christ. They need to be warned against doing things that would cause hurt or harm to others in any way. I think this is a reference to being aware of how our actions impact other members of the body of Christ, especially young believers. We should not act in any way that would cause them to stumble. It is also a directive to speak out against actions that are evil according to God’s word, e.g., lying, homosexuality, pride, disobedience (cf the list in chapter 1).

Clinging to that which is good is an attitude of desiring the things that are beneficial and exercising tenacity and determination in making them part of your way of life. It is the other side of the coin of “abhorring evil.”

**Rom. 12:10** *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

“kindly affectioned” = cherishing one’s kindred (physical and spiritual)

“cherish” = Webster: “treat with tenderness and affection; to nurture with care; to protect and aid.”

“honour” = value, esteem

“preferring” = to lead the way for others, show deference (respect)

After looking up all the words, I liked the way the CJB expressed it: *Love each other devotedly and with brotherly love; and set examples for each other in showing respect.*

Love is proved by actions—towards God and towards each other. This truth comes out more clearly in the definition for *cherish*. When you are expressing “brotherly love,” it will produce actions that are visible to others; it sets an example. John states it this way.

1John 3:18 *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

### **Rom. 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;**

The word *business* is the same Greek word translated *diligence* in verse 8 above. The connection between the phrases isn’t as apparent in the KJV as it is in some of the other translations. Again, I like the CJB: *Don’t be lazy when hard work is needed, but serve the Lord with spiritual fervor.*

The Greek for *fervent* references “hot” like boiling liquids or glowing solids; this reflects great intensity. The word *servng* is a reference to slavery or bondage; it reflects an attitude of submission and obedience.

### **Rom. 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;**

The Greek for *rejoicing* was interesting—“cheerful, calmly happy.” The idea seems to be an encouragement to happily keep your focus on the future that is yours according to your confident expectation, your faith; and don’t let the stress or pressure of persecution or trouble affect that focus. Persevere in your faith. One of the best ways of persevering is through continual connection to the Lord in *prayer*, the Greek for which includes worship with supplication. Prayer is a time of fellowship with God. The more we place our focus on who He is and the promises of His word, the more confident we will be through our times of tribulation. The Psalms are a wonderful place to learn to pray. David was always baring his heart before the Lord in times of trouble. His psalms so often start with a heavy spirit and end up in praise and worship of God. He was aware of the importance of remembering how God has worked in our life in the past according to His word and drawing strength from that memory to encourage one’s perseverance and faith in the current time of trouble. He was quick to confess his own weakness and acknowledge God as his only dependable

source of protection and provision. I am reminded again of my life verse (as I often am).

*Isaiah 26:3* Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

**Rom. 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.**

“distributing” = to share with others

“hospitality” = Webster: “The act or practice of one who is hospitable; reception and entertainment of strangers or guests without reward, or with kind and generous liberality.”

The *saints* references other believers in the body of Christ. When we see a need in the life of another believer, and we have the capacity to meet that need with what we have—we should be willing to share. The principle to remember is that we only have because God has given to us. He expects us to use what we have unselfishly for His glory. Sometimes that sharing involves taking one into our home for periods of time. When we share with those in need, it should never be done with the thought of what we might get in return. When we share our home it should be with kindness and generosity—not just out of a sense of duty or with impure motives.

In America in particular, even those who are “poor” have so much more than those in the rest of the world. I know I have to fight the tendency to compare what I have with others. I have absolutely no reason to complain. I may have to fight fleshly desires for the nicer “things” of this world, but I always come back to the realization that I have so much!! And, frankly, I am actually quite rich in spiritual blessings in particular. I have a loving Christian husband and children that love the Lord and want to serve Him with their lives—that alone is a wonderful treasure beyond value.

**Rom. 12:14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.**

This immediately brings to mind the teaching of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount.

*Matthew 5:44* But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you....

The Greek for *bless* states “to speak well of,” which is just the opposite of cursing. It would seem that we should always do the opposite of what our flesh would lead us to do when responding to those who do us harm or hurt. To respond in the spirit, instead of the flesh, is to bring glory to God.

**Rom. 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.**

It's much easier to rejoice with someone than it is to weep with them because of the sense of helplessness that is often associated with a situation that causes weeping. When we rejoice with someone, it is an expression of happiness because they are happy without thought of jealousy or covetousness. When we weep with someone, it is an expression of the sorrow we are experiencing out of concern for their suffering with a desire to ease their pain in any way possible. I think we can all say from experience that happiness is intensified when you know that others are happy for you and that sorrow is more bearable when you know that there are others that are concerned for you and want to comfort you.

**Rom. 12:16** *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

Being of the same mind speaks of unity and harmony. I like the CJB for the last part of this verse.

*"...don't think yourselves better than others, but make humble people your friends. Don't be conceited."*

One of the Lord's greatest desires is that the body of believers live in unity with one another; this is made very clear in His prayer to the Father in chapter 17 of John.

*John 17:20-23* *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: **that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.** And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and **that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.***

Sadly, I believe it is the lack of unity that has most impacted the testimony of the "church" before the world. People of false religions often display more unity of spirit than do we. Twice in that prayer the Lord connects unity of spirit with the effectiveness of our witness to the unbelieving world.

Scripture is very clear regarding God's hatred of pride.

*Proverbs 6:16-17* *These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look....*

*Proverbs 8:13* *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.*

*1John 2:16* *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

We are not to regard one man over another. We are instructed to honor positions of authority as established by God, but never the man occupying the position. We are to follow the example of Jesus; He ministered to people according to their need—never according to their position in life.

The last phrase of this verse immediately brought another verse to mind.

*Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

When I did a word search to find this verse, I found another verse that applies.

*Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes....*

This is directly connected to a spirit of pride. The scripture is clear that only a fool would depend upon his own wisdom in navigating this life. The wisdom of man only leads him into evil. True wisdom comes from fearing the LORD. One who fears the Lord will submit to Him as Lord and will strive to obey Him because they recognize His awesome power and authority. This will lead one to make choices that are good and not evil.

**Rom. 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.**

Our flesh will always want to respond with evil intent to one who has done evil to us (or someone we love). Again, God is honored when we respond in the spirit—not in the flesh. We are to trust God to give vengeance where vengeance is due (see verse 19 below). Again, this brings to mind the teaching of Jesus.

*Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

This is a hard truth to absorb. I liked the comments from JFB on this verse in Matthew.

“Our Lord’s own meek, yet dignified bearing, when smitten rudely on the cheek (John 18:22, 23), and *not* literally presenting the other, is the best comment on these words. It is the preparedness, after one indignity, not to invite but to submit meekly to another, without retaliation, which this strong language is meant to convey.”

God has established positions of authority in family, church and community to deal with wrongdoing. We are to turn to those authorities when dealing with injustice and not assume authority we don’t possess. In that process we are to trust God with the outcome—even when that outcome may not be what we think is “fair” or “appropriate.” Jesus set the perfect example, and we are to imitate that example.

“provide” = to consider in advance, i.e. look out for beforehand (actively, by way of maintenance for others; middle voice by way of circumspection for oneself)

“honest” = beautiful, good, valuable, virtuous

As usual, these definitions were not what I expected. The emphasis seems to be on our testimony before others. The Greek for *provide* emphasizes the

importance of action with forethought and careful consideration. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will always choose to act in ways that will honor God before others. If we act in the flesh without giving the Spirit an opportunity to guide us, without careful consideration, our actions are more likely to be less than honoring to God.

**Rom. 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**

Again, I like the wording of the CJB: *If possible, and to the extent that it depends on you, live in peace with all people.*

The wording definitely implies that the encouragement to live peaceably with all men will not always be possible. The emphasis is directed to the actions of the believer. There are people who will choose to be your enemy because of your stand for Christ and the truth of His word. This verse ties directly to the thoughts of the previous verse. If we are acting with circumspection and careful consideration to honor God, we have done the best we can do regarding living peaceably with others. We are not to compromise choices or actions that are based on God's word and the leading of His Spirit just to establish peace with our fellowman. That is one of the greatest tragedies in the church (the body of professing believers) today, in my opinion. We are willing to compromise God's truth in the name of peace and tolerance.

**Rom. 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.**

This is one of the hardest truths for the believer to accept. Everything in our flesh screams out to take our own vengeance in matters where we have been harmed or wronged. To yield to the authority of God and trust Him to take vengeance according to His righteous judgment takes great effort of submission and trust. This does not mean that we cannot pursue lawful retribution according to the governmental authorities that God has ordained, but we cannot go beyond that. Where is it written?

*Deuteronomy 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence....*

This verse brings up lots of different thoughts in my mind. On the one hand, I think of the verses in Revelation where the souls under the altar want to know when vengeance will be taken on their behalf, and the Lord admonishes them to wait for His timing.

*Revelation 6:10-11 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

These believers are not rebuked for their desire for vengeance; they are just to trust God's timing as to when and how they will be avenged.

I'm also hit with the thought of "there but for the grace of God go I." I know that God would have every sinner come to repentance and salvation—even those from whom I might desire vengeance. It would seem that the heart of Christ would be for me to put aside my wrath with the same heart—to desire the salvation of my enemy and to trust God for righteous judgment.

**Rom. 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.**

This is a quote from the book of Proverbs.

*Proverbs 25:21-22 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.*

Two translations (the NLT & CJB) indicate that these *coals of fire* reflect shame. There is nothing in the Greek to support that thought, but logic would support it. In today's thinking at least, there are many who would consider it weakness and an opening for further evil treatment to respond with kindness to your enemy. (The Palestinians and enemies of Israel are prime examples of this thinking.) To others, however, this type of response would produce shame and a desire to understand the faith of one who responded to evil with good. If kindness does not produce a response of shame and repentance, we can be assured that it will produce the righteous judgment of God. It is a strong, public act of faith in God to trust Him and respond in kindness to one's enemy.

**Rom. 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

What the believer is to guard against is being overcome with evil himself. The minute we respond in the flesh to do unto others as they have done unto us, we have opened the door for wicked responses and actions in other areas of our life. We are to respond to evil with good. That means that our focus is on the Lord and that we value His honor and trust in His judgment for what He allows in our life. It could be that He allowed someone's evil actions to touch us for the opportunity of bringing that person to a position of repentance and salvation. It could be that He is perfecting us for a special position of ministry for eternity. It may be interconnected to many things that the Lord is seeking to accomplish in the lives of those around us that we could not possibly understand. I believe it always gives an opportunity for Him to be glorified and the efforts of Satan to be defeated.