

Better Together

*EXPLORING REAL WAYS
TO LIVE IN AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY*

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STUDY GUIDE
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LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER // *Romans 12:16*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The Greek word translated to “live in harmony” is *phronesis*, a word not easily translated into English. It is a mindset, a way of understanding or practical reasoning that has concern for another. *Phronesis* is not merely thinking but is a kind of comprehensive moral discernment.

The same Greek word is used by Paul ten times in his letter to the Philippians. For example, Paul exhorts the Philippians to be...

“*likeminded* having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your *attitude* should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2:2-5).

The word translated “likeminded” and “attitude” are the same word, *phronesis*. Paul is saying we are to live with one another in such a way that our thoughts, feelings, and actions should model the character of Jesus Christ.

Harmony is a byproduct of humility. To be likeminded, one cannot be proud or conceited. These traits stand in contrast to the character of Christ and in opposition to one another community. Instead, Christ followers are to be humble and, like Jesus Christ, willing to associate with people whom the culture labels as unimportant.

To live in harmony (to be of the same mind) is to be “one in spirit and purpose.” It means having a disposition of character that considers the needs of others before our own. It means following the model of Jesus who emptied himself and became a servant.

PRAY:

Ask God to reveal something meaningful through this time of reflection.

READ:

Offer your full care and attention to reading the provided scripture passages.

DISCOVER:

Romans 12:9-16 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge: I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink, in doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Philippians 2:1-11 – If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

DISCOVER, CONTINUED:

And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- 1) In Romans 12:9-16, Paul gives several instructions, and names various practices, that describe what it might look like if the church lived in harmony. Discuss what these instructions are and how well we are doing in practicing each one.
- 2) In verses 18-21, Paul warns against habits and practices that prevent us from being likeminded. What are the obstacles in our life keeping us from living in harmony?
- 3) Read Philippians 2:1-11. As noted earlier, the word for harmony literally means having the same mind or attitude, a moral reasoning involving how we think, feel, and act. What does it mean to “have the same love, being one in spirit?”
- 4) Here in Philippians, as in Romans, Paul warns against pride and selfish ambition. We are to associate with people in low position. In fact, we are to follow Christ who takes the nature of a servant. How do we follow the attitude of Christ in “making ourselves nothing?” What would this look like if we lived authentically – that is, neither playing a role nor being a victim?
- 5) What, specifically, is God leading us to discover and practice for us to be likeminded and to live in harmony with one another?

