

Romans 12:9-21
“Need a Hug”

- I. Intro**
- II. Vs. 9-13 Hugging people in Church**
- III. Vs. 14-21 Hugging people in the world**

I. Intro

A man was walking by a used bookstore and saw a book that intrigued him by what he thought was its title “*How to Hug*”. When he went in to purchase the book he was disappointed because instead of a book on hugging it was an encyclopedia that covered “*words from How to Hug*”. I’m afraid that many times this describes people’s church experience as they come to Church to get a hug and instead of a demonstration they get clobbered by an encyclopedia. On June 30th, 2004, a movement was started by a lonely man named Juan Mann who had been transformed by a random hug from a stranger. He started a campaign at a local mall in Sydney Australia by holding a sign that simply read “*Free Hugs*”. To date well over 69 million people have watched the video but what he didn’t realize is that Jesus started that campaign 2000 years ago; it’s just that the Church has failed to keep it going! This morning in verses 9-21 we are going to learn “*How to Hug*” and I promise no encyclopedia! There are two main areas that Paul says we need to be hugging people:

A. Vs. 9-13 In the Church

B. Vs. 14-21 In the world

II. Vs. 9-13 Hugging people in Church

Vs. 9a Last week Paul’s focus was humility and this week his focus is love. There is a natural progression in the spiritual life from humility to love and Paul follows that flow! The first thing

we see if we are going to “hug” properly is *sincere love*! The word “*sincere*” in Latin literally means “*without wax*” and was used by people when buying a marble sculpture when they would ask the artist if it was “*without wax*”. Many of the artist’s would use bee’s wax mixed with marble dust to hide the flaws in their work. Clearly if we are going to hug people we need to do so in love without any wax covering hidden motives or attitudes. Paul mentions *six ways to hug folks within the church*:

- a. Vs. 9b “*Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good*”: The word “*abhor*” is a word in which we get our word for “*horror*” from. We are to hate sin as we hate that hell to which it leads. Oh, that we would so view all the “evil” that so tempts us as the things that we avoid at any cost as they horrify us. But that is only part of the picture as we can treat sin and temptation as a horror flick, but we will also need to *cling to that which is good*. *We will continue a losing battle if all we do is become horrified at our temptations.* A recent article in “*Science Daily*” was investigating human behavior and people’s motivation to generally pursue pleasure and avoid pain. But how can this be reconciled with the decision to engage in experiences known to elicit negative feelings, such as horror movies. For years people believed that generally one of two theories explained why people like horror movies.
 1. The first is that the person is not actually afraid, but excited by the movie.
 2. The second explanation is that they are willing to endure the terror in order to enjoy a euphoric sense of relief at the end.

But a new study argues that neither of these theories is correct. Instead, the theory that people cannot both “*experience negative and positive emotions simultaneously*” is incorrect. In other words, “*horror movie viewers are happy to be unhappy*”. As the authors put it, “*the most*

pleasant moments of a particular event may also be the most fearful.” There you have it friends we have to do more than be horrified of sin we need to glue ourselves to that which is good! We need to realize that hugging involves the person not what they do or don’t do. **We aren’t called to love what a person does we are called to love the person!** We ought to hate what is evil in people without hating people when they do sinful things.

- b. Vs. 10a “*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love*”: Secondly, love remembers that **action is based upon relationship not mutual friendship**. Paul says we are to be “*kindly affectionate to one another*”, with **brotherly love**. Our concern isn’t based upon how well we know someone or how much we enjoy their company. The question is whether or not through Christ we are related to them.
- c. Vs. 10b “*in honor giving preference to one another*”: Third, if we are going to hug properly **we are going to have to view people as more deserving than we are**. It has been said that “*There is no limit to the good a person can do if they don’t care who gets the credit!*” That is the way to hug someone, do so and tell them that it is from someone else!
- d. Vs. 11 “*not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*”: Fourth, **a good hug must remain enthusiastic despite the setbacks**. We are told how to make sure our love doesn’t become one of this lack luster hugs: it must have two ingredients if it’s not going to lack diligence:
 - 1. **Fervent in the Spirit**: First it has to be **empowered by the holy Spirit**.
 - 2. **Serving the Lord**: second its aim must be **through the person to Jesus**.

- e. Vs. 12 “*rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer*”:

Fifth, **church hugs need to possess the tri-fecta of joy:**

1. **Praise:** It has to rejoice in hope, believing that God is going to make something good come from the mountain we have made out of a mole hill.
2. **Patience:** It has to be patient when everything and everyone is rocking our boat, knowing that the rocking of the boat always leads to the stilling of the storm.
3. **Prayer:** It has to maintain constant communication through out to the only One that can transform our biggest obstacle, ourselves.

- f. Vs. 13 “*distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality*”: Finally, if **we are going to hug folk’s properly in church then we are going to need to do practically and consistently!** We are going to have to hug folks where they need to be hugged if you know what I mean? Hospitality and hospital came from the same Greek work and best way to make people whole and well is to treat them as if they are an invited guest! “*Given to hospitality*” is literally pursuing “*stranger loving*”. There are far too many folks pursuing “*strange loves*” but not near enough of Christians pursuing “*stranger loving*”.

III. Vs. 14-21 Hugging people in the world

Having seen how to hug people in the Church Paul switch’s his focus to those outside our doors and gives us **six ways to hug people in the world:**

- a. Vs. 14 “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse*”: First, Paul says that **you are going to have to hug folks who would rather kick you then hug you.** For the most part when someone is kind to us and goes out of their way to bless us we say nice things about them to others. To hug folks that don’t like you, find something about them that you can say good about them and tell others that one or two things.

- b. Vs. 15 “**Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep**”: Second, if we are going to be affective in hugging people in the world then we are going to have to remain flexible and adjustable to their ever-changing moods. Sometimes they need a hug of consolation other times they need a hug of a “*high five chest bump*”! And to give someone a “*high five chest bump*” when what they needed was a shoulder to cry on is not going to be well received. It is comparatively easy to weep with those who weep but much more difficult to rejoice with those that rejoice. To give our condolences and not our congratulations only means that someone has loss not that someone has won!
- c. Vs. 16 “**Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion**”: Third, if you are going to hug folks in the world you are going to have to consider yourself on the same level as than the one you are going to love. The biggest obstacle we Christians face in loving the world is in forgetting our own sinful past as we believe that we are just a little bit better than those sinful folks out there.
- d. Vs. 17 “**Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men**”: Forth, if you are going to hug folks in the world you are going to have to drop the knife that you planned to plunge in their back when they aren’t looking. Now this is especially difficult when you realize that they may have one ready to plunge into your back as you hug them.
- e. Vs. 18 “**If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men**”: Fifth, you are going to have to be committed to hugging people even though they are equally committed to kicking you. You’ve heard it said that it takes two to “tango”

well I've never "*tangoed*", but I can tell you it takes two to "***Tangle***" and if you aren't into that dance they will have to be going solo.

f. Vs. 19 "***Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord***": Finally, to hug folks in the world you will need to keep a clean slate as folks can be pretty messy. You will need to keep handing them off to the Lord to deal with. When we try to get even all we will do is escalate the conflict. Paul gives two reasons why we should not avenge ourselves:

1. Because He is already at work taking care of the other person, albeit maybe not the way or in the timing you would like it.
2. Second, God alone has the right to avenge, and He can do so without collateral damage. He often does so in a redemptive way that touches the life that we would want to have destroyed.

Vs. 20-21 Paul moves on in anticipation of what he knows we would be thinking: "*So I'm supposed to just sit here and let that person let that person put the knife in me as I hug them?*"

Well of course not, Paul quotes Prov. 25:21-22, "*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.*" "***The coal thing on their heads sounds right but I'm not sure how feeding them when they are hungry or giving them something to drink when they are thirsty is part of that?***" By doing this God's way two things will happen:

- a. **You will turn their negative into God's positive**: Putting coal on someone's head was an ancient custom of lighting fires as they would use coals from one fire to start another fire for someone else. They would come over and say, "*You got a light?*" And you would

take some embers for your fire and place it in an earthen vessel that they would carry on top of their heads. *This became a metaphor of being neighborly and providing warmth and light to someone who would have been cold and in the dark without your generosity.*

- b. Vs. 21 **Secondly you automatically win because you are overcoming evil by doing good:** Three times in verses 14-17 Paul tell us not to return evil for evil thus we can see that the point is that we aren't to react like the world. We aren't to combat evil with evil we are to combat it with good.