

INTEGRITY

- **Romans 12:9-21**
- **Matthew 16:21-28**

Counterfeit bank notes have no value in the eyes of the law: fake love has no value in genuine relationships. While the passing of counterfeit bank notes is rare in our country, attempts to pass counterfeit love are all too common. So, just as everyone needs to be alert to the possibility of being landed with a fake fifty-dollar bill, we all need to beware of those who profess love but are not sincere. But what is more important than that is that we take note of Paul's injunction in Romans 12:9, to make sure that our own love is genuine.

Whether it be our love for God or for other people, make sure it is sincere, that it goes beyond mere words, that it is given without expecting something back in return. In the Letter to the Romans, Paul elaborates for his readers what that means, but one thing we can say about genuine love is that it is always costly. It involves time and effort, the surrender of our selfishness, concern for the wellbeing of the other.

The cross stands before us as a constant reminder of God's deep, sacrificial love for us all, and Jesus calls his disciples of every time and place to take up their own cross in following him (Matthew 16:24). What gain is there if we should win the whole world but lose our soul's integrity?

- What are some examples of fake love?
- What differentiates genuine love from false love?
- What examples of sincere love does Paul give in Romans 12:9-21?
- Why should integrity be so basic for the Christian life

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Romans 12:9-21

Love in Action

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ 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."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 16:21-28

Jesus Predicts His Death

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."