

Ten Marks of a Christian Father

Romans 12:9-13

Thought for the Day: The primary Christian virtue is love manifested in several practical and tangible attitudes and actions.

Charles Swindoll entitled his commentary on Romans 12:9-16, *Christianity 101*. In other words, what we have in this passage are the basics, the fundamentals, the essential ingredients for a well-lived Christian life. Here is a checklist of attitudes and actions that should characterize our lives. Because it is Father's Day, these remarks are addressed to fathers. But if we are followers of Christ, this passage is addressed to all of us.

1. Loving: He Has Genuine Love for Others (vs. 9a)

- Love is the lifeblood of the body of Christ: love for God, for other believers and for those who do not yet know the Lord.
- A genuine follower of Christ seeks to be sincere and unhypocritical in his love.
- Hypocrisy is lying through your behavior rather than your words: Love and truth go hand-in-hand. (*Swindoll*) Don't pretend to love when you really don't!
- The Greek word for love here is *agape*; that is, God-like love. Paul's model or pattern for loving others is the love that Jesus Christ manifested for us. (John 13:34-35)
- It is unselfish, self-sacrificing love that puts the welfare and needs of others above its own.
- "This [kind of] love is the most accurate indicator of spiritual health in the body of Christ... Sincere love requires concentration and effort. It means helping others become better people. It demands our time, money, and personal involvement." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

2. Holy: He Hates What is Evil and Loves What is Good (vs. 9b-c)

- Genuine love does not turn a blind eye to evil. The true believer "shrinks back from and detests" that which is evil. (Psalm 97:10)
- The mature Christian refuses to participate with evil and does not embrace it. Tolerance of evil is not a Christian virtue!
- If we do not hate evil, it is because we do not fear the Lord. (Proverbs 8:13)
- We need to hate the sin, but love the sinner.

3. Brotherly: He is Devoted to Others in Christian Love (vs. 10a)

- This is the kind of love, loyalty and affection that family members have for one another. (*Life Application Commentary Series*)
- This is accepting love that allows for weaknesses and overlooks the imperfections of others—it doesn't nit-pick and continually focus on criticizing the faults of others.
- Love keeps the lines of communication open and deals with problems rather than sweeping them under the carpet; it speaks the truth in love.

4. Respectful: He Delights in Honoring Others (vs. 10b)

- The word "honor" means to respect and value highly.

- "Honoring someone begins with a willingness to let another have his or her preference in nonessential matters." (*Swindoll, Insights, p. 258*)
- He subordinates his preferences to the preferences of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)
- This is the man who has learned that submission to others in non-essentials is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. (Ephesians 5:21)

5. Zealous: He is Fervent in Serving the Lord (vs. 11)

- This is a man who takes his religion seriously.
- He would never be accused of being lazy, apathetic or indifferent about the things of the Lord; he is diligent, enthusiastic and passionate in his service to the Lord and His people.
- He is a man who has identified and embraced his spiritual gift(s) and actively seeks to use his gift(s) and abilities to build up and encourage others in the body of Christ.
- This is a man who is led by the Spirit, who walks in the Spirit, and who is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

6. Joyful: He Has Confident Joy in the Promises of God's Word (vs. 12a)

- This is a man who looks forward with happy anticipation to all that God has in store for him.
- Biblical hope is "anticipating that which has not yet happened and celebrating it as though it has." (*Swindoll, Insight, p. 258*)
- Genuine joy is built on biblical hope which is basically synonymous with faith.
- The Christian father does not fear the future because he knows it is in God's hands.
- It is his personal relationship with Christ, not his circumstances, that is the source of his joy. (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

7. Persevering: He is Patient and Persevering in the Face of Trials (vs. 12b)

- This is a man who endures trials and difficulties with patience and perseverance because he knows that God is in control. (Romans 8:28)
- He recognizes that trials and tribulations are God's classroom for the development of Christlike character in his life. (Romans 5:3; James 1:2-4)

8. Prayerful: He is Devoted to Prayer (vs. 12c)

- Prayer is his lifeline to God. (Philippians 4:6-7)
- He views prayer to be as necessary to his spiritual life as air is to his physical life.

9. Generous: He is Generous to Those in Need (vs. 13a)

- "This was another trademark of believers, and it was often what drew nonbelievers to Christianity (see Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37; 11:27-30)." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

10. Hospitable: He Shows Hospitality to Others (vs. 13b)

- "Christian hospitality differs from social entertaining. Entertaining focuses on the host...Hospitality, in contrast, focuses on the guests. Their needs...are the primary concern. (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)