

Bible Study Lesson  
Characteristics of Growing Christians - Part 4  
Romans 12:17-21 (NIV)

**INTRODUCTION:** When we are wronged, we can easily feel tempted to retaliate, defend ourselves and seek revenge. But Paul says there is a better way. In the last talk of our series, I consider how and why we should resist vengeance, and what it means to trust in the justice of God.

Towards the end of Romans 12, Paul considers how we should respond when people seek to do us harm, and he describes two responses: how God responds, and how we are to respond. In these verses 17-21, I want us to consider how God responds to evil, and our response.

I. A growing Christian will be – Forgiving.

**Romans 12:17 (NIV)** “*Do not repay anyone evil for evil...*”

The word for “**repay**” here means an exact payback, penny for penny. This is the automatic sinful **reaction** of human nature when it has been wronged. Yet verbal, emotional, or physical payback is not an option for the Christian.

**Mark 11:25 (ESV)** “*And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*”

**Luke 17:3-4 (ESV)** “*Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.*”

If there is an escape take it. The Lord Jesus did not get even with his enemies.

II. A growing Christian will – Have Integrity.

**Romans 12:17 (NIV)** “...*Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.*”

This phrase refers to **both moral** and **physical sight**. Christians should appreciate what is good and right as they spend time with others. We should be known for having “a careful regard for that which is noble.” For this to be evident to people who don't know Christ, we must have relationships with them!

**II Corinthians 8:21 (NIV)** “*For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.*”

**Proverbs 3:3-4 (NIV)** “*Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.*”

III. A growing Christian will be – Peaceful.

**Romans 12:18 (NIV)** “*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*”

**V.18** recognizes that it is **not possible** to be at peace with everyone all the time. But we must make our **best effort** to maintain peace when our friends are acting like our enemies. Even if they do not reciprocate, we can be assured that we honored God and made an effort.

**Romans 14:19 (NLT)** “*So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.*”

**Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)** “*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*”

IV. A growing Christian – Does Not Retaliate

**Romans 12:19 (NIV)** “*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,”[a] says the Lord.*”

**V.19** makes it clear that **revenge** is not an option for the Christian either. We must give space for God's wrath and know that His vengeance will have its way. God is infinitely capable and exact in working vengeance in His perfect time.

Hebrews 10:30 (GW) “*We know the God who said, “I alone have the right to take revenge. I will pay back.” God also said, “The Lord will judge his people.”*”

Psalms 94:1 (KJV) “*O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.*”

V. A growing Christian – Is Not Overcome by Evil but Overcome Evil with Good.

Romans 12:19-21 (NIV)

### **Application:**

How can we keep growing in our practical love for those who don't know Christ?

1. Maturity doesn't sinfully react when wronged. What is your usual response?
2. Love God, His Word, and prayer.
3. Gather with the church family to learn God's Word and enjoy fellowship.
4. Maintain a disciplined relationship with other believers.