

## Just Checking In #128 Circle of Concern, Circle of Control Romans 12:17-21

*Psalm 39:12 "Hear my prayer, O Lord... for I am a 'pilgrim' with You..."*

(You can also hear the sermon series on Romans at [www.bbcpa.org](http://www.bbcpa.org) - click on the Sermons link)

Review from Romans

Paul has taken us on a panoramic tour of man's ruin in sin and restoration in Christ through the first 11 chapters of Romans. We have viewed man's awful misery and God's awesome mercy. God's mercy is underserved, saving, freeing, transforming, and sovereign. It has taken us from being SINNERS WITH GUILT (Ch 1-3), to being SAINTS WITH GRACE (4-5), to being SONS WITH GLORY (6-11), and now in chapters 12-16, STEWARDS WITH GIFTS.

### **WE ARE CALLED AND INVITED TO BE INVESTING STEWARDS Chapters 12-16**

Stewards of our **bodies**: *Offer them* 12:1-2

Stewards of our **gifts**: *Use them* 12:3-8

Stewards of our **relationships**: *Bless them* 12:9-21

**The Relationship of the Steward with his God**

**Love God Fervently – 12:11-12**

**The Relationship of the Steward with Others**

**Love Others Generously – 12:13-16**

**The Relationship of the Steward with Difficult People**

**Love Enemies Freely – 12:17-21**

(I owe the following concept of "Circle of Control, Circle of Concern" to my friend Ken Nichols. We became acquainted at ABWE when I was involved with the interviewing and approval of missionary candidates. Ken comes each year to the home office to both interview, counsel, and instruct our new potential missionary appointees. Ken is a wonderful pastor, Bible teacher, and counselor. Let me encourage you to get his books and materials at [www.aliveministries.net](http://www.aliveministries.net))

## **Circle of Concern, Circle of Control**

When dealing with difficult people, it is important to remember what I am responsible for, and what I am not responsible for. That's where the two circles come into play. In the circle of concern are all those things that concern me, but over which I do not have any control. I have serious and legitimate concerns about other's feelings, motives, choices, beliefs, perspectives, habits, and decisions. But I do not have control over any of these things. Regardless of the depth of that concern, or the legitimacy of that concern, I am still unable to control the outcome. Their choices are just that... their choices, not mine! Therefore, to spend my time living in "the circle of concern" will only lead me to increasing levels of anxiety, frustration, fear, anger, and hopeless despair. Trying "to fix people" is not within my power. What is within my power is my attitude, actions, responses and reactions. These are within my "circle of control." I can control myself, and I am responsible to do so, with the power of God available to me in Christ Jesus. Keeping these two circles clear and distinct will enable me to concentrate on what I am responsible for and in control of, and therefore enable me to be a vehicle for God to use, rather than an obstacle that hinders His work.

### **Circle of Control**

**How do I deal with difficult people? Romans 12:17-21**

**"Do not repay anyone evil for evil."**

Don't get even! Don't even think about it! Respond with love, not hate. Getting even only adds sin to your own soul as well as prolonging the conflict and blocking the possibility of restoration or resolution.

To respond to "evil with evil" means evil wins on both sides of the offense, and makes both wrong!

**"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 right, no matter who's looking! At first glance it would seem absolutely impossible to do "what is right in the eye of everyone!" If that means "do what everyone thinks is right"... we will always find those who think any decision we make is the wrong one. What this text is instructing us to do is perhaps better phrased... "Do the right thing, no matter who is looking." The right thing is God's will. So we are told to do God's will, obey His clear commands, regardless of who is watching or not watching. Keep doing the right thing. This is always within my circle of control. And as far as it depends on you, you will be a peacemaker, living a life of grace and kindness. We are called to be vessels of mercy, showing mercy and kindness, letting God work through us. There are times when others will respond in anger no matter what we do. Stephen lived and died doing God's work, showing mercy, doing right, and seeking peace. It was not possible for him to change the minds of his persecutors. But he fulfilled God's calling "as far as it depended" on him. This is our circle of control.

**"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.**

Live at peace. Let God settle the scores. When we respond with kindness to evil doers, aren't we letting them get away with evil? No! We must step back and remember in the final analysis that *no one ever gets away with anything!* Either Christ pays for the evil at the cross, or men pay the price for evil in hell forever. We choose to not show revenge knowing that either mercy or justice will be satisfied in the end. We have received mercy through the cross, and so we show mercy, praying that others will turn from their sin and find forgiveness and transformation in Christ. If they refuse, then God's wrath will settle all accounts at the great white throne judgment.

**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."**

Be Christlike in kindness. When suffering evil we may feel like dumping hot coals on the heads of our tormentors! Paul tells us that responding in Christ-like love accomplishes this in an amazing way. By showing Christ-like love to those who are acting like enemies we are heaping burning coals upon them. Some think this means adding to their guilt and eventual wrath, while others think it means bringing about severe embarrassment and conviction of sin leading to repentance. Both have a basis in fact depending on their response to our kindness. Remember again our circle of control. When we embrace our responsibility to control our emotions and reactions by responding to evil with good, we overcome the evil with the good and become a vessel through which God can accomplish all He intends to through us.

**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."**

Love in action conquers evil in ourselves, as well as in others. We are not overcome (conquered) by evil until or unless we ourselves begin to do evil in response to evil done to us. To receive evil treatment does not mean that evil has conquered me. Stephen was not overcome by evil. (Acts 7:54-60) He was killed by evil men, but he overcame their evil by his Christlike response of love. Revelation 2-3 continually promises "the one who overcomes" eternal blessings. We overcome evil when we respond in love. Evil was overcome ultimately at the cross, when mankind's most evil deed became the means of God's greatest good for mankind. This is how God overcomes evil and how He calls us to do the same.

We are called to conquer evil by demonstrating right in the face of wrong, love in the face of hate, and kindness in the face of cruelty. We are called to be peacemakers in this world. As Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God!" Let the world curse us. We will be vessels of blessing, living in the circle of control, and letting God work His will through us for His glory.

**SELF CHECK:**

- 1) Are you finding yourself living in the circle of concern... frustrated, angry, worried, fearful and depressed? Are you willing to leave these burdens in God's hands and step over into the circle of control?

- 2) Are you aware of anyone who could be characterized as your enemy? How can you demonstrate a holy, loving response to their anger or bitterness towards you? This kindness could be anonymous or known. Seek the best way to bless them.
- 3) Are you being overcome by evil, allowing evil thoughts and motives to fill your life in response to the evil of others? Repent and ask God to remove the bitterness and replace it with His overcoming love and grace.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:**

Matthew 5:1-16  
Ephesians 4:24-32  
Colossians 3:12-17

"Lord God, You are the God who reconciles. You are the God who forgives. You are the God who shows kindness to we who were Your enemies. We hated You, yet You loved us. We killed You, yet You forgave us. We cursed You, yet You became a curse for us so that we might be forever blessed by You. How can we do less? We have received such grace continually from Your hand. Grant us the strength to respond with grace and be vessels, not obstacles, to fulfilling Your purposes through us as we deal with those who make life difficult for us. Make us a blessing, O Blessed Savior, even to those who curse us. We pray in Your blessed name, Amen."

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... Jn 9:4 Ron & Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable,  
changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible  
with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows,  
spending our time on eternity,  
owning nothing yet possessing everything  
that matters and lasts.  
We are Pilgrims in Paradox.  
Welcome to THE JOURNEY