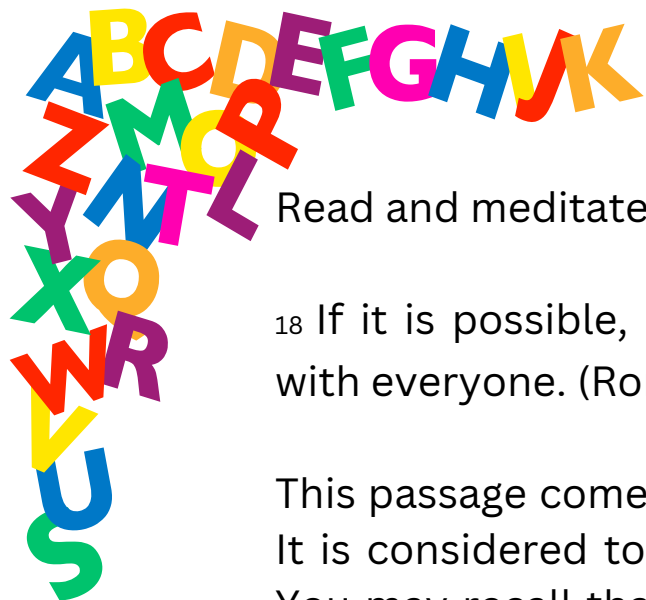




For Further Study

Read and meditate on the passage below:

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

This passage comes from Paul's letter to the church at Rome. It is considered to be his most in-depth theological treatise. You may recall that Paul begins the chapter by talking about being "living sacrifices," a theme that he continues in the verses that follow.

Paul emphasizes that because of our choice to live sacrificially, we are to remain humble in our dealings with others. This humility is demonstrated, in part, by choosing to avoid retaliation and a spirit of revenge against those who persecute or harm us. When we come to verse 18, we see that Paul suggests "peace" as a prioritized goal. We are to strive to live peacefully with everyone.

In some relationships it is relatively easy to live at peace. We have common beliefs, personalities, and values that unify us. In other relationships, living at peace can be quite challenging because we have opposite ideas, perspectives, and priorities. Paul recognizes this challenge and seems to differentiate between what we can and what we cannot control. He calls us to do everything in our power ("as much as it depends on you.")

When we think about what is in our control, there is plenty for us to focus on: our words, tone, body language, attitude, response, and actions are all within the bounds of our responsibility. While we do not control (and should avoid attempting to manipulate) other people, we can set and maintain boundaries on how we will interact with those who are toxic in our lives. At the same time, we have to daily evaluate our own internal perceptions and guard against arrogance, pride, ego, victim mentality, and other counter-productive/hostile views.

PRACTICE:

What can I do to be at peace with others around me?

