

How Can I Get Along with People I'm Not That Fond Of?

As I write this little article, it's the time of year for visiting with family, but, to be honest, there are folks that don't like some members of the family. How can a person get along with people of whom they are not that fond? This question can really get to the heart of some serious holiday struggles. It's also a good example of how life is not easy, but God's Word doesn't shy away from the difficult issues.



That's one of the many things that we as God people can appreciate about God's Word. The Bible puts real life on display and is honest about our struggles, sins, and flaws. But it also gives us God's real hope in the midst of our human mess.

In terms of getting along with difficult family members, there are several options we might want to pursue. We could avoid people we don't like. We can fight with people we don't care for. We can be sneaky and play games with people who rub us the wrong way. But those methods only cause more discord in relationships and difficulty within ourselves. There is only one way to deal effectively with a people problem and that is to show the same kind of love to them that God has given to you.

But ... how in the world can you show love to someone you don't like? Well, that's why I said show what you've received! Think about how God treats you. *"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)*. In other words, we are not very likeable to Him.

In our flawed and fallen sinful condition, we offend God every moment with our self-centeredness and rebellion. But even in our unlikableness, God sent His Son to die for us and save us from being eternally lost and broken. The Apostle John said, *"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10 NIV)*. That love humbles us and changes us. That's exactly what John said next: *"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11 NIV)*.

What does that love look like when you have to sit at the same table or stand in the same room with someone you can't stand? It doesn't mean putting on a show. You don't have to fake a smile or make a big fuss as if you're thrilled to see the person. It also doesn't mean that you throw away healthy boundaries or let someone walk all over you. What it means is that in your heart, filled with God's love and grace, you wish the other person well. You live as a person of goodwill and as a peacemaker. You watch for opportunities to bring the person God's grace. Sometimes it may mean just being quiet. But that can be both difficult and exhausting.

Christmas is not for the faint of heart. For that matter, following Jesus is not for the faint of heart, either. We are called to follow in Jesus' steps. This means setting the tone of constructive love. It means not starting trouble or verbally destroying someone after the party is over. The big question for a follower of Jesus is: how can we show God's love to the people in our lives—especially the people who are most difficult to love? Can you imagine if everyone tried to do this during the holiday season?

All this might sound to some as a worn out cliché, like, is that all you've got? Love? The fact is, OUR love is a cliché, but I'm talking about God's love in Jesus Christ. That love is a precious gift and a challenging calling. Love isn't merely a feeling; it's an intentional action of self-sacrifice to care about someone and build them up. Sometimes it involves tough love, but it always involves wishing someone well.

The way of Christ excludes vengeance and pettiness and it always blesses people. God's love works wonders. Ask God to fill you with His love so you can, in turn, show love to people in your life—even the ones you don't like that much. With God's love in us, His love will show through us.

God's blessings for a great New Year!! That's the View from Here!

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