

Daily Devotional, November 10, 2020 Love Like You Love Yourself

27 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:27-31 (NIV)

There is a great deal of joy that we receive when we are nice to others. When I am able to give to someone in need or perform a kind deed that blesses another person, it makes me feel good. Sadly, we are living in difficult times. Many people have experienced job losses, a new relief bill has been held up over a stalemate in congress and we have a strange virus that continues to turn our world upside down and backwards. There are so many things in our world that seem out of our control. These difficult times can really test our patience *and* our kindness.

It is not as easy to be kind right now, so worried for our own health by keeping our safe distances, keeping our mask tightly in place, and doing our best to show civility and patience without losing our cool, especially when others around us are just as frightened and tend to have the same trepidation, even at times displaying short tempers as well. In addition to the usual Corona-virus anxiety, what this latest election cycle has shown me more than anything, is just how out of control peoples' emotions have become, showing a total lack of patience, understanding, empathy and civility.

I recently read this teaching of Jesus, from the Gospel of Luke, that tells us, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." This is a demanding teaching! Jesus is asking His followers to be kind, no matter how poorly the other person treats us and no matter how horribly they make us feel.

The scripture from Luke's Gospel reminded me that kindness is not just for those people that I like and enjoy being around. Jesus reminds us that our calling to be kind, to love one another, is a calling to love all people. We are to care for those who so often seem unlovable, unapproachable, even our enemies. And by what measure do we look at ourselves if the shoe is on the other foot. Do we treat that other person with the same compassion that we demand? Do we truly listen to the other with empathy and compassion and grace? Or are we intolerably defensive and argumentative? Even over who reached for that item first or who violated the other's space?

Loving our neighbor is an intentional act, based on God's love for us, and our desire to share that love with the world. Our love for others and our acts of kindness are not based on the other person who is receiving our love and kindness, but rather our love is motivated by the love of God in our own hearts, having received such amazing grace through the life and sacrificial death for us by Jesus Christ. Being kind to our enemies is no easy task in some cases, but God's gift of love and kindness is truly a gift for the whole world. When we share with even those who seem to be our enemies, we can start to put this world right-side up. Can't we set our egos aside, humble ourselves and work toward that goal? Christ did.

Prayer: God, today we ask for Your help to walk humbly with our brothers and sisters. It is all too easy for us to fall prey to our flesh and to walk in arrogance, but pride causes division, and we desire peace. Lord, help us to humble ourselves in order that we do not let the lies of the enemy overtake us, rather, help us to count ourselves as equals with one another. It is then that we will stop attempting to be better than others, and we can love their hearts for the unique person You made them to be. Help us to value one another in this humble spirit so that we may live to the fullest. In Jesus name, Amen