

## Daily Devotional, November 16, 2020 Love Against All Odds

<sup>34</sup> ***“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35 (NIV)***

There are people in life, even those we may love dearly or live with closely, who we sometimes find ourselves “at odds” with at any particular moment or situation. There are many other people in our lives who we most definitely find ourselves “at odds” with over a particular issue or opinion. We have been reminded (and often need to be reminded!) throughout this year that these moments, issues, or people are no exception to our commandment from Jesus to “love one another”.

I don't know who you are “at odds” with at this moment. Maybe it's your spouse or your child as your struggle with stress that you bring home, or keep at home if you're not leaving much! Maybe it's the education system that has changed and turned your world upside down as a parent, as a student, or as an educator. Maybe it's new and difficult expectations at work, coupled with financial tension. Maybe it's the new guidelines set by the medical field or the government that have caused frustration or limitations that have proven challenging and costly.

It's important that in all of these situations that we pause and consider the other perspective. You may have your own stress at home, but your other family members have their own stress as well. Those in the education system and the medical field are bobbing up and down in troubled waters due to quickly changing demands. It's easy to make quick judgments and harsh comments on those we see in a store or those in the public eye. You will not always know the battles that someone else is trying to overcome. But fighting with and judging others has not really proven itself useful when living out the command “love one another.” Instead, we should choose to listen and understand more deeply. Communicate your own needs and worries to trusted individuals. We can still choose kindness in our words and actions to all. We can always pray for one another.

2020 is not a year of perfection, but it's definitely proven to be a year of perseverance. It's hard work to be kind and loving, especially when we are “at odds” with another. But it's important, and it's necessary. Take a moment to pause and consider someone that you are “at odds” with today. Pray for God to open your heart in grace and your mind in gratitude. Pray for them and then decide on a way that you can show kindness to them in spite of your differences or the difficult moment you may have shared recently. And then take a moment to realize, you may need to do this again tomorrow or the next day. It's not only hard work, it's everyday work. But God will strengthen you and guide you, so trust in God. Don't be discouraged if you don't get it right in a month, or a week, or even this afternoon. God doesn't give up on us; God is faithful, so we can continue to persevere in these harder moments. So, take another moment to pause and pray. Express your gratitude to God. Choose kindness. Show grace and love. And love one another as God has loved us.

***Jesus, grant me grace for loving my family and friends well. Help me to not take any of them for granted. Forgive me when I want friendship to be simply a mutual admiration society rather than a community of grace and growth. Grant me strength for loving the irritating people in my life—those who are easy to avoid and hard to forbear. Remind me that I'm that very person to others. Help me to walk in your ways. To your glory, Amen.***