

## Daily Devotional, August 24, 2021 Loving the 'Hard to Love' Ones

***Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 2:23-25 (NIV)***

Not so many years ago, I joined Facebook because it seemed like a great way to stay in touch with my kids. They live far and near and Facebook allowed me to hear about the fun things they were doing and to see pictures of places they had been. I still occasionally go to Facebook hoping to see a post from my kids. (Although they have mostly moved on to more hip sites such as We Chat and Instagram) That is the good part of social media for me.

Of course, Facebook has become so much more than a platform to connect. It has become a place where conspiracy theories are peddled, false information is shared, and folks engage in endless arguments about politics and the culture wars. Seeking honest debate is one thing, but too often folks post controversial items designed to lure you into a cesspool of propaganda. It becomes a place where some folks take pride in insulting each other. And to be sure...many of us are not above taking the bait in some of these posts. Some of us have even been known to create posts just to vent. More recently, I have been much more discerning about accepting "friend requests" from people I barely know or knew years ago. Who needs more "friends" who simply want to push their agenda on to as many people as they can?

I think one question we need to ask is: How do we love those who seek to divide us, who treat us with disrespect and judge us? The Apostle Paul writing in 2 Timothy, offers some insight here in the above passage.

I can wholly subscribe to what Paul says about avoiding foolish arguments. When it comes to social media, stop making enemies out of people we often do not even know! But, the hard question to answer is, how do we love these neighbors without exception? The short answer is, we remember God loves them just as much as God loves you. Martin Luther once said something to the effect that when you are at odds with your neighbor, remember that Christ also died *for them*. If Christ was willing to die for these folks, *they must have worth*. To hate someone that God values and loves seems like a sin in itself. I know I need to heed the words in this devotional as much as anyone. If you feel the same way, perhaps, we can pray for each other!

***Prayer: Father, I have to thank You for looking beyond my faults and for loving me unconditionally. Forgive me when I fail to love others in the same way. Give me eyes to see the needs of the difficult people in my life and show me how to meet those needs in a way that pleases You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.***