

Daily Devotional, September 14, 2021 Odds Are, Love Will Prevail

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 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 whom we may love very dearly, whom we live or whom we are close to, who we sometimes find ourselves at odds with at some moment or over some situation. There are many other people in our lives who we most definitely find ourselves at odds with over particular issues or opinions. We have been, and continue to be reminded, 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 home if you're not leaving much. Maybe it's the education system that has tampered with your world as a parent, as a student, or as an educator. Maybe it's some new and difficult expectations at work, coupled with financial tension. Maybe it's new guidelines in the medical field or in public sectors that have caused frustration or limitations that have proved to be challenging for you.

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 balancing deftly the quickly changing demands that they experience. It's easy to make quick judgments and harsh comments regarding those we see in a store or those in the public eye. But you will not always know the battles that someone else is trying to overcome. Fighting with and judging others has not really proven itself useful when living out the command to “love one another.” Instead, we need to choose to listen and to understand more deeply. As you communicate your own needs and worries to trusted individuals, we can still be considerate and choose kindness in our words and actions to all. And we can *always* pray for one another.

This past year has not been a year of perfection, but it has definitely proven to be a year of perseverance. It's hard work to be kind and loving, but most especially when we are at odds with one another. Still, 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 make a decision on how you can show kindness to them in spite of your differences or despite the difficult moment you may have shared recently. And then be determined to do this again tomorrow, and again the next day. It's not only hard work, it's everyday work. But God will strengthen you and guide you, so trust in Him.

Don't be discouraged if you don't get it right in a month, or a week, or in the next 24 hours. 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. Ask for strength, patience, and perseverance. Express your gratitude to God. But most of all, choose kindness. Show grace and love.

Prayer: Lord, You have said that to truly love you then I must also love my neighbor, which can be difficult when we disagree or our lifestyles clash. Yet in overcoming those difficulties it is possible to see the miracle that You could love someone like me. Teach us to love, Lord, as you have loved us, that this world might be a better neighborhood in which to live and share. May we look at others as if through Your eyes, less judging, more loving, and seeing them, like us, as not perfect or finished, but as a work in progress that will be completed in due time by Your hands. In Your perfect name I pray, Amen.