



With hope that this page will bring glory to God and attention to His Word, you are invited to check this page every day for a piece of scripture, thoughts on the verse(s) and a prayer. May the ideas presented here bring you fulfillment as you continue your journey with Christ.

Thursday April 25, 2024

Today's Scripture:

**If someone says, "I love God,"
but hates a fellow believer,
that person is a liar; for if we
don't love people we can see,
how can we love God, whom we
cannot see? And he has given us
this command: Those who love
God must also love their
fellow believers.
1 John 4:20-21**

Thoughts on Today's Verse(s):

Tough instructions from St. John today, huh? Not really. If we think that today's directions on loving one another, especially the family of believers, are tough, then we better consider our standing in the faith for there are a lot tougher things to believe and follow than this.

Here's a question for you to consider: *Is it possible to love someone if you do not like some of the things they do and say?* Of course it is. We love our spouses but we don't like all the things they do nor do they like all that we do. We love our children but we do not approve of some of the things that come out of their mouths. And what about Jesus? Did He not scold and reprove, rebuke and admonish, those He loved? Like Peter? The Pharisees? The rich young man? Martha? His own Mother? Those who conspired and had Him crucified?! Indeed, He certainly did not like what any number of folks did at various times. But, He *never* stopped loving them.

John uses a pretty tough word today. One that many find offensive and difficult to swallow: *liar*. The apostle actually accuses all of us of being liars if we profess to love God but hate His followers. Ouch! That one stings - and it should. There is no wiggle room on loving the family of believers. Loving each other in the church is not optional. Jesus *commanded* us to love each other. It wasn't suggestion or a recommendation, like so many treat it. It was/is a commandment. John asserts: "*Those who love God **must** also love fellow believers*". We in the church are guilty, just as society is, of loving those we like and associate with while being prone to actually hate those we don't like. Brothers and sisters, this should/must not be so.

So, how do we truly *love* those who hate us? We do what Jesus did. We *pray for them*. We lift up those who do not hold agape love for us to The Lord. And we must be mindful of how we pray. We do not ask God to make them as we would have them for we must remember that we are flawed. Our desires and wishes for someone/anyone always carry the imperfect and inconsistent longings and cravings of human hearts tainted by sin. No, we must ask The Lord to make Himself known to them and help them to become the person(s) He designed them to be. In the meantime, we must do more than just *tolerate* them. We must truly and unalterably show them love in actions and words.

"Do you know how hard that is? Do you know what they said? Do you know what they did?"

"Of course I know. I know everything. I saw what they did. I heard what they said. But, do not forget that I have seen & heard all that you have said and done and some of it's not pretty; some of it is downright unrighteous and sinful. But I have forgiven you and I love you - and I love them too. How can you say you love Me and not love them?"

Ouch! That stings!

Prayer:

O Holy Father, forgive us for not loving our neighbors as ourselves. We have not loved them as You have commanded us. Lord, hear our prayers for them and may our hearts be truly turned to want the best for them, just as You do. Hear our prayers that You may be incited to bless them and protect them, guide them and direct them, to become the people You want them to be. May we truly honor Your commandment to love one another in truth and genuine agape so we love them as we love You, and You love us. Help us to set aside resentments and grievances that may cause us to actually descend into hatred without realizing it. We pray through The Good Shepherd who unreservedly loves us all, Amen.

1 John 4:20-21 NIV

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

