

Is it even possible to Love Thy Neighbor?

We all have neighbors, family, or coworkers that can be very difficult to get along with. Some of them seem to go out of their way to be mean or cruel and yet we are called to love them.

1. What does it mean to love them?

Philippians **2:1-8**

Romans **13:7-10**

To love our neighbor is to view them with high esteem. That is to view them as though they are actually better than us. To love our neighbor is to ensure that we do nothing to harm our neighbor. It does not mean that we have to be all huggy best of friends but that our love and care for them only lifts them up and encourages them.

2. To what degree should I love my neighbor?

Leviticus **19:12-18**

Mark **12:29-34**

Ephesians **5:1-2**

Romans **5:6-10**

We have been called by God to love our neighbor as we care for and love ourselves as well as to love them as Christ has loved us. We need to remember that God's greatest demonstration of love toward us took place while we hated and despised Him and that we have been called to be like Him and to love others like He has loved us.

3. What if they treat me with animosity and anger?

Matthew **5:43-48**

Luke **6:26-36**

Galatians **5:13-18**

1 John **5:3**

Ephesians **2:1-6**

Romans **12:18**

Christ has called us to love our enemies. We need to remember that they are also created in the likeness and image of God but they, like us, have lost their way and that we might be the conduit of God's power so that they might see the light of truth and turn to Christ for His redeeming power. Even if they view us as enemies, we are called to bless them and pray for them even as others have done for us and as Christ has commanded us. By the power of Jesus Christ working in us and through us, keeping His commands is not a chore but a blessing and gift. Even while we love and care for your neighbor we need to remember as well that it is not our job to see that they love us back. We are called to live peaceably with all men, as much as it is in our power to do. Some men will refuse to be loved and care for by us, we cannot be overly concerned about that.

4. What does it take to look beyond their cruelty?

Ephesians **4:29-32**

2 Corinthians **12:6-10**

Philippians **4:11-13**

Matthew **19:26**

Mark **10:27**

1 Corinthians **6:9-12**

Our ability to care for and even love those to are cruel to us does not come from our own power and abilities but from God's presence. It is God, through Christ, that gives us the power and ability to

look beyond our mistreatment by others and see that they are acting by the power of their own flesh and need to see and, if possible, feel the love of Christ. We need to remember that we also once hated and despised all that is of God but by God's mercy and grace He has shown us the light of truth.