

Loving the Hard to Love

In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Most of us find the greatest commandment easy to obey. How difficult can it be to love the Lord our God, from whom all our blessings flow? Likewise, most of us find it very easy to love most of our neighbors. Our neighbors tend to be pleasant and sensible people, for the most part.

Some of our neighbors, though, can be a bit difficult to love. Maybe they are argumentative, or easy to anger, or just not very much like us. Our neighbors might not even be Christians. They may be in prison, or they may even be unrepentant sinners. How can we learn to love those neighbors as we love ourselves?

It helps to ask: How can God love me, a sinner, as much as he does? "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). My sins nailed Jesus to the cross and the Lord let it happen because he loves me. It is difficult to fathom the Lord's love for me, that he would send his only son to die a horrible death to save me from my sins. Truly, I am hard to love because of those sins. How can God love me so much?

Once you have this perspective, it should be easier to show your love to someone who may be a bit difficult to get along with. If God can love us, we can show our love and compassion to everyone, not just the "easy to love." Go out of your way to show this love to all of your neighbors as you strive to be more Christ-like in your daily life.

For the elders,
Tony Turner