













## **“How Do I Live Next Door To The Person I Least Want To Live Next Door To?”**

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“How Do I Live Next Door To The Person I Least Want To Live Next Door To?”</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>A Sermon on Loving Relationships by David Newman</b></p>
	<p>Jim and Cora Williams having sold their farm in Pennsylvania were looking for a new farm. Driving through a beautiful fertile valley in Wisconsin they remarked that this looked like a nice place to settle in. When they checked into the motel that evening they asked the motel owner if he knew of any farms for sale in the area.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"These are all good farms around here" Mr. Owens replied, "people seldom move." Then he remembered. "Oh, I almost forgot, there is the Philips place, but it has changed hands many times. No one seems to want to stay there more than a few months.</p> <p>"What's wrong with the farm?" ask Jim. "Nothing wrong with the place. It is a good farm. People just don't seem to stay there long..</p>
	<p>Jim went over the farm with the eye of an experienced farmer. It had obviously suffered from neglect but with some work it would make a great farm. He was almost afraid to ask the price. The answer he got was so ridiculously low he could hardly believe his ears. He had gone over the farm very carefully and could not find anything fundamentally wrong. What was the problem?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Let me think about it" said Jim, "I will let you know in a day or two." No sooner had they got back to the motel than they got into their car and drove back out to the farm. They decided to ask some of the neighbors. The first one they approached was only too eager to help.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Oh, it is all on account of old man Grimes whose</p>


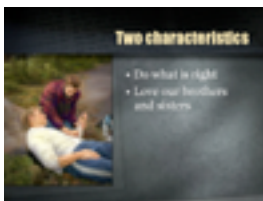

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	<p>farm adjoins the Phillips place. He is so mean. He plays every dirty trick in the book on the people until they cannot stand it anymore and just sell and leave. There is nothing wrong with the farm itself but I wouldn't live next to him for all the tea in China.</p>
	<p>They bought the farm and forgot all about Mr. Grimes. One morning when Jim went to feed the cows he found them missing. Someone had cut a hole in the fence and he found them on government land by the spring that fed the house.</p> <p>A few days later when Cora called Roger their dog for breakfast he did not appear. They found him dead behind the barn. "Poisoned" said the vet. Who could have done this they thought but knowing Mr. Grime's reputation they had their suspicions.</p> <p>A month passed without further incident. Then when Cora turned the tap on one morning--no water. Cora informed Jim who left the milking, took a bucket and went up to the spring. There he found that someone had dug up a section of pipe and hidden it behind some bushes. And to top it all off, because of the water incident Cora was late getting her washing on the line and decided to leave it up all night. In the morning, much to her horror, she discovered that someone had cut the line leaving the clothes dragging in the dirt.</p>
	<p>How would you feel if you were Cora? How do you live next door to someone who you don't want to live next door to? How do we practice that kind of love? It begins by understanding the fundamental difference between the children of God and the children of the devil. Listen to what the Apostle John says:</p>

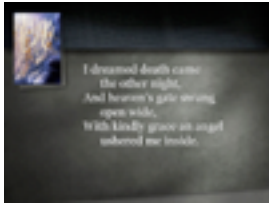
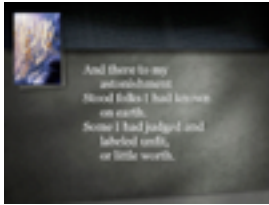
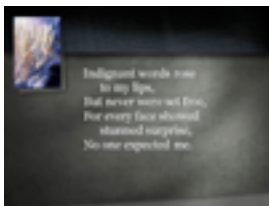
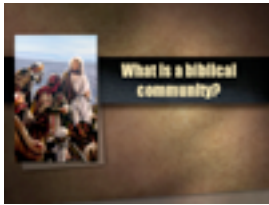
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 <p><b>1 JOHN 3:10</b></p> <p>The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right and do not love their brothers and sisters.</p>	<p>“The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters.</p>
 <p><b>1 JOHN 3:11</b></p> <p>For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.</p>	<p>For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.</p>
 <p><b>1 JOHN 3:12</b></p> <p>We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.</p>	<p>We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.</p>
 <p><b>1 JOHN 3:13-14</b></p> <p>Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death.</p>	<p>“Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death.</p>
 <p><b>1 JOHN 3:15</b></p> <p>All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them.</p>	<p>All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them.</p>
 <p><b>1 JOHN 3:16</b></p> <p>We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us--and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.</p>	<p>“We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us--and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.</p>
 <p><b>1 JOHN 3:17</b></p> <p>How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help” (1 John 3:10-17, NRS).</p>	<p>How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help” (1 John 3:10-17, NRS).</p>

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	<p>John gives us two characteristics of those loyal to God: one, we must do what is right, and two, we must love our brothers and sisters, those around us. But what is love? John leaves us in no doubt. In verse sixteen he tells us that love is what Jesus did when He laid down His life for us. To love others including our enemies, the difficult people in our lives, we should also be prepared to give our life for that person.</p> <p>John gives an example of how to love in verse seventeen when he says that when we see people in need we are to help them. In other words love is proactive. It does not wait to love but actively searches for people to minister to.</p> <p>The hardest people to minister to are not those with physical needs but those with emotional needs. We prefer people like us, who think like we do.</p>
	<p>Here is what Philip Yancy, Christian author says about why he prefers smaller churches.</p> <p>‘The man who lives in a small community lives in a much larger world. . . . The reason is obvious. In a large community we can choose our companions. In a small community our companions are chosen for us.’”</p>
	<p>“Precisely! Given a choice, I tend to hang out with folks like me: people who have college degrees, drink only Starbucks dark roast coffee, listen to classical music, and buy their cars based on EPA gas mileage ratings. Yet, after a short while I get bored with people like me. Smaller groups (and smaller churches) force me to rub shoulders with everybody else.</p> <p>“Henri Nouwen defines ‘community’ as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives. Often we surround ourselves with the people we most</p>

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	<p>want to live with, thus forming a club or a clique, not a community. Anyone can form a club; it takes grace, shared vision, and hard work to form a community”</p> <p>Philip Yancy, Christianity Today, May 20, 1996, p. 80</p> <p>Building community, that is what church is all about. But how do I get on with the people I don’t get on with? I know I will have to live with them in heaven but do I have to live with them here? It reminds me of this piece of doggerel:</p>
	<p>“I dreamed death came the other night, And heaven’s gate swung open wide, With kindly grace an angel ushered me inside.</p>
	<p>And there to my astonishment Stood folks I had known on earth. Some I had judged and labeled unfit, or little worth</p>
	<p>Indignant words rose to my lips, But never were set free, For every face showed stunned surprise, No one expected me.</p> <p>Quoted in the Ravine Review</p>
	<p>So what is a biblical community? How do we get on with people we cannot stand? Let’s look at what Jesus did with the 12 disciples. We tend to idealize these men because we see them in the book of Acts on fire for their Lord. We forget what kind of people they were to begin with.</p> <p>This group was characterized by diversity in personality and diversity in ideology. Let’s take</p>



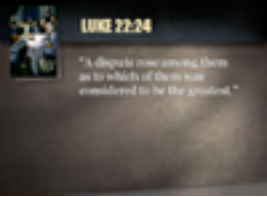

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	<p>personality first. If Jesus had wanted people who thought alike and who were easy to get on with he would never have chosen the people he did.</p>
	<p>Take Peter, an extrovert, a choleric, a doer. He was a natural leader, a take charge kind of guy. He had no fear of anyone. Peter was also an excellent example of someone who talked first and listened last. In Scotland we call this kind of person a blatherskite. A blatherskite is someone who starts his or her mouth talking and then walks away and leaves it.</p> <p>Jesus tells his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer, be killed, and on the third day be raised back to life.</p>
	<p>In verse 22 of Matthew 16 Peter argues with Jesus: "Never Lord, this will never happen to you." Peter heard the words of Christ but he was not listening for their meaning. What Jesus said did not fit into Peter's theology!</p>
	<p>Then we have James and John. They were even more aggressive than Peter. Jesus gave them the nickname, sons of thunder. Talk about thunder. Jesus and the disciples were returning from a trip and were passing through Samaria. Now there was no love lost between the Jews and the Samaritans. So when they pulled in to the local motel with the vacancy sign they were surprised to be told that every room was taken. Outside, James and John were livid. They implored Jesus to let them call down fire from heaven just as Elisha had done and burn up these shortsighted and ungrateful people. What fine examples of love and caring.</p> <p>No only were they fiery in temper but they were</p>

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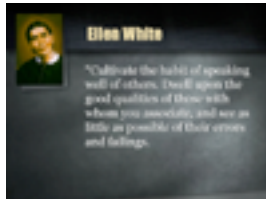
	<p>ambitious as well. One day they approached Jesus and asked for the highest positions in the kingdom, secretary of state and secretary of defense. Of course when the other ten heard about this little request they were so pleased that James and John wanted to better themselves. Not likely. The bible says that they were indignant. Each of them, secretly, wanted the highest positions for themselves.</p>
	<p>There was Thomas. Dear Thomas. Cynical, doubting, slow, would not trust the other disciples when they said they had seen Jesus after his resurrection. He took time to make up his mind. He was the kind of person who would drive the risk takers, the choleric personality, the movers and shakers, crazy. While they could see the way clearly, Thomas needed to be convinced. One business session would not be enough for him to get all his questions answered. He needed twenty. Those of us with a different personality than Thomas get very impatient with this kind of individual.</p>
	<p>Judas was suave, educated, polished, intelligent. He became the treasurer of the group. He was the finance man. He tended to look down on these uneducated fishermen from Galilee.</p> <p>Nathaniel tended to be the contemplative, quiet type. He liked to meditate under trees. He was quiet and soft spoken, no bold aggressive language like that used by Peter.</p> <p>Andrew the brother of Peter was his opposite. He was not the mover and shaker that his brother was. He was quiet and introspective yet in his way quite an evangelist, he just invited people to come and see.</p> <p>Matthew was educated, wealthy, trusting, believing.</p>

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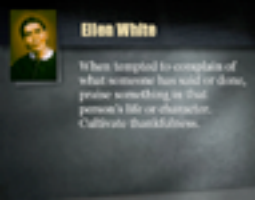


	<p>The 12 were about as varied and quarrelsome a group of people as you would find anywhere.</p>
	<p>They spent quite a bit of time arguing over who would be the greatest as they traveled around Palestine. Matt 20:24 Mark 9:34. Luke 9:46. Most incredibly, they were still at it on the night of Jesus’ betrayal. Jesus had just finished breaking the bread, passing the wine, instituting the Communion Service, explaining what is shortly going to happen when Luke records "A dispute rose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest" (Ch 22:24). How would you like to lead this bunch?</p>
	<p>Not only were they diverse in personality they were different in ideology. To begin with their concept of Jesus’ role and Jesus' concept were totally different. They expected Jesus to be a political king, to rid them of the Romans. They could not understand why he took so long to proclaim Himself king. This was a source of much friction between Jesus and the disciples. After the feeding of the 5,000 the people and the disciples were ready to proclaim Jesus king. So Jesus insisted that his disciples get into their boat and take off without him so he could dismiss the crowd without them around to egg them on in their desires.</p> <p>You think this was a fun group to work with, to plan with? Think again. Here is Matthew who worked for the Romans, collecting taxes from the Jews. He is hated as a traitor. In fact, so low is his profession regarded that tax collectors were always linked with prostitutes in the public mind as the lowest you could sink socially and morally.</p>







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	<p>And then in the same group Jesus selects Simon a Zealot who belonged to the party that worked to rid themselves of the Romans especially through force of arms. Just imagine the conversations that must have gone on when those two got together. Here is a great example of two people learning to live next door to each other who would never have wanted this before.</p> <p>Just imagine if some members of the Church Board believed passionately that abortion was wrong while others believed just as passionately in free choice. Or having people who believed that Christian rock music came directly from the devil grouped with people who believed God sent it on the wings of an angel.</p> <p>We learn to accept each other, live with each other, despite our faults and our differences when we remember what Jesus did for us. We already read in 1 John that love is revealed by a servant attitude, by our willingness to do anything for anyone even to the extent of giving our life. But notice when Jesus was willing to do this.</p>
	<p>“While we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).          He came for us before we were repentant, while we were still enemies. He is our model and our strength. He speaks well of us despite our sins.</p>
	<p>Ellen White points the way in how to be proactive in dealing with difficult people.</p> <p>“Cultivate the habit of speaking well of others. Dwell upon the good qualities of those with whom you associate, and see as little as possible of their errors and failings.</p>



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	<p>When tempted to complain of what someone has said or done, praise something in that person's life or character. Cultivate thankfulness.</p>
	<p>Praise God for His wonderful love in giving Christ to die for us. It never pays to think of our grievances. God calls upon us to think of His mercy and His matchless love, that we may be inspired with praise ”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Ministry of Healing, p. 492.</p> <p>The church is to be a place of reconciliation not of alienation, a place where people feel loved, valued, and accepted. When you praise someone you are loving them. When you praise someone you have difficulty with you are acting out of love. Love is no longer a theory, knowledge. Love becomes an experience.</p>
	<p>That is the experience of the Williams—you know the farmer couple with the hole in the fence, the broken water pipe, the poisoned dog, and the cut clothes line? How did they handle living next door to someone that they didn’t want to live next door to?</p> <p>Mr. Williams handled the situation very differently than all of his predecessors. After the fence was cut he rounded up the cattle and instead of repairing the fence he placed a gate in the gap leaving it unlocked. That way if Mr. Grimes wanted to let his cattle out he could more easily and Jim would not have to repair a fence. And what about the water pipe? He replaced the pipe but did not cover it with dirt reasoning that if Mr. Grimes wanted to dig it up again he would find it easier to do. But what about the cut clothesline with the clothes dragging through the dirt?</p>

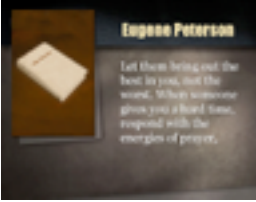
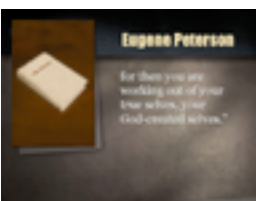
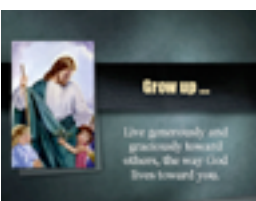
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	<p>That evening as they sat around the fire having family worship Jim turned to Matthew 5:38,39. "You have heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other cheek." Then turning the page he read Matt 6:14</p>
	<p>"For if you forgive men when they sin against you your Heavenly Father will also forgive you."</p>
	<p>Jim was silent for a while. When we were deciding to buy the farm I wondered if I was strong enough to be the kind of Christian God wanted me to be. Could I relate to this Mr. Grimes without having to fight him back? It is evident that something has happened in this man's life to make him bitter. This last episode with the clothes line is clear evidence of this. Let's put God to the test. Can we love him enough that love will win over hate. This is not going to be easy but let's ask God to help us to think right and not harbor one resentful thought regarding this man. Lets love the man even if we do not love what he does.</p>
	<p>That's a wonderful idea said Cora. I will bake some fresh bread and slip a loaf over to his house. All through the winter, every time Mr. Grimes did something nasty to them they did something nice back to him. Toward spring the attacks lessened and practically stopped.</p> <p>One spring morning Mr Grimes was carrying a load of potatoes to market when his truck got bogged down in front of the Williams' farm. Without a word Jim hitched up his horses and pulled Mr. Grimes out of the mud. As he was unhitching the horse Mr. Grimes exploded. "Stop</p>

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	<p>Williams, you are killing me! I can't stand it. Every time I do something mean to you, you do something good to me. I give up, I can't take it any longer."</p> <p>"Welcome home neighbor," said Jim with a big smile on his face. "Let's go into the house and tell Cora." Cora almost dropped the frying pan she was so startled to see Mr Grimes with her husband. "Guess what honey? The war is over. Mr. Grimes and I are friends."</p>
	<p>"Oh thank God," cried Cora "we have been praying for this so long. We just knew that God would answer this prayer in His own good time. How terribly you must have suffered in your life."</p> <p>"You really think that God could love an old sinner like me?" said Mr Grimes. "Of course" said Cora, "we are all sinners and Jesus died for sinners." As they sat at the table Mr Grimes shared how he had shaken his fist at God ever since the time a drunk driver had run down and killed his wife and little son. How could a good God allow such a thing to happen.</p> <p>"I never got over it" he said "until you people came along and showed that there is still some good in the world." "Why don't you come for supper and we can talk some more" said Cora.</p> <p>"I will," replied Mr. Grimes. "I want to know about this God of yours."</p>
	<p>Jesus gave some wonderful wisdom in His great sermon on the mount and here is a portion as translated by Eugene Peterson in <i>The Message</i>.</p> <p>"You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies.</p>

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 <p><b>Eugene Peterson</b> Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer.</p>	<p>Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer,</p>
 <p><b>Eugene Peterson</b> For then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves.</p>	<p>for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves.</p>
 <p><b>Grow up ...</b> Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.</p>	<p>This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.</p> <p>In a word, what I'm saying is. <i>Grow up</i>. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you." ( Matthew 5:43-48, The Message).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">This is how we live next door to the person we least want to live next door to.</p>