

Neighbors on the Way

Scripture Reading — Genesis 4:1-7; Luke 15:21-32

Love the Lord your God with all your heart. . . . And . . . 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' — Matthew 22:37-39

Neighbors can get in the way of our love for God, but not because of what they do. It wasn't Abel's fault that God preferred his sacrifice, and it wasn't the prodigal son's fault that his father wanted to throw a lavish party when he returned. The older brothers refused to love their neighbors—that is, their younger brothers—because they disagreed with God's love for them.

To walk with God, we need neighbors—whether they are family members or other believers in Christ—even if the only way to connect with them is by phone or Internet. Some neighbors may also be unknown to us, like a good Samaritan who helps a man -attacked by robbers.

There are also some neighbors who can be a constant thorn in your side: maybe there's a fellow believer who cannot be quiet about how good he is to the poor; or maybe there's a friend who keeps reminding you of your sin against him, even though he accepted your apology.

Walking with God can be difficult because we sometimes don't like his goodness to others, or we don't like our neighbor's behavior.

The good news is that we don't have to like our neighbors. All we have to do is love them, as God loved us for no good reason. Give your neighbor a good reason to love you.

Prayer

I confess, Lord, that it's difficult to love some of my neighbors—and it must be difficult for some of my neighbors to love me. Pour out your love on us, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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