

TakeFive

Biblical insights for the week of September 3–7, 2018
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A Case for Civility

Monday — John 3:16, 1 John 4:19

In general, we all have people we like and people we dislike. Often this comes down to us drifting towards people who are like us. They think like us, they enjoy the same things we do, and there is a sense of commonness and comfort in those relationships. People that aren't like us can make us feel uncomfortable. The way they think, what they believe, how they live, may even stretch beyond uncomfortable and seem abrasive. In those moments how do we respond? As people who trust in Christ, who say Jesus is our Savior and example, how should we live?

In one of the most famous verses in the Bible, Jesus tells the Pharisee Nicodemus how God feels about all people in one simple phrase, "For God so loved the world." He didn't love part of it, half of it, or only those who agree with Him. God's love is not discriminatory in any sense. Because of this love, we can approach all people the way He does, whether we have something in common or not.

For Today: Think through your relationships with others; ask God to help you have a love for all people like He does.

Tuesday — Romans 12:3, Romans 11:32

One of my favorite little books is *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness* by Tim Keller. In this short easy read, Keller lays out that everything from extreme pride to extreme insecurity is rooted in self-centeredness. The focus on oneself gets in the way of our relationship with God and our relationships with others. We can get so caught up in whom we think we are and what we think that it builds walls and wedges in our relationships.

Paul reminds us in Romans that we should think about ourselves with an appropriate sense of self. In fact, God looks at everyone the same way; He sees a broken sinner that He loves, that He sent His Son Jesus to die for so that He can pour out His love and mercy on them. It is important to understand how God sees others and us so that we can look at ourselves and those around us in the same way He does.

For Today: Pray and thank God for His mercy on your life. Ask Him to help you have a heart for **all** people.

Wednesday — Philippians 2:3-5, Colossians 3:14

I have not found a place in the Bible that has taught me to love myself. Frankly, it is not because I need to be taught to do that; I just need to be reminded to put God first and love Him. I also need to be reminded to put other people before myself. This is not natural for us to do. From the moment we are born, our first cries are to communicate our own needs.

Scripture reminds us to put others first, before our wants and needs. This is unnatural. However, as we love people in this way, no matter who they are, we exhibit a life that lives and loves like Jesus. This brings harmony and unity to our relationships and gives us the opportunity to impact people for Christ.

For Today: Pray that God would reveal to you where you need to step back and put others first.

Thursday — Proverbs 6:16-19, Leviticus 19:18

There aren't many places in the Bible where we hear about what God hates, so when we hear it, we should take notice. The list in Proverbs 6:16-19 makes sense. Many on the list we may easily avoid, but the last one is more difficult. God hates, "**One who sows discord among brothers.**" We have all had a moment when we've disagreed with someone, but we don't always disagree *'in the open.'* We may have conversations about that person with others we know in common. Those conversations we have about others can undermine their position and the individual.

God is love, and God wants us to love others the way we want to be loved. He wants us to be unified. In public and private we should speak about others, their beliefs, their opinions, and their lives with dignity and respect. We are called to love our neighbor even when our neighbor isn't around.

For Today: Ask God to reveal areas where you "sow discord" toward others, and repent.

Friday — John 13:35, 1 John 4:8

To call oneself a Christian is to set an expectation for others. If you say you follow Jesus people expect you to be Christ-like in your behaviors, your attitudes, and especially in your relationships. "Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save it." Therefore, we should not condemn others for what they believe or what they do. The example of Jesus is one who spent time with those different from Him and sharing His love for them.

Scripture teaches us that if we say we follow Christ, people will know it by how we love one another. It also says if we do not love then we may not even know God. Living in civility with others is not only a command of God but also evidence of Christ in us.

For Today: Ask God to give you a heart like His for others so that people can see and know Jesus.