

## **How to Love Meanies and Misfits**

Are you like me? I often find myself edging away from people who aren't fun to be with. I avoid those who don't fit in or might not be nice to me, but Jesus said, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44).

Such love isn't easy. The Apostle Paul wrote, "I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding" (Philippians 1:9, NLT). You see, the Bible links loving with getting to know and understand Jesus, which is a lifelong process. Thankfully, the Bible also points out markers along this road – truths we can learn and pray about and begin to live out – that help us love those meanies and misfits. Here are four of them:

### **1.Understand Your Own Failure.**

Jesus told the proud Jewish leaders, "I know you don't have God's love within you" (John 5:42, NLT). Pride and love don't mix. As we realize how deeply we've failed God and how he loves us anyway, we become less critical of others. When we stop being judgmental, we're able to love other messed up people.

### **2.Know Where Your Security Lies.**

Paul told the Colossian believers that their love came from their confident hope in what God had reserved for them in heaven (Colossians 1:5). Loving hard-to-love people is risky. We may lose money, time, reputation and privacy. Only a deep assurance that God will take care of us and give us great rewards will free us to sacrifice self-security for the sake of other people.

### **3.Live In Community.**

The Bible says, "Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24, NLT). We cannot overcome pride and self-security without other believers to help us. We must admit our struggles to each other, daily if possible, and encourage each other with God's promises.

### **4.Most Importantly, Believe Your Status In Jesus.**

Jesus is the best there ever was at loving meanies and misfits. He befriended smelly fishermen, prostitutes, dishonest tax collectors, and the thief on the cross next to him. If Jesus were anyone else, this would make us say, "Why bother? I could never love so well." But Jesus is our Savior who died and rose for us, so the way he loved becomes our résumé. What's more, God "has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his

love” (Romans 5:5, NLT). Who you are – both your standing before God and your heart itself – has fundamentally and forever changed.

Until we reach the next life, our love for meanies and misfits will be a struggle. But we go at it with confidence because we know it is our calling and our true heart. Never think this love is beyond your grasp. No! You are a child of God. Love for others is your birthright, your anthem and your destiny.

**Read more: Read Luke 18:35-19:10. What two people does Jesus choose to love on his visit to Jericho? Think about the humbleness and the assurance of God’s approval that Jesus must have had as he befriended these people.**

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