

Chapter 5: Relationship with Others

Part 39: Loving God, Loving Others

Be still and begin with a short prayer. Share some of your reflections about this group since the last meeting. (30 minutes)

Loving God, loving others

There are two sides to loving God. One involves our whole being, the emotional, rational and volitional self responding to all that God is for us; on the other, we love God when we love others. 'When you did this to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:40, 45)

In facing our love for others, we find that loving and caring for some people is not a problem, but loving some others IS difficult. Can we really love them as God asks us to? ('Love your neighbours as you love yourself.')

Generally speaking, the feelings we have for people enable us to love them or prevent us from loving them. If our feelings for a person are positive or 'good' we will probably want to befriend them, but if we feel uncomfortable with someone, chances are that friendship will not come easily.

Our feelings are controlled by our attitudes. If our attitude is one of self-centredness, then we will focus on whether that person feeds our self or not. If they do not, we will not need them, and so pull away; but if they do, we will continue to relate for as long as our ego is fed.

We can only love someone in a real way if we avoid the usual conclusions of our attitudes and remain open to the mystery that each person is.

What we see of a person is so very limited and what we conclude so very subjective that any feelings we have for them are no basis for deciding whether they are worth loving or not.

Being open and sensitive to the gift that each person is, and having a sense of their being uniquely created and called by God, is a good place to start. This, and the thought that any uncomfortable feelings that the person may cause in us are a key to some closed area in ourselves, helps us to be more balanced and able to love.

Reflect on 1 John 4:7–21 and then focus on the first person that comes to mind. Consider your relationship with them. It doesn't matter who it is and how shallow or deep your level of relating to them is. Look at some of your perceptions of them, and the ways in which you interact. What is the focus and which way are you moving? Be particularly aware of any tendencies of avoidance as you reflect – our true centre does not like to be exposed. (20 minutes)

Journal and then share. (30 minutes)

At home reflect on the story of the good Samaritan, Luke 10:29–37, then look at a relationship you have with any person you are likely to meet that day. Pray for a greater openness to them, and a greater freedom from your perceptions and attitudes. What does loving them mean for you? Is this loving God?



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