

## Scripture Reading: John 15:9-17

*Don't throw stones at your neighbors if your own windows are glass.  
—Benjamin Franklin*

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In today's Scripture lesson, Jesus admonishes us to love one another as we have been loved. In just nine verses, Jesus uses a form of the word "love" nine times. He was serious. And lest we forget, the commandment "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" was preceded only by this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Loving our neighbors: How hard can it be to love someone across the street, or across the hall? How hard can it be to love that person in the bed beside us, or in the room next door? Is it so difficult to be kind, forgiving, generous and thoughtful? Does it take a lot of energy to treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated?

Well, yes! It can be very difficult, especially if the person in the next room or the next bed is not easy to love. And what about the person who sits with us at our dinner table who talks so loudly and says mean things? She's not so easy to love! Does God expect us to love people like her, too?

The answer is yes. God loves your neighbor and we should too.

But God is perfect and we are not.

God loves with a perfect love. We, however, struggle sometimes to love those who are not so easy to love.

But if we stay close to God, God will find a way to use us to love others!

And remember, God is not asking us to have a warm, fuzzy emotional feeling about everyone. That's not the love that Jesus is talking about. No, the love God wants us to share is an active concern for the physical, spiritual and emotional welfare of the other person.

So this week, do an act of kindness for someone that will make them smile. Then you can smile, too, because you have just loved that person as you love yourself!

—Melanie Silva

***Prayer:** God of us all, forgive us for the times when we have not loved as we should have loved. Grant us the courage to do the right thing — even when the way is hard and we really would rather not love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen*