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RELATING TO OTHER PEOPLE

How does scripture say we are to relate to other people? Romans 12:10 (KJV) says, ***“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.”*** Brotherly love (Greek: phile’o) is the general camaraderie that we share with all other people, like as the kinship of all humanity. We are to see them through eyes of acceptance for who they are and as they are. This is the “affection” meant here. It does not matter whether you know them or whether they are strangers, nor whether or not you like them, nor whether they are friend or foe.

“...in honor preferring one another” means that you should put other people’s “best interest” in high esteem, even ahead of your personal interest. Putting your own interest ahead of others is not only selfish and egotistical, but it also interferes with your interpersonal relationships.

It does not mean you do everything for them or that you give them whatever they want or desire of you. The key is “best interest,” that which is good and best for them. Do not let anyone “use” you or control you; that is neither their best interest nor yours. Do not become an enabler. However, be kind and considerate.

What about those who are hostile towards you, a/k/a, your “enemies?” Jesus himself said in Matthew 5:44 KJV, ***“love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that spitefully use you, and persecute you.”*** That sounds like a hard task; it is contrary to our natural human behavior. It is only possible because of God’s own love within us (Greek: agape). How else could we “win them over” except that way?

In fact, Proverbs 25:21-22 (NKJV) says, ***“If your (personal) enemy is hungry, give him bread (food) to eat. And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. For (in so doing) you will heap coals of fire on his head.”*** It is a powerful thing when someone does or says something against you and you respond in gentleness and with kindness. Sometimes it can turn someone who is hostile (enemy) toward you into a friend, or at least change their attitude toward you for the better.

Jesus desires that we win people, not alienate them.