

loving isn't the same
as liking



ENEMIES

By Katharine Bird
NC News Service

Imprisoned in a concentration camp during World War II, the Jewish man managed to endure the constant taunts and harassment from a German guard, but not without thoughts of revenge. Later, after regaining his freedom, the Jew nourished those thoughts by planning what he would do to the guard if ever the chance presented itself.

One day the man saw the guard on the street. His first instinct was to attack. But then he found himself hesitating and reflected: This enmity has to stop somewhere. It might as well be right now, here, with me.

That story powerfully brings home for me what it might mean to "love your enemies."

Somehow the Jewish man found a way to break down the barrier between himself and his enemy.

Perhaps he discovered, as Gerard Vanderhaar puts it, that we don't have to be "prisoners of our past."

"We have a measure of freedom that allows us to move in another direction," Vanderhaar adds in a 1985 book, "Enemies: How to Love Them" (Twenty-Third Publications).

"We can remove ourselves from the pressures of our former way of looking at the world and take up another way of seeing things," he says.

The ability to see differently is one of the keys to the love for enemies discussed by Vanderhaar. His book details some ways for Christians to set out on this essential and difficult task.

Vanderhaar, professor of religion and peace studies at Christian Brothers College in Memphis, Tenn., defines an enemy as someone who is "antagonistic," who has a "deep-seated dislike" to the point of

wanting to do harm to another. How can anyone be asked to love such a person?

Vanderhaar observes that the "love we are talking about here is not a sentimental journey." He notes that Jesus' "sense of psychology was sound." Jesus doesn't insist that people like their enemies.

Loving enemies means developing "a concern for the genuine good of the person. We can love without liking," Vanderhaar explains. "It means making 'a purposeful, firm decision to respect them as human beings.'"

It can take hard work with those considered enemies "to resolve our differences," the theologian says.

"Loving enemies means developing a concern for the genuine good of the person. We can love without liking."

"Life provides a great opportunity for positive human interaction," he thinks, and many possibilities for us to bring "out the best in each other."

For Vanderhaar, "the goal of enemy love is finally to become cooperators in a common effort to improve things for all of us."

The theologian points out that Jesus had no blinders on concerning the enemies who wished him ill. His way of handling one who wished him ill — Judas — can be instructive.

At the Last Supper, Jesus singled Judas out as the one who would betray his master. Vanderhaar notes that Jesus called Judas "friend" and gave him a chance to reconsider. He "appealed to Judas' conscience by impressing on him the ugly consequences of his act."

But, he adds, Jesus did nothing to embarrass Judas in front of the other apostles. Acting otherwise would have given Judas an "opportunity to become defensive and so reinforce his decision," Vanderhaar suggests.

"Jesus always respected the person of his adversaries, even when he disagreed with their position," Vanderhaar explains.

Jesus "never helped spin higher the spiral of enmity" by refusing to recognize the humanity of others, Vanderhaar concludes.

(Ms. Bird is associate editor of Faith Today.)

Whatever

By David Gibson
NC News Service

It is risky to talk about love. First, there is the risk of trivializing the subject. In a world where love's "three little words" make "the world go 'round'" — and where a novelist was able to write that love means you never have to say you're sorry — it is all too easy to speak of love in sugary terms. But is love always sweet?

Second, there is the risk of envisioning love too narrowly. Then what is said reflects the love of a husband and wife, or the love of a parent and child, or the love of friends, or the love of neighbors — but not all these.

There is also the risk of seeming to be naive when talking of love and its power. It may be true that "what the world needs now is love sweet love." But the world also needs problem solvers and people with vision and people with commitment. The person of love may be the finest kind of problem solver, of course. But should love be described as though it were a panacea, wiping away life's complications the way window wipers of a car wipe off the rain?

Again, there is the risk that in speaking about love, one will appear to be trying to define a reality that can't be defined; attempting to box up one of life's greatest mysteries and most

Love is wha

By Father John Castelot
NC News Service

Paul's Christians at Corinth were endowed with many special gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, the gifts were proving counterproductive. Individuals were glorying in them as personal accomplishments, especially the more visible ones, like the gift of tongues.

This presented a problem for Paul. He did not want to give them the impression that he did not esteem such gifts. They were, after all, gifts of the Spirit. But Paul wanted to correct their misuse.

He reminded the Corinthians that "to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). The Holy Spirit is the spirit of love, showering gifts on the community in order to foster love and unity; not division.

Unfortunately, some who received gifts were, in spite of their natural intelligence and education, quite immature. They were like children selfishly hugging to their

dynamic
It seen
words c
things d
dependi
our mea

If it is
love, it i
sometim
love is n
Love i
proach t
a view t
to speak
Nor de

duce a li
or elimin
one's lif

St. Pat
blem wh
about lo
he wrote
added: "I
not self-
anger; no
injuries.
not rejoic
Fortunat
with this

In fact
make thi
never fai

So it is
love. Bu
speak ab
Christiar

Love i
For th
was sup
a trait b
recogniz
you for
Gospel s

toys.

"Brot
them, "
outlook
evil is c
mature"

"You
greater
you the
the oth
the way
other g

"If I
move n
I am ne

Notic
nothing
Love is
existen
God cr
what b
and lik

God
creativ
and un
authen

When
some c
struck
reality.