

MORNING DEVOTIONS

Living in Harmony With Others

Unless you plan to live on a desert island, you will need to live and interact with others. It's a fairly simple fact of life. We rub shoulders with people all the time – and sometimes that's not an enjoyable experience.

No matter how much you love your family, for example, there is going to be some areas of conflict, tension, or disagreement. It's inevitable. And there's not a great lot you can do about it, except be aware and try your best to live at peace with others.

You may struggle to feel in sync with people close to you and with society at large. Living a long and fruitful life is a difficult thing to do when a person can't coexist with other people in harmony. Living in harmony not only helps others – but it helps the person living the harmonious life.

Humans are social beings, and we enjoy being treated well. Getting along with someone, regardless of their values, isn't about being their best friend or sharing all their hobbies. It is about treating people with respect and care.

Do you try and listen? Listen to other people when they talk to you. Do not drift off or try to think of what you are going to say in response. You will be surprised how much people appreciate someone who is really listening without judging or arguing. We are not very good at that – but it is possible if you work at it. What can help us succeed in our relationships? The ability to listen. Your friendship, your marriage, your relationship with those you care about is built up through the art of listening. To listen is to love and to strengthen the connection.

There are many reasons we must learn how to get on with others. Francis Scott Fitzgerald was the American novelist responsible for many novels including *The Great Gatsby*. After he died in 1940, his family was clearing up his office and discovered papers for a planned novel. One paragraph said, "a widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live forever".

Interesting thought – sometimes we have to live together and learn how to get on. On occasions good comes out of bad times. Two women who were wives of New York's firefighters who rescued survivors from the 911 attack didn't speak to one another – until the tragedy threw them together. Now they are best friends.

The Bible is quite specific about this. I read in Romans 12:16, "Live in harmony with one another". Our problem is that often we expect others to think like us – and that will never work. You and I come from different backgrounds and experiences – how can we think exactly alike? As we say sometimes, "singing from the same hymn book". It's not really possible.

But we should always aim to live in harmony with each other. In order to do that, we each must readily adjust ourselves to other people. This is not always easy to do, but the grace of God is available to help us. Often, we don't take the time to process why challenges come up in relationships. We are too quick to judge.

Selfishness has no place in healthy relationships, but the harmony we long for will come when we begin to put others above ourselves. It is amazing to meet people who are unselfish. They put others first. This could be with helping a friend, partner, or colleague at a local level. And at a wider scale this could include some kind of charity work.

Ultimately, their position is not important, because they are always on the look out to be there for another, regardless of their needs. This is one of the characteristics of Jesus. The Bible is filled with many examples teaching us how to handle our relationships. It is important for us to learn from the best Teacher – the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for us to love the Lord, whom we cannot see, if we do not love those who are with us daily. Continue practicing the art of listening – work at it.

A good relationship with someone we care for is a treasure. Yet, maintaining healthy relationships is not easy.