

# Loving Prickly People

Have you ever had that one person in your life? You know, that one person who seems to be able to push all your buttons at all the wrong times? We've all been there. And in our world today, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. So, what should we do?

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Fortunately, people who have flaws and faults are nothing new. All you need to do is read Genesis to realize that. One of the earliest recorded stories in Genesis is about Cain, who killed his brother, Abel, because he was jealous of him. And yet, the people involved in these situations are people God used for His plans and purpose—so this means there's hope for us, too.

It seems like if we're going to love anyone, then no matter who they are, they'll have flaws. We must learn to live in peace and walk in love. And we absolutely need to learn to love people who are hard to love, which includes most of us, at least at times.

Love is so much more than a feeling; it's how we treat people, and it changes everything. Just imagine how different our world would be today if people truly loved one another. I have decided that I am going to love people, which includes those who are hard to love. I am asking you to make the same decision, and I believe if enough of us do it, we will impact the world in a very positive way.

In the animal kingdom, probably the most difficult animal to get close to is the porcupine. Porcupines are not usually considered lovable. Every one of them has about 30,000 sharp quills that can stick you and be very painful—but it's their

way of protecting themselves.

People also often develop ways of protecting themselves, especially if they have been hurt in the past. I like to use the saying, "Hurting people hurt people." For example, a person who has been hurt may be extremely defensive and think they are being rejected when that is not the case at all. Or, they may argue all the time, striving to be right in every situation because that is the only way they can feel good about themselves.

I happen to know a few people like this, and you probably know some, too. I call them "porcupine people." They are dangerous to be around because you are likely to get hurt. It would be so nice if we could just place an order for the kind of people we would like to have in our life, but people come "as is" and we either take them as they are or end up alone.

God takes us the way we are and helps us become all that we should be. The question is: Are we willing to do this for other people? My husband, Dave, did it for me, and had he not loved me unconditionally, I probably wouldn't be in ministry today.

You see, when Dave prayed for a wife, he asked God to give him someone who needed help, and God certainly answered his prayer because I needed a lot of help. Growing up, I experienced terrible physical and sexual abuse from my father. And because of that past abuse, I ended up becoming a porcupine person. Dave said he knew the first night he met me that I was the girl for him. As it's turned out, he was right, but he had to be willing to love someone who was very hard to love for a very long time before he had a wife who was somewhat normal.

Now I pray regularly to be good to people and make them feel good when they are around me. I'm sure I don't always succeed, but I don't always fail either. I still stick out my quills occasionally, but God is working with me, and I always want to

be willing to work with the porcupine people He puts in my life, too. We may sustain little wounds as we walk through life with others, but we are much better off in relationships than in isolation.

Despite their prickles, I don't believe there is a person on the planet who doesn't want to be loved. As a matter of fact, most people who are hard to love are the way they are because they have never experienced real love. They are dissatisfied and looking for something to fill the emptiness they feel, but often they don't know what they are looking for, so they search in all the wrong places.

But we can make a difference. When we have God's love in our hearts, we can let it flow through us to other people—even porcupine people. Everything God gives us should flow through us to others—His love, peace, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, joy and many other blessings. Loving people who are hard to love will be difficult on most days and seemingly impossible on others, but God never asks us to do something that we cannot do with His help. You can do it because God is in you, and He will do it through you. So, let me ask: Are you willing to say yes to God?

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