

ALPHA COUNSELING  
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Dear Friends,

Our nation has several events that we celebrate in February. They are Black History Month, Valentine's Day, and President's Day. It seems that the only one not totally commercialized is American Black History. It is sad that Presidents Day is more about car or furniture sales than the history of our presidents. A young adult told me that Valentine's Day is "a conspiracy by retailers to get our money." I just listened and thought how sad that some people have such a hard time celebrating love for someone! In John 15:12 Jesus says, "***This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.***"

So how can we best love one another? Especially those who are harder to love! I found an old prayer in my reading and think it is a good example of how we can love others as He has loved us.

A Prayer of Francis of Assisi  
Lord make me an instrument of your peace  
Where there is injury, let me bring forgiveness  
Where there is hatred, love  
Where there is doubt, hope  
Where there is darkness, light  
Where there is sadness, joy  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not seek  
So much to be consoled as to console  
To be understood, as to understand  
To be loved as to love  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

I hope in this year of elections, debates, and rancor that we Christians will take the high road that our Lord and Master has commanded us to follow. We are encouraged to love those who disagree with us politically and to pray for those who would persecute us for our views. If we love only those who agree with us, we are not doing anything different than what non-Christians do! My prayer for you is to have an abundance of opportunities to love others as Jesus has loved you!

I really hate writing this, but Alpha is in need of your prayers for our finances. As we are seeing many companies laying off staff and too many stores are going out of business. Now it is Alpha's turn to cut costs in hopes of continuing to minister to hurting folks. Please understand that neither Alpha's board nor myself are asking you for additional financial help, but your prayers will be a big help.

God bless you in these troubling times and thank you for your prayers and gifts! *Richard*