

# How to Love Difficult People

---

Receiving and Sharing  
God's Mercy

William P. Smith



[www.newgrowthpress.com](http://www.newgrowthpress.com)

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New International Version®, NIV®.

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.  
Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27429

Copyright © 2008 by Christian Counseling & Educational  
Foundation. All rights reserved. Published 2008

Cover Design: The DesignWorks Group, Nate Saliccioli and  
Jeff Miller, [www.thedesignworksgroup.com](http://www.thedesignworksgroup.com)

Typesetting: Robin Black, [www.blackbirdcreative.biz](http://www.blackbirdcreative.biz)

ISBN-10: 1-934885-40-1

ISBN-13: 978-1-934885-40-6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Smith, William P., 1965-

How to love difficult people: receiving and sharing God's  
mercy / William P. Smith.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-934885-40-6

1. Conflict management—Religious aspects—Christianity.
2. Interpersonal relations—Religious aspects—Christianity.
3. Love—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV4597.53.C58S65 2008

248.4—dc22

2008011944

Printed in Canada

08 09 10 11 12 5 4 3 2 1

There are people in my world who are hard to love. Some of them are determined to protect themselves; prickly and constantly on the defensive, it only takes something little to set them off. They lash out verbally, and then withdraw emotionally and sometimes physically, cutting off all chance of communication. Others are just plain nasty for no apparent reason. They seem to take perverse pleasure in sabotaging every interaction, so most exchanges end unhappily with hard feelings on both sides. And then there are the Eeyore types who mope through life always looking at the dark side. They notice and (endlessly!) discuss every gloomy detail of their lives. They throw a wet blanket on every conversation. Frankly, I get tired of them all.

How do I deal with difficult people? Sometimes I avoid them by ignoring their emails, losing their telephone messages, or not allowing them to catch

my eye at work. Other times I try to manage our interactions by keeping them as short as possible. Occasionally I cope by talking about them with someone else. And when I've just had it, I give them a piece of my mind. Sarcastic, critical, and loud are my preferred options when I'm fed up and can't take it anymore.

Hmm, that's an interesting set of reactions... avoidance, manipulation, gossip, quarreling. You know, when you think about it, I can be pretty difficult to love too.

### **We Are All Hard to Love**

Learning to love difficult people starts with understanding that you (like me) are hard to love too. You might not be difficult to love in the same way as those around you are, and you may not cause the same amount of relational damage; but on the inside, in your own way, you are just as difficult to love as everyone else.

Just like those difficult people, you and I sin