



## Reasons to Dislike

I didn't like John for two reasons. First, he was unethical. He had taken advantage of two people I like. (I could have said cheated because it involved money.) Second, he was what my dad called a blowhard: a lot of loud noise but no substance behind it.

A few months ago John and I were among two dozen teachers at a conference. Although I had no direct dealings with him, I was aware of his presence and realized how much I didn't like him. I began to pray daily for John. I reminded myself that it was the right thing to do.

Each morning I prayed for God to make him an honorable, ethical man. That continued for perhaps a month. One day I realized the obvious: What I disliked in John was what I disliked in myself. I want to be ethical, but I realized that sometimes my motives aren't pure. I do right things for wrong reasons, such as say something kind when I don't feel particularly sympathetic.

The other part of John probably bothered me even more: his loud, empty words. It's not that I'd call my words empty, but sometimes I'm boastful or arrogant. I call attention to myself or more often to my accomplishments.

Again, I prayed for John, but I also prayed for acceptance of the John-part inside me. That went on for three or four months. And I want to be clear that John isn't the only person on my daily prayer list. I cried out to God for seven or eight people for different reasons, but all of them were spiritually deficient in some way.

Two mornings ago I realized something radically new—at least new to me. I don't see myself as particularly insightful and it takes a while for me to grasp the obvious.

As I prayed for John and others, here's the message I grasped. John and all the others are creatures of God. They're loved by God because—okay, just because that's how God set it up. Again, obvious.

As long as I was critical of John, I was also critical of myself. It meant to me that there were still parts of myself that I hadn't accepted: parts of myself that I rejected or didn't like.

That insight led to the next bright light: As long as I remained critical of others—that is, judgmental or accusing—I was being judgmental about myself. The more I accepted John as lovable, the more I embraced myself.

This isn't to say I ignored his behavior, or that I won't stand up against evil, or that I shrug when anyone does anything wrong. It is to say that I realize this truth: *My attitude toward others is an excellent measure of my own self-acceptance.* The more self-loving, self-affirming I become, the more I'm able to affirm John and people like him. It also means the more I realize God's magnificent grace toward me.

I still pray for John. But now, instead of complaining because of his lack of ethics, I ask God to help John overcome his problems. Instead of criticizing him for his failures, I can honestly say I want him to be blessed and happy.

I had one further insight on how to look at this. Jesus' words in the New Testament tell us to love others (neighbors) as we love ourselves. The *as* means on the same level and it also implies loving ourselves first.

For me, that means when I criticize others, I see it as a symptom of my own lack of self-acceptance. The qualities and actions I criticize in others help me to see my own self-love level.

The more self-loving I become, the more I can extend that love to other individuals. "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Did Jesus have to give us the command to love others on the same level we love ourselves? Maybe not, because that's what we do.

## Personal News

We had an 8-day trip to England and you can see my picture with the group who attended a one-day writers conference. I also preached at the church where one of them is the pastor.

[Christmas Miracles](#), even before release, sold out of its first printing and St. Martins Press has set up a second printing. On the strength of that, we have a contract for a second book, *The Christmas Spirit*.

Gospel Media, a group in Sweden, has contracted for the translation rights of [Christmas Miracles](#).

[When God Turned off the Lights](#), released only a month ago, has gone into its second printing.

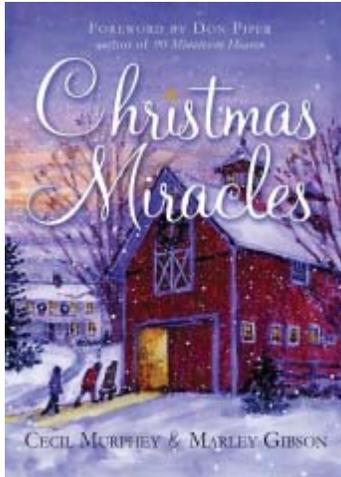
Oct 14-19, I'll be in Grand Rapids, MI, where I'll do a bookstore event, speak to an ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) caregiver group, teach two days at a writers conference, preach on Sunday, tape a segment for Radio Bible Class, and speak to a Celebrate Recovery group.

I'll speak/teach at Write to Inspire, a spiritual/inspirational writing workshop at St. Simons, GA (Oct 23-25).

Beginning Nov 12, I'll speak and teach in Seattle.



Cec with a group of new friends from The Write Start writing seminar in England.



**Christmas Miracles**  
Foreword: Don Piper  
St. Martin's Press  
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Retail: \$14.99

## The Twila-zone—words from my assistant, Twila Belk

It's not too early to think about Christmas. What will you get the teachers on your list, the letter carrier, your pastor, the friend in the hospital, and all of those hard-to-buy-for people? How about [Christmas Miracles](#)? This beautiful book releases in a few days and you can order it now.

*Gifted Hands*, starring Cuba Gooding Jr., has been released on DVD. It's a great movie for the family. For a good review, [click here](#). Although Cec had nothing to do with the movie, he's the one who wrote the book for Dr. Ben Carson and also gave it the title.

A blog tour for [When God Turned off the Lights](#) is going on right now. A list of blog hosts will be posted soon at <http://kcwcomm.blogspot.com/>. Visit the blogs and see how you can be eligible for the grand prize.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and November is National Family Caregivers Month. [Here are some practical things you can do to help a loved one diagnosed with cancer.](#) You are welcome to share the tips with others.

Congratulations to Cec and Don Piper. *90 Minutes in Heaven* has been on the *NY Times* bestseller list for 151 weeks. That's almost three years. Wow!

You're welcome to contact me with any Cec-related questions or to invite him to speak for your church or group: [twila@gottatellsomebody.com](mailto:twila@gottatellsomebody.com) or 563-332-1622.