

NAROMIYOCKNOWUSUNKALANKSHUNK: Our Problem with Love
Bob Young

This may not be the longest word in the world, or even in the United States, but it certainly qualifies for consideration as one of the most difficult to pronounce. NAROMIYOCKNOWUSUNKALANKSHUNK. The name of a small stream near Milford, Connecticut. It is an Indian word which is said to mean, "You fish on your end of the stream; I'll fish on mine." In modern jargon it means, "You mind your business; I'll mind mine."

Application time. How often are God's blessings withheld from his children because of grudges and secret resentments harbored? Through the years, too many Christians have decided on the course of "peaceful coexistence" because they allowed some small differences to become so large they could not get along with one another. People worship side by side who will not speak to one another. Perhaps even worse, people segregate into separate congregations because of some little matter that they allowed to become large. They call one another "brother" and "sister" while the surrounding community laughs. At its worst, grudges are nourished and resentment reigns. At best, some level of grudging fellowship is maintained. Regardless, the gospel is crippled.

"You fish on your end of the stream; I'll fish on mine." Such an attitude may avoid open conflict, but it does not fulfill our responsibility as Christians when we are at odds with another Christian. The course of peaceful coexistence will not bring us to "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We who have spoken against ecumenical movements in which people "agree to disagree" ought to examine our own lives lest we fall.

All the while we talk about love. Listen to the Apostle of Love. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.... If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 3:14; 4:20). Listen to Jesus. "If your brother sins against you, go...." (Matt. 18:15).

The same Christ who reconciles us to God makes it possible for us to be reconciled to one another. Jesus came to break down the vertical barriers erected by sin. He also came to break down walls between brothers (Ephesians 2). Here is a scary thought: our reconciliation with God depends upon our reconciliation to one another (Matt. 5:24).