

Why Sage Christianity?
Because Love is Hard to Find

[modified transcript]

It seems to me that we have a problem not only with wisdom in this cultural moment of our lives, but also with love. See what you make of this.

Two Unhelpful Views of Love

It seems like there are two views of love pressuring us. One view says:

You must never affirm someone unless you're ready to totally endorse them. Don't affirm one thing about anyone because that means you've endorsed everything about them.

The other view of love says:

You can't disagree with anyone. To disagree with one thing about someone is to hate everything about them.

We know that these two ideas of love don't work in other spheres of life.

If a teacher or a coach could never disagree with their students, because suggesting a student's answer was wrong or that a player could improve, if such a thing meant hatred for a student, how could we ever learn anything?

If a parent or a loved one never affirmed us until we totally aligned with everything they thought and believed, wouldn't that doom us to a life of therapy? The amount of encouragement withheld in our lives and the requirement that we perfectly measure up before any encouragement can come, would be anything but loving.

Jesus Has a Different Way

Jesus just has a really different way of love. There's a consensus that Jesus loved so distinctively in the history of the world. People like Gandhi or Dr. Martin Luther King junior would attribute their love ethic to what they learned from Jesus.

So, here's what you find out about Jesus that's so different. He affirms people that he doesn't fully endorse. That is, he will affirm something about a person without waiting for that person to fully align with everything he believes and thinks. And Jesus disagrees with people without hating them (Matthew 5:43-48). People come into confrontation with differences between him and them and yet, they still experience his love for them (Mark 10:21).

As each of us considers experiences within our own family systems, within our own church attempts, within our own cultural moment, it seems really compelling to encounter someone like Jesus. A love like this is rare.

Our Longing

So, we're looking in this community to Jesus. We're just trying to ask, "What is love?" "How does love affirm?" "How does love disagree?" "How do we bring honest questions into that kind of loving environment?"

Because here's the thing.

If you can't be affirmed until you totally align with everything someone believes it's just not safe to raise a question. It isn't safe to get something wrong. It isn't safe to be anxious or sorrowful.

And if disagreement automatically means hatred then why ask a question anyway? No one's going to be able to give you an honest answer. It just creates this environment in which we have these real questions and these honest doubts and these real sorrows. But you have to be perfect with it all. You can't make any mistakes. You have to constantly watch out for making sure you prove that you will line up perfectly with everything.

The result is the inability to cultivate wiser relational spaces for this kind of conversation. I'm just longing for such environments, especially when spoken in Jesus' name. So, we're trying to look at what Jesus has to say in light of the conversations of our life. We're trying to learn his gracious way of love and that's what we're seeking

Questions for Further Reflection

1. What encouraged you or surprised you in a positive way that you don't want to forget?
2. What bothered you or didn't set right with you in your first impression?
3. What did you notice about how Jesus was described? What about this description sounded attractive or inviting to you?
4. Did anything in these hints about Jesus raise a question for you or not sit right?
5. What follow up question would you like to ask?