

September 2007

Cecil ("Cec") Murphey

" *I love Bob, but I don't like him.*" I first heard that statement more than 20 years ago. I didn't agree with it then; I disagree even more strongly now. If I understand what people mean, they're saying, "I love Bob—I'm committed to caring for him—but I don't like things he does."

It says that we are professing love (compassion, concern—whatever word we want to use) but we've judged the person's conduct as unacceptable to us. Notice I used the word judged. That's exactly the position. We have decided—and we may have strong ethical or biblical reasons—that the other's behavior doesn't conform to what we want or expect. When we determine what is the acceptable behavior of another, we don't love the person. This comes down to saying, "I'll love you if you meet certain conditions."

If we truly love and accept others, we love them in spite of what they do. The best example of the right attitude is when Jesus said to the adulterous woman, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

We toss out those words of Jesus easily enough but what are they saying? They speak of a love and an acceptance that transcends her behavior. He is saying, "I'm not opposed to you. I stand with you." He also exhorts her to change, but her decision has nothing to do with his acceptance.

Maybe we need to learn to care for people as they are, regardless of whether they ever conform to our standards. We love them even if they never change. If we do that, we don't have to decide whether we love or like them..

PERSONAL NEWS:

I've started a busy three-month period. I leave September 10 for Minneapolis where I'll do six different things: teach writers, hold a one-day workshop for pastors, do a radio interview, a booksigning, and finish with Sunday morning preaching. I'll be home for four days before I head to Spokane, WA to teach.

In Minneapolis, I'll conduct my third mentoring clinic for the year and the fourth will be in October in Bozeman, MT.

Our house is slowly being built with a lot of delays over permits and rain. We have no idea when it will be finished, but we suspect it will be after the new year.

If you are interested in having me speak to your church or group, please contact me through Twila Belk at 563-332-1622 or iamstraightway@aol.com.

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Cec

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