

## As I Have Loved You

Yesterday I spent working in the temple. Saturday isn't my regular shift, so I tend to bounce around between lots of different assignments and meet lots of new people. There was a fair amount of comment about one elderly brother who has served in the temple for many years, but yesterday was his last day as he is moving out of the area. One brother, after making some unflattering remark about this brother's age, said, "Who will I tease after you're gone?" The departing brother responded "I don't care!"

That interchange typifies a problem which has been troubling me for some time. How much of our interaction with others revolves around negative observations or unflattering comments? Sadly, I have noticed this most in the temple, although I think part of the reason is because I am exposed to a wider variety of people at the temple than in my job or church associations, and because the relationships in the temple are more intense because of amount of time spent together. But there is another brother who, although I have tried to be very respectful of him and often commented on his positive qualities, thinks that friendship is best expressed through denigrating comments and rather mean-spirited little pranks.

Is our treatment of others a reflection of our religious lives? Of course, we are well aware of the verse from which the title of this musing comes:

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

*John 13:34-35*

It is interesting that Christ specifically identifies this as "a new commandment." It doesn't seem that it should be new in the context of the Law of Moses, but perhaps it is new because it goes against something in the natural man. Elder Wirthlin put it this way:

*If you are criticizing others, you are weakening the Church. If you are building others, you are building the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>*

It is amazing the responses that come from praising someone. Hearts

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<sup>1</sup> I highly recommend the whole talk: "The Virtue of Kindness" April Conference 2005, Saturday afternoon session.

are lifted, hope is inspired, life takes on renewed meaning. All this from kind words.

In the temple, I have observed how the opposite is also true. We have brethren there from many different walks of life. One brother in particular appears to be from rather humble origins. He is hesitant in reading, and concerned about doing what is right. When I informed him of a mistake he had made in an ordinance he was concerned for two weeks thereafter. But, when you shake hands with him, you feel the true spirit of Christ – the pure love which should fill us as we work and serve in the temple. He may be unsure of himself, but he is a great example to me. I can see the hope in his eyes when I praise him. Interestingly, when I commented to his wife what a great example he is she glowed even more warmly than he did. She knows the man he is, and she is grateful when others see the same thing.

We do not know what burdens others may bear. We can only see the outside, and may little know the inside. A sister made a thoughtless criticism of my performance in an issue relating to the ward choir, which triggered a depression so severe I just turned around and ran from the chapel. I suppose many see my family and me as having everything under control, and she had no thought that her comment could affect me in that way, but it did. How much worse if, in the spirit of friendship, we offer some joshing remark, some little witticism, which affects someone else in that way? None of us would wish to do that. I have to wonder, though, how many times I have been guilty of exactly that sort of behavior? Humility is not my natural state, and sometimes my quick tongue comes up with comments that could better have been left unsaid.

And so I call on Elder Wirthlin again:

*Kindness is the essence of a celestial life. Kindness is how a Christlike person treats others. Kindness should permeate all of our words and actions at work, at school, at church, and especially in our homes.<sup>2</sup>*

We have more power, to build or to tear down, than we sometimes realize. Let us be careful how we use that power. In this way we grow closer to Christ, and become more like him.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*