

Jesus Wasn't Liked by Some, but He Was Likeable

My post last week, "Are You a Likeable Christian," received a pretty decent response and sparked some strong debate. To refresh your memory, I wrote to extol the virtues of my friend Justin Lathrop's new book, *The Likeable Christian*.

While some people agreed with my assessment of the subject, I'm afraid many misunderstood the point. Please allow me to elaborate.

One reader posted on Facebook, "When you preach the truth you will not be liked ... when called, you are not here for a popularity contest. It is written you will be hated for my name sake. Those drawn to you are done so by the will of God. Truly loving others is a willingness to endure for His names sake and preaching in places where you will not be liked ... but are needed. Are we to seek approval from people?"

The reader quoted Galatians 1:10, which says, "For am I now seeking the approval of men or of God? Or am I trying to please men? For if I were still trying to please men, I would not be the servant of Christ."

The Scripture is 100 percent correct. No, we should not seek the approval of men, and we should not seek to be liked. Jesus did not seek anyone's approval, and he was not liked by everyone. He was even hated by some. Anyone who reads the Bible knows that.

Another reader posted on our message board, "'Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man" (□□Luke□ □6:22), and, 'If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first' □□(John□ □15:18,□ □NIV). Neither of these would impress me that Christ was likeable."

Jesus Christ wasn't likeable? I'm pretty sure that wasn't the case.

The point that many are missing is that there is a huge difference between being "likeable" and being "liked." Jesus didn't care about being liked, but He did care about being "likeable." That is the trait that we should all aspire to.

Jesus wasn't liked by some; and why was that? It was because of the hardness of those people's hearts, not His. The Pharisees' hearts were not focused on the good of the people. Their hearts were focused on themselves and how the public perceived them.

That resulted in their hatred of Jesus. But that doesn't mean Jesus wasn't likeable. If we are likeable, then people are more apt to be drawn to us and will listen to what we have to say. There are those who will not like what we have to say, and therefore will not like us. We shouldn't care about that. We need to keep preaching the gospel as instructed and portray Christlike character, which is that of a "likeable"—and loving—person.

The simple message: Be a Christ follower who is pleasant to be around. Smile. Laugh. Don't repel people with self-righteous venom. Be compassionate. Give of yourself—including your time and your finances.

And even if your points are factual and valid, don't try to be right all of the time. It's annoying. Believe me—I've been there.

Some people may not like what I write, but that's OK with me. I believe my words are said with a loving heart and I am doing what the Lord wants me to do. Jesus' rebukes were said in love and some hated Him. If that's the case with me, I'm in good company.

And as I always like to say, "There is that." God bless.

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