

When It Feels Like You Can't Do Anything Right

There came a time in my ministry when I had to learn how to build relationships with people, for I knew that ministry flows through relationships more than through what we *do*.

People in church congregations basically fall into one of three categories:

- *those who like you no matter what you do;*
- *those who may like you or dislike you, depending on what you do and how you do it;*
- *and those who will dislike you no matter what you do.*

Obviously, the first group is a joy. Appreciate them. Encourage them. Thank God for them. Don't take them for granted or take advantage of them. They are the salt-of-the-earth people who keep churches alive. But as much as you would like to, you cannot spend all of your time with them.

The people in the second group are the ones watching you. This group is more cautious, the "wait-and-see" folks. I have found that the majority of this group is looking for authenticity and integrity in the ministry. They want to see real Christianity in action more than skill in the ministry. I found with this group that what I am is more important than what I do.

The request that came to my husband most often, when he was assisting churches in the pursuit of a pastor, was: "Send us someone who will love us." They did not want a superficial saccharine-sweet love, but a genuine expression of the love of

God flowing through the pastor's heart to the people, the love put there by the Holy Spirit according to Romans 5:5. When we show people this kind of love in all we say and do, most will respond positively to us.

Most but not all. This third group was a shock to me. As a naive green tree, I did not expect to find that, in spite of all we did, some people would not like us. But it happened. Particularly with one woman. No matter what we did, we did not measure up to all of the wonderful pastors she had known. No matter what we proposed, she was against it.

As had become my habit at this time, I turned to God's Word to cope with this attitude. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said we were to pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). In a moment of frustration, I wrote this woman's initials at that verse in my Bible. I was reminding myself that in obedience to the Lord, I have prayed for this person. Now I was turning her over to Him. I would like to tell you she changed, but she did not. However, my attitude toward her changed, which made the situation bearable. Later, according to the pastor who followed us, we were at the top of the list of the wonderful pastors she had had in the past that he was not measuring up to. Such is life!

*Reprinted with permission from the © Assemblies of God Her Green Room Ministry blog. **Peggy Musgrove** is a speaker and writer. She served in ministry alongside her late husband, Derald, for 61 years, as pastors, district superintendents, and in the National Leadership and Resource Center for the Assemblies of God. You can visit her blog at .*