

Amy – This I Believe

I believe in seeing the view from the other side and not forgetting the man or woman behind the message.

Recently, I penned an essay about gun control for my local newspaper. I received vehement rebuttals to my position from some folks I know well and some I don't. Everyone tried to goad me into defending my stance. All wanted to argue.

I knew we'd never see eye-to-eye on the issue. I listened to the criticism, but didn't take the bait. I couldn't see the point.

If I were to color a political map, my favorite color is blue. Many folks in my family prefer red. My father and uncles hold political viewpoints that make me cringe. They have no tolerance for certain choices which I believe should be fundamental human rights.

I have struggled mightily with these differences between me and my family. I love my father and his family dearly, and they have always adored me unconditionally. They are good people striving to make their way in the world and care for their families, just like my friends and I.

My relatives give a very human face to the other side of the fence.

I used to think moral courage meant speaking your truth. That does take guts. But it takes even more guts to listen to the opposing viewpoint without flinching-- and then extend the hand of friendship. It takes true courage to say "I disagree, but I honor your right to your opinion and the values you hold dear".

I know few people who can do this. Politics polarize us and breed anger and

resentment. Compromise can be hard to come by. It's much easier to argue than listen. But I believe we must try to see the view from the other side and never forget the man or woman behind the message.

If I try, I can glimpse the concerned citizen behind the gun lobbyist. I can glimpse the compassion behind the pro-life agenda. And I can glimpse the good intentions behind those who are more right-wing or evangelistic.

No, I don't espouse the same views. But, in most cases, I believe those who do are dedicated and well-meaning people. Undeniably, they are my brothers and sisters in this world. I believe we must try to remember that greater truth and seek healing over division and good sportsmanship over victory.

Am I there yet? Not even close. Family visits this fall will test my resolve to look beyond our differences. I'm sure my sensitive heart will be bruised when what I care about is dismissed or ridiculed. But I will try to remember that moral courage doesn't need or expect a cheering section.

Moral courage stands alone in calm, compassionate stead. I'll work to see the world from another's point of view and remember the person behind that point of view. This, I believe.