

## *Pk's Perspectives ... Blue Like Jazz*

Mr. Spencer then asked us about another area in which he felt metaphors cause trouble. He asked us to consider relationships. What metaphors do we use when we think of relationships? We **value** people, I shouted out. Yes, he said, and wrote in on his little white board. We **invest** in people, another person added. And soon enough we had listed an entire white board of economic metaphor. Relationships could be **bankrupt**, we said. People are **priceless**, we said. All economic metaphor. I was taken aback.

And that's when it hit me like so much epiphany getting dislodged from my arteries. The problem with Christian culture is we think of love as a commodity. We use it like money — if somebody is doing something for us, offering us something, be it gifts, time, popularity, or what have you, we feel they have value, we feel they are worth something to us, and perhaps, we feel they are priceless. I could see it so clearly, and I could feel it in the pages of my life. This was the thing that had smelled so rotten all these years. I used love like money. The church used love like money. With love, we withheld affirmation from the people who did not agree with us, but we lavishly financed the ones who did. I used love like money, but love doesn't work like money. It is not a commodity. When we barter with love, we all lose. When the church does not love its enemies, it fuels their rage. It makes them hate us more.

I replaced economic metaphor, in my mind, with something different, a free gift metaphor or a magnet metaphor. Instead of withholding love to change somebody, I poured it on, lavishly. I hoped that love would work like a magnet, pulling people from the mire and toward healing. I knew this was the way God loved me. God had never withheld love to teach me a lesson.

If a person senses that you do not like them, that you do not approve of their existence, then your religion and your political ideas will all seem wrong to them. If they sense that you like them, then they are open to what you have to say. When I am talking to somebody there are always two conversations going on. The first is on the surface; it is about politics or music or whatever it is our mouths are saying. The other is beneath the surface, on the level of the heart, and my heart is either communicating that I like the person I am talking to or I don't. God wants both conversations to be true. That is, we are supposed to speak truth in love. If both conversations are not true, God is not involved in the exchange, we are on our own, and on our own, we will lead people astray. The Bible says that if you talk to somebody with your mouth, and your heart does not love them, that you are like a person standing there smashing two cymbals together. You are only annoying everybody around you. I think that is very beautiful and true. Now when I go to meet somebody, I pray that God will help me feel His love for them. I ask God to make it so both conversations, the one from the mouth and the one from the heart, are true.

*20 years ago I bought [Blue Like Jazz](#), a book by Donald Miller, because I liked the title. Turned out to be a good read. The above excerpt is from Donald's book. Grace & peace, love you.*

PK