

THE STAR-SPANGLED GIRL

BY NEIL SIMON

There are two main questions to consider while watching this show. The first question, where most of the humor can be found, is “what lengths will people go for the one they love?” We laugh at Norman’s attempts to win Sophie’s affection, as well as how quickly he is smitten with her, because in a less exaggerated way, we have likely found ourselves also doing impractical things over someone we loved as well as falling for people for the wrong reasons. In spite of how crazy or creepy Norman comes across in the story, we can see part of ourselves in his desperation, which should make us chuckle as well as rethink how we handle ourselves when faced with romantic feelings.

The second question, of a more serious nature, is “how should we interact with people who disagree with us?” Andy, Norman’s roommate, can’t imagine being attracted to Sophie, because her philosophy of life is so different. While Sophie grew up in the South, instilled with admirable yet incomplete principles, Andy and Norman are progressives who grew up in the throes of a political pivoting point for this country. Sophie can’t fathom the idea that there is anything wrong with America to protest about, and Andy can’t fathom that there are people who don’t see that there is anything wrong with America to protest about.

When two people have opposing values, their purposes in life, moral codes, and presuppositions war against each other. They will have different solutions to problems and different tactics to reach those solutions. If what you believe is worth anything to you, it will be extremely difficult to be around someone who represents philosophies that you are fighting to destroy. (Amos 3:3; 2 Cor. 6:14) That isn’t necessarily a bad thing, because it means that you have conviction. (2 Tim. 3:14) However, things become problematic when the difficulty being around opposing views translates into the inability to be respectful and give an honest ear to what the other person is saying. “Seeing things from someone else’s point of view” doesn’t mean you need to agree with them, but it does mean you should try to understand what is motivating them to think the way they do. Nine times out of ten, you can sympathize with their intentions. And if you can sympathize with their intentions, you are in a much better position to be persuasive. (Proverbs 25:15; 2 Cor. 5:11; Gal. 6:9; 2 Tim. 2:24-25)

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Neither of them are quick to admit it, but Andy and Sophie finally realize what motivates the other to think the way they do. Andy tells Norman that perhaps he was short-sighted in some of his tactics. In so many words, he admits that perhaps he thought too highly of himself and his opinions – was too quick to point at other people as being the problem when it could have been right in his own heart. Sophie realizes that as much as she doesn’t like what Andy or Norman have to say, she would rather have things said that she disagrees with than nothing said at all.

Always surrounding yourself with people you agree with limits your own intellectual growth. In the same way loving someone for their looks or popularity is a shallow attraction, loving someone because you never have an argument or debate can also be shallow. It could be a testimony to the fact that neither one of you has anything worth fighting for. If you are constantly striving for unity at any cost whatsoever, you might want to do some self-examination concerning life’s purpose.

From the audience’s perspective, Andy and Sophie’s relationship should represent a blend between “standing up for what you believe in” and “being patient and respectful with those who disagree.” The relationship can also represent the fact that it is possible to work alongside someone to a point. (Mark 9:38-40; Luke 5:30-32) You don’t have to agree with every single little aspect of life in order to get along and work toward another common, overarching goal, and we need to learn when to compromise and when to stand firm on principle. (Prov. 26:4-5; Rom. 14:1; Eph. 5:11)

Your own beliefs are only as strong as their weakest link. When you allow yourself to discuss opposing viewpoints, you can more easily see where your own views might have flaws. Or, perhaps your belief isn’t flawed, but rather it is your defense tactic that has holes. (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15) Whatever might be the case, you can’t pretend to be in a quest for truth at all costs if you aren’t willing to change your mind once you’ve been shown the truth. (1 Kings 18:21; Matt. 16:24) Powers and opinions will fade, but truth never changes. And once you’ve found that truth, do not let go. (Deut.6:6-8; Prov. 3:3; 2 Thess. 2:15)