My Opinion on Opinion

I was sitting at my desk, wracking my brain for something to write about for my class assignment. We had to write this opinion column and submit it to the Lariat to potentially be published.

I have small, personal opinions on unimportant things. These types of opinions are as non-threatening as opinions can be. For example, they include food or music preferences. Nothing offensive, and fairly neutral.

However, I couldn't recall a single one of those opinions. I have many personal interests – I enjoy old music and movies and reading books. I paint. I love to hang out with my friends. I go to church, life group and college ministry. There are so many things I could write about.

Still, nothing came to mind.

I had already decided that I didn't want to write on any controversial topics, knowing that previous stories in the Lariat opinion section have gotten negative responses. Very negative. That scares me. It scares me to write my opinion, in an opinion section.

It is inevitable that most opinion will be met with opposition. That opposition often turns into pointed judgment at the individual, rather than just the opinion. I don't want people to create perceptions of me based on what I think about a certain topic. I don't want to be resented for maybe not thinking in the same way as everyone else.

As I was trying to avoid topics that are super controversial and couldn't think about anything "safe" to write about, it hit me – though ironically, I feel as though it may end up being controversial: opinion, love and respect.

This season in particular seems to be filled with more polarized opinions and lots of hatred because of it.

However, I would like to propose that there is room for respect and love in disagreement.

In order to create space for respectful disagreement, we will need to have hard conversations. But these tough conversations are pointless if all of us are scared of the repercussions of our opinions. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it.

In my case, I'm scared to write the *wrong* thing. But that's tricky, because what is *wrong*? All our definitions will be different. Some may be the same, or we may at least be able to agree on really big issues, but what about the smaller things?

Respect and love. These are two words I have to keep learning about and keep practicing. It doesn't always come naturally. It has to be intentional and purposeful. It takes humility, something I don't always feel like I have, but am continually working toward.

I want to love and respect other people and their opinions. I want love and respect from other people in regard to my opinions.

This life is too short for us to not love and respect the people who are walking through life at the same time we are, regardless of how their beliefs make us feel. The fact is that all humans have intrinsic value – and that value isn't taken away based on what they believe.

I'm very ready for love and respect to invade our culture. To define it.

This column does not contain my exhaustive opinion or thoughts. There are more things I would like to say. More things I would like to clarify or really articulate better. All I can hope is that I won't be judged based on my 600-something words.

Of course, wishful thinking and talking ideologically isn't quite progress itself. I am aware that steps need to be taken and decisions made. This is a group effort.

It is just my simple desire to humbly submit to the readers of the Lariat that I personally am working toward love and respect in relation to opinions of individuals and individuals

themselves and am hoping that my Baylor family will walk with me. This is an area I realize more and more that I will never be done growing in. There is always room to love people better.