

# Cybercolumn for 2/16/04 by Jeanie Miley: "Yes" of the heart\_22304

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## CYBERCOLUMN: "Yes" of the heart

**By Jeanie Miley**

"Yes, I agree with you."

The words were right, and so, I took the words at face value and made my plans, based on what I thought was an agreement.

Only later, I found out that while the person said "yes," everything else within that other person was screaming "no," and I didn't have the life experience to hear the real message that was underneath the words.

Jeanie Miley
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If I had paid attention, or if I had been more astute at reading tone of voice and facial gestures, I would have seen the signs and could have saved myself a lot of trouble. As it was, I had to pay, big time, for the behavior of another person whose "yes" meant "no."

Reflecting on Jesus' invitation to "believe and receive," it strikes me that

Jesus knew well the duplicitous ways of human beings, and so he made it clear that it isn't enough just to give mental or verbal assent to a proposition. Instead, if you really want to be transformed and live the abundant life that is available through the mystery and miracle of the living Christ, then you really do have to welcome that transforming Presence into every single nook and cranny of your life.

When a stranger comes to my front door and rings the doorbell, I open my door, but he doesn't get to come in and join my family at the dinner table. We take care of business, and then he goes on his way, and I go back to my life, as usual, before he interrupted me.

The bookcases in my study are lined with books about the life of Jesus, for the facts and interpretations about him have been a source of ongoing fascination to me for my entire adult life. My hunger to know the historical Jesus and to learn his teachings is never fully satisfied.

Intellectual assent to the facts of Jesus' life, however, as good as it is, isn't enough. Just "saying yes" to the facts isn't enough. As long as Jesus remains a doctrine to be argued, a theory to be explored, a set of facts to be memorized or a concept to be analyzed, I can keep that Change Agent in the book cases, neat and manageable, or on the front porch of my life, closing the door and going back to business when I am ready.

When someone I love comes to my house, on the other hand, I prepare my home and turn on the porch light. I throw open the door and embrace the person with gladness and open arms, receiving him with celebration and bringing him into my home and give him a seat at my table. And if the person arriving happens to be one of my children or a precious friend, I may even meet that person on the driveway, I'm so happy to see him!

The One who calls us "friend" doesn't want to be boxed up in a theory or a doctrine. The living Christ wants us to open our minds and hearts to

receive the fullness of all that he is into the innermost rooms of our lives. It is in the welcoming embrace that a relationship with Christ really does begin to heal us, liberate us and empower us to be and become all that a human being, made in the image of God, can be.

Saying “yes” in a verbal agreement is a beginning. If there is really going to be a transformation, however, that “yes” must be accompanied by a welcoming “yes” of the heart.

*Jeanie Miley is an author and columnist and a retreat and workshop leader. She is married to Martus Miley, pastor of River Oaks Baptist Church in Houston, and they have three adult daughters.*

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