

Cybercolumn by Jeanie Miley: Being human— in the family of God

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CYBER COLUMN: Being human—in the family of God

By Jeanie Miley

As children of God, we are made in the very image of God, created just a little lower than angels.

And we are sinners.

On top of all of that, we who call ourselves Christian are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jeanie Miley

It's a lot to ask of frail human beings, and yet the Scriptures include all three realities.

Driving home from our church retreat, I had plenty of time to think about our speaker's wisdom and what it means to carry the responsibility and burden of the multi-faceted dimensions of being human. Pondering the trouble we humans have getting along in the family of God as brothers and

sisters in Christ, it occurred to me that perhaps that is partly because we forget that each of us and all of us carry both the image of God and the tendency to sin.

It is an immature mind and childish thinking that insists that life fall into either/or, black/white, good/bad categories, being one or the other and not allowing for both. More than one thing can be true about almost everything and anyone, at any given moment, and maturity requires that our brains flex and bend enough to wrap around two realities at the same time. It is a grownup who can manage to tolerate ambiguity and ambivalence, paradox and irony and not lose his mind in the process!

It makes an enormous difference how I live in my community of faith when I can hold all three parts of my identity in tension. And I am a healthier member of the Body of Christ and a more loving and compassionate sister in Christ when I remember that my identity encompasses behavior, attitudes and speech that reflect an accurate image of myself.

I am, in fact, loving and nonloving. I can be generous and stingy. I am capable of being forgiving, tolerant and compassionate, as well as vindictive, intolerant and punitive. I have within me the capacity for tenderness and patience, and sometimes within the same day, I shock myself with my self-centeredness and insensitivity, toughness and impatience.

I am both courageous and fearful, noble and petty, selfless and selfish, often responding out of forces that I did not know existed in the underworld of my unconsciousness.

On any given day, I can behave as a mature adult and a petulant child, a cranky old woman and an idealistic adolescent!

It makes a big difference when I hold in consciousness the reality that my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ are, as well, made up of the complex

and complicated motivations that I am and that all are made in the image of God and inclined to fall short of the glory of God.

And so, as we frail and fallible human beings stumble and falter together, attempting to be kingdom people while we strive to pay our bills and raise our children, solve our problems and fulfill our goals, we must be as patient with each other as God is with us.

Some people just want the “made in the image” side of human nature, and others focus only on our sin nature. Surely, we are called to the high and holy task of calling forth in each other that image of the divine that is stamped within our innermost being. Surely, we are called to give up being surprised at the sin nature in each other and use that energy, instead, to forgive one another.

Perhaps, if we can remember who we really are, and all of who we are, we can be better siblings in the kingdom of God.

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. Got feedback? Write her at Writer2530@aol.com.