

# Cybercolumn by Jeanie Miley: What kind of witness am I, anyway?

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## CYBER COLUMN: What kind of witness am I, anyway?

**By Jeanie Miley**

“My friend hurt my feelings,” someone told me recently. “She said I was too much of a Jesus freak, and she really couldn’t talk to me about her problems.”

I waited, curious about where this conversation was going. I had noticed this person was pretty out-there with her religious language, but it wasn’t my business to try to edit or inhibit her.

“She said that every time she tries to talk to me about something that is bothering her, I pull out the ‘Jesus card,’ and it turns her off.”

Jeanie Miley
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We who call ourselves followers of Jesus hold this treasure of the Good News of the saving, healing, transforming, liberating and empowering life of the living Christ in the imperfect clay vessels of our minds and hearts. We have the capacity to turn people on or off to this Jesus by what we say,

what we do and how well we love each other. Truly, that burden/blessing is a huge responsibility.

When we suffer an attack of inflation for bringing people into the kingdom of God, we are also called to ask ourselves the hard, cold questions about if we might also have made it hard for other people to want to have a vital, personal, dynamic love relationship with the living Christ by our words or our actions.

Those of us who grew up under the burden of that old adage about how our lives might be the only sermon some folks ever hear may need to face the truth that we do, in fact, witness by our deeds even more than with our words. We shout our faith by what we don't say and what we don't do, as well as what we actually do say and do. Our lives in the boardrooms and the sanctuaries, the convenience stores and the mission sites are sermons, whether we like that or not, and how we represent Jesus is vitally important.

Being a witness to the presence and power of Christ is a challenge, calling us to balance speaking and acting with integrity while we maintain sensitivity to the needs of the person to whom we are communicating the love of Christ.

Just because I have a need to unload my opinions and my testimony about Christ doesn't mean I have the right to do it in a way that offends another person. Just because I am eager to share the Good News with someone else doesn't mean I can do that without considering how that message is going to be received and accepted.

If I am going to represent Jesus, I need to have a current relationship with the Real Jesus based on the biblical revelation and not on some cultural caricature that sells T-shirts and bumper stickers.

If I am going to call myself a follower of Christ, I need to have a clue what

that means, and I need to have his sensitivity to the needs of the other person I'm so eager to witness to and the appropriateness of the moment. I need to know whether I'm witnessing to the presence of Christ for the benefit of the other person or because I need to count my contacts for the week.

If I am going to invite people to open their minds and hearts to Christ, I'd better make sure my own heart is full of that love instead of my need to look good, gain power or win points.

Jesus of Nazareth—the Living Christ—warrants a witness that is authentic, appropriate and respectful of others.

*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](mailto:Writer2530@aol.com).*

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