

HYPOCRISY UNITES ALL

“...human hypocrites are easily identified -- they are breathing.”

I'm thinking of starting a church and naming it, “First Church of the Hypocrites.” Catchy title, don't you think? It came to me while pondering a common criticism of Christianity. Repeatedly I've heard it said, “I'd attend church, but it's full of...” (you-know-what.) After evaluating the average church-goer, I'd have to agree – hypocrisy abounds in most -- including me.

The rationale for such a statement becomes clearer when morals and ethics are defined. Morals are what we believe to be right. Ethics however, are revealed in our actions or lifestyle. When the two fail to correlate we have a recipe for hypocrisy.

Among the human-race representatives I interact with, not one lives out his/her beliefs one hundred percent of the time. Thus, I propose that human hypocrites are easily identified -- they are breathing. And that's why I would christen my new church as mentioned: there would be no lack of potential members.

Many readers of the Saskatoon StarPhoenix would feel comfortable in my gathering. The May 21 publication trumpeted how “...a team of scientists in a Maryland laboratory have brought to life the world's first synthetic cells.” A few pages into the same section, we discover an article berating attempts to curtail a woman's access to abortion; after all, it's just a fetus, not real life...right? To celebrate both stories is to practice the ancient art of hypocrisy. Welcome to the club.

When we rail against politicians reticent to reveal expense statements, but then fail to file accurate tax returns, we are hypocrites. When we become disgruntled at the burdened down health care system then choose a bag of Doritos and a couch over a brisk walk, we are hypocrites. When we profess equality for all, but refuse to sit beside the black/white/brown individual on the bus, we are hypocrites.

Myriad misdemeanors pollute our lives with the H-odour. We teach our kids, “If you can't say anything nice don't say anything at all,” then verbally assassinate the boss at coffee break. The 16-year-old hears, “Don't speed,” yet the needle creeps past the 100 mark when we hit the highway.

I'm not proud of my hypocrisy and I like to think God is growing me towards integrity, but honest evaluation leads to the unpleasant realization that I've got a ways to go.

I keep wishing the Divine would just zap me into a state of perfection -- low stress, high return. But instead He takes me along the scenic route of change – long, laborious and anything-but-fast. However, it is surprisingly effective in producing lasting life change. As I hang with God, read His love-letter (the Bible) and talk relentlessly about the stuff of life (prayer), He gently changes me from the inside out.

To every reader who has observed a state of hypocrisy within a Jesus-follower, know that I've seen it too -- each time I glance in a mirror. But before heaving stones too hard in my direction, please consider Jesus' response after the societal elite slammed him

for eating with “tax collectors and sinners.” His response was epic: “I didn’t come to save those who are perfect, but to save the lost ... the healthy don’t need a doctor.”

According to the Perfect One, the gathering of the church is for those who want to get healthy. That’s the only requirement – not flawlessness. Thus, when we see such hypocrites within a church, relax, they are probably in the right place.

I know I certainly feel a sense of belonging -- and I suspect you would too.