

FOCUS ON FAITH

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CREATED & CRAFTED

In many respects I'm a creature of habit.

- I like to be on time – and usually I am.
- I'm not risk-averse but I'm not altogether spontaneous and take my time over important decisions thinking through the options.
- Usually I thoroughly plan what's happening and I'd like to think that I'm quite organised.

If you ask my wife though she'd probably say I'm deluding myself and point out that my office is not entirely a model example of order. Paperwork overflows everywhere because I haven't got round to devising a proper filing system – yet!

However I like to point out that when someone says, "A tidy desk is the sign of a tidy mind" that the same logic applies if you've got an empty desk! Anyway I know roughly where everything is and I can usually find it even if it does take a week or two.

You and I are unique - there is no-one like us....no-one comes close

Years ago when I was employed in a "proper job" (rather than being a church leader!) I underwent regular personality and psychological profiling exercises. These were designed to try and ascertain skills, behavioural and motivational traits such as leadership ability, teamworking or creativity. The questionnaires used were different depending on the purpose of the exercise but the methodology was usually very similar – questions based on experience, values and aspirations.

The outcome could be different as in most cases none of us is entirely honest when we take these types of test. Rather than giving the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, i.e. the way it really is, we tend to answer the questions either based on how we would like to be perceived or on what we think the answers ought to be.

And the problem with many of these tests is that in the end they reduce everyone to fitting into a little box, pigeon-holing and categorising them. Rather than recognising that everyone is uniquely different and multi-faceted each person is assigned an alpha-numeric scale, descriptor or even colour coding depending on where they come out on the charts.

Now I'm not denigrating these tests – I actually find many of them very useful in helping to understand the way people react and respond. However they do tend to rely on combining the wide variety of components to create a simplistic formula that is easy to understand.

"Oh so you are an extrovert or an introvert; or you're a team player but so and so is a team leader because they have initiative and vision" – you know the kind of thing.

It amazes me how little we appreciate how wonderful we are. You and I are unique – there is no-one like us. In fact no-one comes close. We are distinctively created and crafted and are much more than the sum of our constituent parts.

Of course we have the same basic elements – flesh and blood; bones, sinews and muscles; DNA; nervous, circulatory, digestive, respiratory systems etc. Some of those elements work better in some people than in others but I can relate to the Psalmist who couldn't stop himself exclaiming in gratitude and appreciation that he was "**fearfully and wonderfully made**". In fact that same Psalm (139) tells us that God knew us intimately before we were born and that He was aware of the extent of our lives and the way in which we would live them.

And when we add in our thoughts, attitudes, motivations, experiences, ambitions, hopes and dreams to our physical skills and talents the permutations are infinitive.

So here's a question for us to think about. If as the Bible says we are all made in the image of God yet the 6+ billion of us currently alive on this planet (in addition to the ones who have gone before us) are individually unique – what must God be like? Amazing, awesome, incomparable.

But there's more! The God who created us individually and uniquely wants a relationship with us and invites us to be part of His family. One of the people who spent at least 3 years with Jesus later wrote: "**See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**"

I love the word, lavished. It implies abundance and generosity, that nothing is held back. The Bible says "**God is love**" and He has the capacity and the desire to shower that love on each and every one of us.

Think it through – God created us, knows us and still loves us, each of us individually! Believe it and receive it.

To find out more about the Christian faith, information on local Churches together with contact details, plus other Christian resources, please log on to www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk.