

Trust

This was written a number of years ago.

I know more than a few people who call themselves 'Christian', who really don't work at it very hard. I've learned that being a true Christian requires a lot more effort than some people are willing to put in. I know I have to work at it every day.

To say that you believe is not enough. You have to trust. You have to trust that God is who He says He is, and love him with all your heart. We trust Jesus because He laid down His life for us. We trust Him to guide our lives. *We trust Him to forgive our sins, no matter how many there were or how bad they were.*

God wants us to commit to Him without any compromise. We can't be 'lukewarm' Christians. When we wake up in the morning, we need to be prepared to allow Him to work through us every single moment of the day. We need to let Him guide our every thought and action, and to make sure that everything we do or say is pleasing to Him.

That's an awfully lot to live up to. There are days when I don't feel close to God at all, because I'm too busy with life or preoccupied with things that need to be done. I have to continually ask God to be with me. I need to talk to Him often. I need to remember that just because I have had a close relationship with God, this doesn't mean that I can be complacent; I need to keep Him at the centre of my life at all times.

"Come near to God and He will come near to you" (James 4:8)

Being a Christian means you are not ashamed to testify to others about how God has changed your life. We need to *tell people* about the changes the Lord has made in our lives. Sometimes when I couldn't find people to talk about Christianity, face-to-face, I did it by email. After becoming a Christian, I only had a few too-short years to talk with Jane about our faith. I will always treasure those conversations.

'Good works' are not enough. Many of us do good things for others in our lives; we show our love for them by doing these things. But this *by itself* doesn't bring us closer to God, and these 'good deeds' are not what makes us Christians. God's love for us has changed us, and we do these things *because they are pleasing to Him*, and because we love Him. Knowing God and having an intimate relationship with Him is far more important than any good things we have done for others in our lives.

By allowing Christ to live in me, my life is no longer filled with my own thoughts and desires. It changes my behaviour. Anything I do is done to honour Him, because I put my faith and trust in Him.

I never understood this before I became a Christian. I was always a good person, and I always did good things for others. I was trying to live my life 'the way Jesus would want me to' ... but I hadn't accepted Jesus as my Saviour, and He wasn't in my life. It wasn't enough.

How do we know that we really are OK with God, and not a 'lukewarm' Christian? We *shouldn't* rely on our feelings. Some days we may 'feel' close to God, and on others, not so much. I've made that mistake a lot. I still do. Instead, we need to actively seek God's Word by reading scripture. We need to talk to Him, pray, ask forgiveness when we need to, and ask Him to be with us every moment. I think if we can do this, we don't need to rely on our 'feelings' ... we will *know* we are being looked after!

Being baptized is important. For me, it was a public acknowledgement of my decision to turn my back on sin and live for Jesus. I wish this could have happened a long time before it did.

Forgiveness is a big part of being a Christian. When people hurt us, we have to forgive them, and we need to ask God to forgive them as well. This is not something I was ever good at; I often held grudges. As a Christian I've changed a lot; I still get angry at things people do, but I am able to forgive much more readily than I ever did before.

Dealing with others without anger is important. Through discussions with others I have come to see that anger is *not* always wrong. In fact, I think God wants us to be angry about the same things that anger Him. It helps motivate us to do something about the things that we see that are wrong. I haven't done a very good job with this, but I'm learning.

But I know that some people have a problem with anger. I did myself occasionally. Sometimes when you're upset with someone, you don't address the problem. Instead, you let your anger out a little bit at a time, through negative comments here and there, gossip, and criticism. Instead of talking to the person who has angered you, you spread your anger around to everyone else. I have been very guilty of this, and I am trying hard to let God help me with it.

I think that when you have the security of knowing that God is in your life and looking after you, *you are not as bothered by what others say and do*. You will be less likely to retaliate in a negative way. Gossip and unpleasant people won't affect you as much, because you are infused with God's love. I believe this, and I hope I can learn to be this way all the time.

Anger can be very negative, when it's directed at those around you, or kept bottled up inside. When we're angry, sometimes we do and say things we will regret.
"Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (James 1:20)

'Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger'.

James tells us this. To me, 'quick to hear' means I have to be an active listener when dealing with people, without getting frustrated or angry. And I need to listen to what God is telling me when I'm dealing with conflict. It was so easy to jump in with anger when confronting a misbehaving student; I needed to stop and listen.

'Slow to speak' means we need to think before speaking. Anger often results in things being said that just make the situation worse. I needed to step back and think about things before dealing with a problem student. I found this really hard to do sometimes. *"I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth"* (Psalms 39:1)

'Slow to anger' implies that we need to be patient and understanding. We need to defuse the anger and replace it with reflection. As a teacher and Assistant Principal, I needed to calmly identify solutions and compromises while dealing with the student in a respectful manner.

The forgoing paragraphs might give the impression that I would 'fly off the handle' quite regularly. In fact, I seldom expressed anger loudly when confronting problem students ... but the anger definitely showed through when I was dealing with them ... I tended to immediately jump in and tell them how their behaviour had to change and what the consequences would be if it didn't.

God helped me to deal with this very effectively. I learned to always take a 'time out' before dealing with problems. I learned to listen attentively to what the students had to say. Then I needed to work with the student to discover possible solutions. I tried this many times, with God's help, and it worked wonderfully. When I remembered.