

# How I Became a Christian

I turned away from God in my early twenties - I'd never really felt his presence in my life, despite the fact that I had two good parents who took us to church and loved us very much. I remember very clearly, as a twelve-year-old returning from church one Sunday morning where I'd been attending Sunday School in our town's United Church, asking my father whether I had to go through the upcoming Confirmation, and whether I actually had to continue attending at all, as I felt that it really didn't mean anything to me. My father told me it was my decision, so I stopped attending regularly.

I would honestly have to say that, after that, for most of the rest of my life, I didn't believe anything at all. I would attend church occasionally with my parents, and later, in Worsley, with Jane. But while I always tried to live my life 'the way Jesus would want me to', I didn't believe in God. I was a staunch atheist.

Jane and my daughters were Christian, and many times they tried to get me interested in God, and to help me to become a Christian too. But I was very resistant. I remained an unbeliever. I was even proud of it. Hard to imagine now.

In retrospect, I realize that my life then was sort of empty. I needed something, but I didn't know what it was. I needed God.

In late 2009 and early 2010 while Jane was away for health reasons, I had a lot of time by myself to think about my life. I knew there were some things I had to do to become a better teacher, husband and father. I just wasn't sure what they were. And I didn't know what to do.

But a student I was helping with Math every day, who later became a good friend, had been a Christian all her life, and she showed me, by her example, how I could be a better person and a better teacher. She didn't know she was my role model ... I never said anything ... but her faith, her ability to overcome setbacks because of that faith, and her caring attitude towards everyone, made me start thinking that maybe I needed God in my life too.

I spent several months working through this, and I prayed a lot about it. I wasn't even sure that anyone was listening. But I knew that it was something that Jane wanted for me, and that she was a good person and a Christian and someone I wanted to emulate. But I didn't talk about it with anyone. I'd never talked about what I believed (or didn't believe) with another person, ever, and I found it very difficult to do. But the more I thought about it, the better I felt.

Eventually I did ask God to be part of my life, and to forgive my sins. But nothing much happened! I didn't realize that you had to *talk about it with other people* ... to be a Christian, you can't keep it inside. Talking about it makes it real. The Bible actually says that, in Romans 10, verses 9 and 10:

*“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

*For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”*

God was waiting for me to take the next step ... to tell someone.

So I did. The same person who was my inspiration to seek God agreed to talk with me about what both of us believed. She had no idea that when I said ‘Jesus is the most important person in my life’, I was saying it for the first time ever. That probably wasn’t very fair to her, but I didn’t know if it was real yet. But it was true.

Within days of saying that out loud, I knew that God was listening, and that He was looking out for me. I felt better than I ever had in my life, and it affected everything I did as a teacher. It wasn’t long before I was telling everyone, including my wife and family, that God was in my life. Many people were very happy for me when I told them. But not as happy as I was!

Why the Baptist Church? Cole’s father was ill, and for some reason Jane had asked me if I would pray for him. This was just before I’d told her I was saved, so she assumed I still didn’t believe. She wasn’t sure why she’d even asked me. Out of the blue, I suggested we attend the Baptist Church since there were a lot of friends there we could ask for prayer from. I’d never before been to their church service, and neither had Jane; she’d been attending the United Church, and in fact had been saved there with the help of one of the pastors who was a friend.

She was amazed that I’d suggested it. So I sat down and told her about how I’d accepted Jesus into my life just a few days before.

I remember very clearly that when Jane and I first attended that day in June, it felt like God was in there with us. I’d never felt that way in church before. Every time I attended after that, I felt God’s presence. It was a blessing.

I think we all have to go through trials before we can come to know the true meaning of Christianity in our lives. I find that when I ask Jesus to live within me, He is able to achieve things for me that I could not possibly do on my own. I sometimes ask Him to give me the right words for a person or situation, and when I let Him speak, amazing things happen. It made me such a better teacher! I don’t think it’s a coincidence that the next two years saw two students in my Math 30 class obtain a mark of 100% on the Diploma exam, something that had never happened before. I cared more.

I’ve had my difficulties, and my doubts. I’ve discovered that you have to fall back on your faith sometimes, especially when things around you are causing problems and you don’t see any solutions. That’s when Jesus has been the most help to me.

Even difficult times are part of God's plan for you - they make you into a better person. I've had trouble dealing with unpleasant people who aren't Christian ... that same friend helped me with this too, at a time when I really needed to hear it. She told me:

*"Over the years I have learned that only God can change people, and how He wants to use us in the process. By being an example to these students and trying to love them like Christ you will never know how big of impact you may have on their lives".*

That little piece of advice changed me completely as a teacher.

God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours, and we will never be able to understand them, which is why it is important to place all your trust in the Lord.

So yes, I am a Christian, and I was baptized the next year. I wish this had happened to me a long time ago ... but better late than never! And I've thanked that special person, and I'm trying to be the same sort of inspiration to others that she was to me. I hope I can be.