

Alexandra Testament for Baptism 18 Aug 2013

I was brought up as a Christian and I believed in God.

When I was a teenager I couldn't reconcile what I was taught by the world and religion, with what was in the Bible. As a result, I put God on the back burner. I didn't pursue the truth of God. I was never an atheist though. However, I didn't want to be saved and stuck. I wanted to understand, so in my late 20s I went to church and house groups. Knowing that if we seek we will find.

The Alpha course was helpful in showing me how short the time was between events and them being written down and how many copies there are. Also references to Biblical events in other ancient literature. This head knowledge gave me confidence in the Bible.

If it was a word of mouth tradition that eventually got written down, there would be a Chinese whispers effect. I believe it is inspired by God and that what is in it, is for our benefit. As we read in 2 Tim 3;16-17 All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, I would add encouragement, comfort and hope. God's word is a living truth that changes lives but it needs to be read with him, not just words on a page but with the revelation of the holy Spirit who guides us.

I, like many people I know, found the Old Testament difficult. I decided instead of focusing on what I didn't understand, I would *stand* on what I knew to be true. There is no merit in chasing red herrings, they are stumbling blocks. God will reveal answers as we grow and mature in using the faith that we have.

There is no way Jesus was just a good man and teacher. No one could do and say the things he did and not be the son of God. I knew inside my spirit that Jesus was the son of God, sent to save us. That he loved me enough to die and take my punishment on himself so that I could be freed from the sin that had separated me from my holy Father.

God sees me righteous *in* Jesus. I am not condemned, I'm treasured, precious, highly valued and beloved. How awesome is that!

I decided that if I can believe in one miracle, then I have to believe in them all. God is a supernatural God, he created everything so he can alter it. It is not for us to understand everything but to *marvel at His work and blessings*. To build my confidence I read books about real people who had experienced the miracles of God in their lives today. So I knew that John 14 v 12 was true: that we would do what Jesus did and even *greater things*!

I also listened to worship songs and rock worship songs. Together with hymns, they are inspired by and quote the Bible. So when I read the Bible I recognised a lot from the words of songs. Songs are easy to keep in your head during the day, ensuring an awareness of his continued presence.

Jesus did not say the Old Testament was a load of rubbish. He taught from it so did the writers of the New Testament. So I decided not to shy away from it.

Every hero in the Bible is a shadow pointing to Jesus. I've received teachings explaining the reasons for the things God told them to do. All the numbers in the Bible represent something and all the names have meanings. Nothing is wasted. I've received so much peace and rest from knowing that the word of God is true, rather than trying to fathom it out and apply human reasoning to it.

If we seek with all our heart (as a deer pants for the water so my heart cries out to you) then the Spirit will guide us and reveal things to us as we grow and mature. It is not an intellectual exercise but an experience of relationship born out of love.

Like rungs on a ladder you go up incrementally not in one leap. Like building blocks, as you mature and take in more of the truth, you look down and realise you entered on the ground floor and now you are on the top of a skyscraper! Once you were in a dark cellar and now you are in the light of the roof top! I used to think of it, as paddling at the waters edge. Just your feet, then up to your ankles, then knees and finally you take off and swim. Jesus doesn't ask us to dive in at the deep end!

I'm so thankful that Jesus taught in simple parables that the common man could understand. I thought that you needed to study and get a degree in theology and learn Greek and Hebrew to fully unlock the Bible! Jesus wants us to come to him as a child, trusting and eager to learn, sit with him, listen to him, let him teach us. I'm also thankful that people do study Hebrew & Greek so I don't have to!

People would quote the Bible and I thought that what God said to the Prophets was for their situation, at their time, you couldn't apply it to today. Now I know the promises of God are for all time. If God said 'I'll never leave you or forsake you' to Joshua, then he is also saying it to us today. Jesus is always with us, he is a firm rock to stand on, for example, when loved ones leave us, to be with Him. I have found He is constant and I've run to Him many times.

In Jeremiah Ch29: v 11 God says "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." That helped me when I was widowed. I knew that God inhabits the praises of his children. I knew that we are to praise Him in all circumstances. When Stephen died, the pain was beyond measure but I praised the Lord and found him to be my strength and refuge. He held me in my grief and brought me through, with His peace that passes all understanding (Phil 4:7, John 14:27). In the next verse 12 God says "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me, *when you seek me with all your heart*. I will be found by you.". This is where I am now. Not content to settle for the status quo but seeking the abundant life he wants for me so that I can be a blessing to others.

Jesus doesn't barge into your life with a battering ram and size 15 hobnail boots. He stands at the door to our lives and says "I love you, come to me". Will you open the door and let him in? Please don't leave him on the back burner, let him set your life alight!

I give thanks for all my brothers and sisters who have helped & inspired me. Praise the Lord, Amen.