

“Love believes all things” 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 7

Jesus very emphatically made believing the key element of faith. He said that if we prayed in his name, believing, we would have what we asked for; the work that God requires of people is that they believe in Jesus, the one he sent; all things are possible for the one who believes. John's gospel is written so that, in his words, “you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

But there are many who would claim to believe in Jesus who would also insist that they do not enjoy all the benefits that the bible promises will follow from believing. It all depends on what we mean by believing.

It is quite possible to believe in God without being a Christian. In fact, the New Testament reminds us that even the devil believes that God exists, and trembles at the knowledge! We can believe that God exists and yet not take our belief any further, continuing to allow our attitudes, dispositions, actions and moral values to be formed by other, secular, worldly and personal influences. But if we believe that God exists, surely we then have a responsibility to find out the truth about him and, if he is God, to conform our lives to his truth. The gospel tells us that God created us to live in connected relationship with him and that he has provided Jesus as a sacrifice for our sin, so that we can live in that relationship through faith in him.

Even as Christians, we can find that there is often a mismatch between what we believe and how we live our lives. This is a clear indication that there are beliefs operational in our lives that are at variance with our Christian aspirations. That is not to say that our faith is false, or insincere, but somewhere in our lives we believe something different, and that belief is the stronger, since we so easily respond according to its influence. We may not be able to specifically identify the beliefs that cause us to respond like that, but we can recognise impulses and reactions within us that are clearly not the product of Christian belief.

It is because there are beliefs in our lives that regularly usurp the truth of God that we continually need God to search our lives by his Holy Spirit. God is able to illuminate areas of our lives that are exerting a strong influence on us without us even being aware of it. When we become Christians, we are asking him to do this very thing. The theological term for it is 'sanctification', and it is a lifelong process.

We can begin by bringing our instinctive reactions and responses before God and acknowledging that they do not come from our Christian belief. When we do this with honesty, authenticity and humility, God is able to bring the healing influence of his Spirit to bear in those areas.

Prayer.

Father, so often I find myself reacting from fear, anger, prejudice, insecurity, judgement and many other attitudes which are not in keeping with my profession of belief in you. Please help me to be open to the searchlight of your Spirit in my life so that my inner life and my outward words and actions may be truly representative of what it means to be your disciple. In Jesus' name, amen.

*All these devotionals can be found on our website [inghamitechurch.org](http://inghamitechurch.org) on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.*