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## Christian Lessons Learned

1. **It's okay to be a baby in Christ.** Everybody in my Bible study class knew all the answers, it seemed. I watched as others found the Bible passage while I pretended to know the right page. Others knew the song lyrics by heart, and they knew exactly what to do at every church event. I didn't know any of that – and I was both awkward and ashamed. No one told me that every believer begins as a baby in Christ.
2. **The Bible is not always easy to read.** I was fascinated when I first started reading the Bible. Genesis was great, because I knew nothing about the beginnings of the world. The book of Exodus was equally exciting, filled with burning bushes, judgment plagues, dividing seas, and shaking mountains. But, then I reached Leviticus. . . . and I quit reading. I needed someone to help me when the reading became difficult.
3. **The Christian life will have ups and downs.** We usually learn this lesson the hard way. Because I did not know Christianity has mountains and valleys, I assumed that the “down” moments were the result of a lack of faith or an unconfessed sin. Sometimes that was the case, but sometimes God was stretching and testing my faith. Even the obedient believer can wrestle with a thorn – but I didn't know that.
4. **You are not alone in your struggles.** I was sure nobody else battled with temptation like I did. Nobody had sin lurking in the shadows like I did. Surely every other believer had conquered sin – at least, it seemed that way on Sunday. I was so certain of that truth that I didn't dare talk to anyone about my struggles. The result in my life was continued failure and increasing defeat.
5. **The devil is real.** In my young mind, the devil was a Halloween character rather than a supernatural enemy against God and His people. Because I didn't recognize the reality of the devil, I thought I could win spiritual battles in my own power. Prayer was not important, and cries for the power of God were non-existent. I was losing a war I didn't even know existed.
6. **Many people don't pray well.** The only prayers I heard then were prayers from the pastor, a deacon, or a Bible study teacher. The petitions were polished, eloquent, and deep (or so I thought then). I didn't always understand the words used, and I was certain I'd never reach that level of praying. Little did I know these same folks often struggled in their private prayer life, and perhaps we could have helped each other grow in prayer.
7. **Some people won't share your excitement.** My Christian conversion was powerful. A friend had shared Christ with me, and I couldn't wait to tell others about Him. I was at times obnoxious with my evangelism. Rude, even. I just couldn't understand why anybody would choose not to follow Jesus. Had I known then that not everyone listens, perhaps I would have felt less defeated in my evangelism efforts.
8. **Churches are not perfect.** I was unprepared for the tares among the wheat, the sin in the camp, the arrogance among the redeemed. It was years of discouragement before I realized that Jesus Himself had a fake in His group, and the apostle Paul loved a church as messed up as the church at Corinth. It took some time for me to learn that the church exists for the sick and the needy – that is, for people like me.
9. **God will always be faithful.** Perhaps you learn this lesson only through the years, but I wish someone would have challenged me then to trust – and even memorize – these words: “I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous abandoned or his children begging for bread” (Psa. 37:25). God really does take care of His own. Always.