

God wants faith, not perfection

Most of my life has been spent chasing a standard of perfection. Even though I know the Bible tells me I am saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), I thought becoming more like Christ meant becoming more perfect.

I knew what the Bible said. I grew up in Christian school, and my mother constantly challenged me to memorize scripture. However, I was missing the point.

I recently completed a bible study by Beth Moore called "Believing God." This study challenges us in the area of faith (Hebrews 11:1), and it was through this study that the light bulb illuminated.

One of the key Bible passages is Romans 4. In this chapter we're told, that "faith is credited as righteousness." It is like God has a bank, we want accounts, and the currency is righteousness.

Every time we display faith, not

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perfection, God puts more righteousness in our account. The one with the most money is the one with the most faith. It's not the blameless one God acknowledges, but the one who trusts Him.

When we face a hard situation and do not know what we are going to do, God wants us to trust in Him. He wants us to praise Him for what He says He will do, with expectation that it will happen.

The practice of faith is so much harder than its definition, and in my world seems more difficult than the practice of perfection. But when I walk in faith, it means that I am doing things by God's power.

It takes the pressure off of me to perform, even though I may

not get exactly what I wanted. I can know God will give me what I need in His perfect timing.

When you read Hebrews 11, known as the "Faith Hall of Fame," you see this lesson to be true. The people God counts as righteous because of their faith are the same people that made huge mistakes.

Moses and David committed murder, Rahab was a prostitute and Jacob swindled his brother, but these people have huge accounts in God's bank because of their faith. What an awesome word of hope!

Not to mean God is not concerned with our actions. He is. In fact He says if we love Him we will obey Him (John 14:15). Our actions can never be enough; Jesus Christ is the key element.

The good news is that "There is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ." (Romans 8:1) This means that through our

imperfection Christ can do great things.

Second Corinthians 4:7 tells us, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us." When one makes a commitment to follow Christ as their Savior, one is not starting a journey of being better than everyone else; instead one is trusting God and letting Him work in them.

Carrie Messinger is youth pastor at First Christian Church in Visalia. This column appears each weekend, providing spiritual insight from members of Tulare County's religious community and information about local programs and events. Opinions expressed are those of the writer. Representatives of all faiths are encouraged to take part by calling 735-3282 or sending an e-mail to features@visaliatimesdelta.com.