If you were asked to list five characteristics that would give us a good idea of who you are and what you’re about, what would you say? You’d probably want to take time to think about your answer and you’d be very selective about the traits that you chose.

Well, if you want to know God better, he’s provided a list of what he considers to be some of his most defining characteristics – merciful, kind, slow to anger, loving, faithful, forgiving, yet not without justice. Gaining a deeper understanding of these things, you will be able to get closer to God. So where can you further your education on these traits? God has already taken care of that for you. What do you do for a living? You’re a police officer. How very convenient.

You are not just one grain of sand to God. Your life on earth is a series of carefully coordinated events which God is using to draw you closer to him. Police work is a key part of his programme. There are many insights you can learn about God through your work and many will come to you in the form of really irritating people who you meet.

Consider God’s daily experience of the human race. This world is full of defiant people who intentionally set out to break his rules. When he challenges them on their rebellion, they give him all kinds of attitude. Sound familiar? As a police officer, you deal with this all the time. When you show up at the scene and challenge people about what they are doing, they give you buckets of attitude.

Often when the Holy Spirit convicts people of sin, the first response is, ‘I didn’t do anything wrong.’ Sound familiar? How many times have you had people shamelessly deny some behaviour that they did right in front of you? Welcome to God’s world!

When you’re a police officer, you see the ugliness of sin close up. You know firsthand just how petty, vicious, selfish and evil people can be. You get your face rubbed in all the ways that people abuse and degrade each other behind closed doors. You see the same faces getting arrested over and over again as people keep making self-destructive choices. You see gangs building kingdoms which no one seems able to topple. These are the people that Christ died for. As a police officer, you are in the perfect position to gain a much deeper understanding of just how awesome God’s mercy, kindness, compassion and love are. No one is excluded. When you keep arresting the same individuals over and over and seeing no change in their attitudes, it’s easy to label them as hopeless, but God is still reaching out to them. God is slow to anger. God hears mockery thundering in his ears 24/7, yet chooses to be patient.

It’s your bad days that help you gain a deeper appreciation of how good God really is. It’s when you just want to snap back at someone that you have the chance to gain a deeper appreciation for the undeserved love that God has for you. What if God got as crispy with us as we get with people on the days when we feel fried? Yet it’s because God is so incredibly good that we can be forgiven and receive eternal life with him. All of this because God is merciful, kind, slow to anger, loving, faithful and forgiving.

God has led you into the perfect career for gaining a very deep understanding of his character. Being a police officer puts you in a great position to thrive in the faith; all that’s needed is to have an open heart towards the Holy Spirit. ‘God, help me grow closer to you through my job.’ It’s a simple prayer, and yet it’s one that can change your whole life. As a police officer, you are surrounded with opportunities for growth. Your job is a tough one – filled with challenges and stresses. There’s a major emphasis on the negative in policing, yet God can use that negative focus to increase your understanding of his goodness.

When you’re tired, when you’re scared and when you’re stressed, he is right there with you, whispering reassuring truths that will help you stay focused on him. With practice, you can become very good at hearing his voice and being aware of his presence with you at all times. Who knew being a cop was the way to gain a closer walk with God? For you, it is. Embrace the journey.

Adapted from The Pursuit of God Blog

Our congratulations go to the CPA Administrator, Jackie Gillen, on her marriage to Philip White on Friday 19 June 2015. Jackie and Pip have known each other for some time and so it was a real delight when their engagement was announced and CPA Executive Director Don Axcell was asked to officiate at the wedding.

The ceremony took place at Park Road Baptist Church, Rushden, Northants where friends and family gathered to witness the joining of two lives. It was made even more a CPA event with Debbie Mawdsley, Beds, reading one of the lessons. We will all now have to get used to calling our faithful servant, ‘Jackie White’ and we ask the Lord to bless their marriage.
The 2015 National Conference for the Christian Police Association was held in Swansea and hosted in the Waterfront Community Church by the Welsh Region.

Following an evening meal, the conference was opened by the CPA worship band. The Chief Constable from Dyfed Powys, Mr Simon Prince, then welcomed delegates on behalf of the four Welsh Chief Constables. He reminded everyone of the core role Christians play in policing, with street pastors on the front line, staff events in the work place, and the vital bridge building between local communities and the church and parachurch groups. He was very complimentary of the work of the local Branch, especially regarding the Christmas carol service and involvement with local schools. The stage was then set for Branches from across the UK to share the highs and lows of their work during the previous year.

Saturday started bright and early for most with an 0830 prayer meeting in the upper room at the Waterfront Church led by Trustee Gareth John. As the delegates were praying upstairs, the worship team were practising and sound-checking in the main hall. Worship that morning was led by Pastor John Powell and his team from Neath. In the band were several police officers: Dyfed Powys CPA lead Stuart Bell, and South Wales officers Mark Yeomans and Winston Roderick. Many of the delegates commented on the presence of Jay Samuel (aged 6) on the drum. The band led us in song with ‘How Deep the Father’s Love for Us’ and a modern version of ‘Be Thou My Vision’ being particularly well received. There was a real sense of God’s presence and a feeling of colleagues uniting to lift up his name.

Josh Jones (South Wales Police) then introduced Rob Parsons of Care For the Family. Rob spoke with humour and passion about their work, regaling us with some of his personal experiences – the man’s been everywhere! We learned of families affected after divorce, parents who grieved for lost children, families at war with each other – there were many stories of how people have had their lives turned around. An organisation truly after the heart of Jesus! Rob spoke about the need to be salt and light for Jesus, whatever we do and wherever we are. He told of the importance of us personally accepting God’s love and grace – how can we convey the love of God if we don’t accept it for ourselves? All present were challenged to do more to help those in need in our communities.

During the break the worship songs of Matt Richley, an officer in Gwent Police, were played from his latest album – *Awakening*. Following this, CPA Deputy Director Allan Spencer talked about the importance of Fruitfulness In The Workplace. He opened with a memorable joke about a high speed train and a frozen chicken – you had to be there. Mandy Harvey of the Cinnamon Network gave a good presentation outlining the fine work carried out by her organisation – they currently engage with over 1.4 million people!

Ending the morning session was the AGM, chaired by CPA President Sir Matt Baggott. Matt paid a moving tribute to Don Axcell for his long service to God and the CPA – a standing ovation followed for Don (a great ambassador for Jesus in the Police Service) who then took the stage to say a few words. He expressed his intention to retire from leading the CPA in the coming year. Inputs from Barry Knott and Tony Gale followed before all broke for lunch and some free time exploring Swansea.

On Saturday evening whilst enjoying the meal we were entertained by accomplished harpist Lucy Jones from the Ammanford area. Everyone enjoyed her music which gave a Welsh flavour to the conference, and her performance received many compliments. Following this children from a 1st language Welsh school (Ysgol Nantgaredig) sang in Welsh and danced wearing traditional dress. The children did a fabulous job putting all their effort into their performance, leaving the church to a standing ovation.

The main speaker for the evening was Rev Kevin Johns. Kevin is the chaplain of Swansea City FC, the only premier league football team in Wales, and a local radio presenter. Kevin was an excellent speaker, relaying the word of God in his message in a comical and very entertaining way. Kevin was hilarious and fully linked in the conference theme of being Salt and Light with his audience during this session. A very enjoyable evening.

Sunday, after a prayer meeting in the hotel where we started by reference to Romans 12:1–2, God being in every moment of our life, we joined the church family at Waterfront Community Church for their morning service. The CPA band led the worship and Don led the communion with the congregation which was swollen to over 150. After the service, delegates made their way to different venues to eat before returning home to share with colleagues both the learning and enjoyment of the weekend.

**Pete Westlake, Regional Coordinator, Wales**
I suppose I was brought up with the understanding that there is a God. I’m not from a church-going family but I took it for granted that I was a Christian possibly because everyone else claimed to be. It was almost as if that was the default state at the time.

The first occasion I can honestly say I made any attempt to look deeper was after I had joined the Police. I had a few years’ service and I had applied to train to be a Firearms officer. It was the training that attracted me and I loved it. Unfortunately there was always the smallest possibility I might actually have to shoot someone, and from somewhere deep down I started to become a little troubled about voluntarily putting myself in that position. The commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ kept popping into my head and I thought I should look at seeking some guidance on this. I needed to resolve this before I committed myself to getting into such a situation, not after I might have shot someone.

A colleague of mine regularly went to church and I agreed to go along to a couple of services with him. As it turned out, I soon got to know some people there, made some good friends and continued to go. I enjoyed the company, I found many of the sermons interesting and thought provoking and I liked the feel-good factor afterwards.

If you’d have asked me then, I would have continued to answer that I was a Christian. I was after all now a regular churchgoer and the company I was in did help to moderate my behaviour, but in reality, and on looking back, I wince at my state at the time. Life was ‘all about me’ still. Just about every decision I made was centred on me and how it would affect my fortunes and welfare. God was reserved for that hour and a half on Sunday and really I was on no more than nodding terms with him. I was a young man earning a decent wage; life was all about weekends, trips away on the beer and anything that would give me a buzz. You knew it had been a good night when you woke up with a traffic cone in the hallway, breath that could make an onion cry and a banging headache.

I went on like this for years, literally years. I wasn’t happy with my lifestyle and there had been a gap of several years where I’d stopped going to church. I was looking for a church that would meet my needs, and my wife Nicky always had a desire to know more. I started going to the Evangelical Church in Newtown where I enjoyed the sermons and the chats afterwards, I liked the ‘back to basics’ style. My wife asked to be baptised and that was the catalyst for me in deciding whether I was also going to make a firm commitment to be a Christian. I had to resolve what it was that had held me back for years.

I know my own failings well and I became more aware of them as I came closer to making the decision to be baptised. I’ve done much I regret in my life, I have sinned, I still do and I deserve nothing from God. I cannot change overnight and I will continue to cause him grief daily but I slowly realised that I didn’t have to be perfect before I could become a Christian.

At work I come into contact all the time with people with every kind of background and issues you can imagine. Being a Christian has made me very aware that after 25 years I had started to become hardened to people’s situations. At times I could be quite indifferent and deal with them as just a ‘product’ to be processed. I’m starting to find that I am much more conscious of not judging someone, trying to keep in mind that wonderful phrase ‘there but for the grace of God go I’. I am instinctively looking past the misdemeanour and more at what brought them to this point. It has surprised me a few times.

I was working the night little April Jones was taken and we rushed across towards Machynlleth to set up road blocks. We were all very much affected by her loss, but when Mark Bridger was arrested I found myself praying for him. Praying for him to recognise the evil that had overtaken him and to seek repentance and ease the pain he has inflicted on her family. There is evil in this world and I have seen it in the eyes of some that I’ve dealt with, but most are ordinary people who have become a little lost.

I’m not the finished article, I have a long way to go to be the Christian I might hope to be and can only be so with God’s grace. Look at Abraham, Moses, David and Ruth who were not averse to murder, lust, adultery or promiscuity. God still chose these people knowing they were far from perfect. One thing they did have, however, was faith. We don’t have to wait until we’re perfect before we look to come closer to God.
It was a warm evening when around 80 people gathered at the Three Rivers Church in Bedford for a meeting to relaunch the Bedfordshire Branch with its new leaders Mandy Godfree and Debbie Mawdsley.

All were made very welcome by Pastor Paul Sands, and the church worship group led the singing at the start of the meeting. On the keyboard was David Brattle, whose father Gordon had played piano for many CPA meetings in London in the past.

Both Mandy and Debbie spoke, giving personal testimony and something of the history of CPA. It was a delight to have a number of senior police officers present, including Assistant Chief Constable Mark Collins. Also present was the Bedfordshire PCC, Olly Martins. At the invitation of Paul Sands, the PCC and senior officers came to the front where local chaplains and ministers gathered around them and prayed for them.

Guest speaker for the evening was CPA Executive Director Don Axcell who spoke from Joshua chapter 1 about being strong and courageous while *Breaking through into new beginnings*, the theme set for the event. Mandy’s verdict on the evening was summed up in her entry on the CPA Leaders’ Forum on Facebook: ‘Awesome, awesome relaunch of Beds CPA. Fantastic to have so many senior officers support the relaunch. Don was awesome, Debbie stood up there on her own and spoke. Amazing and so many people made it work. Thank you to everyone.’