

# FOCUS ON FAITH

## YOU NEVER HAVE A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION

### First impressions count.

Whether meeting someone for the first time; attending an interview; visiting a new area or buying a house; reading a book or doing virtually anything for the first time our initial reaction will leave a lasting impression. It's true for us and for the people with whom we interact.

### Body language

A recently published research paper claimed that job interviewers form an impression of an interviewee in the first 30 to 90 seconds based primarily on their body language. 55% of their judgement of the interviewee is based on appearance; 38% on tone of voice and only 7% on what is actually said. In over 80% of cases that first impression – gained in the opening minutes – will be unchanged at the end of the interview.

**It's possible to be strong and compassionate!**

We all have "impressions" about Church and Christianity. There's a host of reasons why we have these impressions. For some reading this article their impression may be ambivalent. *"It's okay for those who need it, but I don't a crutch to lean on."*

It could be that we've been disappointed in some way in previous contacts with Church or that we think it's only relevant for births, marriages, deaths and Christmas or Easter.

Perhaps it's due to the stereotypical image of Christians portrayed in TV programmes – you know the weak-handshaking, usually effeminate, vicar who never seems to know what to do and can't make a decision to save his life. On the other hand perhaps the impression is that of the fast-talking, loud mouthed, money-demanding "telly-evangelists". Some may be put off by the people who seem to sit in judgement on others or those who go to Church on Sundays but whose lives don't appear to reflect their faith during the rest of the week.

### Take a fresh look.

My impression of Jesus is not that of the old Sunday School hymn *"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild"*. He was strong in every way. Physically he was a carpenter and needed muscular strength to do his job – he didn't have power tools; it was hard, sweaty work. Mentally and emotionally he was strong. To the people of his time he was after all the son of an illegitimate relationship rather than the Son of God and he would have had to

deal with the stigma, criticism and personal abuse that came with impression. And if that wasn't enough he also had to overcome other people's rejection, betrayal by a close friend and face the most agonising method of execution ever devised.

Jesus was strong when he drove out the merchants who were building their retail empires in the Jewish Temple and he certainly told the religious leaders of his day a thing or two about their attitudes and behaviours. Of course he was kind and generous to people with physical and other illnesses, loving towards children and accepting of people that others rejected. It's possible to be strong and compassionate!

But he also related to the ordinary folks of his day. His followers weren't just those in need – they were drawn from all walks of life, status and social standing. Rough, tough fishermen, government officials, wealthy individuals and families, businessmen and entrepreneurs – in fact people just like you and me!

### First impressions aren't always right

First impressions can be deceiving – we've all had to change our minds about something in the past when we've found out additional information that wasn't available to us initially. Maybe it's time to reconsider your impressions of Christianity and find out the real story. Each week in the Bridgnorth area people's lives are being changed through an encounter with the Jesus Christians believe in. You can find out more by visiting one of the local Churches. So why not look a little deeper – after all what have you got to lose?



**Stephen G. Derges**  
Elder & Worship  
Pastor,  
Bridgnorth Baptist  
Church

If you'd like to find out more about the real, radical Christian faith, log on to [www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk) which has details of local Christian Churches and contact details.