

Make Your Faith Your Own

Kyle Skaggs encourages believers with practical suggestions for growing one's faith in Christ.

I was inspired to write this article when another believer told me they weren't sure whether they continue to be a believer because they believe for themselves, or because of their parents' faith. It is that uncertainty I want to address.

One of the first questions our students are asked at Mind Games is, "Why are you a Christian?" Most of them can't give a good answer. There can be any number of reasons for this, but the one I am concerned with is a lack of spiritual maturity. Knowing and communicating why you are a Christian is one of the first steps to making your faith yours. Being able to definitively say that your faith in Christ is yours and not something inherited from family, friends, or culture gives you the confidence and the fortitude to be an effective witness to the world, which is critical these days.

The writer of Hebrews wrote, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil." (Hebrews 5:12-14)

To make your faith in Christ your own is to mature spiritually. Those who have grown up in the church, yet have not taken responsibility for their walk with Christ, are unable to discern good from evil because they are like children. At some point, you need to stop waiting to be spoon-fed by your parents or your pastor every Sunday and start

being deliberate about your relationship with God. This means adopting a mindset that encourages spiritual growth.

To grow spiritually, we need to first desire to grow closer to God. If you lack that desire, then doing any activity to grow spiritually will become a chore. This requires prayer and introspection guided by the Holy Spirit. If you ask God for it, He will change your heart to give you that desire. Put yourself in God's shoes: don't you think it would please Him to be asked, "Lord, I want to WANT to grow closer to You. Please give me a heart that seeks You more"?

Next, expect Him to work in your life. Trust that God will change you. Furthermore, trust that God will not lead you astray. Trust that He will speak to you through the scriptures, through other Christians, and through prayer. In our culture it is popular to be skeptical, and that is fine so long as that is used to discern God's word from man's; but we still need to be open to the fact that God can and will reveal His will to us. Trust that the Holy Spirit will guide your interpretation. You still need to learn to discern truth from falsehood. If what is said does not contradict scripture, then it may be true and helpful. Engage in activities that will form godly habits.

Spend more time with God. Just as you get to know someone better by spending more time with them, you will get to know God better as you spend more time with Him. Be deliberate about this, planning your day around that time you have set aside for Him. That looks like spending time in His word, meditating on what you have read, talking to Him in prayer by sharing your heart with Him and then listening for a response. It can look like cultivating mindfulness of God's presence with you and His gracious activity in your life through giving thanks for the ways in which He provides, protects, and shows His love for you.

It is frustrating to ask God to change you, only to continue

to stumble over sinful habits. Stop relying on yourself to change your behavior. Don't simply ask God for help, yet change nothing about your life. The New Testament frequently uses the word translated "repent" to describe a U-turn in actions and direction. Repentance is something we need to do—with God's help, but it is still our responsibility. God does not do it for us. Start doing things that will help you grow spiritually. Studies have shown that when people engage with the scriptures at least four times a week, the odds that they will engage with sins like drunkenness, marital infidelity, gambling, and pornography decrease significantly. Meanwhile, those who experience what researchers call "the power of 4" more than double the odds of sharing their faith, memorizing scripture, and discipling others.[\[1\]](#)

In the same way that you need to eat well in the weeks leading up to a race, you need to fill your head with godly things. For example, if all your music is about sex and violence, is it any surprise your thoughts drift to those subjects? Do whatever you can to increase the amount of godly things going into your head through your eyes (your screens) and ears (your playlist).

Trust that God will answer your prayers. If for example you sprain your ankle, and a friend lays their hands on you and prays for healing, trust that it was God who healed you. He is in control of all things, choosing to act directly, or through people, or through the natural processes He created. His actions do not need to be miraculous, so do not hesitate to give Him credit when your prayer is answered.

Remember the prayers God answers. It is in our nature to remember the bad things that happen to us more than the good. So it can be easy to allow every unanswered prayer to overshadow those that are answered. Keep track of what you are praying for, and as time goes on, see what prayers God has answered. Being able to see how God has been at work in your life will increase your faith, which in turn leads to

spiritual maturity. Start praying and looking for opportunities to act in faith. To do this, you need to be listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes, these opportunities will seem random. Whether witnessing to somebody, or helping the needy, taking the opportunity to glorify God will increase your faith in Him. Finally, always ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your heart to you. It is so easy to lie to yourself, and God cannot be pleased by the self-righteous.

To summarize, if you want to grow as a man or woman of God, you need to take responsibility for your faith. Decide that you want to grow spiritually. Develop godly habits that encourage your faith to grow. Pray for opportunities to glorify God. Trust God to reveal His will to you. Remember the prayers He answers. As you develop these habits and learn to make Christ the Lord over your life, your faith will grow.

Notes

1. Cole, A., & Ovwigho, P. C. (December 2009). *Understanding the Bible Engagement Challenge: Scientific Evidence for the Power of 4*, Center for Bible Engagement. bttbfiles.com/web/docs/cbe/Scientific_Evidence_for_the_Power_of_4.pdf

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