

DEVELOPING FAITH IN OURSELVES & OTHERS

Aaron Beard
Trussville
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INTRODUCTION:

A. How can we best help someone go to Heaven?

1. Since our faith is the foundation of our life as a Christian, our ability to endure, and the basis of being saved, helping someone grow in their faith is the best thing we can do!
2. One of the saddest things, and most difficult to accept, is watching a person begin their walk with the Lord but after a little while having to watch them give up and quit!
 - a. We are often left hurt, puzzled, and even questioning what more we could've done
 - b. Jesus knew some would start but then abandon their walk with Him (**Lk 14:28-30**)
 - c. Why did this man fail in being a disciple of Christ? Jesus says why – **vs. 33**

B. All of us our building and tower and helping others build theirs... how is it going?

1. The way we build on our tower depends on how we view our relationship with God!
 - a. Far too many are willing to take the initial steps in becoming a Christian but still have yet to take their personal responsibility to build their own faith seriously
 - b. A real Biblical faith will produce confidence in the scriptures and a humility to be constantly seeking and testing that faith → A continuous building process
 - c. To this person the scriptures are alive because faith teaches them that they serve a God who knows them through and through and has spoken so he can see himself and be changed (**Heb 4:12-13**)
2. There is a major difference between one who observes what men expect him to believe versus the one who has struggled and fought to find the answers that results in faith!
3. Everyone must develop a faith that is alive & personal! One may memorize answers to questions they know we expect & yet have no real faith & knowledge of God's word!

I. PRODUCING FAITH IS A PERSONAL PROCESS ALL MUST GO THROUGH:

A. The first lesson we all must learn is that we cannot make another person believe!

1. Our power to build faith in others is limited to their willingness to believe: (**1 Thess 2:13**)
 - a. Like a parent with their children – Teach them God's word, about moral decisions, and God's love; however, in the end the child must answer the questions of faith on their own and make their own decisions concerning serving the Lord!
 - b. If a child obeys the gospel, does bible lessons, makes moral decisions only because their parents made them... Do they really have faith? Whose is it?
 - c. One of the first lessons we have to learn is that we cannot force others to believe!
 - d. We have to realize that sometimes people judge themselves unworthy because they reject the gospel of Christ... this is not our fault! (**Acts 13:46**)
2. When it comes to producing faith in others, we need to remind ourselves what our responsibility is: (**1 Cor 3:5-7; Romans 1:14-17**)
 - a. Our responsibility is to teach them the God's word – If we do this, we've succeeded
 - b. Sometimes in our zeal & desire to convert people we try to shove the truth down their throats, force them to believe, or overpower them with personal pressure
 - c. Often this just drives people away and makes us frustrated! We fail to distinguish between our responsibility in developing faith and the responsibility of others
 - d. Paul preached the gospel, God's plan of making man righteous, and the faith that was in him produced faith in others through his preaching about the faith
3. Consider Jesus – He would not "make" others believe in Him: (**John 6:64-69**)
 - a. Jesus put the truth before people & left them with a choice that was theirs to make
 - b. The gospels often picture people coming face to face with this choice and walking away or Jesus moving on to another town to seek to save the lost there
4. The Lord wants us to plant and water His perfect word. The rest would be left to the one taught to determine his response (**Luke 8:1-15**)

B. We must recognize that building a strong faith is something that takes time!

1. Coming to believe in God and then grow in faith is a process:

- a. This means people will be at different stages in this process – Some are struggling with whether or not there is a God while others are very mature in their faith
- b. Being a process this means that time will be involved – Strong faith is not something that occurs overnight... So don't expect this in ourselves or others!
- c. Being a process this also means that it is going to involve work – It's not something that just happens to us, but individuals must put forth great effort to develop it
2. We see this process illustrated by its comparison to the growth of a plant (**Mark 4:10-20**)
 - a. The seed planted is God's word, the soil is our heart, and what is produced is our faith and the lives we live in service to the Lord by our faith
 - b. In the "Parable Of The Sower" we see that it takes a heart that is receptive to the word not a hard heart, it takes roots being set in, and weeds cleaned out
 - c. Notice too that Jesus acknowledges that there are different degrees of responses ...Some thirty, sixty, & hundred → People's responses will vary initially!
 - d. We need to realize in this process that very important work is going on even when you can't see it! The plants who breezed through this stage withered away!
3. In one's response to the gospel's call a process must be undertaken (**Rom 3:23; 5:6-8**)
 - a. One has to weigh the evidence & message and choose to believe what is taught
 - b. A person has to see their condition, accept that they are lost and cannot save themselves... to hear the bad news before they are ready for the good news
 - c. A surrender of wills has to take place where one turns their life over to God, where they make the decision to turn away from sin, and choose to change their life
 - d. Some, due to previous teaching and circumstances make this decision with more ease but for others it's a struggle & process that takes time & great thought!
4. Consider two comparisons of some who had to face following the Lord:
 - a. Nathaniel was quick to confess that Jesus was the Son of God while it took a good amount of time for Nicodemus to follow Him (**John 1:46-51; 3:1-9; 19:39**)
 - b. There were three thousand people who, after many words, obeyed the gospel on Pentecost while those in Athens took much more time (**Acts 2:41; 17:16-17**)
 - c. What made the difference? Circumstances, religious upbringing, what was given up, & other factors → The time wasn't as important as a good & full response
5. Whether it is in the growth of our own faith or in teaching others we must put forth the time and effort to develop a faith that is deep-rooted and strong! It won't come w/o this!

C. Learning from Jesus about producing faith:

1. When Jesus taught people He challenged them making them struggle to find the answers!
 - a. How often do we find Jesus answering questions with His own questions or asking questions of people whom He was wanting to teach? (**Matthew 16:13-18**)
 - b. Jesus taught people how to think and how to reason from the scriptures, not just giving them parroted answers without making those answers their own faith!
 - c. Jesus taught people to FISH for truth – "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, teach a man to fish & he will eat for a lifetime" → True in regards to our faith!
2. What was one of Jesus' favorite ways of teaching? Parables! Why? (**Matthew 13:10-15**)
 - a. Some who were following him weren't seeking the truth – With parables they would just walk away confused because they would not put forth the work necessary to understand nor did they have the real desire in their hearts to know!
 - b. Parables allowed people to think on their own and in that process see the truth!
 - c. Many did not have this spirit to seek and dig deeper & as a result they rejected Christ! The same is true today when men don't want the truth above all else!
3. You can tell when a person has developed a faith that is his own (**I Tim 6:12**)
 - a. He not only can tell you what he believes and provide a scriptural answer, but more importantly he is willing to stand up and fight for these truths
 - b. It means something to him, it has penetrated his heart & it greatly impacts his life!
4. Sometimes our failure to leading people to a strong personal faith is that we teach them the right things but fail to lead them to see those things on their own! (**2 Thess 1:3**)
 - a. How many works of the church? How many ways of establishing authority? How

- many steps in plan of salvation? How many items of worship? ... Now, why?
- b. These answers aren't wrong; however, we must recognize that they are just packaged this way by men... Could we answer these a little differently?
- c. The important thing is not can others spout back these, but can they see how they came about? Is a memorized series of man-made answers really faith?

II. SOME BARRIERS TO PRODUCING FAITH IN OURSELVES AND OTHERS:

A. Stay away from the emotional response of running and hiding

1. It can be a very stressful thing to examine long held practices and beliefs **(Phil 3:1-11)**
 - a. As you build your trust in God you should not be afraid to put them to the test...
The truth does not fear being tried or examined because it is what is right!
 - b. One's emotions say, "Run and hide" from the truth when we realize it contradicts what we've always believed... But you can't hide from it and faith won't do that!
 - c. If you make changes by faith you won't be afraid to talk to others about those things!
2. Some wind up making changes because of peer pressure from false teachers
 - a. They make changes because of pressure applied to them from false teachers
 - b. This newfound "faith" is then used by men to make them run & hide from those now considered "traditionalists" - A Biblical faith will not do this! **(2 Th 2:15)**

B. Don't make sweeping generalizations:

1. Just because you find one item of past practice or belief that must be changed doesn't mean that everything you have believed and done must be cast away! **(Isaiah 51:1)**
 - a. Think specifically about the Jew who came to faith in Christ – There were changes they had to make but many of the things they believed were right!
 - b. You should not blindly accept everything that another person has taught you, nor should you blindly reject everything that you have been taught
 - c. Think in terms of our desire to be just like the New Testament reveals – If we find we need to alter something we believe or do should we scrap everything?
2. Walk by faith by reexamining scriptures & allowing those alone to determine your stand... This is going to mean that we all have to be people of the word! **(Romans 10:17)**
3. God's word is constant and once for all delivered... don't look for any updates! **(Jude 3)**

C. Learn to be patient as you seek faith in your own life and in others

1. Just like the farmer who must plant, water, and wait, so you will be in the process of building your faith **(James 5:7-8)**
 - a. As we have already noted this is going to take time, effort, and behind the scenes work where you and others may not see the immediate fruit – Realize you are laying a good foundation that will produce much fruit & persevere to the end!
 - b. Give priority in your life to establishing a strong foundation in the trusting God, and then to the question by question studies that are going to arise
 - c. It may also be that for now you have to lay some questions and issues aside to study and build something else then come back to that thing a little bit later
2. Let honesty, integrity, and a deep love for God clothe you as you walk before Him!

Conclusion: Do you really believe in the Lord? Pray for God's blessing as you grow in his grace and knowledge **(2 Peter 3:17-18)**