

Faith Alive!

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I love the story of the Croods family. Have you seen this movie? It's about a family being forced out of what they've always known....their cave. They are also forced to break their own rules. Rules like; anything new is bad, curiosity is bad, leaving the cave at night is bad. Each night the family participates in "story time" before bed and every ending of each story consists of a character trying something new or being curious and as a result DIES! Then Krug, the dad, announces, "Never, not be afraid! That's why we're still living today." To which his daughter, Eve replies, "No, we're not living, we're just not dying!"

Throughout the movie you see their many fears and doubts tested. You also see them going through the adventures that deepen their love, trust, and loyalty to one another.

Today, I want to talk about faith and how it comes alive. In my younger years I subscribed to the thought that faith or my relationship with God is something that I randomly find. It's like one day I'll finally look under the right rock and ta dah...., there it is and you keep it till you lose it, and then you begin the search once again.



At times, it actually felt like I too was growing up in a cave. Anything inside the cave was good. There were rules created to keep me alive. And there was this entire world outside of the cave called the... "Outside world" And this world was dangerous. This world wanted to hurt me and it couldn't be trusted. The problem was that the world outside of the cave looked pretty good to me and not all the rules of the cave made sense.

The conclusion I've come to now, many years later, is that faith is not something you just find. Faith is alive, it's organic, it breathes in and out.

It's similar to a fire. Fire needs three things to come into existence: heat, oxygen, and fuel. Similarly, in our relationship with God we need faith, hope, and love... And the greatest is?.... When these three elements come together with a sincere desire to engage with our creator the relationship sparks.

"The reason that you believe in God is that He had believed in you before you believed in Him. Therefore, you should believe and love the Will with your utmost gratitude and loyalty." SMM

This makes so much sense to me. God's belief in us – is in us. I know that's what gave me the faith, hope and love which propelled me to develop my relationship with God. It helped me look back on my life and

see how God's hand has always been with me. And it's helped me trust and know that I can handle the future. And because of that I can let go and let God happen.

Let Go – Let God



When I was a child it was fun to have my dad push my bike enabling me to feel like I was riding by myself, at least at first, but the day my dad let go and I realized I could do it on my own... that was a big day! It was similar in building my life faith.

I left home at 19 with two questions in my heart. God if you exist, then show yourself to me, and show me who are Father and Mother Moon? Six months later I had both those questions answered and etched in my heart and soul. It was

something that I had to do on my own. And yes, I'm sure it was scary for my parents but also at the end of the day I don't think my parents wanted to be holding my hand throughout my entire life of faith. They wanted to let me go and see what I would make of it. It also confirmed and deepened something for them.

You see faith is simply the substance of things hoped for and assurance about what we don't see.
(Hebrews 11:1)

A few years ago my friend and I were backpacking through the Adirondacks. We got lost in the middle of the woods; really lost, sick in your stomach lost. We'd both seen our share of survival shows; we'd heard and seen demonstrations of putting a stick in the ground, watching and marking the shadows to determine your direction. We'd never done it though. So we tried it and to the best of our abilities we found north, the direction we had to go because that's where the river was. 6 hours later we came to the river. We couldn't see the river from where we started but stuck to it, and when we got there, oh man what a good feeling. Yes, we had doubts and fears along the way but we were also hoping like crazy in the things we couldn't see.

Validation

I had a dream a little while back. I'm sure I have them all the time but I rarely remember them. So, in this dream I was walking through a field, the grass was up to my hip and golden brown, and there was a person in the distance. When I got to the person I realized it was Father Moon. I didn't know what to do, I kinda just stood there for a second and then I asked him the question. What should I do? And he unexpectedly replied, "Why are you asking me? You already know what you have to do, just go ahead and do it."

Wasn't it Howard Thurman who said, "Don't ask what the world needs, instead ask what makes you come alive and do that, because what the world needs is for people to come alive."?

Sometimes we're stuck looking for validation, approval, permission. We're scared to live out the life we have been given. I believe that each and every one of us has what it takes to make a difference. God has

planted a seed deep in our souls and we know what it is that we have to do. The ‘doing it’ part can be difficult. Perhaps we don’t think we’re ready, or we want to gain approval.

“Faith plays the role of a guide. Therefore, it only takes you to the gate and not to the room.”
SMM

It’s up to us to take the next step. Faith is not something in a book, and it’s not believing in invisible things, it is a way of life. The Bible tells it this way:

Faith & Deeds

James 2:14-26: ”What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless[a]? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”[b] and he was called God’s friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

25 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”

Like I said earlier, our personal life of faith needs to breathe and at times it can feel kind of dead. For me in those dead situations, when I’ve been able to really look at my life, I can see that I wasn’t doing anything. I was just going through the motions of life (work, eat, sleep, hang out with friends.) After a while that no longer sustains you.



And what James is talking about here, is that it’s not good enough to just talk about what we believe. He says, I’ll show you my faith by my deeds. He’s basically saying live out what you believe in your life. Do your part.

So just subscribing to a set list of beliefs but never letting the words manifest through your actions is a dead faith. A little while ago I was talking to a friend battling cancer. I asked her “What’s helped you take on this cancer?” And she said she had been inspired by Rev Moon’s example of ‘loving your enemy’. She thought about that and realized that instead of fighting her cancer and hating her cancer she should embrace it for what it is. She

had to become bigger than her cancer and in that way gain the victory. That’s powerful. That’s real faith!

I always hear this word ‘witnessing’ and I want us to think about it differently. When many of us think about that word, what comes to mind is people on the street speaking their beliefs to others. But what does witnessing look like when you’re not intentionally witnessing? How do others experience you? Who are you to your community, to your neighbors, to your family? Do they know your faith not by what you say, but by what you do and how you live? I’ve been asking myself this question a lot lately.

The Divine Principle states, “Just as we come to know the character of an artist through their works, so we can understand the nature of God by observing the diverse things of Creation.”

It’s about how we express God in our everyday life. That may look very different for each person depending on your personality, but a heart of faith, hope and love shines through each person’s uniqueness. Here are 5 practices that can strengthen your faith and develop your heart if you invest your time and energy this way:

Inspire a love for God every day by taking time to pray and meditate or through music. Find a faith community that works for you.

Empower your life through educational opportunities. Always be learning and growing.

Connect with friends of faith in a small group, so you can share your heart with others.

Contribute your talents to make a difference in someone’s life through a ministry or community project.

Inherit God’s love and wisdom to live a blessed life.

This week, step outside your cave, explore the world and all of the possibilities it holds to create a living faith.