

The Maturing Process of Faith – Part 3

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Faith, like all the virtues, is a spiritual muscle. We have faith. Life develops a certain amount of faith in everyone. Whether we put that faith in God is another reflection.

Sometimes people say, “I have no faith” or “I need faith,” as if they don’t have any faith. They do this with patience too, “ugh, I have no patience, I need patience, God give me patience, someone pray for me to have patience.” They act like they don’t have patience. They act like they don’t have faith. That is so silly. Remember, faith (like all the virtues) is a muscle. The way they talk, it would be like if someone said, “ugh, I have no muscles. I need muscles. God give me muscles. Someone pray for me to have muscles.” See how silly that sounds? It makes no sense. Everyone has muscles, even if they are small or weak, everyone has some muscles throughout their body. The same is true of faith, and all the virtues.

Everyone has some faith. Faith is simply thinking, believing, trusting, speaking, acting, for the results you want rather than according to present situations.

If I want muscles I have to exercise at the gym, I have to act according to the results I want, not according to the way things currently are. If I want to change something in my life, I don’t go around talking about the way things are, or only acting according to the way things are. If I want something in my life to change, I

have to begin living according to the end result I want, and my life will eventually change into that result.

We do this naturally, with goals and desires. If I want to be a basketball player, I don't just read about basketball, or pray asking God to make me a basketball player, or ask others to pray for me to become a basketball player. I actually have to start playing basketball. I have to start doing what I want, even if it's not the current situation in my life. Even if when I first do it I fail and mess up a lot. I must start dribbling, start shooting baskets, start passing and playing with the ball, learn to walk and run while dribbling, learn to guard and play defense. When I first try things, I will feel funny, silly, awkward, uncoordinated, wondering what's the point. But, if I continue acting according to the result I want, to be a basketball player, eventually everything comes together and I become a basketball player.

The same is true of faith. Faith is expressed (exercised) through our thoughts, the words we speak, the actions we perform. As we exercise faith (think, speak, act) according to the end result we want, our faith muscle grows. Remember, it's like a muscle. When we exercise muscles, first they break down and get tired and weak. But when we rest in sleep the muscles grow back stronger so that the next time we exercise them we are stronger than we were previously. So, when I exercise my faith muscle through thinking, speaking, or acting upon the end result I want to happen, my faith muscle breaks down and gets weaker. I may feel weak (or strong) in faith afterwards...sometimes you feel strong after a work out and sometimes you

feel exhausted. But when you rest in sleep and God, your faith muscle grows back stronger. So the next time you go to exercise your faith it will be stronger and have more endurance than before.

Maturation of faith is when you speak something and believe it will happen automatically, like an instinct, without thinking about it.

When we are growing in our faith, often we have to think about what we are going to pray, choose to believe, then speak it, and then wonder if we did it right.

Whereas mature faith just speaks the end result it believes automatically. Like when you see your child's messy room and you automatically say, clean up your room. Or when children are fighting you automatically tell them to stop fighting. You don't think about it first, "should I tell them to stop fighting? Will they stop if I tell them? She did they don't stop when I tell them, then I will look foolish like I have no faith..." no, you don't think about any of that, you just tell them.

At first we have to practice by thinking, believing, and then speaking. But there comes a point when you have to stop thinking about it and just speak the result you want and believe.

In fact, when first thinking, speaking, or acting in faith, we usually end up thinking about what we are trying to do so much that we get stuck in our head instead of in our faith. But as we continue practicing, soon we can think, speak, and act in faith without

“thinking” about trying to act in faith. It becomes instinctual, it becomes a virtue, a part of your character.

I remember when I first learned to altar serve at Mass. Before altar serving, Mass was a beautiful experience, prayerful, I felt God's presence so close. However, when I started to learn to altar serve at Mass, I found myself thinking so much about altar serving, and what the next steps were I had to do, that I wasn't able to worship and pray at Mass the same. It took awhile for the altar serving to become a natural part of me that I could do it without thinking about each step, and then the worship and prayers and sense of the presence of God returned stronger than before, as I found myself not simply worshipping at the pews, but now kneeling at the altar of God. A similar transition experience happens with the exercising of our faith. At first it may feel awkward, speaking something I want to happen even though it appears that it won't. But as exercising your faith, like Jesus did, grows and becomes a natural part of you, the strength of your faith increases tremendously.