

Active and Growing...Basic Faith!

II Peter 1:3-11
January 6, 2019

When you hear the words "active and growing" who do you usually think of?

What kind of person do those words, "active and growing" talk about?

I know that for me I think of children and teenagers!

Children and teenagers seem to always be on the move! They are so active that grandpa gets worn down after running around with them in the park for a couple of hours.

Teenagers are sponges that seem to be learning and growing in their knowledge about life. I am amazed at all they learn at such an accelerated pace.

Active and growing!

The door frame of our kitchen pantry has served as an "active and growing" measuring device for many years. Any time any of our grandchildren come to visit we have them stand tall and straight against the door frame and we make a mark on the frame at the top of their head and put the date. Then they step away to see how much they have grown since their last visit.

A few weeks ago our oldest grandchild came to stay overnight with two of her soon to be college roommates. Of course, to keep with tradition, we had to measure her. She stood tall against the doorframe and when the mark was made it was discovered she had not grown at all since her last visit!

When she realized that she had not grown even an eighth of an inch she gave her rationalized, college educated reason...

"Of course I've haven't grown any! I'm 18 years old! I've stopped growing!"

When did you stop growing?

I was 5'5" when I graduated high school. By the end of my first year in college I grew to 5'10". Five inches in one year! I have not grown an inch in the last 40 years...at least upward!

When did you stop growing?

I won't even go there on the growing around the waist line!

I'll leave that one between you and your physician!

I do want to ask us to stand up tall against the doorframe of faith and see where we measure up in our relationship with Jesus. Are we active and growing or have we stopped growing?

We have walked into a new year. How many of us made resolutions? Perhaps some are about getting more active in order to stop growing...around the waist!

I want to challenge each of us to make the resolution to be "active and growing" in our relationship with Jesus!

Why?

Our bible reading answered that for us!

"With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus." (II Peter 1:8)

Any grass growing under your faith?

Are you daily maturing in your faith?

Are you growing in your relationship with Jesus? Or have you come up with a rationalized reason why you haven't grown in your faith?

There are "active and growing" measurements in our relationship with Jesus that we will look at and mark where we are in our faith. Then hopefully, by this time next year when you stand tall against the doorframe of faith you will have seen growth!

The "active and growing" marks are: basic faith, good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness and generous love.

We step up next to the doorframe to measure our basic faith!
Is your faith "active and growing" or "inactive and stagnant?"

Basic faith is more than a belief system.

Basic faith is a way of life.

Basic faith is a relationship that is to be "active and growing!"

Basic faith is a desire to mature and to be Christ-like.

Tomorrow a NCAA Football National Champion will be earned! I cannot tell you which team will be the champions. What I can tell you is that both teams did not get to the championship game on luck. Their season began with the basics. Their championship will be won because they will have executed well the basics of the game.

Outstanding coaches, in any sport, constantly review the basics of the sport with their teams. Good athletes execute the fundamentals consistently...each and every game.

Active and growing followers of Jesus Christ are called upon to execute the fundamentals, the basics of the faith. We cannot neglect the basics if we expect to grow in our faith. Just as an athlete needs daily workouts and practice of the basics, so too, we need to be active and growing in our faith.

What are the basics of the faith we are to mark and measure in our daily journey with Jesus?

I believe the basic faith of a follower of Jesus has the following fundamentals of the faith:

PRAYER...constant communication with God, our Heavenly Father.
What is His will and direction for our lives each new day?

THE BIBLE, God's Word...the playbook...a daily reading of the His promises and His truth and how it applies to our lives personally.
HUMILITY...God's will be done in and through me...it's not all about me.

WORSHIP...We were created for community. We are to gather with community in worship weekly.

SACRIFICIAL GIVING...money, time and abilities.

OUTREACH...getting out of our comfort zone to help others.

WITNESS...telling others about the difference Jesus' love has made in our lives.

Will you activate these fundamentals of your basic faith or will you negate them?

Will you daily practice them or will you stop growing or implementing them?

Will you activate or hesitate?

These do not happen automatically. It takes time, effort and a willingness to want to be "active and growing" in one's basic faith in Jesus.

Faith brings an obedience or a trust in Jesus.

Faith is not a barren belief. It is a life that is active and to be growing.

We are not given a choice to either have faith or to have action.

Some argue that faith saves them so they don't have to worry about action. Others say their good actions are what earn their way to heaven.

C.S. Lewis, theologian and author, in seeking to answer this dilemma of either faith or works held up a pair of scissors. (Hold up a pair)

Now one blade represents one's faith and the other blade represents one's actions.

He then asked the question: "Which blade of the scissors is most important?"

Faith and action are both important. James wrote in his New Testament letter that both faith and action are necessary. Here is how he phrased it,

"Isn't it obvious that God talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?"

I can already hear one of you agreeing by saying, 'Sounds good. You take care of the faith department, I'll handle the works department.'

Not so fast. You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, work and faith, fit together hand in glove." (James 2:17,18 Message bible)

What we discover is that basic faith, true faith, transforms our behavior as well as our beliefs. If our lives remain unchanged, we don't truly believe the faith we proclaim. Our basic faith becomes lived out in our daily lives. Our true faith involves a commitment to be active and growing in our relationship with Jesus. Basic faith always results in action and growth.

The writer of the book of Hebrews described faith as ***"being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."*** (Hebrews 11:1 NIV) What was he getting at?

There are two words that describe this basic faith: sure and certain. Our basic faith is a beginning and an ending.

The beginning is that we believe in God's character...He is who He says He is!

The ending is the we believe God's promises to be certain..."He will do what He says He will do."

Faith is the conviction that what Jesus says is the truth. We commit our lives, our actions to His truth, His promises, His Word. We cooperate with God's grace to grow and mature in us. We accept God at His word!

Jesus talked about this active and growing faith relationship of trust and obedience with some pretty direct words:

"Knowing the correct password---saying 'Master, Master,' for instance---isn't going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience---doing what my Father wills. These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock." (Matthew 7:21, 24 Message bible)

What is the foundation of your faith...rock solid or sandy?

This basic faith is possible not on our own, but through the power and presence of Christ's Holy Spirit. We can be confident that God who began this good work in us will continue to guide us and grow us until that day He comes again. (Philippians 1:6)

"The righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:17

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." Hebrews 11:6

Some self-professed athletes can "talk" a great game, but that tells you nothing about their athletic skills. Jesus is more concerned about our "walk" than our "talk." He looks for that "active and growing" faith in us to be lived out daily, no matter young or old we may be.

He wants us to "do" right and not just "say" the right words. Basic faith is not a mere lip service. Basic faith is active and growing. Basic faith is a deep trust that is lived out in daily obedience. What you do cannot be separated from what you believe.

Basic faith is lived out daily.

Basic faith is active and growing!

Have you activated your faith?

At what age do you think it's okay to stop being active and growing in your relationship with Jesus?

When you get a new phone what is necessary in order for your phone to be useful to you? You have to activate the number with the server. If you fail to activate your phone your phone will be useless.

Have you activated your personal faith with the Master?

Stand up next to the doorframe of faith and mark where you are. Mark your spot here at the altar of communion with the reminder of Jesus' sacrificial love for you.

Now activate and grow each new day!

Each new day practice the basics of your faith and stay active and grow in the faith!