

Our Faith as Lifestyle By Brian Smith

1.) Some spiritual foundation

I notice in my own life that when I trust God and stop trying to take the reins, there is peace, joy, and an inner knowledge that God is in control. I have also found that doors open to the miraculous and events that only God can do and wants to do. It can be scary but also liberating as we witness God's works! Thus, we become secure in the knowledge of His will for our lives.

The following Scripture passages encourage us not to abandon and shipwreck our faith in the journey that God places before us. Faith and trust can liberate us in the face of circumstances which may otherwise discourage us.

Hebrews 11:6

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

Are we believing and seeking God ,no matter what?

Hebrews 12:2

"Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God".

Is our focus on Jesus and the joy of His resurrection steady enough within us to endure the cost when we face the crosses we must endure?

Ephesians 1:18

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

Are we allowing the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds - through Scripture reading and our life of prayer? As we do this, are we getting God's vision for our lives?

Exodus 13:21

"The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night."

When the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea from Egypt into the wilderness, there was much struggle with seeing and understanding God's plan in their lives. However, as the "cloud by day" and the "pillar of fire by night" rose from the camp for them to see, the Hebrews followed God's presence before them. Often in our Christian lives, there are seasons where we need to "stay put" or "wait" - where God is doing a work of faith in us. Then we are led to new places in His plan as we discern Him leading us.

2.) Getting close to God beyond Sunday

When we think about it, we acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. "Lord" implies a governing of all - all the time. At Mass we implicitly state this and adhere to it in the Creed: "**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all that is seen and unseen...**"**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ**"

As Lord, are we walking and talking with God - as if He is the very center of our life? Do we cry out to Him in our quiet places and on walks; can we spend some time before Him in the Blessed Sacrament? Is God our friend?

If I can use a computer analogy, sometimes our “hard drive” needs cleaning out, some organization, and prioritizing. Now and then there are periods of time when “bugs”, “spam ware”, and other viruses bring confusion and hijack our hard drive. This indicates a need to form good practices in keeping good “files” in our hard drive.

- Do we file “good relationship deposits” - with our Lord in our hard drive? In other words, are we keeping the hard drive of our soul secure? Do we “remember who we are” (Lion King) ?
- Are we guarding our souls from deceptive interception - from the devil, fleshly thinking, and worldly worry? These intrusions pollute what God has instilled in our soul.
- Do we let God have access to all that we are and have?; are we compartmentalizing our lives - only letting God be God on Sundays and not the rest of the week? The hard drive of our souls - although needing prioritizing and order - should not be divided or be withheld from its Owner.

As we are secure in who we are before God and all that he has done, there is a grace within us that causes us to want to spread the good news of what God has done in our lives. Our evangelism becomes spontaneous. We find more and more that we don't need to force ourselves to speak, share, or do good deeds; it comes naturally.

Some forms of Holy Spirit Evangelism:

- Acknowledge where God has put you. Maybe you have a job or situation with people around you that are not always pleasant. Instead of complaining about the problem, rejoice in the opportunity. Be sensitive to how the Holy Spirit may want to reveal God's love in that situation or people.
- Friendship Evangelism. Build friendships of trust, and learn how to be sensitive to “felt needs” on your path. While driving part time for Uber, I have found my self in many situations where there was an open heart that sought healing - a broken marriage, a young adult struggling with a broken family; a person who seems to be searching for answers to life questions.
- Be used of the Holy Spirit to defend the faith. Get to know our Catholic beliefs - and why we believe them (perhaps for those with questions from a Protestant denomination). Study the basic tenets of Christianity (maybe for a friend who is an atheist or agnostic).

4.) A Life Style of Faith sharing in our Parish

What I encounter quite frequently in the RCIA program are people coming into the church who want to *continue* to gather, have “fellowship”, and be in a setting where their new faith is cultivated. Coming from a Protestant background, it was a life style for me to get involved with various Bible studies, prayer groups, and share our life struggles with one another.

As Catholics, we are very good in demonstrating God's love toward one another, experiencing daily Mass, providing various prayers and devotions, having groups available that assist very important needs and causes, bearing one another's burdens, and helping the poor.

Aspects we can learn from our Evangelical Protestant friends and continue to grow in - is having a daily spontaneous excitement about the Bible, and provide opportunities where people can grow through friendships, prayer and “fellowship”.

Some suggestions (not always needing to be built around church functions)

- Coffee dates
- Phone calls
- Prayer ministry
- Bible studies (for woman and men)