

DEEP FAITH: HELP ADULTS GROW THEIR FAITH IN JESUS

(This resource is a summary of Chapter Six "What Is Faith" and Chapter Seven "This Is It? When Life And Faith Feel Disappointing" in the book *Life & Faith: from "This is it?" to "This is it!"*)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Casey Ross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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It goes by a lot of names: a growing relationship with God/Jesus, spiritual growth, discipleship, feeling close to God, going deep, spiritual development, intimacy with God, etc. What do you call it? I call it growing your faith in Jesus. Here is what matters more than what you call it:

- What do you do to lead adults to do whatever you call it?
- Does what you do actually lead adults to do whatever you call it?
- How do you know what you do actually leads adults to do whatever you call it?

This resource will help you answer those questions and lead adults to grow their faith in Jesus.

ADULT FAITH TODAY

Many Christians today are disappointed in their faith in Jesus. They may not talk about it or use those words, but they're wondering, "This is it?"

Think about it. When we tell someone why they should start their faith in Jesus, faith sounds amazing.

- Forgiveness for your sins.
- You become a new creation.
- Freedom from sin.
- Righteous before God.
- The Holy Spirit is deposited in you.
- And so many more "benefits."

But life is complicated. Some of it is good. A lot of it is okay. And some of life can be pretty painful. Isn't being a Christian supposed to make life better?

In addition to that, most Christians don't seem to talk and act much differently than people who are not Christians. It's hard to tell sometimes who the people with faith in Jesus are.

It leaves everyone wondering, "This is it?"

D.E.E.P. FAITH

DEEP faith is for everyone no matter what programs, assessments, or classes your church has people do. And it works regardless of their age, stage of life, or faith phase.

You've probably observed people usually trust Jesus more when they feel like they are in the deep end and their feet cannot touch the bottom. Life suddenly forces a person into the deep end. They cannot manage or control what is happening to them. These times in life, often, cause a person to trust Jesus more.

Because of these times, though, adults pray for life to be manageable and easy. They do all they can to remove all the obstacles in life. The goal is to stay out of the deep end and have both feet planted firmly on the ground. There is no need to trust. At the same time, they wonder, "This is it?" when it comes to their life and faith. Their faith feels disappointing.

But, throughout the Bible, God uses obstacles to grow people's faith. It does not seem like God's desire is for people to be free of obstacles in life. DEEP faith helps adults embrace obstacles as the best way to increase their trust in Jesus. They even get to choose the obstacles that will best help them trust Jesus more.

DEEP faith revolves around one question: What step can I take that will cause me to trust Jesus more?

DEEP faith gives you a framework in which to answer that question in unique, personal ways that can cause anyone's faith in Jesus to grow. When someone's faith is consistently growing, life and faith go from "This is it?" to "This is it!"

Your church can lead people to take steps that cause them to trust Jesus more.

WHAT FAITH IS

Faith is trust.

Trust is the difference between sitting on the edge of a chair or sitting back in a chair. When you sit on the edge of a chair, you're ready if it breaks. You won't fall. Your feet are firmly planted on the ground, and your weight is still on your legs and feet, just in case.

When you sit back in a chair, you fully trust that chair to hold you. You're all in. If the chair breaks, your whole body ends up on the ground. That's trust!

Everyone has faith in something or someone. They may just not be aware of who or what they trust. People can put their faith in...

- financial account balances
- sport's teams
- plans
- traditions
- other people
- a job
- promises made
- a church

- possessions
- a goal
- themselves
- politicians
- the past
- rules
- _____ (fill in the blank with what / who you tend to trust)

When people put their faith in these things, they trust them for desired outcomes. It could be something tangible. Maybe a feeling. It's trusting they will get what they want and think they deserve. That is not how faith works.

How is faith meant to work?

Faith is not meant to be fragile and temporary. Faith is meant to be dependable and eternal. When you trust the one person, the only person you can truly put your faith in, you receive a new life. You become a new person. Faith is not a part of your life; it is your new life. It is how you live...how you think, talk, act, etc. Paul, in Acts 17:28, used a philosopher's words to describe this new life only found in faith in Jesus: *"For in him we live and move and have our being."*

Paul, a man who trusted so many things before he trusted Jesus, wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"* And in Galatians 2:20, he wrote, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

Paul experienced the difference between trusting himself, achievements, religion, rules, etc., and trusting Jesus. He could write about the new life found in putting your faith in Jesus because he experienced it first-hand.

The Bible has two expectations of your faith in Jesus. Jesus and the writers of the New Testament expected your faith to consistently mature and consistently be active.

MORE MATURE FAITH

I think we get maturity all wrong.

EXHIBIT ONE: OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

Kids get credit for being mature every August or September. If they accumulated enough "good enough" test scores the previous school year, they advance to the next grade. And they are now more mature because they're in a new grade.

Are they truly more mature? Maybe. Maybe not. But a 9th-grade boy gets credit for being more mature than an 8th-grade boy because he is in a higher grade. Do you know any real-life 9th-grade boys? Yes, some are more mature than 8th-grade boys. But some are less mature than 4th-grade boys.

Kids get credit for being mature when they advance to a new grade, but this is not real maturity. There is more to it.

EXHIBIT TWO: MOST CHRISTIANS

Christians love knowledge and information. Especially hard-to-understand knowledge. Sometimes the more complex something is to understand, the more Christians love it. The people with the most knowledge are usually placed on a pedestal reserved for the "best" Christians.

Those who know the most must live the best, right? Nope. There is more to being a mature Christian than knowledge.

Jesus opposed the people who valued knowledge over faith. Matthew wrote in Matthew 23:25-28, *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean."*

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

In First Corinthians 8:1-3, Paul wrote, *"Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that 'We all possess knowledge.' But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God."*

Knowledge is important when it comes to faith in Jesus, but it does not automatically result in maturity. And it doesn't even result in more faith. More knowledge just results in knowing more.

Correct thinking is important. Believing correctly about God, Jesus, and His teachings is important. Knowing the Bible is important. But knowledge accumulation is not the same as mature faith. Knowledge was never meant to be the goal.

Feeling close to God is not the goal either. Feelings were never meant to be the goal.

Faith is the goal. Trusting Jesus more and more is the goal.

When knowledge leads to greater lived-out trust in Jesus, faith matures. When emotions lead to greater lived-out trust in Jesus, faith matures.

If age, life goals, grades, knowledge, and emotions do not achieve maturity, what does? Growing up achieves maturity.

Maturity is the natural progress of anything healthy. It happens all around you. Living things...human and in nature...mature. They progress in the right direction if they are healthy.

How do you respond when you see a baby drinking from a bottle? Cute, right? How would you react if you saw an adult drinking from a baby bottle? Creepy, right? The writer of Hebrews used natural maturity to explain our faith in Jesus. He knew we'd understand if he compared a baby's eating habits to an adult's. The writer wrote in Hebrews 5:12 through 6:1, *"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."*

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,..."

Even thousands of years ago, there was a problem with adults not growing up. Maturity has always been a problem regarding faith in Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 13:11, Paul wrote, *"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me."*

What would you think if you saw a grown-up stomp their feet, scream, fall on the ground, and cry when they did not get what they wanted? That video would go viral. It would be so ridiculous. I'd watch that.

Think about your own life. What do you do today that you did the same way as when you were in first grade? Or ten years ago? You've matured. You've grown up. You are growing up. Like you were meant to do.

What does a faith in Jesus that is growing up look like?

D – DEPENDABLE – YOU ARE KNOWN AND NEEDED

I believe we all have a basic human desire to be known and needed. You want others to make moves to know and need you. You feel loved and valued when others know and need you.

Christians should feel more known and needed than any other group. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-26, Paul wrote so clearly and creatively, *"Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were somehow influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.*

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body - whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. Where would the sense of hearing be if the whole body were an eye? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

Christians are the most needed people on the planet. When a person starts their faith in Jesus, they instantly become part of his church, his movement, and his plan to change the world. And

they play a specific role in it. They are needed so the church functions as it is designed to function.

Faith makes a person a significant part of something bigger than themselves.

Yes, the church is not perfect. It will disappoint you. It's led by people trying their best. But the church is still the thing Jesus established to reach the world. In Matthew 16:17-18, *"Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'"*

Someone becoming more mature in their faith in Jesus is making themselves more known and needed in their church. They're always asking themselves: How am I doing my part for my church?

They're not waiting to be asked to be needed. They're humbly meeting needs in the church, so it functions as it is supposed to work. They're known and needed because they're raising their hand to serve, not because the church is coming to them.

E – EQUIPPED – YOU ARE READY

A mature faith in Jesus means a person is ready for what's next. What's next? I don't know. No one can know. But life is complicated. There is some good stuff coming. And there is some bad stuff coming. There is some significant and insignificant stuff coming. "Stuff" seems like a good word to use.

Whatever is coming will have the ability to sway a person's faith in Jesus.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:12-16, *"...so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Lead people to confidently say, "My faith makes me ready for life and relationships."? A person who has faith in Jesus should be able to say this confidently. A faith that is consistently maturing causes you to be ready for what is coming in your life. Is a person's faith growing up? Are they more and more ready for life the longer they're a Christian?

Jesus and the writers of the New Testament expected a person's faith to mature consistently. Faith is supposed to grow up. They also expected faith to be always active. But "active" and "activity" are not the same thing.

MORE ACTIVE FAITH

Have you ever met someone who is an expert on teenagers, and they have never parented anyone over the age of twelve? If you're a parent, how do these people make you feel? These people bother you, right?

Action gives credibility to a person's words and beliefs. The actions of parenting a teenager give a person the credibility to talk about parenting teenagers. Without action, words mean less, no matter how loudly you yell or how smart you sound. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote in James 2:14-19, *"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 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? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

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. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder."

One of the interesting things about faith in Jesus is even people who have not put their trust in Jesus know there should be actions that go with this kind of faith. People who have not put their faith in Jesus may look down on faith in Jesus, but they expect people with faith in Jesus to act a certain way.

Christians are great at Christian activity. They love to be busy doing Christian activities. But that is not what I mean by "active" and not what those without faith in Jesus look for from you.

Christians are also experts at acting good and not acting badly. But that's basic ethics. And again, that is not what I mean by "active" and not what those without faith in Jesus are looking for from you.

Active faith is trusting Jesus more by doing what needs to be done. What should a person's active faith in Jesus look like?

E – EFFECTIVE – DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Faith in Jesus changes how a person lives their life. They act differently than they did before they put their trust in Jesus. They act differently than people who have not put their faith in Jesus. Faith results in the right actions.

People who have put their faith in Jesus have the ultimate advantage. They have the Holy Spirit, God Himself, inside of them. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Paul wrote, *"Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."*

In Ephesians 1:13-14, he wrote, *"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory."*

With the Holy Spirit in them, they have God in them, helping them live the right kind of active faith in this complicated life.

What does the right kind of active faith look like?

In Galatians 5:22-25, Paul said a person who has the Holy Spirit in them would exhibit specific actions. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."*

Love – Joy – Peace – Forbearance (Patience) – Kindness – Goodness – Faithfulness – Gentleness
–
Self-control

Since the Holy Spirit is in them, these actions should be observed more and more in their life as they grow up and are more active. These are the right things to do. These things show love to others.

An active faith does not make God love a person more. An active faith does not make them closer to God. Matthew, after he started his faith in Jesus, wrote in Matthew 5:14-16 the result of active faith, *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

Active faith results in others putting their attention on God. Faith in Jesus leads a person to do the right thing for others.

Peter Scazzero wrote, "Jesus refused to accept that people were growing in love for God in a way that did not translate into love for people. We must refuse to accept that as well. The religious leaders of his day knew their Bible, practiced spiritual disciplines, and worshipped faithfully, but they were defensive, judgmental, and unsafe to be around."¹

Doing the right thing for others should happen within the church, but it needs to happen outside it. How? The possibilities are limitless. Well, maybe there's a limit at some point. But none of us will get there.

What needs to be done in any situation and any relationship? The right thing needs to be done. And when a person's faith is active, they can do the right thing more and more.

P – PASSIONATE – EXPERIENCE MOMENTUM

An active faith not only does the right thing but also experiences momentum.

Are you familiar with March Madness? So much meaningful college basketball. A team's success during March Madness has so much to do with momentum. As someone famously called it, "the big mo!" A team with "the big mo" is on a roll. They are difficult to defeat. They are working hard, and things seem just to go their way. And they win!

This is what an active faith in Jesus looks like. When a person's faith in Jesus is active, they experience momentum. They'll know this happens when their faith compels them to help others start their faith regardless of what is happening in their life.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Paul wrote. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

When a person starts their faith in Jesus, God gives them a purpose. When they live out His purpose for them, they experience momentum. When they do not live out His purpose for them, they do not experience momentum in their faith. Yes, it's that simple.

A Christian's purpose is to show and tell others that Jesus came to reconcile them to God. And they can share how Jesus reconciled them to God and how that has affected their life. They can share this with words and with actions.

¹ Emotional Healthy Discipleship. Peter Scazzero. Zondervan. 2021. Page 159.

Active faith in Jesus is a faith that experiences momentum. And faith that experiences momentum is a faith that is helping others start their faith in Jesus.

WHAT IF?

As a leader in a church, what if the people in your church could say these things with confidence

- My faith makes me a significant part of something bigger than me...my church. (Dependable)
- My faith makes me ready for life and relationships. (Equipped)
- My faith leads me to do the right thing. (Effective)
- My faith compels me to help others start their faith. (Passionate)

Sign me up! A church full of people who not only can say these things but also lives them out would be incredible. Imagine the life change that would happen. Imagine the impact on your local community. Imagine how they would love each other. Imagine what it would be like to lead these people.

You can lead your people to have this kind of faith. To get different results, you have to do things differently.

Check out another free resource at caseyross.net called "STEPS YOUR CHURCH CAN TAKE TO HELP PEOPLE OWN THEIR FAITH." That resource will help you begin to think differently.

The following two pages give you an overview of DEEP faith that can help you begin to think about how to implement DEEP faith in your church.

CAN I HELP YOUR CHURCH?

I love the church. And I'd love to help you and your church. If you think I could help your church take steps forward, visit caseyross.net to contact me. Let's schedule a 30-minute phone call to discuss your situation and setting. If I can help beyond that, I'd love to Zoom, fly, or drive in to work with you and your church.

There are also free resources for church leaders and churches at caseyross.net.

D.E.E.P. faith philosophy



**YOU EXPERIENCE
MOMENTUM IN YOUR
FAITH.**

My faith compels me to help others start their faith.

**YOU ARE KNOWN AND
NEEDED.**

My faith makes me a significant part of something bigger than me.

MORE ACTIVE FAITH

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:17)

MORE MATURE FAITH





Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity... (Hebrews 6:1)

**YOU DO WHAT NEEDS
TO BE DONE.**

My faith leads me to do the right thing.

**YOU ARE READY FOR
WHAT'S NEXT.**

My faith makes me ready for life and relationships.

	Be able to say...	Ask yourself...		Possible next steps within the church:	Possible next steps outside the church:
	My faith makes me a significant part of something bigger than me.	How am I doing my part for my church?	1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (Each one of us is a meaningful and useful part of the church.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Services • Give Financially • Volunteer Where Needed • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite Others To Church • Engage Your Community Through Your Church • _____
	My faith makes me ready for life and relationships.	How am I making myself ready for what's next?	Ephesians 4:14-16 (We should prepare ourselves for the things that could sway our faith.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor • Be Mentored • Bible Study/Small Group • Attend Services • Baptism • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling • Bible Study/Small Group • Pray • Read Books • Have Conversations About Faith • Share Your Faith Story • _____
	My faith leads me to do the right thing.	How am I doing the right thing for others?	Matthew 5:14-16 (Our light should always positively affect those around us in ways that draw them to Jesus.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Where Needed • Mission Trips • Engage Your Community Through Your Church • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Less • Repair A Damaged Relationship • Deal With A Habit/Addiction • Start Relationships • Volunteer In Local Nonprofit/School • Meet Someone's Needs • Meet Needs • Be Generous • Start A New Job • Help Someone Else Succeed • Start A New Friendship • Focus On The Fruit Of The Spirit • Rest • Coach Your Kid's Team • _____
	My faith compels me to help others start their own faith.	How am I influencing others to start their faith?	2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (Our job is to tell others that Jesus came to reconcile them to God.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite Others To Church • Baptism • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest In Others • Share Your Faith Story • Invite Others To Start Their Faith • _____

What is my next step?
 My next step should cause me to have to trust Jesus more.