

DOING OUR FAITH

By Ross Hoagland

There are many places in the scriptures that remind us that our actions as believers are as important as our thoughts and beliefs. What we do (or fail to do) is often the first thing that those outside the church notice about us and is the way they determine if the faith we profess is attractive or reasonable to them. We are so used to thinking in terms of saying the right thing and making the right arguments that we often forget about loving people and reaching out to them through our actions. The following exercises are things we can DO to get us out of our own head and focus our attention and love toward others.

My suggestion is to choose at least one of these (choose one that is difficult for you) and try to do it before we meet again. If you can, try to do 3 or 4. There is of course no pressure here, you can try to do all of them or none of them or make up your own. Pray about it, talk to others about it and pay close attention to your own feelings and reactions. When I teach again we will have a class discussion about our experiences trying to do them. I chose these in part because they are all challenging to me personally, so I will talk about my own experience too. Have fun!

1. Take an interest in someone you don't know well or tend to avoid by asking them questions about themselves.
2. Listen to someone's opinion (that you disagree with) about some topic, affirm that you heard them, agree with what you can, but offer no contrary opinion until another conversation.
3. As you casually interact with people, try to make eye contact, smile or greet them, note something you like about them, then say a quick silent prayer for them.
4. Admit a failing or weakness of yours to someone you don't know very well.
5. Stop and talk with and offer assistance to a homeless person (apart from giving them money).
6. Greet and engage someone you only know casually.
7. Show a specific kindness to or greet someone you don't like very much.
8. Compliment someone at the moment that you feel competitive with them.
9. Thank God for different things every day for a week.
10. Say a prayer out loud (not when you are with them) for someone who annoys you.
11. Call an old friend for no reason other than to ask how they are.
12. Go through one day without complaining.
13. Go through one day without gossiping.
14. Bless that ~~meron~~ child of God who cut you off in traffic.
15. Engage someone who is socially awkward or is difficult for you to be around.
16. Do a kindness for someone for no reason, offer no explanation, and accept nothing in return.
17. Say please and thank you to the server at the restaurant and leave a bigger tip than you normally would.
18. Give a gift to someone who is not in your family for no holiday reason.
19. Turn a lustful thought towards someone into a prayer for them.
20. Give away something you own that is meaningful to you to someone you know that would also like to have it.
21. Talk to someone from a younger generation about their opinion about a subject and acknowledge their insight and wisdom as you honestly can.