

[FAITH FUNDAMENTALS]

[excerpt from **GREAT FAITH** by **WENDELL SMITH**]

Years ago, I coached my daughter's high school basketball team. Our record was dismal and the greatest challenge was teaching those raw recruits the basics of basketball. We spent weeks just dealing with ball-handling, going over and over the same fundamentals of basketball every practice. Dribbling, passing, shooting, and rebounding were all rehearsed in the drills. To that point in my life, I had never seen a basketball player cry because they were tired of running. They worked at it, though, and we pulled together some semblance of a team. The games were the reward – some of them anyway. Even NBA stars have to practice the fundamentals every day – they are that important.

Golf also takes practice time and great concentration. That is one of the reasons I like it. I have to forcibly put other things out of my mind and focus on hitting that little white ball. Sometimes it is maddening. I am supposed to hit the ball straight and fairly long. I must keep my head still and at the same time position my feet in the right direction – all the while swinging the club properly. And no matter what the outcome, I am expected to exercise self-control and patience. It sounds so easy. I have no expectation to be Tiger Woods. I am just a man who is practicing his sanctification on the golf course. But even Tiger has to practice. In fact, he does it more than most and that may be a key to his success.

To excel, we must **adhere** to the **fundamentals** of the **faith** | If we are going to excel in faith, we must adhere to the fundamentals of the faith. We are not just speaking of repentance, water baptism, or other foundational truths, assuming that every believer has laid that kind of solid foundation in Christ. We are referring to growing in faith by using the primary principles of the kingdom and employing them daily to become healthy, happy, redemptive faith-people. Here are the Christian fundamentals we all need to work on:

1. **Bible** – Read your Bible every day. Put the Scriptures before television in your home. Meditate on God's Word day and night by reading through the entire Bible annually. Pray the Scriptures out loud as you spend time before the Lord. Build your knowledge of the Word and allow your faith to grow.
2. **Prayer** – Access the grace you need every day through prayer, going boldly to the throne of grace. Wait on the Lord in prayer and worship and listen to the inner

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voice of the Holy Spirit. Commune with the Lord daily and constantly, allowing your needs and the concerns of others to be known to Him.

3. **Church** – Do not miss it. Set aside the first day of the week for a celebration of the Resurrection and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Go to special gatherings and receive impartation from every genuine faith source possible. The church is the equipping and training center for the kingdom of God. It is where we go to be prepared for more effective ministry and fruitful living and is a place for sweet and godly fellowship.

4. **Giving** – Pay your tithes. Go beyond tithing to giving in offerings, giving to the poor and to brothers or sisters in need. Let liberality become a lifestyle – giving generously, blessing others, helping a person in need, paying the bill, and tipping largely – making someone’s day.

5. **Serving** – Find a place of service in your local church. Focus your faith on the realities of daily life with those around you. No one needs training to be a blessing. No one needs permission to love others and be a witness of the life of Jesus. There are many things you can do to help strengthen your local church, support your pastor and find fulfillment at the same time. Do not strive to find a ministry, just begin by serving and helping others. Remember, it is by losing your life you find it.

6. **Confession** – Use the words of God, weaving them into your daily conversation. Set a watch by your lips and guard what you say. Speak life not only to those around you but also to yourself. Your mouth reveals your level of faith, for “*out of the abundance of [your] heart,*” what you really believe, your mouth speaks. You should not use your words to just describe your situation, but rather use your words to change your situation. The apostle James described the tongue as a rudder on a ship. Utilize your confession to set your course into the great waters of faith and fruitfulness.

7. **Attitude** – Joy is a choice. Determine to be a happy faith-representative of Jesus. Many believers are far too intense and serious about life. Some are even grumpy, while others whine and murmur. This is not the way the Lord intended us to

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live. Although the stakes of heaven and hell are a serious matter, and the realities of the fear of God are genuine, the Lord has given us Good News as our message and wants to fill us with joy in fulfilling His will. *"In [His] presence is fullness of joy."*ⁱⁱ We are to offer the sacrifices of joy and thanksgiving. Jesus was anointed with joy above His peers, and He expects us to share that same anointing. Believers should be the happiest people on earth. They should be filled with joy and rejoice in the Lord always. The joy of the Lord should be their strength and even in the testing or persecution of their faith, they are exhorted by the Scriptures to rejoice and be exceeding glad. We should not be aggravated, agitated, anxious, fretful, or uptight, but at peace and full of His joy. Stir up that peace and joy and let faith guide your demeanor. Your personality can change. You can improve and grow by the transformation that occurs as you renew your mind, alter your confession, discipline your attitude, and enjoy the adventure of serving the Lord.

Jesus exhorted, *"take heed how you hear."*ⁱⁱⁱ The Bible tells us, *"man shall not live by bread alone; but...by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord."*^{iv} In Greek this Scripture is written in the present tense and could be translated, "live by every *rhema*-word that is proceeding out of the mouth of God!" The Word of God is the source of our faith. If we want to grow in our faith, we must be committed to some lifestyle changes that will assist us to that end.

We will never have great faith by simply hoping for it or by confessing some presumptuous slogan over and over again. True faith only comes from one source – the Word of God (the Bible) and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit upon it. If one does not read the Word, the Holy Spirit has limited means of communication in which to speak a *rhema*-word to us. God communicating with us is never the problem; the problem is our receivers are not tuned in to His frequency. We are dull of hearing.

ⁱ Matthew 12:34

ⁱⁱ Psalm 16:11

ⁱⁱⁱ Luke 8:18

^{iv} Deuteronomy 8:3