

A SUMMARY OF HOW FAITH DEVELOPS
based upon Gene Robinson's interpretation
of John Westerhoff's theory of faith
development presented in this book,
Will Our Children Have Faith,
first printing Seabury Press, 1976.

OWNED FAITH

KEY: Conversation, witness,
interaction with the world.

Typified by "I"
statements in
regard to faith/beliefs

SEARCHING FAITH

KEY: Critical judgement
Doubt

Need: To continue to
have Experienced and
Affiliative faith
needs met –
To be affirmed
and accepted
amidst the
struggle.

AFFILIATIVE FAITH

KEY: Belonging

Typified by
"we" statements
in regard to
faith/beliefs

EXPERIENCED FAITH

KEY: Experience & React
Observe & Copy

Need: Experience of acceptance,
trust and love.

Need: Experience of awe,
wonder, mystery. Religion
of the heart.
"Spiritual goosebumps"

Need:
To commit time
and energy to
persons and short term causes.

Need:
To witness to
one's faith and
beliefs in word
and deed,
responding to
the call to
ministry and
mission.

Need: To push against the
known and accepted.
Religion of the head
is now equal to
religion of the
heart. Serious
study of the
"story."

Need: A sense of
community
authority.
Knowing the
community
"story"

Need: A sense that we are
wanted, accepted, needed
and missed when we are absent.

Need:
Experimentation.
Exploring alternatives to
earlier understandings and ways.

of other "owners" in
sustaining and putting faith to work.
Identifying individual ministry.

What motivates a person to grow and change?

1. When confronted with situations or problems which are not satisfactorily resolved by the present style and old answers?
2. When confronted by role models or persons who are acting more satisfactorily in an expanded style of faith.

Styles of Faith

EXPERIENCED FAITH

EXPERIENCED FAITH is faith that is first experienced passively through interactions with other persons who have faith.

EXPERIENCED FAITH is typical of children, who imitate and respond to the faith actions of others.

An environment of shared faith experiences and interactions is necessary for the growth of experienced faith.

EXPERIENCED FAITH is primarily an affective experience characterized by feelings of trust, love, and acceptance.

AFFIRMATIVE FAITH

AFFIRMATIVE FAITH is belonging faith. An accepting community is necessary for the development of affiliative faith.

Participating in a faith community that has a clear sense of identity and authority nurtures affiliative faith.

AFFILIATIVE FAITH, like experienced faith, is deeply rooted in the feelings – the religious affections. Persons in the affiliative style of faith need to experience awe, wonder, and mystery. These feelings can be developed by media that convey them, such as drama, art, music, dance, and storytelling.

SEARCHING FAITH

SEARCHING FAITH more significantly involves the cognitive capacity of the person. Doubt and critical judgement are characteristic of searching faith. Persons with this style of faith need to test the community's faith-story and practices in order to reach convictions of their own.

Searching faith usually includes a period of experimentation – experimenting with alternative faith expressions, and even alternative faith communities.

Committing one's life to persons and causes, even if only for short periods of time and in rapid succession, is characteristic of searching faith.

SEARCHING FAITH inquires into the meaning and relevance of the faith story by which the community of faith lives. Serious study is important.

SEARCHING FAITH often signals a movement from a noncritical acceptance of the community's understanding and expression of faith to a personal faith.

OWNED FAITH

The expansion of faith from experienced faith to an owned faith is commonly called conversion. Owned faith is the culmination of the conversion process. The person owns and is owned by his or her faith.

In an owned style of faith, persons witness faith by word and action by committing themselves to a lifestyle in which they really do what they believe.

An owned faith prompts a major change in a person's feeling, thinking, willing, and action.

(Adapted from the book *Will Our Children Have Faith?* by John Westerhoff [New York: The Seabury Press, 1976], pp. 89-103.)

“EXPERIENCE IS FUNDAMENTAL”

“RELIGION OF THE HEART”

“RELIGION OF THE HEAD AND HEART”

“A MAJOR CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR”

