

# Grow by Doing!

## *Becoming a “Can Do” Person:*

Psalm 50:23, James 1:22-25

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Little Bobby was born in Corpus Christi, Texas. He moved to Rochester and experienced his first winter. Bobby walked up to the edge of a pond. A boy with him said, “The water is frozen and the ice is thick enough to walk across.” The next day Bobby walked up to the edge and saw tracks on the pond. Each day that he walked up to the edge, he saw more tracks. One day a man saw him standing there and said: “The ice is safe to walk on, don’t you believe it?” Bobby answered, “I believe, but my feet don’t.”

In a humorous way, Bobby captures the challenge of faith. It is easier to say, “I believe” than to act in belief. We don’t grow by saying “we believe;” rather we grow by acting in belief. Some spell faith R-I-S-K. Are you truly walking in faith if you do nothing? Do you truly believe if you fail to risk? Whatever Bobby thinks about his faith, he is influenced more by fear than faith until he steps on the ice.

Now I’m a child of God. I’m a saint made holy by the blood of Christ. God is raising me as his child and disciplining me as a saint. However, some of my behavior has not been saintly. I shared about the way we see things using a glass chessboard/checkerboard. The clear squares represent godly beliefs where we see things accurately and therefore respond appropriately. What we see corresponds to God’s truth. The darkened squares are where we hold ungodly

beliefs, where we are deceived, and therefore act destructively. Unlike this checkerboard we don't have an even number of clear and dark squares, but we have some of both in each area of life. For example, the first row is how we see God and what we believe about God. The second row is what we believe about ourselves. Each row represents an area of focus and of course the checkerboard can be very large. Well, let's consider the third row to be what I believe about my wife, Diane, and married life. Notice, I have some godly beliefs that bless her and some ungodly beliefs that mess up our relationship. Now suppose after a busy week she says in frustration: "We never spend time together anymore." Now I could see her words as an attack and respond: "What do you mean 'never'?" and pick her statement apart. I don't want to degrade myself and say "I'm not brightest light bulb on the block, but I must admit that sometimes the switch is off, and I have responded exactly in that way, destructively. On the other hand, I haven't done the following and wouldn't dare, but I could say, "You have it good woman, after all I've attended two Marriage Enrichment weekends, one Marriage Encounter weekend, one Family Life marriage weekend, two Les & Leslie Parrott marriage conferences and gone through two small groups on marriage at Bethany, plus had training in marriage and family counseling." Now that is about the dumbest statement I could think of. We don't grow by listening. We grow by doing. What good are all the conferences, retreats, small groups and training if I don't do anything?

The Bible says:

***Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.***  
(James 1:22, NIV)

According to the Bible, if we merely read it or listen to the sermon and then go and do nothing, we deceive ourselves. Consequently, your and my condition actually worsens – we deceive ourselves – if we do nothing after we've read the Bible or been taught its content.

For the last month, God has been speaking to you and me about becoming his “Can Do” children. The Apostle Paul wrote:

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* (Philippians 4:13, NIV)

Our heavenly Father does not parent us to cower in fear. He does not grow our hearts to shrink back when there are obstacles. God does not groom us to act like the children of Israel who refused to follow Moses and enter the Promised Land. He works in our hearts to become Davids who challenged Goliath.

We’ve discussed how we will shrink back unless we believe that God is for us... because if God is for us – and there is only one God – then who or whatever is against us is irrelevant. We spoke about checking our vision. We must see God in our situations with us, or we’ll deviate from the path of Christ. We talked of pulling away from scoffers and skeptics so we develop a “Can Do” attitude; and we focused on the amazing promises that if believed and acted upon will change our lives. However, all this teaching hurts us if we don’t do anything as a result. We are like little Bobby who walks up to the pond and says he believes the ice is safe, but can’t step on it. We deceive ourselves about what we believe. **If you cooperate with your heavenly Father in becoming a “Can Do” person, you will have to do something.**

I remember when my daughter Sarah traveled to Florida to perform with her high school danceline in the half-time show of the College Football National Championship game. It was New Years, and she was in ninth grade. Neither Diane nor I could go with her; and I thought of everything that could happen to my vulnerable, young, naïve, tiny, unprotected, never-away-from-mom-and-dad-before daughter. My stomach was in knots. I worried over everything I could worry about, and even about things I couldn’t worry about. I prayed and prayed. When I picked her up in Minneapolis and began the three and a half hour trip home, I was on cloud nine.

I was so grateful to God. I thanked God over and over. Moreover, I wanted to give God a gift. When I arrived home, I talked with Diane and we celebrated the journey and safe arrival of our daughter with a special gift to the church. In Psalm 50:23, the Bible says:

***He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.*** (Psalm 50:23, NIV)

Something happened to me when I gave that thank offering. I had always given before because I wanted to support something, or I wanted to participate in God's promises of the tithe. When I made the thank offering, it was like I stepped onto the thick ice and discovered something. I saw, in a way I hadn't seen before, a loving God moving in my life. I grew not by reading, but by doing. I hadn't even remembered this promise. I can just say it is true for me.

Did you know that Bethany's founder, the Rev. Richard Harper, wanted to name Bethany "Second Mile Church"? Bethany was not supposed to be started. It was not a part of the denomination's plan. They were already starting a different church. Bethany was a great financial risk, but God was forming a "Can Do" people; and they decided to go a second mile in giving, beyond what they had planned, beyond what they had budgeted, beyond what they prepared to sacrifice. Richard Harper saw this church as a fellowship based on the faith to go beyond the planned and achievable, the faith to go a second mile. We are a "Can Do" fellowship by birth. The sanctuary we sit in was built in a similar situation, according to Rev. Harper, when everything said, "not now!" You are in a "Can Do" fellowship!

However, these words are meaningless unless you do something because of what you've heard. You've got to walk on the pond, not just talk about it. You grow by doing!

Here are critical questions.

1. *Do you believe God is for you and with you?*

2. *What will you do this week because of what you heard and read?*
3. *In what way is God calling you to act and take a risk?*
4. *Are you to go a second mile right now in some way?*
5. *Are you more a “Can Do” person today than you were at the beginning of this month? How do you know?*

Take the time to reflect and respond to these questions. Cooperate with your heavenly Father who is raising you to be his “Can Do” kid. Remember God has us here to support you in your challenges. Following worship, I’d be glad to partner with you in prayer. You are welcome to join me at the communion railing for prayer.