



He was probably in his early twenties. Dark hair, trendy sunglasses, faded t-shirt and baggy shorts. Strapped to his back was a skateboard. I saw him trekking up the road leading to the top of the hill that eventually opens to the picnic area at Royalview Park. The road is a mile long from bottom to top. I know because I've ridden it many times on my bike. Relatively speaking, Royalview is not the most demanding hill in the world. It's neither steep nor technical, but definitely enough to get the heart rate up and make the legs burn if one takes it seriously. The day I saw him I was doing an interval workout. Eight times up, eight times down. The descent is considered the reward for the energy expended on the climb, but consumes only about one fourth of the time it takes for the ascent.

I thought to myself, what is this kid doing? Is he going to trudge all the way up just so he can ride that skateboard down? During my workout I passed him four times; twice going up and twice going down. Then, on a climb up (I think it was the fifth or sixth interval), I spotted him on the other side of the road. Zooming down at full speed with reckless abandon, his shirt and shorts flapping in the wind. It was a vision of pure joy.

When I got back to the bottom of the hill I saw him sitting on the tailgate of his beat up SUV and wondered, is he through? Once?! That's it?! Nice going princess. Let an old man show you how it's done. I turned my bike around for yet another climb. On my way back down, much to my surprise, there he was again. Same relaxed look on his face, same confident gait, skateboard on his back, making his way up the hill so he could sail back down. I had underestimated his tenacity. Good for you young man, good for you.

Living the faith is a popular term these days, but I also like to think of it as **practicing** the faith. Being a person of faith takes practice, meaning we have to work hard at it, doing it over and over again, each and every day. The more we practice the faith the stronger it becomes. Even though we are not perfect in our faith lives and we make mistakes, over time we can achieve a level of maturity that deepens our relationship with Christ and our love for our neighbors. Strengthening our faith takes the same kind of determination that causes a kid to hike to the top of Royalview with his skateboard in tow.

James wrote, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”* (James 1:2-4)

What can we do to practice the faith this week? How can we let others know that the power of God’s Spirit can transform lives? In what ways can we serve others and share the love of Jesus? And don’t forget... God is with us in each attempt to practice our faith, helping us to persevere even unto eternal life.

Pastor Chuck

Let us pray. Good and gracious God, we thank you for the many opportunities you provide for us to practice our faith. May we be blessed with the gifts of determination and perseverance, and may we feel your gracious presence as we continue on this Christian journey. Amen