

Beyond Striving: 5 Theological Truths That Will Change How You See Your Faith

Introduction: It's Not What You Think

For many, the Christian life can feel like a performance—a relentless striving to follow abstract rules, please a distant God, or simply endure our physical existence while waiting for a spiritual escape. It's a vision of faith built on human effort, a constant pressure to generate enough belief, goodness, or piety to measure up. But what if this entire framework is wrong?

A recent theological gathering, the 2025 Torrance Retreat, offered a radically different perspective rooted in the Christ-centered theology of J. B. and T. F. Torrance. It replaced the exhausting paradigm of performance with the liberating reality of "participation." The core message was that Christianity isn't about what we do for God, but about sharing in what God has already done for us in Jesus Christ.

This post distills the five most counter-intuitive and impactful takeaways from that experience. These are not just academic ideas; they are truths that can reshape how we understand our faith, our bodies, our ethics, and our relationship with God himself.

1. You Don't Generate Your Faith—You Share in It

The foundation of Christian life is not our ability to produce faith, but our union with Christ. Genuine spiritual vitality flows from sharing in Jesus's own life, his perfect responses to the Father, and his unbroken communion with God through the Spirit. It is not a self-generated achievement that we must struggle to maintain.

Core spiritual practices are reframed in this light. Repentance and sanctification are not tasks we accomplish on our own, but participatory realities. This is the essence of Christ's *vicarious humanity*—he lives our life for us, offers our flawed worship perfectly to the Father on our behalf, and invites us into his success. This truth is profoundly freeing. It shifts the immense burden of the Christian life from our shoulders to Christ's, inviting us not to strive harder, but to receive and participate in His completed work.

2. Your Body Isn't a Prison—It's Your Hope

This freedom from performance begins with understanding who we fundamentally are. The entire paradigm of participation begins with a radical re-understanding of what it means to be human. Counter to a common misconception that paints us as disembodied souls trapped in physical shells, merely waiting for an escape to a purely spiritual realm, the biblical view is precisely the opposite. We were created as unified, embodied creatures, and our ultimate hope is not spiritual escapism but resurrection life.

This understanding affirms that our physical, daily existence matters. God created us as whole beings, and the Christian hope is grounded in the resurrection of the body, in union with the resurrected Christ. This rejects any artificial divide between the sacred and the secular. Our bodies and our daily lives are not obstacles to our faith but the very arena in which we live out our relationship with God.

3. Christian Ethics Isn't a Rulebook—It's a New Way of Seeing

Living as an embodied creature in relationship with God naturally redefines our moral life. Christian morality is often reduced to a list of abstract principles to be followed. But a truly Christian moral life

arises from something much deeper: participation in the risen life of Jesus Christ. Our ethical vision is reshaped by His resurrection, opening up new possibilities that transcend mere rule-keeping.

This "resurrection-shaped vision" creates pathways for forgiveness and justice that are based on the logic of grace, not retribution. This new ethical vision is not a human invention; it is a direct consequence of the Incarnation. Because God united himself with our broken human condition in Christ, reconciliation is now woven into the fabric of reality in a way the world cannot comprehend. This shifts the fundamental ethical question from "What should I do?" to "How can I participate in Christ's reconciling work in the world?"

4. The Trinity Isn't a Math Problem—It's an Invitation to a Dance

This life of participation finds its ultimate source and pattern in the very nature of God himself. The doctrine of the Trinity can seem like a confusing or peripheral belief, an abstract puzzle to be solved. In reality, it is the "core grammar" of the Christian faith—the key to understanding who God is and how He relates to the world. It reveals that God's very being is communion.

This understanding moves us away from a "contractual" religion based on works and into a "covenantal" life of communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are not just subjects obeying a monarch; we are children invited into the very life and love of God. This changes everything, even our mission, which ceases to be a human-pressured activity and becomes a joyful overflow of the love we have been swept into. The final sessions of the retreat described this beautifully, affirming that we are called into the Triune "dance" of love.

5. Science Isn't the Enemy of Faith—It's a Form of Worship

When we understand that we are embodied creatures invited into the Triune life of God, even our work in the world is transformed. The perceived conflict between science and faith dissolves within a Christ-centered, Trinitarian understanding of creation. When we see the world as sustained by God's ongoing presence and Christ's mediating work, science is no longer a threat but a complementary field of discovery.

This view invites scientists to approach their work with wonder, humility, and hope. Scientific inquiry becomes a form of participation in God's ongoing creative activity, a way to explore the intricacies of His world. Rather than undermining faith, this work can become a doxological act—a form of worship and praise that bears hopeful witness to God's purposes for His creation.

Conclusion: Living in the Flow

From our personal faith to our professional vocations—be it scientific, pastoral, or communal—the Christian life is not a series of tasks to be performed but a single, unified reality to be participated in. Every facet of our existence is an opportunity to share in the transforming life of the Triune God. The gospel invites us out of the exhausting cycle of striving and into the life-giving flow of communion.

What would change if you approached your daily life not as a task to be accomplished, but as a communion to be enjoyed?