

YOUR  
FAITH  
PATH

Discover How to Choose Your Beliefs

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*Your Faith Path: Discover How to Choose Your Beliefs*

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## INTRODUCTION

You may not have realized this before, but *you live your life by faith*—every day and in many different ways.

So do I.

Let's think about it: We have breakfast in the morning—by faith—trusting that no one has laced our food with poison. We stop for coffee, trusting the barista not to put something harmful in our triple-shot, extra foam, grande lattes. We sit down in our chairs at work, without testing them first to make sure they'll still hold us. We key in private financial information on Web sites that claim to be secure, but we really don't know that they are. (We simply trust that the people who run the site will use the information properly.) We sign business and legal contracts, even though we haven't read the fine print—and might not understand it if we did. And we invest in the stock market. (If that doesn't take some faith, I don't know what does.)

There's no getting around it: You and I both live our lives by faith. We routinely make decisions and take actions that we trust will work out for our benefit—but we don't know for certain that they will.

We probably have reasons for most of what we decide to do, which is good, but we could be wrong

about some of our conclusions. And some of those mistakes might be serious, even life threatening.



What's true in the ordinary areas of life is also true in spiritual matters. Whether you're religious, into "spirituality" in some form, or skeptical about everything associated with the word *spirit*, you are *still* a person of faith.

You might believe in one God, many gods, or an all-encompassing god (of which everything and everyone is a part). Or you may believe there is no God at all. But regardless of your perspective, you base your beliefs on reasons that can't be known with complete certainty; therefore, you must make up the difference with trust, or faith.

Even the statement "There is no God" can't be proved, so it must be embraced by atheists as an article of faith—trusting that they have sufficient reasons to disbelieve in God and supposing they won't someday face a deity who will ask them to give an account of their beliefs and actions. That kind of trust is the skeptic's own version of nonreligious faith.

Because we all live by a measure of faith in regard to our spiritual beliefs, the important question is this: On what are we basing our beliefs? Put another way, by what means did you attain your faith? What criteria did you bank on and value? You've somehow arrived at your current point of view, but how did you get there?

From my observation, we come to our beliefs regarding God and matters of religion through a variety

of approaches—what I refer to as *faith paths*. Knowing which faith path you're on is crucial, because the approach you take can have a huge bearing on which faith you end up choosing.

I realized this during college, when it became clear to me that I'd accepted my Christian faith without serious study, careful assessment of the information, or some deep spiritual experience or insight. Mostly, I'd just accepted what my parents had taught me. I had adopted a hand-me-down faith. That didn't make it wrong—but it didn't make it right, either. I had gotten my beliefs through the faith path of *tradition*, as many people do, but when my faith was challenged by a philosophy professor, I knew that I owed it to myself to pause long enough to reexamine my beliefs in light of logic and real evidence. I needed to make certain I was choosing my faith for myself (not just inheriting it somehow from my parents) and doing so wisely—based on reliable criteria.

Think about it. Don't you owe it to yourself not only to think about what your current beliefs are, but also to step back and consider *how* and *why* you selected them? Doing so can bring spiritual clarity, some possible course corrections, and, ultimately, real confidence.

The purpose of *Your Faith Path* is to help you identify how you approach faith decisions. Put more simply, my aim in this booklet is to help you discover which faith path you've taken to arrive at your current beliefs.

Once you've identified your particular faith path, I'll offer a few thoughts to help you evaluate how

well that path is serving you, and whether you should consider additional or alternative routes toward discovering what's true and worth trusting.

I don't know where your journey will ultimately lead you, but let me assure you that it's an important one—one worth giving plenty of careful consideration. I'm glad that I reassessed the reasons behind my own faith when I was in college and made certain I was trusting in the right things. Personally, I don't think there is anything more important than thoughtfully and wisely choosing your faith.

### **Filling Out Your Faith Path Quiz**

Here's how to take this simple quiz: Read the statements on the following pages and consider the degree to which each one describes you or your beliefs. After reading each statement, write the number that most closely reflects your response. Choose from 0 to 5, according to the following scale:

- 5 That's totally me.
- 4 That's usually like me.
- 3 That's often like me.
- 2 That's a little like me.
- 1 That's barely like me.
- 0 That's not me at all.

Don't spend a lot of time pondering the statements. Simply jot down your initial response, from 0 to 5, and move on to the next one. Repeat the process until you've written down responses to all forty-two statements.

- \_\_\_\_ 41. I didn't know what to think, so I prayed and asked for supernatural guidance, and I was given assurance about which way I should go.
- \_\_\_\_ 42. I just try to weigh the information I'm given, carefully consider the source, and reach a logical conclusion.

Now copy the number you wrote by each of the statements to the corresponding blank on the chart below,

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Relativistic	Traditional	Authoritarian
1. ____	2. ____	3. ____
7. ____	8. ____	9. ____
13. ____	14. ____	15. ____
19. ____	20. ____	21. ____
25. ____	26. ____	27. ____
31. ____	32. ____	33. ____
37. ____	38. ____	39. ____
<b>TOTALS:</b> ____	____	____
<b>PAGES: 15-17</b>	<b>19-20</b>	<b>21-23</b>

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and total each column. This will help you to see which faith path you're currently on. Next, turn to the pages that correspond to your highest score (listed at the bottom of the chart), and consider the advice and encouragement you find there, addressed to your particular faith path. (If you discover that you're close or equal on two or three faith paths, that's okay. Just read each of the sections and consider the advice that best fits you.)

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<b>Intuitive</b>	<b>Mystical</b>	<b>Evidential</b>
4. ____	5. ____	6. ____
10. ____	11. ____	12. ____
16. ____	17. ____	18. ____
22. ____	23. ____	24. ____
28. ____	29. ____	30. ____
34. ____	35. ____	36. ____
40. ____	41. ____	42. ____
____	____	____
<b>25-27</b>	<b>29-31</b>	<b>33-35</b>

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