

# **A Complicated, Ongoing Relationship with Faith**

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The textbook definition of faith is '*strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof.*'

There has been one constant in my life: faith, but my relationship with this virtue has been rather complex. I was raised in a typical Hindu home in India and transferred at the young age of 5 to a convent catholic school. Every morning, I prayed the "Our Father" and every evening, my family and I would perform a pooja (a Hindu prayer). Despite having grown up with two different religions and worldviews, I continually learned to have faith from both cultures.

There were many difficulties associated with growing up as a queer child in a tiny village in India, including ongoing bullying at school and a desperate search for the answers to questions like "Why am I different from other kids?" Although I occasionally felt lost and wondered about my own existence, I never lost hope. My heart had a sense that compelled me to go out into the world on a regular basis. It wasn't something I understood at that time, but in late adolescence, I discovered the term 'Faith'.

I relocated to a larger city after finishing high school so I could pursue my passion for fashion design. For the first time in my life, I encountered individuals who did not hold my sexual orientation against me. I experienced the freedom to express myself for the first time. Coming from a very modest rural town to a large city was a challenging transition but, I have always believed in myself and the plan the universe has for me, and my faith kept me going again.

Faith has always been a matter of perspective for me; for me, it's a phrase I was taught in the convent, "Praise the Lord" and now it's tattooed on my left wrist. Lord to me means a higher

power that is independent of religion, a being that is superior to immortals and always keeps an eye on us. This expression holds that you should "Praise the Lord" no matter what occurs in your life, that greater force is directing you in the correct route and has a plan for you. And everything that occurs at any time, good or bad, is a part of a grand plan, which is how I framed my faith.

I have a way of life as a reward of my virtue of faith. It gave me courage when I was afraid to face the world, and it taught me compassion when I was angry with my bullies, it made me appreciate life when I found myself sinking in my sad thoughts. The most essential way it humbled me was by making me feel that there is a higher power than all of us that guides us, aids us, and illuminates the path.

The relationship I have with faith has not always been easy, but rather complicated. Many questions concerning syncretism have been posed by growing up under the overwhelming influence of two different religions. As I became older and started seeing the world through an adult's lens, I started to question my religion. I was a millennial with a group of friends and peers that held divergent opinions, and I frequently found myself in debates where those opinions were encouraged and dissected. Some concerns were frequently voiced over my decision to identify as a devout Hindu rather than a Christian, given that I practice both religions on a daily basis and wear a permanent tattoo of "Praise the Lord" on my wrist. Although the answer to these questions has never been simple to understand, it so as in clearing up some long-standing questions I had about myself.

Finding answers was difficult, and there was never a single correct response to a topic like that. I read a lot, including the Bible and the Bhagwat Geeta, and one of the quotes always stuck out to me as the place where I learnt to have faith in what I believe and not have doubts about it.

*"But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind." (2)*

As I look back today, I realize how much I have grown confident in my faith, but it didn't happen overnight. I felt increasingly conflicted as I read more about both religions, but over time, I got better at separating my faith from the religion.

I took stock of every element of my life; from the first time I prayed at a Hindu temple or sang Christmas carols to the moment I cried in the restroom of my middle school after being called "gay" to the moment I graduated from my dream school and the moment I proposed to the love of my life. Despite the wide range of feelings, I had throughout each of these life-defining experiences, I discovered one thing that unites them all: FAITH. Faith in the cosmos, in a higher power, and in the God that I haven't yet figured out how to define.

Despite its lack of definition, I have always seen it as a constant in my life. It serves as a cushion against which I have occasionally fallen to consider my choices, ideas, and aspirations.

Every action we take is like a writer who will fill up those blank pages in the life that lies ahead of me and all of us. Our faith is the publisher who polishes the content and makes it available to

the public. Perhaps that comes the closest to describing faith that I have ever come, but it's a start, and I'm not complaining.

Believe in your faith and watch it work wonders. Julia Cameron wrote in her book 'the Artist's Way': *There is a path for each of us. When we are on our right path, we have sure-footedness. We know the next right action-although not necessarily what is just around the bend. By trusting, we learn to trust. (3)*

1. Logan, Stephanie, and Good, Tyra. *Black Women Navigating Historically White Higher Education Institutions and the Journey Toward Liberation*. IGI Global, 2022, 2022.
2. "James 1:6." *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments Translated out of the Original Tongues and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared & Revised*, American Bible Society, New York, 1986.
3. Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. TarcherPerigee, 2022.