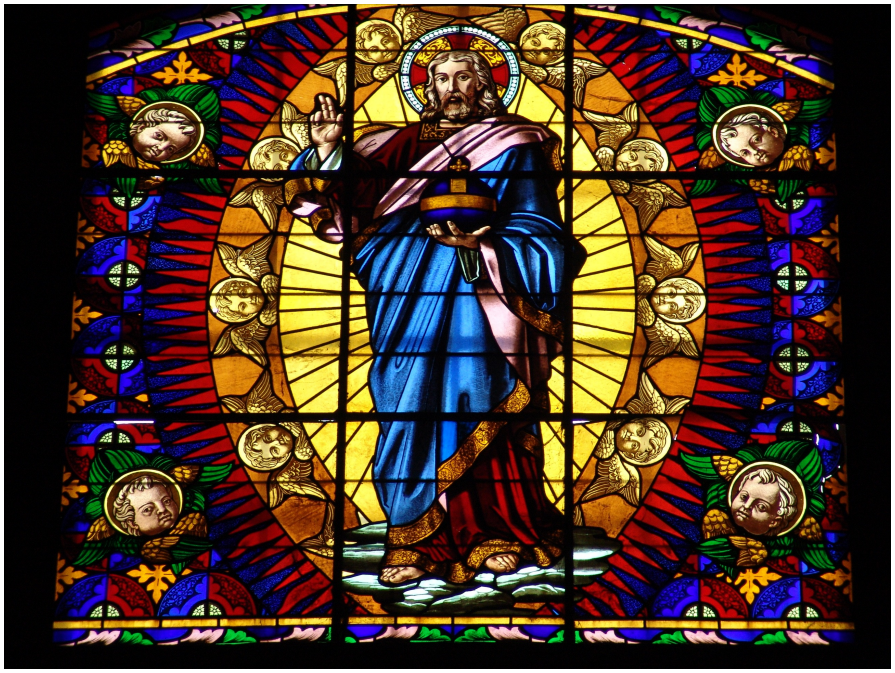
Losing Your Religion, Choosing Your Religion - the Search For Spirituality

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Losing Your Religion, Choosing Your Religion – the Search For Spiritual Enlightenment

Religion is often considered a part of a person's identity. Religion may be profoundly associated with experiences from childhood and interwoven with social connections and family events. Despite these strong connections, many people may find themselves unsatisfied by the religion of their childhood and begin a search for more meaningful spiritual expression.



The Phenomenon of Spiritual Seeking

Spiritual seeking is such a common phenomenon, particularly in young people. During their teen years, many people begin to examine their current religion more intellectually. Often, they cannot square many of the precepts with their experience of life. They then begin to look to other spiritual disciplines to answer their questions. Some people are raised without an organized religion. As they become adults, they may begin to examine their spiritual natures and look for a traditional framework for religious practice and belief system. Still others find that traditional religions are too limiting in their understanding of life and the spiritual world. They may begin to custom-create a belief system of their own that fits not only with their experience of life, but also with their understanding of spiritual concepts.

The Religion of Your Birth

Many people are given their religious training from the cradle. In Catholicism, this phenomenon has given rise to the term “cradle Catholic” to distinguish this religious history from those who convert to the faith later as adults. However, the idea can apply to any religion. Children are imbued with a set of fixed beliefs and principles that are reinforced with religious classes, rituals and socio-religious events throughout their formative years. The religion becomes part of the childhood bank of memories. However, even this does not always secure the religion in the person’s life or identity. As the person matures, he may begin to question precepts or find the rituals stagnant. He may then begin a search for a new faith that both satisfies the soul and engages his imagination.



Conflicts About Religion

Religion has often been a source of both conflict and compromise in family life. In the past, children were expected to be brought up in the religion of the mother or the father. In other families, the two religions of the parents were often blended in some way, to ensure that everyone was happy. Though this method worked well for the family, grown children often felt that neither religion became deeply engrained in their spiritual scripting. They often set out on their own search for spiritual fulfillment. The search often led them back to one or the other of the parents’ religions. At other times, a whole new faith enters the picture, and the family becomes even more diverse in its spiritual makeup. Though this may seem like it introduces more confusion, it can also make for lively family discussions and can cause people to find even deeper layers to cherish in their own faith.

“Shopping” For Religion

A spiritual search first begins with a realization that your current faith or lack of faith does not fit your needs. This realization may be something of a wrench to the soul, particularly if you have held to one faith all your life. Many people try doing without religion for a period, but once the mental concepts for viewing life from a religious mindset are in place, people often feel at loose ends without the structured belief system of a traditional religion. Though it may seem crass to “shop” for a new religion, this method is still the best way to go about finding a comfortable faith for your needs. Reading about the beliefs and rituals of different religions can be the best first step for most people. Many times, friends and coworkers are happy to share their experience of their faiths. They may offer to accompany you to a worship service or study class. These experiences can be a good way to get a feel for a new religion before making a commitment. Many faiths are open to new members and have open-house services that make a special effort to welcome curious seekers.

What’s Right For You

At heart, religion must satisfy the psychology as well as the spiritual understanding. You may require a religion rich in ritual and ornament, with songs, chants or social welfare activities. Conversely, you may feel most comfortable with very simple religious expression and a minimum of outward display. Some people require a contemplative or prayerful environment for their spirituality. Others look for social interaction and fellowship with other congregants. These particular needs all play a part in choosing a new religion. Listen with an open heart and spirit when researching religious options, and know yourself to determine what’s right for you.

Dealing With Hostility

Changing to another religion is a significant event in a person’s life. It may cause upsets within the family, when people feel threatened because you are becoming less like them. You can help them through this transition by reassuring them that your relationship with them remains the same. Gradually, let them know about the features of the religion that attracted you to it. However, keep these sessions light and conversational. Avoid sounding like you are proselytizing them, as this can cause resistance and hostility. Only go into detail if the other person seems truly interested. In time, they will adjust to and accept your new belief.