



## From Churchgoer to Moderate Believer

This may sound rather corny, but I consider myself a believer, even though I am no longer a regular churchgoer. During a significant period in my life, I attended church almost every week and was an active member of a Protestant congregation in Antwerp. However, my journey of faith experienced some complicated twists, leading me to where I stand now

In the earlier stages, my relationship with faith became somewhat of an obsession. I found myself expecting far too much from my religious practices and rituals. It reached a point where I began looking for miracles—expecting divine interventions that would defy the

natural order. Despite knowing intellectually that miracles like turning water into wine were beyond the realm of reality, my desire for divine proof got the better of me.

After some time, I started to understand that my approach was not only unsustainable but also fundamentally flawed. My anticipation for miracles was overshadowing the true essence of faith. This realization dawned upon me gradually but firmly. I understood that while faith can guide and offer solace, it does not cater to our expectations of the miraculous. Faith isn't about bending reality to our desires but finding strength and meaning within the life we already lead.

## Redefining Belief: Beyond the Church Walls

Recognizing my misplaced expectations, I made a wise decision to step back from my regular church-going habits. It was not an abandonment of faith but rather a redefinition of my spiritual approach. I focused on integrating faith into my daily life, embracing it as a source of inner strength and reflection rather than a conduit for miracles. This shift from structured worship to personal belief reconnected me with the core values of spirituality without the constraints of ritualistic compulsions.

In conclusion, my journey from being an avid churchgoer to a more balanced believer has been insightful and transformative. While I no longer frequent church services, my belief remains steadfast—adapted to a form that supports my personal growth and inner peace. This path, though unconventional, has offered me a deeper, more authentic connection with my faith.

## The Turning Point: Leaving the Church Behind

The decision to leave the church did not come easily. It was the culmination of numerous internal reflections and external influences that compelled a deep, transformative change. For years, the author had clung to the belief that divine intervention was the guiding force behind life's events. However, as time progressed, the gap between lived experiences and spiritual dogmas widened, prompting an unavoidable confrontation with reality.

Internally, the author wrestled with cognitive dissonance—an inner conflict where heartfelt devotion clashed with rational skepticism. Questions surrounding spiritual doctrines began to emerge more frequently, challenging the foundation upon which faith was built. This growing unrest was echoed by external experiences, such as witnessing the suffering and injustice that seemed inexplicable through a theological lens. These moments of disquiet accumulated, pushing the author towards a critical juncture.

Psychologically, the journey was fraught with emotional upheaval. The transition from dependence on divine intervention to seeking personal agency involved navigating a labyrinth of fears and uncertainties. There were times of intense self-doubt and guilt, often overwhelming, as if treachery was being committed against a long-revered tradition. The author had to grapple with the potential fallout—losing community, facing judgment, and the profound solitude that often accompanies such significant life shifts.

Ultimately, the realization took root that passivity in the hope of divine resolution was unsustainable. This insight ignited the courage to consciously embrace change, fostering the determination to take charge of one's destiny. This turning point marked the beginning of a fresh start, where the author ventured away from long-held beliefs and began to cultivate a life grounded in self-reliance and personal responsibility. Despite the challenges, breaking away from the illusions of divine providence proved to be a necessary step in forging a new path forward.

## Self-Reliance: Taking Control of Your Life

Embarking on the pathway to self-reliance marks a pivotal moment in one's personal development journey. It took considerable time for me to realize that the only person truly responsible for my life's trajectory was myself. This revelation didn't dawn overnight but through a series of experiences that underscored the undeniable importance of taking control of my life and addressing my problems independently.

The concept of self-reliance fundamentally revolves around personal responsibility. It means understanding that waiting passively for solutions to present themselves is counterproductive. Instead, it necessitates a proactive mindset where setting goals and

taking tangible steps toward self-improvement become non-negotiable aspects of daily life. For instance, rather than blaming external circumstances for my difficulties, I began to focus on what I could do differently to overcome these challenges. This decisive change in my approach yielded progressively more positive outcomes.

Human intelligence and persuasion are crucial components in this transformative process. Harnessing these traits allows one to navigate the complexity of personal and professional landscapes effectively. By leveraging my intellect and honing my persuasive capabilities, I was able to garner support, build meaningful relationships, and influence my surroundings to align with my objectives.

A key lesson learned from this journey is that self-improvement is a continuous process that demands dedication and resilience. Setting goals is merely the starting point. It is the sustained effort and regular evaluation of progress that solidify the march toward those goals. Building a life predicated on self-reliance isn't simply about independence but a strategic approach to one's own development, making the deliberate choice to act decisively rather than remain stagnant.

Ultimately, the essence of self-reliance lies in the recognition that one's destiny is shaped by intentional actions and the refusal to succumb to a passive existence. By taking charge, we not only transform our own lives but also inspire others to embrace their power and potential.

## The Illusion of Religion Versus Reality

For many, religion offers a comforting narrative, filled with promises of divine intervention and ultimate justice. These assurances can act as a balm for life's uncertainties, suggesting that a higher power is in control and that patience and faith will be rewarded. However, this can often lead to a passive approach to life's challenges, where individuals await supernatural solutions rather than taking proactive steps to address their circumstances.

The metaphor of the baking smell that cannot satisfy hunger aptly describes this phenomenon. Just as the aroma of freshly baked bread cannot quell one's appetite, the promises of religion, while comforting, do not provide tangible solutions to real-world

problems. Faith and hope alone cannot substitute for the actual effort required to improve one's situation. For instance, waiting for a miracle to alleviate financial distress may not be as effective as actively seeking employment or financial planning.

Many religious teachings emphasize patience and waiting on divine timing. This can sometimes detract from the necessity of personal effort and responsibility. For example, an individual might spend years praying for a better job without taking concrete steps such as acquiring new skills or networking, ultimately missing out on real opportunities for advancement. The reliance on spiritual assurances can create a disillusionment when expected miracles fail to materialize, leaving one feeling abandoned or inadequate.

It is crucial to recognize that while spiritual beliefs can provide emotional support, they should not replace proactive actions. Real-world successes are often the result of personal initiative, strategic planning, and consistent effort. Just as a person cannot live on the scent of bread, one's needs and aspirations cannot be met by hope alone. By engaging actively with the world, setting realistic goals, and taking purposeful actions, individuals can close the gap between their desires and their realities. Human agency plays a significant role in shaping one's destiny and achieving concrete outcomes.

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