

## Faith in Crisis

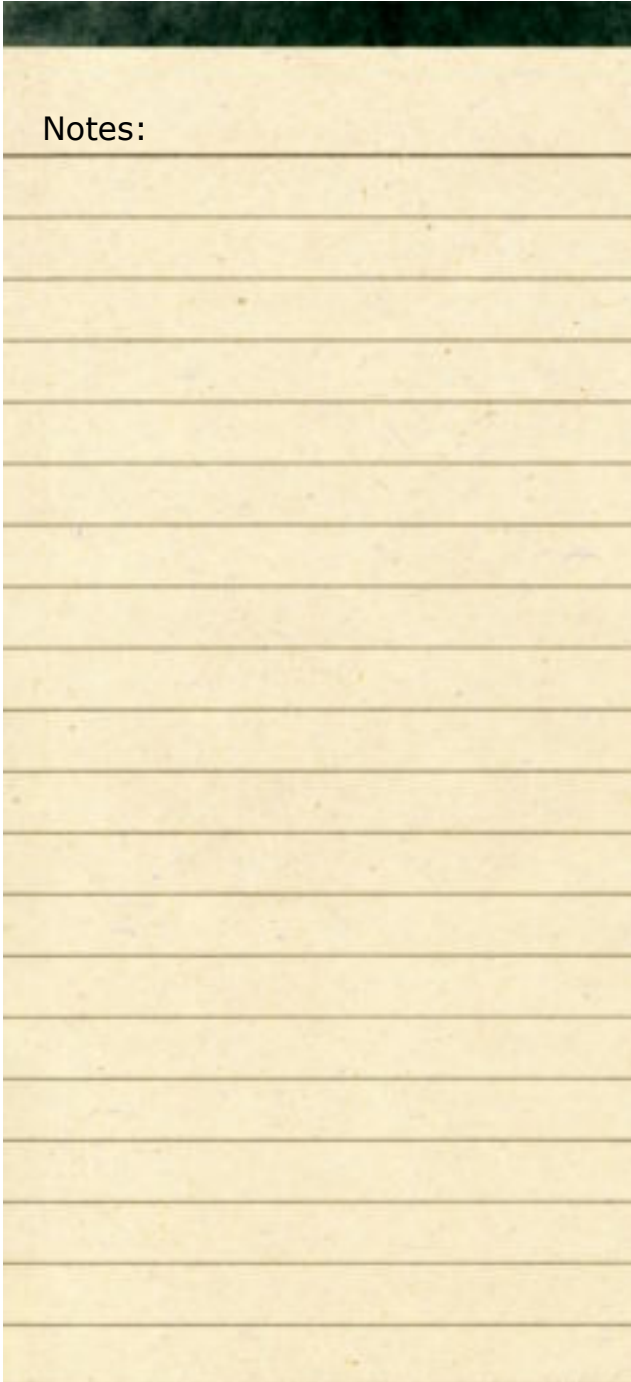
Have you ever questioned what it is that you really believe? And how do you know it's true? Do you sometimes doubt what you've always been taught? Or are you investigating issues of faith for the first time? No matter where you are on the path, you're invited to take the journey of faith with us at [HelpForMyLife.org](http://HelpForMyLife.org).

Now I must warn you, the journey of faith is not a predictable one. It's often filled with unexpected twists and turns. Life throws challenges at each of us that call into question what we're really hanging on to when the bottom falls out of life as we know it. Struggle and triumph, heartache and joy, betrayal and loyalty, disappointment and delight, pain and pleasure, boredom and exhilaration, success and failure all take their shot at challenging our faith.

Now maybe some of you have never considered yourselves on a faith journey. The fact is, whether we recognize it or not, we all are on a journey of faith. Why? Because we live life based on what we believe is true, good, and important to us. Those beliefs—whether formally stated or not—make up our personal belief system that shapes our values and choices. Unfortunately, we're usually so busy living our lives that we don't often pull off the road long enough to check out a map to see if we're heading in the right direction. Sometimes we need a course correction.

While each of our journeys is a unique, one-of-a-kind experience, each also contains a recognizable cycle of faith that most people can identify with. There are repeated phases that we cycle through at deepening levels. Each pass through a phase becomes a stopping point where we can pause to reflect on where we are on our journey. We call these phases discovering faith, doubting faith, and deepening faith.

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But here's the catch. This is where the unpredictable comes in. Once we go through the phase of discovering our faith, life happens. And it's usually life's struggles that force us to question what we really believe. This is the doubting or testing phase of the cycle that Paul described in Romans 5:1-5 and James described in James 1:2-4. It is only after our faith has been tested and proven trustworthy that we develop deep convictions that are both personal and passionate. That kind of enduring faith deepens our discovery and begins the cycle all over again.

So, if you're up for the journey of faith, you're welcome to travel the path along with us to the authentic life that is only found by following the One who promised that He was "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

- Discovering faith is the beginning of our journey. Here's where we begin to investigate some of the core questions of the Christian faith, such as: What is faith? Can I really believe the Bible? Does God love me? Why did Jesus Christ have to die for me?
- Doubting faith is the proving ground of our trek and, frankly, where we will spend most of our time. Here's where the faith we discovered earlier is questioned, doubted, challenged, and tested. While doubt and confusion are often seen as the enemies of faith, it is more often true that they are the only fertile soil where authentic convictions are birthed and can flourish. Struggling with real life is crucial to cultivating authentic faith. Untested faith only becomes personal and passionate when we learn how to depend on God in the middle of our struggles. This part of the journey isn't about learning how to avoid struggles but about learning

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how to struggle well.

- Deepening faith is the maturing part of our journey of faith. It grows out of the process of discovery and struggle and takes on an enduring quality that enables us to go the distance faithfully. The apostle Paul's personal reflection on his journey of faith as a Jesus follower describes it best: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Now that's the kind of enduring faith that will encourage us to keep going and will bring us safely home.

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