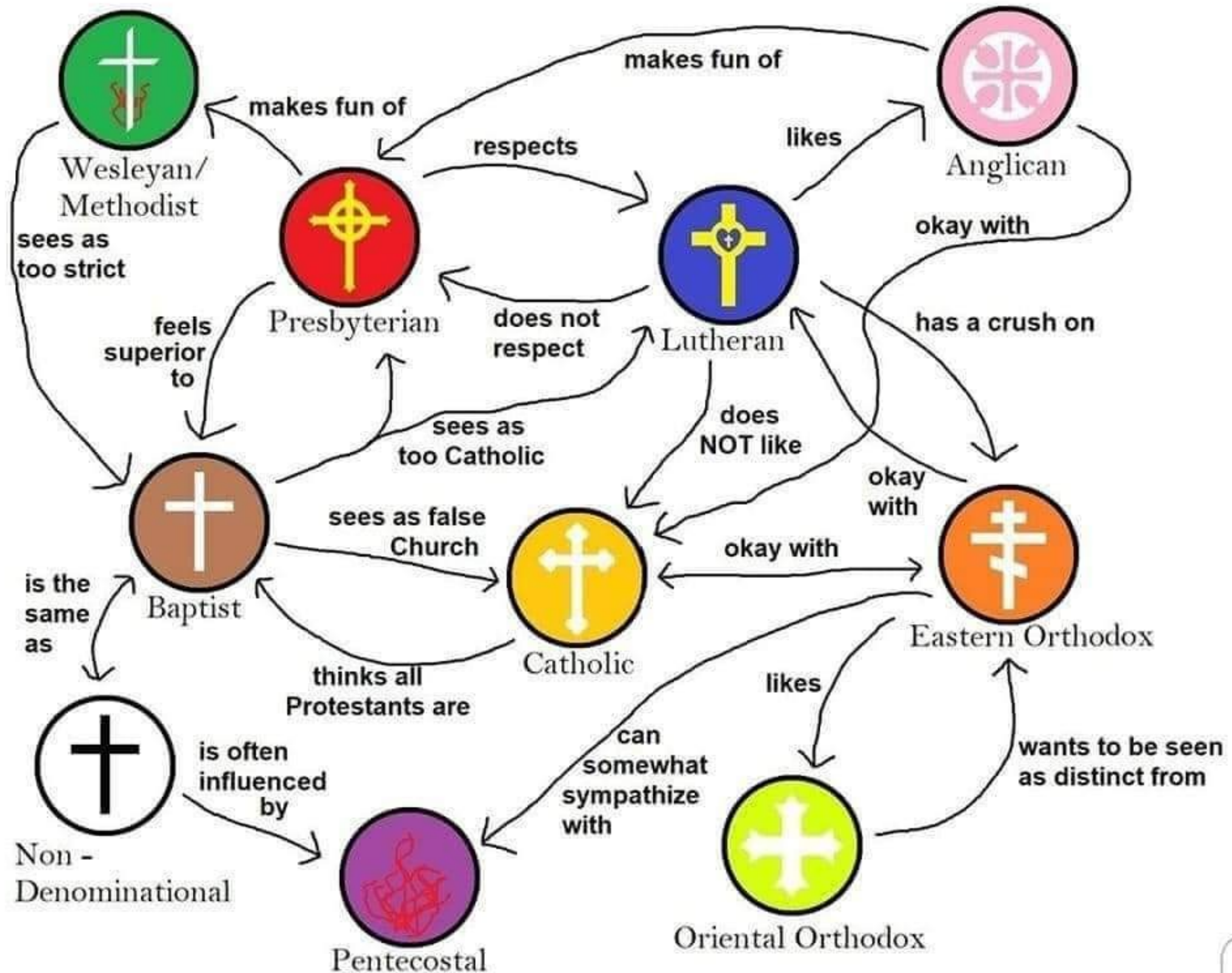


Do I Stay Christian? Part II

How do we encourage a spiritual journey?

Relations between denominations



Questions from the Video

- What does it mean to you to be Christian adjacent?
- Do you agree that religion must be deeply personal?
- Do you have a healthy container for your faith?

SIGNS OF LIFE

NURTURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH
— IN YOUR CHURCH —



JAY SIDEBOTHAM

Signs of Life by Jay Sidebotham

Renewal Works from Forward Movement

- While there are many resources that speak to these questions, there is a new book that describes this issue from an Episcopal Church point of view.
- Talks about where the church may be falling short in attracting others and enhancing the faith journey of our members and others.
- How do we enhance spiritual vitality?

What is RenewalWorks

- Jay Sidebotham was an Episcopal priest in Chicago, whose parish was near Willow Creek — a large non-denominational church that realized it was losing members because they were not being spiritually nourished.
- He adopted their program of Bible reading, and also their inventory to ascertain where their parishioners were on their spiritual journey.
- The program grew to nearby churches in their diocese and then across the country.
- Eventually, it became associated with Forward Movement.

The Stages of Individual Growth

Exploring

- 18% of Episcopalians surveyed
- Interesting, given the fact that many respondents indicate that they have been attending church for longer than 10 years.
- People in this category are exploring the basic beliefs expressed in the Episcopal tradition.
- They are drawn to the beauty of the liturgy and are eager for a deeper understanding of the sacraments. They affirm belief in God, though they are not sure what faith claims they would make about Christ. Faith is not a significant part of their life on a day-to-day basis.

The Stages of Individual Growth

Growing

- 53% identify in this group
- They are committed to the Christian faith, but they still have many questions and would not speak of having a personal relationship with God.
- First two groups are highly dependent on the church, especially clergy, to help them grow in faith.
- An authentic vision of a relationship with Christ can be accomplished by exploration of personal spiritual practices during the week. These include: prayer, time in solitude and reflection on scripture.

The Stages of Individual Growth

Deepening

- 24% of respondents identify here.
- They describe having a personal relationship with God, or moving toward a deeper relationship.
- For this group, opportunities to have spiritual friendships, mentors or small-group connections are especially important as these provide mutual accountability and moral/spiritual support.

The Stages of Individual Growth

Centered

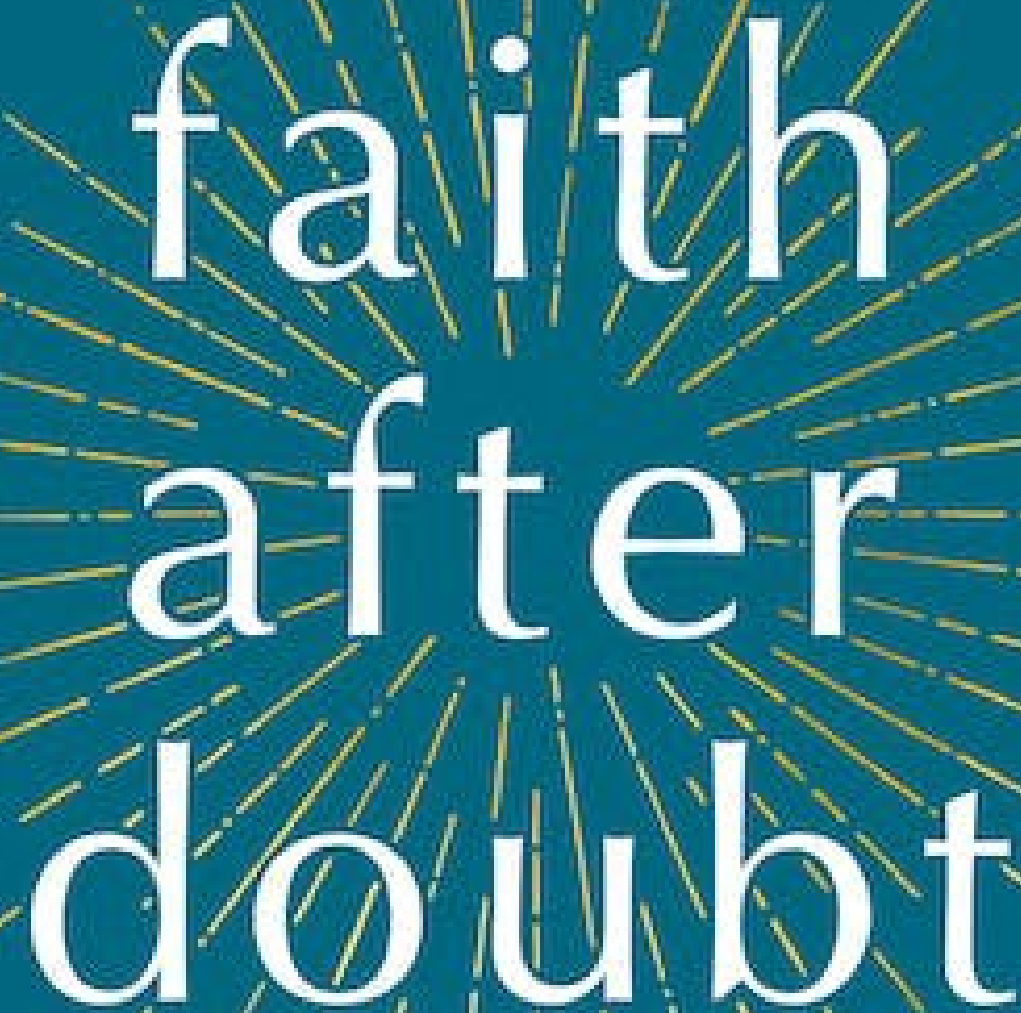
- 5% identify in this group
- They claim a personal relationship with God in Christ in their lives.

"Will help you live fuller and breathe easier."

—GLENNON DOYLE,

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Untamed*

WHY YOUR BELIEFS
STOPPED WORKING AND
WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



faith
after
doubt

BRIAN D. McLAREN

Questions to consider

- Is doubt acceptable?
- Do I feel comfortable being honest about my own faith journey?
- What do I look for in my current faith community?
- Do I accept other faith practices, both at St. Paul's and outside of St. Paul's?

A Second Scale

From faith after doubt by Brian McLaren

Simplicity

Focus	Right or Wrong
Assumption	Everything is knowable
Us/Them	Good/Evil
Belonging	I am part of the good, right, and true group.
Faith Is...	Assent to required beliefs

Complexity

Focus	Success or Failure
Assumption	Everything is doable or possible.
Us/Them	Winners/Losers
Belonging	I am part of the successful, effective, and winning team.
Faith Is...	Means to desired ends.

Perplexity

Focus	Honest/authentic experience or dishonest/inauthentic experience
Assumption	Everyone has an option; every viewpoint is a view from a point
Us/Them	Honest/Dishonest
Belonging	I am one of the honest, thoughtful, and independent individuals.
Faith Is...	An obstacle to critical thinking.

Harmony

Focus	Integral/Holistic
Assumption	We are all connected, part of a greater whole.
Us/Them	Part of a Bigger Us
Belonging	I am seeking understanding, connection, and the common good, even with opponents and enemies
Faith Is...	A humble, reverent openness to mystery that expresses itself in non-discriminatory love.

What do you think of these?

- How do you react to the idea of a spiritual continuum?
- Do you think that spiritual growth has a linear dimension?
- Are there other ways of thinking about spiritual growth?
- For you, is this an important question for the church?

Reading List

- McLaren, Brian D., Do I Stay Christian?, St. Martin's Publishing Group, NYC, 2022
- McLaren, Brian D., faith after doubt, St. Martin's Essentials, NYC, 2011
- Sidebotham, Jay, Signs of Life: Nurturing Spiritual Growth in Your Church, Forward Movement, Cincinnati, OH, 2023
- Rohr, Richard, Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2011