

Love Is My Religion (For Years I Relied Too Much On God)

BY PATRICIA BIESEN

I've had an interesting relationship with God.

I grew up as a "holiday Catholic", meaning my family encouraged me to go to [CCD](#), attend church on all the important holidays and to embody a traditional lifestyle. As I got older I decided that the Bible was just one book and who is to say it's the best or the most true. That's when my journey to seek other truths began.

I attended a Unity / New Thought style church for many years. It wasn't so much about worship for me as it was about self improvement and creating the best life for me.

I wanted to have a certain spiritual toughness. I wanted to be kind, filled with faith, prosperous and also to kick ass in my life. I like what Jim Carrey (as Ace Ventura) has called "spiritual creaminess" (forgoing the self in order to obtain total spiritual creaminess, and avoid the chewy chunks of degradation). Being in this community felt spiritually creamy for a long time... until it did not.

I currently live in a Midwestern city known as the City of Churches. There have been times in this city where I've never felt more like an atheist than at any other time in my life. Maybe it's a product of middle age or our current politics, but I began seeing the world through more realistic glasses. The haze of incense left.

They say you can't have a testimony without a test.

But when does the point come where you just get tired of unanswered prayers? How many tests can one person sustain? How many times has worship been a disappointment while still leaving me on my knees in faith asking for my prayers to be answered.

What bewilders me the most is that I'm asking a question to something that I do not even know. Something in my being really thought that God was a nice older gentleman, much like a George Carlin type, that tells you truths and gives you hugs but is tough as well. There was also a tiny part of my being that believed God was a little like Santa Claus. If I'm good I'm gonna get some good presents.

Maybe God is just the spiritual energy humans feel. Or is it a coping mechanism? Cause if we accepted that we are really alone we would feel completely fucked. The older I get the more I get behind science. Maybe it just is? The cells of our bodies. The sea. The rocks. The stars. Whatever is in the petri dish... that shit is real. In Patton Oswalt's recent comedy special "Annihilation", he quotes his deceased wife, Michelle Eileen McNamara, a crime author, who said, "It's all chaos so let's be kind."

I can also get behind native Indian wisdom because nature is real and true. And yes, Buddha and Jesus existed and we humans kind of idolize them like movie stars. I do not think this is necessarily a bad thing – if it makes you a better person, then why not. Hearing people commenting on the "Good Lord" it seems less about curiosity and more about fear. "If the Good Lord will allow it..."

I think for many years I was relying too much on God.

God will take care of this and that. Pray for this hurricane and that disaster. Maybe it's better to send our blood, water, food, supplies and money than our prayers. I'm for action over words. I hear that *God works in mysterious ways* but I really don't like it. I'm not perfect but I am showing up. I'm learning lessons. Applying principles. Looking inward at all the icky gooey parts of my soul. I'm not asking for a Coach bag, I just want to pay my bills and eat every day.

Some spiritual manifestation experts say – pray with all the details you want, don't leave it up to God cause you will pray for a brand new red Ferrari and some fucker will give you the wee matchbox version of that.

Other experts say – oh no, don't pray with details, you are hexing God's blessing. Do not limit your good by telling the universe what you want. I've tried all the versions and all the affirmations with all only leading to frustration. I'm disappointed I have Henry-Rollins-Style-Anger about this, but I'm also grateful that life is not worse than it is.

I've never been able to outsmart my lessons with spirituality.

I thought the more positive my thoughts were, the better my life would be. I do agree that it's not good to wallow in negativity but I found that dismissing the negative emotions was like painting with only yellow paints. Sorry, I'm human I want all the colors. I cannot deal with the pressure that a negative thought is going to create some shitty circumstance for me. In a way, the [Law of Attraction](#) was becoming as superstitious and just as repressive to me as my former

religions. I thought it was going to give me freedom and secure a super happy life... but it didn't.

Then I wondered if I was a closet atheist. What I admire about the atheist point of view is the action aspect of it. It's not relying on an external entity to get things moving. Let's pull up our sleeves and make the world a better place. If there isn't a God then I need to step up my game. I need to be kinder than ever. I need to have more compassion than ever. I need to be busier than ever. I have a lot of shit to do and so do you. Let's not wait for God to handle it. I got this.

Recently I decided to do a little experiment. I was going to pray to different names and see what happened. I still pray from time to time. Why? Because I am desperate. Desperate to pay my rent, desperate for safe travels, for feeling well, and for things to run smoothly. I still fall to my knees and ask whoever is listening for help.

I didn't want to use the word "God." So I tried "Universe" and "Megamind." My results were still pretty shitty. In fact praying to the Megamind produced one of the worst days ever. Then one morning I thought, why not use the word "Love" in place of "God?" Then it hit me. God isn't a boss, a ruler, a Zeus in the sky, a Yoda, a beam of light, an alien, an apparition. God is love. God is the unexplainable love.

When I feel love for another human that is what I know of God. When I feel love for a place. That is God. Love is something I cannot see or explain. It is the mystery of mysteries. Can Love make my day better, when I put Love into it then? Yes. I was doing it all wrong. So now I ask Love for help. I ask Love for answers.

We can debate all day about the colors, symbols, stories and significances of what God is but for me, God is interchangeable with Love. My religion might not look like most people's. I may not read scriptures or adopt certain

customs to worship (which is a very heavy word by the way). But I will ask where is the love? Where can I be in love? Love is also my direction point. I will go where I feel the most love.

“If Man is 5, then the Devil is 6. Then God is 7!”

–The Pixies

Love is my God. Now that doesn't mean I know where my soul goes after this lifetime. As fascinating as all those theories are, I'm not going to waste any more of my time on that. I'm going to live in love.

For more self-study, [The Urban Howl](#) recommends [The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom](#) .

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