

Faith and religion has been a topic that has surrounded my life since I was a child. I attended a Catholic school from kindergarten through eighth grade, but lost my faith around fifth grade. I have identified as agnostic since then, but I still have a curiosity when it comes to faith, and I've been exploring the idea of having spiritual guidance and incorporating aspects of faith into my life. For this interview, I wanted to seek more information on faith and religion as a whole, and what it brings to a person's life.

To get a more intimate look and perspective on this topic, I chose to speak with my mother, Stacy Restani. She is a 54-year-old woman who works as an instructional aid at an elementary school. She has been a part of my journey and started it for me, as she was the one who enrolled me into a private Catholic school. She has had several religious perspectives - she attended Methodist, Presbyterian, and Catholic church services throughout her life. She now identifies as a Christian, but has her own beliefs and personal relationship with faith.

While my mom has been a part of religion for her whole life, it wasn't until she was older that it became a significant part of her life. I asked her what had changed - "As I got older, in my early twenties, I did a lot of soul searching and reading books." These, along with her journey, are what carried her through this life for the past 30+ years. I wanted to know what faith had brought into her life, as she has always mentioned that accepting God comes with gifts. "It gave me unexplainable joy and peace, life-changing experiences. God constantly keeps me on the right path." It seems that having faith brings a bounty of blessings that people may not be able to find themselves.

My mom mentioned to me that she didn't consider herself a part of any true organized religion, but I never asked her to elaborate until this interview. "Many of my beliefs are personal between myself, God, and Jesus. I strive to have a personal relationship with Jesus." She believes in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, but doesn't agree with all of the religious texts that focus on Christianity. One thing she strongly believes in is that Jesus died for our sins so that we may get into Heaven. "If you're a true Christian, you have to accept Jesus into your heart as your Savior in order to get into heaven. The true life we will live as believers of Christ will take place in Heaven - that is our reward."

Something that I always wondered about was how faith had changed my mom as a person. She had gone through many events in her life that affected her greatly, and some of the negative ones she experienced as a child shaped her into a colder human being. With her reignited faith, she changed into a loving, caring, and empathetic person. "My relationship with Jesus has brought me indescribable serenity and patience. I got a lot of patience as I delved more into my relationship with him. I'm a lot more joyful - the Holy Spirit has brought me joy that is unexplainable. I'm grateful."

This interview facilitated my understanding of faith and religion, and helped me to gain a deeper understanding of my mom as a person. A common theme among different religions is what one receives from believing in something and how it positively shapes one's life. Faith and religion do not only change one's beliefs and mindsets, but it shapes you into a different person

blessed with gifts like peace, compassion, and the promise of a life greater than this one we experience on this Earth. Faith is important, and I believe everyone could use some aspects of it in their own lives - after all, this interview showed that there is more to gain than there is to lose.