

# If You Have This Kind of Faith, It's Not Worth Having

In May 1957, I graduated from Southwest Baptist College (now University) when it was still a junior college. That fall I transferred to William Jewell College.

One of my courses that first semester was Philosophy of Religion; the textbook was the newly published "Philosophy of Religion" by the Quaker scholar D. Elton Trueblood.

In the first chapter of his book, Trueblood declares, "Unexamined faith is not worth having."

My professor, for good reason, emphasized that statement repeatedly, and I gradually came to realize that it was, indeed, not only an important statement to think about but also something that I badly needed to do.

That autumn was an uncomfortable time for me. Seeking to examine my faith resulted in a trying period of doubt, reflection and examination, but that was an extremely valuable experience.

As a result of that process, I came to embrace what seemed then, and still seems to me now, an examined faith very much worth having.

Of course, at various times through the decades since then, it has been necessary to re-examine various aspects of my faith.

If faith is always good, as I [asserted](#) previously, how could faith ever be not worth having?

Well, faith is always good - but not always stable. Sometimes it is weak, easily shaken and even so fragile that it is broken by adversity.

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July 13, 2018 Leroy Seat**

In that sense alone, it is not worth having: If faith cannot withstand challenges, both those from within and from without, how can it be of great value?

Faith in God is, truly, always good, but people often have an insufficient or erroneous understanding of God. Failing to have an adequate understanding of God can produce a flawed faith.

Moreover, there are many challenges to faith hurled at believers by aggressive atheist or anti-theistic writers.

Far more than at the time that Trueblood wrote about unexamined faith not being worth having, in recent years there have been several popular, widely read authors who have strenuously attacked faith in God and touted an unabashed atheism.

These “new atheists” represent a belief system that actively opposes faith in God.

If a person of unexamined faith is confronted by people such as those militant atheists, that faith may not be strong enough to withstand the attack.

That is part of what I mean by emphasizing that unexamined faith is not worth having.

The process of examining one’s faith is not easy, though. Philosophical and theological thinking rather than the empirical or scientific method must be used.

Serious reflecting, analyzing, studying and, yes, praying must be a part of that process.

In addition, being a part of a community of faith is also invaluable for that important endeavor.

Those who come to realize that unexamined faith is not worth having need to realize that, in addition to their personal efforts they must make to examine their faith by study, thought and prayer, they also need to be a part of a supportive

faith community.

That community may or may not be a part of “organized religion,” but robust faith often doesn’t last long for people who proclaim to be “spiritual but not religious.”

*Editor’s note: A [version](#) of this article first appeared on his [blog](#), *The View from This Seat*. It is adapted from a [chapter](#) of his unpublished book, “Thirty True Things Everyone Needs To Know Now,” and is used with permission.*