

# Looking beyond childhood religion grows stronger faith

May 16, 2023

PHILADELPHIA (BP)—Christians tend to follow their mother's religion, but those who have changed their religion since childhood are spiritually healthier, the American Bible Society said.

The answer likely lies in the quest involved in exploring Christianity, the American Bible Society said in its latest release from the [2023 State of the Bible report](#).

"It didn't matter which Christian tradition they had come from or moved to, the process of moving itself seemed to boost the vitality of their faith," the Bible society stated.

More than three-quarters of Christians—77 percent—follow their mother's religion. But those who have changed their faith while remaining Christian consistently scored higher on several variables related to living faithfully, the Bible society said in the second chapter of the 2023 report.

Those who have changed their faith are slightly more Scripture engaged, have a higher belief in Bible accuracy, hold religious faith as more important and are more curious about Jesus and the Bible.

Of those who have changed faiths, 64 percent believe the Bible is totally accurate in all the principles it presents, compared to 47 percent of those who retained their childhood faith.

Three-quarters of those who have changed their faith since childhood rate their religious faith as very important in their lives, compared to 68 percent of those whose faith remained the same.

Three-quarters of those who have changed religion are curious to know more about Jesus, compared to 64 percent of those who've retained the religion of their childhood. And 78 percent of switchers are curious to know more about Scripture, compared to 66 percent who haven't switched.

The differences are true in each major denominational group including evangelical, mainline and historically Black Protestants, as well as Catholics.

"We explored the personal faith journeys of people since childhood, as well as their commitment to Christ today. When people change their faith, they often wind up with a stronger one," the Bible society stated.

"Their quest for a truer expression of their relationship with God carries them into deeper engagement. We observed the movement of faith through a continuum that included seeking and claiming and enjoying a relationship with Jesus."

## **Strengthened faith after searching**

Researchers also linked the phenomenon to the fact that those who search outside their childhood faith tend to develop a deeper connection to newfound faith, a matter of owning their relationship with Christ.

"Internalization of Christian truth is a lifelong process," researchers said. "As they seek the best expressions and connections for their faith or their growing understanding of the Bible's teaching, some people will pull up stakes from one religious tradition and move to another. This is not necessarily a loss of faith commitment. It can actually signal spiritual growth.

"Sometimes seekers return to their spiritual roots with a stronger faith."

The American Bible Society plans to release monthly findings from the

report, with upcoming releases focusing on spiritual vitality in America, how the Bible impacts human flourishing, the faith of Generation Z, how the Bible impacts behavior, and technology and the Bible.

Now in its 13th year, the State of the Bible report annually looks at the Bible, faith and the church in America.

The American Bible Society collaborated with the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center in designing the study conducted online and via telephone to the research center's AmeriSpeak Panel. The 18-minute survey, conducted Jan. 5-30, produced 2,761 responses from a representative sample of adults 18 and older within the 50 states and D.C.