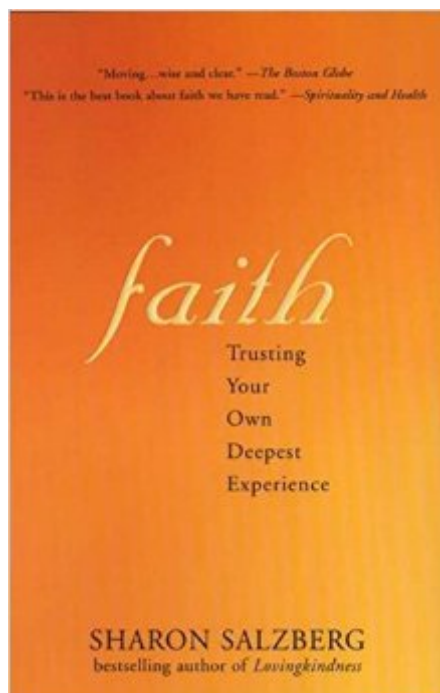


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# Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience



## Synopsis

In this beautifully written work, one of America's most beloved meditation teachers offers discerning wisdom on understanding faith as a healing quality. Through the teachings of Buddha and insight gained from her lifelong spiritual quest, Salzberg provides us with a road map for cultivating a feeling of peace that can be practiced by anyone of any tradition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bestselling author Sharon Salzberg explores the meaning of faith through her personal story about a harrowing childhood of isolation and loss (a father's abandonment, a mother's early death) and her eventual journey into the Buddhist tradition. The overriding message, explains Salzberg, is that faith is "not superficial or sentimental: it does not say everything will turn out all right." So what is faith, if not trust in a happy ending? Salzberg, the cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society, explains that faith resides not in the outcome, but in the willingness to see the possibility for change. "The first step on the journey of faith is to recognize that everything is moving onward to something else, inside us and outside.... We see that a self-image we've been holding doesn't need to define us forever, the next step is not the last step, what life was is not what it is now, and certainly not what it might yet be." Like the great teachers of Buddhism, Salzberg relies on her stories to make the teachings relevant. She shifts effortlessly from the voice of a memoirist to the voice of a master teacher. Through her insights, we come to understand faith as a verb. Faith means never giving up on the possibilities of each moment, always seeing "our own potential for happiness, for vibrant wisdom and sustained compassion--a potential that all beings share." --Gail

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Current world events show that we need to find fresh ways to think about faith. Just at the right moment, Buddhist teacher Salzberg (Lovingkindness) offers a deeply personal and luminously honest work that makes faith relevant to us all. Unyoking faith from its usual association of adherence to systems of belief (and even the belief that we have no faith), she allows it to be a verb, an act of offering and affirmation that can heal and enlarge our lives. "Faith is the animation of the heart that says, 'I choose life,'" she writes. "This spark of faith is ignited the moment we think, 'I'm going to go for it. I'm going to try.'" In 1970, as a shy, 18-year-old college student, Salzberg recounts, she decided to travel to India to learn to meditate. She had lived cocooned in sadness since her mother died when she was young, until a course in Buddhism sparked the intuition that life held possibilities that could make her future different than her past. She went for it. In the rich stories that follow, Salzberg describes how that first flare of faith ignited the next, how a path appeared step by step, light by light, as she encountered teachers and friends and, finally, her own innate wisdom and compassion. True faith, according to Salzberg, is the action of the heart opening to admit life in all its unknown potential. It does not need to constrict around a particular belief or view, because it flows from an inner sense of reality, "a homing instinct for freedom." Salzberg shows that, in its essence, faith is a love of life that breaks out as it is exposed to real forces. Truth feeds faith. This is a work of great truth and great heart. It will help everyone who reads it. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Faith by renowned meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg is one of those books that can change your entire perspective of the world. There are few books that can do that, that can challenge the foundation of your reality. For me, such books were *On the Genealogy of Morals* by Friedrich Nietzsche and *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. As a heavy reader of religion and spirituality, I thought I'd never read a book on faith apart from God, or a deity we know as God. I didn't think the word could exist without God. But Salzberg challenges all of this. She speaks of her version of faith, one that doesn't revolve around God at all. Salzberg lost her mother at nine when she witnessed her hemorrhage right before her eyes. Her father left the family when she was a young child and ended up institutionalized. To experience such devastation in childhood, it is no wonder that she could dismiss God entirely, or any higher being. But miraculously, Salzberg doesn't reject God, or she doesn't say so. She just has a different view of faith. She begins by explaining that the word faith in Pali, the language of the original Buddhist texts, means "to place the heart upon." In *Faith*, part

memoir, part essay, Salzberg shares many beliefs and tenets of Buddhism that have shaped her spirituality and concept of faith. To her faith is to keep walking forward, even in the dark. It's the strength to take that magnitude of risk, though you know not what lies ahead. I found this concept of faith wholly original, a Godless faith. What kind of faith can you really have without the power of God? Deeper into her book, Salzberg speaks of an immense interconnectedness among us, and a truth like protective hands that holds her. It sounds like God, but she doesn't elaborate as to what this is. Her concept sounds oddly familiar, like the invisible hand that Newton referred to in his writings, or that unexplainable uplifting force that Tolstoy explains at the end of his memoir. Both are referring to God, and it sounds like Salzberg is too, but she isn't. Suffering, such as when we experience trauma or loss, she says, comes from feeling alone, separate from everyone and everything around us. The core aspect of despair is this sense of utter isolation and disconnection. She explains that Buddhist teachings reveal that it is in deep suffering that faith can be uncovered and renewed. It is at this low point, the abyss, that we begin to sense this interconnectedness, that we are intimately connected to a bigger reality. But what is that thread that connects us? What is it that makes us so united and so whole? What is the source of this unity? To me, that source of unity is God, and I wonder, what is this source to Salzberg? How does she refer to this interconnectedness that is just there? Though Salzberg's book doesn't answer all of my questions, Faith is still a beautifully written, poignant, pivotal book that can stretch all notions of spirituality.

Awesome book on faith! I found myself re-reading passages and writing them down. There's a lot of profound stuff in here. There are many insights that could be repeatedly pondered, similar to a mantra. This book is made all the more credible and appealing as Salzberg writes about how many times she herself has been vulnerable to great suffering. She does not mince words here.

Experience is difficult; life is full of suffering. However, with this book, Salzberg presents a hopeful path to transform even our greatest suffering. She does this in the most authentic way; by showing us her own greatest suffering.

I'm still reading this book. Having read other books by Sharon Salzberg this one which is autobiographical is particularly fascinating to me, and very moving. I'm reading it with a group, and savoring it.

As a person who has struggled with the concept of faith, this book gave me a new and fresh perspective on the subject. It was very helpful to me. I would recommend this book to anyone who

was interested in looking at faith in a broader way. I found it easy and enjoyable to read.

This is an incredible book that I feel everyone should read. I read it in a matter of a day or two because I couldn't put it down. A must for anyone searching for how in the heck to trust ourselves and this crazy world we live in.

This reads like a memoir. It was an engaging and informing story as the author shared her life in ways that resonated with me. An American girl looking for peace from the deep hurts of a difficult childhood. She did a wonderful job of unveiling the tenets of Buddhism and her growing faith. I found truths that were helpful whether you live this "faith" or another as I followed her story to peace. . Well done,

I was always curious about how Sharon came to Buddhism, having read "A Heart as Wide as the World" and "Lovingkindness" during my introduction to Buddhism years ago. In "Faith," Sharon describes her personal journey to Buddhist-based faith with personal and universal truths. And yet, it is accessible, simple and logical. Who would have thought Faith could be simple and logical? Thanks to Sharon, it is. A real pleasure (and easy) to read!

I always viewed faith as being about belief. This book has helped me to see that it may be more helpfully be viewed as being about "practice" and, over time, determining how practicing actually affects what we experience. Excellent writing.

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