

Toxic Faith

This handout is to help you understand what is toxic faith.

Presented by Barrington H. Brennen

Taken from the book *Toxic Faith* by Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton

Erroneous Beliefs That Can Fuel Toxic Faith

1. When tragedy strikes, true believers should have a real peace about it
2. If you had real faith, God would heal you or the one you are praying for
3. Material blessings are a sign of spiritual strength
4. The more money you give to God, the more money he will give to you
5. I can work my way to heaven
6. Problems in your life result from some particular sin
7. I must not stop meeting other's needs
8. I must always submit to authority
9. God only uses spiritual giants
10. Having true faith means waiting for God to help me and doing nothing until he does
11. If it's not in the Bible, it isn't relevant (all truth is in the Bible)
12. God will find me a perfect mate
13. Everything that happens to me is good
14. A strong faith will protect me from problems and pain
15. God hates sinners, is angry with me, and wants to punish me
16. More than anything else, God wants me to be happy (free from pain)

10 Rules of a Toxic Faith System

1. The leader must be in control of every aspect at all times
2. When problems arise, find a guilty party to blame immediately
3. Don't make mistakes
4. Never point out the reality of a situation
5. Never express your feelings unless they are positive
6. Don't ask questions, especially if they are tough ones
7. Don't do anything outside your role

8. Don't trust anyone
9. Nothing is more important than giving money to the organization
10. At all costs, keep up the image of the organization or the family

Characteristics of Healthy Faith

1. Focusing on a personal relationship with God in Christ, not religion
 2. Looking to God to meet the needs for security and significance
 3. Growing in faith as evidenced by walking into pain
 4. Respect for the personhood of others
 5. Serving others for their sake
 6. Being vulnerable
 7. A trusting atmosphere
 8. Celebrating uniqueness by recognizing people's spiritual gifts
 9. Relationships being the heart of everything
 10. People being taught to think
 11. Balanced thinking rather than extremes in black and white
 12. Non defensive
 13. Non judgmental
 14. Reality based
 15. Able to embrace our emotions
 16. Able to embrace our humanity as evidenced in the ability to allow for mistakes
 17. The ability to laugh
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Recommended reading:

Although I may not agree with everything in these books, they are very much on target. Read these books with an open mind and guided by the Holy Spirit.

"12 Christian Beliefs that Can Drive you Crazy"

By Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

"Healing Spiritual Abuse"

By Ken Bleu

"Toxic Faith"

By Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton