

ATHEIST.

AGNOSTIC.

SKEPIC.

BELIEVER.



**GO WITH PANTON
WORKBOOK**

Introduction

"I SIMPLY DID A LITTLE RESEARCH, THOUGHT ABOUT IT, AND CHANGED MY MIND."

That's the bottom line. And if you are willing to give my book a read, then you might also be willing to use this workbook I created for you. It's completely up to you - no pressure - just making this available in case it can help.

Have an open mind? Willing to make a little change in your thinking and your life? Can I just suggest - give it a shot, what have you got to lose?

THIS WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE TO WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS FOR THIS EXERCISE

If you were to use this resource, what would your goals be? Here are some ideas to get you going:

- (a) I'm just here for the story, the humor, and some information.
- (b) I want to know more about God and/or religion and/or spirituality from the perspective of someone like me.
- (c) I might be open to changing my perspective on things.
- (d) I don't know why I'm here.
- (e) All of the above.

(Choice (e) seems like a joke, but I felt that way once or twice in the past, so let's just leave it there in case it applies.

"HEY! WHAT'S KEEPING YOU FROM BELIEVING IN GOD?"

Still optional, but this might be a good time to think about writing down the real reasons that you have been avoiding this topic. What is really holding you back? Write it down here so you can think about it as you go. You know, if you want to.

Book Notes

I like to highlight and write in the margins of the books I read; it's helpful in case I want to go back to something I liked. I suggest you do the same with my book. But if that's not your style, here is a page where you can take some brief notes as you read. You know, if you feel moved to.

[illegible]

Chapter [01]

1. The text in the Introduction challenges religious beliefs. It begins with a bold assertion: "Look, God doesn't exist." How does this make you feel? Does this conviction resonate with you? Can you identify any specific experiences that have caused you to feel the way you do? If so, write them down here so that you can think about ways you might be able to address them later.

2. There is an underlying theme of Critical Thinking vs. Dogma in the Introduction. Do you think it is helpful to rely on your own critical thinking and self-reliance to navigate life's complexities? Do you think there is any perceived weakness in relying on external forces for guidance?

3. The text describes personal transformation from staunch atheism to a belief in the existence of God. The author achieved this profound change of perspective through introspection, research and open-mindedness, the process of which is described later in the book. Would you be willing to open your mind to ideas that are new to you about spirituality, religion and God? Why or why not? If your answer is no, is there anything that could sway you to do so?

Chapter [01]

4. The author introduces the concept of a "Spectrum of Belief" where individuals occupy various positions between complete disbelief and absolute faith. Where would you place yourself on this spectrum? Would you like to change your position? Why or why not? Would it be helpful in your daily life to do so? For example, would changing your view on spirituality improve an important relationship that you have with someone?

5. The author presents a message of empathy and understanding, inviting readers to connect with their shared human experiences. Reflect on the highs and lows of your own personal journeys, acknowledging the universality of struggles and growth. Did you have an open or closed mind during these experiences? Would you be willing to open your mind to ideas that are new to you with the hope and intent that future experiences might be more positive? Make notes about this below.

Additional Notes

Chapter [02]

1. The author makes a statement about his identity and how he wants others to perceive him by rejecting the label of "Bible-thumper." Reflect on your own feelings about this statement. If you were to change your current beliefs, would this be in conflict with your identity? Could you overcome this conflict?

2. The author describes a cultural clash between his upbringing in a cosmopolitan environment and his current residence in a conservative, religiously influenced community. How do you feel about your place in your community and in the larger world?

3. The author describes his own cynical worldview, characterized by skepticism toward religion and a belief in humanity's inherent savagery. Do you share this view, and if so, do you think that it is reasonable to do so? If so, do you think you could change your perception of the world?

Chapter [02]

4. Think about the author's belief in self-reliance and hard work alongside their rejection of divine intervention. To what would you ascribe the experiences in your journey? Were you solely self-reliant, or have others helped you along the way? Have you ever felt like you received help from less tangible sources, i.e., The Universe, Karma or God?

Additional Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Chapter [03]

1. The author describes his early impressions and negative experiences with religion, including feelings of boredom, worthlessness and discomfort as well as Fire and Brimstone sermons. Can you think of experiences you may have had that impacted – one way or another – your opinions about religion and/or church?

2. Do you share the author's defiant attitude toward attending church? What are the underlying thoughts or emotions driving your resistance to religious participation?

3. Note the author's sense of liberation upon escaping regular church attendance, emphasizing his certainty in rejecting religion and his determination to maintain autonomy over his beliefs and actions. Can this reaction be justified, and do you make similar justifications for your own actions?

Chapter [04]

1. In this chapter the author describes total professional burnout, existential questioning, and dread and crisis with high stress and anxiety dominating his life. How are you coping with life's demands? What are your coping strategies for good mental health, and are they effective? Do you need additional help?

2. Note the author's descent into anger and bitterness, fueled by a sense of isolation and perceived injustice from the world around him. Do you think this progression was appropriate, or could he have gone about things differently? How? Compare this with how you feel about the world and your place in it.

Chapter [05]

1. Consider the value of companionship in adversity and the importance of having a supportive friend during challenging times. Do shared perspectives and mutual encouragement provide you with solace and motivation? Who can you include in your "circle of support?"

2. Note the author's attempt to adopt a positive mindset amid adversity, embodying the persona of "Super-Positive-Optimistic-Man." Can you think of limitations in this approach and its inability to address deeper issues?

3. Note the author's pursuit of success through a three-step process, emphasizing goal-setting, objective achievement and vision fulfillment. Think about such strategies in the face of systemic challenges and personal dissatisfaction. Does this work, or is it a band-aid fix that won't solve the underlying problem?

Chapter 05

4. The author has an escapist fantasy of moving to Belize as a response to dissatisfaction with his current life. Think about the allure and pitfalls of seeking refuge from our realities and how you might engage in this behavior currently.

Additional Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Chapter [06]

1. In this chapter, the author recounts a ridiculous account of conflict with authority, reckless workplace behavior, a Judgment Day lacking any kind of climactic result at all and ultimately feelings of apathy and self-reflection. Do you think his attitudes and behavior were acceptable? How could he have done better?

2. Note the author's sense of satisfaction in maintaining composure despite the circumstances. Can you think of times in your own life where "better heads prevailed" and you kept your cool under pressure? Is this behavior typical or atypical for you? Which should it be?

Additional Notes

Chapter [07]

1. Note the author's aversion to the corporate initiative of "Continuous Improvement" and his humorous reinterpretation of the customer slogan "Get What You Want," emphasizing the theme of managing expectations in the face of workplace demands. Note also his revelation about the importance of lowering expectations for personal satisfaction. What do you think about this unique perspective and its implications for navigating life's challenges?

2. The author describes having lived with undiagnosed anxiety since childhood. This lack of recognition and understanding of mental health issues during earlier years had a lasting impact on his perception of normalcy. How would you describe your own mental health right now?

3. The author ultimately finds relief from anxiety through medication and describes the transformative effect it has on his mental well-being and daily functioning. Could you benefit from outside assistance in the form of medication and/or therapy? Alternatively, can you think of something else accessible to you that would positively influence your mental health?

Chapter [08]

1. In this chapter the author describes a harrowing experience in seventh-grade Math Lab, bullying and other social challenges during the same time and academic difficulties in college that collectively have lasting psychological effects. Are these experiences relatable to you, and can you think of traumatic events in your life that have unfairly affected you? How can you more objectively view those events, and what can you do to overcome any injury they have caused you?

2. Consider the idea of “Redemption Through Persistence.” The author was required to persevere through a second attempt at his Calculus classes. Note how different his experience was with a supportive instructor and the determination to overcome his past failure. If you don’t already, could you adopt this attitude when facing your challenges? Perhaps more importantly, could you find allies and support from others to assist you in doing so?

Additional Notes

Chapters [09 & 10]

1. The author describes the impact of a childhood fascination with mythology, resulting in the formation of agnostic views. This later results in his ongoing internal conflict of belief systems, which oscillate from atheism to agnosticism to skepticism. What are the roots of your current beliefs? Could they be a little incorrect, or maybe even a lot? What if you found they were incorrect? What would be your response?

2. Think about the author's shift in mindset from resignation to actively making choices that lead to long-term fulfillment and happiness, up to and including a philosophy of "doing the opposite!" Do you have a mindset to make good choices in your life? Can you adjust or tweak your mindset to be more capable of doing so going forward?

3. The author describes pondering the mysterious forces at play in his life. Do you ever feel that something unseen may be at work in your life for your benefit? Would you be open to the idea that it could be true?

Chapters [11, 12 & 13]

1. Note two experiences the author describes. First, his surprising engagement with the Christian daycare staff and the development of genuine friendships, despite his initial skepticism and differences in belief. Second, his journey from reluctance to attend church to actively participating in religious services, which was driven by familial obligations and curiosity. These were the result of an attitude of open-mindedness and acceptance, and they set the stage for personal transformation. Now ask yourself if you could, under the right circumstances, have a similar experience. Could you approach potentially scary or provocative settings or information that is new to you with an open mind and an attitude of – if not acceptance – consideration? If not, why?

2. The author's journey included questioning his own preconceived notions in the pursuit of truth. Think about your beliefs. Could you open your mind in this way?

Additional Notes

Chapters [14 & 15]

1. Consider ignorance as a barrier to understanding. The author realized that his lack of knowledge about religion stemmed from his reliance on popular culture rather than seeking genuine education, leading to a shift in perspective. Ask yourself what your sources of “information” and/or “education” have been regarding religion/spirituality. Are they reliable sources, or could they be skewed in some way?

2. The author actively seeks knowledge through deliberate efforts to educate himself about Christianity, including reading the Bible and attending church, despite his initial resistance and skepticism. What have your approaches toward religious/spiritual knowledge been, if any? Could you use some re-education?

3. Consider the concept of “Critical Discovery.” The author cites Lee Strobel’s investigative approach in providing evidence for the authenticity of Jesus Christ and the Bible in The Case for Christ as leading to his fundamental shift in belief. Most would assume that reading the Bible would and should be the catalyst for this kind of change. Does knowing this soften your stance toward religion/spirituality? Does it help to know that you can seek alternative information sources in your quest for answers/truth?

Chapters [14 & 15]

4. The author describes the empowering nature of discovering the historical and cultural validity of the Bible, enabling him to overcome his last stumbling block and embrace belief with ease. Does this encourage you to consider your own potential barriers to understanding and belief?

Additional Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Chapter [17]

1. In this chapter the author has an outsider's perspective to religious institutions, expressing confusion and dissatisfaction with the approach of churches toward newcomers, particularly regarding the use of unfamiliar language and concepts. Does this resonate with you? If so, what was your reaction to this feeling?

2. Consider the author's critique of the church's failure to provide a basic understanding of religious principles, noting the absence of a primer or introductory education that could help individuals engage with and comprehend religious teachings. Do you agree with this? Would a baseline starting point help you? Or would it have helped you in the past?

3. The author questions the authority and credibility of religious texts and teachings. Do you? Would it help to know that content in the Bible is corroborated by other external recorded history? Could this fact change your perspective?

Chapter [18]

1. In this chapter the author prompts readers to reflect on their limited understanding and the humbling realization that what they know is merely a fraction of what exists. Do you agree with this stance? Why or why not?

2. The author describes the detrimental role of ego and closed-mindedness in inhibiting intellectual growth and fostering division. Would you be willing to confront your own biases and embrace open-mindedness as a means to expand your knowledge and perspective?

3. The author describes the comforting assurance that comes from faith in a higher power, encouraging readers to relinquish their ego-driven need for certainty and control in favor of embracing humility and trust. This can be a pretty large hurdle for someone who has lived without faith. What do you think about this idea, and do you think that if presented with persuasive and true information, you could make this kind of change in your thinking?

Chapter [18]

4. Consider the concept of “Specialness in Divine Love.” The author closes this chapter describing the profound inherent worth and importance of every person in the eyes of their Creator, thus encouraging a sense of self-worth and spiritual connection. What do you think about this – is it off-putting? Or can you visualize yourself embracing this idea and benefiting from it?

Additional Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Chapter [19]

1. Reflect on various mysterious and speculative topics, including aliens, monsters, ghosts, zombies and the possibility of the existence of God. Answer the next question honestly. Which of these do you believe might exist? Is God one of them, and if not, couldn't He also be on your list?

2. Do you agree that you actively choose your own beliefs rather than life being predetermined to some extent? Do you fully acknowledge your role in the decision-making process, and can you confront any underlying biases or assumptions that are embedded in this process?

3. What has been your process of evaluating and selecting religious beliefs? Would you be willing to begin again by seeking the information and answers you need to make a fair judgment? What would you change about your approach?

Chapter [19]

4. Regarding Question 3, the author encourages an open mind toward the possibility of God's existence amid other speculative phenomena, prompting honest reflection on preconceived notions and biases that may influence one's beliefs. Would you be willing to commit to maintaining an open mind while considering the mere possibility of God's existence? Why or why not? Is your answer fair and reasonable?

5. How could your life change for the better by embracing the transformative power of conscious decision-making in shaping one's life trajectory? How do you see yourself changing or improving if you take full ownership of your choices and embrace opportunities for personal growth and exploration? Take a moment and really let your imagination soar – what amazing things could you accomplish? What kind of amazing person could you become?

Additional Notes

Chapter [20]

1. The author describes personal discomfort or reflexive reactions to openly religious discussions or situations. Are you willing to confront these reactions in yourself to foster open-mindedness and genuine engagement?

2. Do you agree with the author's challenge to common misconceptions associated with religious beliefs, debunking stereotypes such as brainwashing and personality transformation? Is it helpful for you to know this information?

3. The author criticizes the concept of a "leap of faith" as a simplistic and potentially harmful notion, advocating instead for informed decision-making grounded in personal experiences, knowledge and critical thinking. The intent, again, is to help ease your anxiety about the process of accepting spiritual concepts. How do you feel about this?

Chapter [20]

4. The author wants readers to feel empowered to make positive choices in their lives, urging them to seek joy, upliftment and personal growth while rejecting negativity and procrastination. Can you think of ways that you can change your attitude and thinking to accomplish this? Can you envision benefiting from this kind of approach to life?

Additional Notes

[illegible]

Chapter [21]

1. Think about the impact of past relationships and experiences. Do you recognize personal flaws and areas for growth in those interactions? Do you value the lessons learned along the way?

2. Recognize the influence of role models and inspirational figures in shaping personal aspirations and self-reflection. Can you list any positive examples that have guided your behavior and character development?

3. Have you ever thought about your legacy and the lasting impression you leave on others? Consider the impact of your choices and actions on your relationships and reputation. How is it looking, and is there room for improvement? Do you want to work to improve your legacy? Why or why not?

Chapter [21]

4. The author discusses the importance of continuous self-improvement and striving to be a better person, fostering a commitment to positive change and character development despite past mistakes or setbacks. Is this an attitude that you can adopt?

Additional Notes

[illegible]

Chapter [22]

1. Having read this book, are you now more willing to explore new ideas and challenge preconceived notions, particularly by considering complex topics like religion and spirituality?

2. The author encourages you to:

- Acknowledge the challenge of accepting supernatural concepts and conduct an open-minded exploration into possibilities
- Embrace the uncertainty and mystery of life and acknowledge the existence of unexplained phenomena
- Explore unfamiliar concepts and beliefs with curiosity and an open mind, emphasizing the value of seeking answers and expanding one's perspective, and
- Embrace the potential for personal growth and transformation over time, even in unexpected ways.

Are you up for this challenge? Why or why not? Is there information, guidance or something else you need beforehand that could persuade you to begin your journey of discovery?

Additional Notes

Chapter [23]

Some final thoughts to consider:

1. Recognize that your personal growth and transformation journey will be gradual and require ongoing effort to overcome old habits and become a better person.
2. Reflect on the role of divine influence in your life, acknowledging the subtle ways in which God may guide you toward self-discovery, growth and spiritual awakening.
3. Consider the author's declaration about the relentless pursuit of God in your life, God's desire for you to know and love Him and the continuous opportunities presented to draw you closer to Him.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Gratitude

Thinking about who and what you are grateful for in your life can go a long way toward improving your mental health and encouraging you to have an open mind to new ideas and ways to improve. I encourage you to spend a few minutes on this exercise.

WHAT NEW RELATIONSHIPS OR CONNECTIONS ARE YOU GRATEFUL FOR?

-
-
-

WHO WERE THE PEOPLE THAT MADE THE BIGGEST POSITIVE IMPACT IN YOUR LIFE THIS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS OR SO?

WHAT WERE YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS OR NEW EXPERIENCES RECENTLY?

-
-
-
-
-

HOW CAN YOU EXPRESS GRATITUDE FOR WHAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW?

Looking Ahead

WITH WHAT YOU LEARNED, WHAT DO YOU YOUR NEXT YEAR TO LOOK LIKE?

WHAT GOALS OR DREAMS WILL YOU WORK TOWARDS?

WHAT DAILY HABITS OR ROUTINES DO YOU
WANT TO CHANGE OR ESTABLISH?

HOW WILL THESE IMPROVE YOUR LIFE?

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR FUTURE SELF A YEAR FROM NOW?

Next Steps

Having finished this workbook, what are your next steps? I encourage you to further your education, understanding or just get some answers to some lingering questions!

WHAT ARE THE REMAINING CRITICAL QUESTIONS OR BARRIERS TO MY BELIEF?

CONSIDER GIVING SOME STRUCTURE TO YOUR QUEST BY SETTING DEADLINES OR GOALS. FOR EXAMPLE, "WHAT IF I ASKED ONE PERSON ONE QUESTION THIS WEEK?" OR "WHAT IF I READ ONE CHAPTER OF A BOOK THAT CAN HELP THIS WEEK?" USE THIS SPACE TO MAP YOUR GOALS.

Thank you! I hope some of this - any of this - helps.
I'm rooting for you!

Your friend,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a cursive 'R' or similar letter.

BELIEVER.

ATHEIST. AGNOSTIC. SKEPTIC. BELIEVER. Companion Workbook

A Planetwreckage Project.
Welcome.



ROCKSTEAD