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# Navigating Mormon Faith Crisis: A Simple Developmental Map



## Synopsis

What if we understood faith crisis as part of a natural cycle of spiritual growth, a breaking open to make room for new life and new faith? In the new book *Navigating Mormon Faith Crisis*, Thomas McConkie draws on the study of adult development to provide a map for people who find themselves in faith crisis, fearing they might have taken a wrong turn in their spiritual progression. This developmental perspective helps readers understand that they haven't necessarily drifted off course; they might have simply run up against the edge of their current map. Understanding how humans-and faith-grow and mature over time can offer tremendous stability and confidence to those who would press forward in the discovery of their own changing identity. This new framework enables the LDS community, and indeed any faith community facing similar struggles, to view faith crisis not as a symptom of apostasy, but of a deeper and fuller redemption. The reader finds that crisis may represent the awakening of a new kind of faith, one beyond mere belief, that may very well represent a new dawn in the unfolding of the world's religious traditions.

## Book Information

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The author explores a much neglected gospel topic, namely, the role of “doubt” in maturation of faith. McConkie’s thesis is that as faith matures, it moves through various stages or learning modes or roles. The five major learning modes/roles he discusses are called Ambassador, Expert, Achiever, Individual, and Strategist. McConkie summarizes the cognitive features, strengths, and weaknesses of each stage. One important aspect is that “doubt” plays a role in leading the believer to a greater level of spiritual maturity and understanding and fulfillment. The Ambassador stage (the philosopher Eric Hoffer might have called it the “True Believer” stage) seems to be the honeymoon of the faith experience. It is the least tolerant of doubt and must eventually be replaced by a faith system that is more resilient, substantial and complex. I’ve put “doubt” in quotes because, like faith, it’s impossible to rigorously define the term in a way that satisfies everyone. Nor does McConkie attempt to define it. But anyone who has struggled with their faith (and everyone struggles at various points eventually) understands well enough what doubt or uncertainty means. Here is the challenge and quandary facing church leaders and parents: Faith has a social aspect. When people meet together for a gospel purpose, attention focuses on what McConkie calls a “center of gravity” – “some minimum level of behaviors and beliefs that hold the group together. Individual members are working through various stages, but the visible “center of gravity” is typically geared for the most basic stages. Since different individuals are experiencing a variety stages, and since different stages have different needs, how and where do leaders and parents set the center of gravity?

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