

# “Why Faith Matters”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Shortly after completing chemotherapy for lymphoma, I read an editorial condemning religion and decrying belief in God. The combination of what I had endured and what I read moved me to write a new book: *Why Faith Matters*.

In the book I make the case for faith; not any single faith, but rather the general importance of faith — indeed Rick Warren, the Pastor of Saddleback church and author of *A Purpose Driven Life* wrote the foreword. In part the book asks perennial questions: does religion cause war, is it compatible with science, is faith good for individuals and for society?

Underlying it all is a reflection on my experiences with cancer. When I was sick, faith was not an abstract proposition; it was a community, a willingness to help, a sense that I was not alone. My prayers were not for magical cures but for closeness. Rather than reflecting on all I was losing, faith helped me understand anew all the blessings that I had been given.

Religion does become entangled in politics, in superstitions, in competition among groups. It can be hijacked by fundamentalists who disgrace God’s name with violence. Human nature is a mixed bag, and there is more than a little ugliness inside us. But for most of us, living a life of faith is ennobling. If our faith is embracing, tender, vivid, filled with an appreciation for God’s bounty and our responsibilities, then mockery fades, cruelty abates and it is clear why faith matters.