

# FAITH

## *Matters*



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Depending on how you look at it, these words can either express a value statement (“faith is important”), or they can describe a category of topics (“matters of faith”).

But these interpretive options also reinforce each other: We should discuss matters of faith because faith matters. Whether you’re a practitioner of organized religion or a skeptic of all things supernatural, matters of faith belong to the human experience.

Even the grand master of suspicion himself, Friedrich Nietzsche, argued that the entire history of philosophy is founded on a

premise of religious trust. In his book *Beyond Good and Evil*, he challenges his readers to imagine a world in which most people do not believe that truth is better than falsehood. That truth is superior to falsehood is not a sentiment that can be demonstrated or tested in a laboratory, yet the entire enterprise of rationality depends on it. We simply *trust* that truth is better than falsehood. Otherwise, reason never gets off the ground and society crumbles.

Rationality, then, is founded on faith, which comes from the Latin word *fides*, meaning “to trust.” A serious atheist like Nietzsche can reject God, but he doesn’t make the mistake of rejecting faith itself. He acknowledges that *faith matters*—both for the process of reasoning and for the welfare of society.

But it’s striking that Nietzsche acknowledges the *religious* nature of faith, even for non-believers. When we trust in the reality of things like truth, beauty, and goodness (things which cannot be tested in a laboratory but are necessary for the functioning of society), we are giving ourselves over to something – or a *sense* of something – that’s beyond us.

As a pastor, I obviously have a vested interest in giving an explicit account of what’s beyond us—also known as “transcendence.” But I’m also interested in the less explicit mediums of transcendence. Everyone who’s reading this column knows that Hillcrest is a beacon of arts and culture in Little Rock. The food, the people, the music, the houses, the merchants—all these things are good and beautiful, evoking a deep sense of wonder at the reality of goodness and beauty. Plato once said that the beginning of philosophy lies in the experience of wonder. As a resident of Hillcrest, how can you *not* experience wonder?

And doesn’t this experience give you a reason to put your trust – your *faith* – in the realities of truth, beauty, and goodness? Being a member of this community reaffirms the basic sentiment that, indeed, faith matters.



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