What is Faith?

What Difference Does Faith Make to How We Behave?

by Ernest O'Neill Program 88

What is faith? What difference does it make to your everyday life? What difference does it make to the way we behave or act? What we have been talking about is how we act in certain crises or difficulties that we find in our lives, crises in our financial concerns, whether personal or our business concerns, crises in our marriages, crises in our careers or our professions. What difference does faith make in the midst of situations that we human beings call worrying situations, situations that cause anxiety to us, or that make it difficult for us to sleep at night or drive us toward tranquillizers or even towards drugs? What difference does faith make to all those situations and the way you tackle them?

What we have been saying is, it makes a vast difference whether you have faith in a Supreme Being or whether you believe there is nothing after this life, whether you believe there is a God who created us or whether you believe you are the chance product of time plus an evolutionary process that is absolutely mindless. It makes a vast difference whether you have faith in God or you have faith in nothingness.

You remember what we have been sharing over months now on this station at this time, faith is something that we exercise in life everyday anyway. Because every time we turn the hot water faucet on, we expect to get hot water out of it, even though on occasion we don't get hot water. Yet we still turn it on with absolute confidence that hot water will come out of it. Every time we turn the ignition in our car, we expect the engine to spring into

life. Even though, on more occasions than we'd like to mention, it has not sprung into life. So, we are exercising faith there.

If you say "Well, what do you mean by faith?" I mean simply what faith is. It is belief in certain situations that are true and it is action on the basis of those beliefs. That's what faith is. You believe the hot water on the basis of your previous observations over the years. Then you turn it. You act on the basis of that belief. it's the same with turning the ignition key of your car. You believe on the basis of observations through your senses over the years, watching your dad do it, watching your friends do it, even observing yourself doing it. You believe that will cause the engine of your automobile to spring into life. So, you act on the basis of that belief. You turn the key yourself with absolute confidence that it will happen. That is what we mean by faith.

What we are saying is that there are certain actions like the ones above that are absolutely appropriate if you believe that there is a God. You believe there is a Supreme Being that has created this earth on the basis of your observations over years and years. You have observed the sun to rise at the same time at that point in the year, every year. You have observed the seasons to occur with some slight variety or modification. You have observed the spring comes more or less the same month of each year. You have observed that winter comes more or less in the same months each year. You have observed the first frost comes more or less at the same time each year.

On the big picture, you have observed the seasons have been regular. They don't go according to chance. They come regularly. The planets move with such absolute precision that we can time space shots. So, we can end up with a certain satellite circulating around a certain planet. We have observed great order in the universe.

We have observed our bodies. We've seen how blood travels thousands of miles a day around our body. It carries more than 60 or 70 different substances. Yet, it never turns to sludge. it does much better than the oil in our automobiles. It makes you think there must have been as much design gone into the content and makeup of the blood as has gone into the makeup of the oil in our automobile.

We believe on the basis of all the observation of the order and design in our world and universe that there must be an intelligent mind and a purposeful will behind the creation of it all. We observed you remember, the characteristics of that unique man who lived in the first century, that man called Jesus of Nazareth. We observed how He was different from Mohammed or Buddha or Confucius. They all died. Their bones were able to be dug up from the grave. This man died, stayed dead for three days and then got up from being dead. He walked around and spoke to friends and enemies alike, to about 500 people at one time for 14 different appearances over a period of 40 days.

Then He disappeared from the earth and we've never been able to dig up His bones. We observed that that man was different from other human beings in that He had power to destroy death. And if He destroyed it once, then He is able to go through it again and again as often as He cares. He must be alive today. Then we observed His life. We saw the power that He had to still storms on the lake. We saw the power that He had to heal leprosy and even to raise a man from the dead. We saw the ability He had, even in the eyes of His critics, to live an absolutely faultless life. What we would call an absolutely sinless life. In the midst of all this, we've heard Him saying, I am going to My Father. That's where I am going. I'm going back up to My Father from whom I came and with whom I lived before the world was created. My Father is the Creator of the universe. He is your God and loves you. He is like Me.

We conclude on the basis of this unique life that was lived in the first century by Jesus of Nazareth, we conclude on this highly documented life backed up by all kinds of manuscripts that there has to be a God. We have faith that there is a God. We exercise faith. That is, we exercise the first part of faith. We believe that there is a God. We believe that there is a Creator who made all this, that designed it all, that brought all the order into it. That it is in many ways an expression of the order and beauty of His own mind and His own life. We can conclude He put us here purposefully, deliberately, carefully and thoughtfully, each one of us to do a certain job in His world, "To subdue the world", He said, to bring part of it into order in a way that only we could. We have a unique purpose here in this world and we are uniquely like Him. Each of us is different from everybody else. Each of us, therefore, can express a certain part of His nature and character in ways that nobody else can. That is our faith.

What we've been saying over the past months is that there is an appropriate way we act when we believe Him. There is appropriate behavior we produce when we believe that. There is an appropriate way in which we think and in which our emotions move if we believe all of that. Just as the way it is appropriate to turn the key into the ignition of the car because we have observed and believed, therefore, we believe it will start the engine. So, there are certain actions and behavior, certain attitudes which form real faith on the basis of the belief that God created the world. During these next few days of this week, we'd like to talk about that action and behavior.