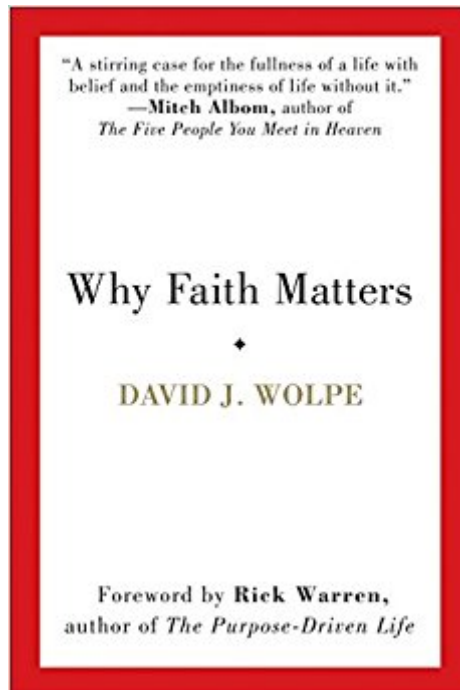




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# Why Faith Matters



## Synopsis

In *Why Faith Matters*, Rabbi David J. Wolpe blends the powerful personal story of his struggles with his own faith with a poignant response to the new atheists that reveals just how important faith in modern society. With a foreword by Rick Warren, New York Times bestselling author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, *Why Faith Matters* is an articulate and much-needed nondenominational defense of established religion in America by the man *Newsweek* magazine named the #1 Pulpit Rabbi in America.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Rabbi Wolpe (*Making Loss Matter*) joins the throngs of authors responding to the new atheists with defenses of faith. Yet rather than tense up about atheism, its defenders and their dismissive attitudes about people of faith, Wolpe answers these challenges with such kindness and thoughtfulness that even the heart of Christopher Hitchens might find itself warmed. Wolpe does not make his case for faith by hiding the darkest moments of Western traditions. Rather, he shines a light on religion's deepest scars—for instance spending a good deal of time discussing the relationship between religion and violence—while at the same time showing how religions have also (almost) always been a force of good in the world. (Take Christianity's extraordinary response to the tsunami in Indonesia, Wolpe explains.) With gentle, wonderfully engaging prose, Wolpe scrolls through history and shows how faith traditions don't offer easy, simplistic answers for the intellectually weak, as the New Atheists imply. More often than not, religion sparks believers to ask even more difficult questions, while at the same time building a platform on which to live under a

canopy of hope. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Why Faith Matters is an articulate defense of religion in America. It makes the case for faith and shows its relationship to history and science. Refuting the cold reason of atheists and the hatred of fanatics with a vision of religion informed by faith, love, and understanding, Rabbi David J. Wolpe follows in a literary tradition that stretches from Cardinal Newman to C. S. Lewis to Thomas Merton—individuals of faith who brought religion and culture together in their own works. Wolpe takes readers through the origins and nature of faith, the role of the Bible in modern life, and the compatibility of God and science, concluding with a powerful argument for the place of God, faith, and religion in today's world.

I first picked this book after watching a debate video of David Wolpe debating Christopher Hitchens (I think). Wolpe seemed like one of the most levelheaded proponents of religion I had heard talk and I wanted to know more about his ideas. In that sense, the book matched my expectations: Wolpe's Jewish faith is definitely a philosophy that leads to good in this world. But as the book claims to be a response to the critics of religion, one can expect more than beautiful stories and anecdotes. Unfortunately, this is where this book falls short: Wolpe doesn't prove anything, and while his religion is productive, his defense doesn't apply to faith as a whole. Also, while it's true that faith can make people more moral, I didn't find in this book any reason why it would do that better than a humanist philosophy. On its own, this book further increased my appreciation for Judaism, but as a response to the critics of religion it really isn't all that useful.

Thoughtful and light handed argument for faith in the modern world. The author is a rabbi but the book is nondenominational.

This is one of those rare books that I will reference, and reread many times in the future. One could open it at any point and be able to get an inspirational message, reading cover to cover is not necessary. Rabbi Wolpe is a deep thinker, who has questioned the meaning of a faith based life extensively, and is able to reveal to us a clear explanation and insight into life's ultimate issues.

This is both a personal journey and a pretty deep exploration as to why faith in God is important in everyday life. As I write those words I realize that the book doesn't exactly say the God is important

in everyday life. To Wolpe, God makes the most difference when life is at its worst or at its shortest. Having read lots of books on apologetics (and atheist books on why faith is stupid) I think this is the best book I've ever read overall. Wolpe explains the interaction between beliefs and a fulfilling life better than anyone. Wolpe won't help you believe, but will make you happy you do or wish you believed if you don't.

Rabbi David Wolpe has hardly reached middle age (by today's standards), yet he's experienced, struggled with, and overcome enormous challenges to his faith in God. Beginning with the catastrophic stroke that crippled his mother at the height of her awesome, well-known creativity, the cancer that invaded his pregnant wife at her most vulnerable moment, his brain tumor that was occasion for major surgery but proved non-malignant, and now his lymphoma that will never truly depart, his trust in God survives. And in that gentle, intellectual style of thinking that always carries over to his writing, he urges us to re-examine our own spiritual lapses. If it is true that "Belief is believing in God; faith is believing that God believes in you" (Andre Dubus, "A Father's Story"), Rabbi Wolpe need only look in the mirror to see why he was named the #1 pulpit rabbi in America by NEWSWEEK.

The first 3/4 of the book is by far the best. Wolpe effectively challenges the barren philosophy of the likes of Christopher Hitchens and other outspoken atheists with his own brand of compelling logic supporting the existence of God. Thoughtful and well-written, with spiritual insights for even the most jaded 'realists.' I was pleasantly surprised and genuinely impressed and edified.

This book is not so great. And this is actually the second book that I've read by this author this week. (The first one was "Why Be Jewish?") and this one felt the same as the first. Lost of fluffy (bloated?) prose that didn't say very much-- and yet had so much potential. A lot of the arguments that Wolpe tried to make actually *were* made more clearly and elegantly in two other books--by other authors. The first one is: *God's Undertaker*, by John Lennox. The second one was *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions* by David Berlinski. The book seems that it can be read out of order and it is very light (as in "easy to read"). But it's also "light" in a negative way (as in, devoid of much serious argument). In contrast to the other two books, this book does not get into more serious arguments. There are about 9 pages of footnotes, but they are not such great quality. A lot of them are links to web articles. I don't think the distinct lack of meat in this book is a reflection on this author's intellectual capacity (I've seen him in debate and he was very good), but

instead he tried to make the book something that was not overwrought with philosophical details (i.e.--teleological vs ontological arguments for the existence of God and other intensely boring philosophical topics) and hence approachable by a popular audience. But in trying to be a Jewish Rick Warren, he just didn't do so well. Verdict: The book only cost \$0.01 plus shipping (and it costs \$3.97 on Kindle) so it is not so much being out of the money as it is the time that it takes to read this. Give this one a miss in preference to the other two aforementioned authors.

A friend's Bible class is reading this book. I picked it up and couldn't put it down. I bought the kindle version that evening. Thoughtful, insightful, challenging and charming . . . this is a great book. If you are at the place in your life where you are asking what matters, this book is a companion to your thoughts. It's not a book of orthodoxy or of theology as much as a philosophical look at how your belief system will change your experience of life - and why that matters. The author is a rabbi, my friend is a Seventh-Day Adventist, and I'm a somewhat non-denominational Christian. This book has light and relevance no matter what label your religious experience comes with. Read it with a high-lighter - there will be a lot of nuggets you want to come back to.

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