

On the Corner

Worldview, faith and motive

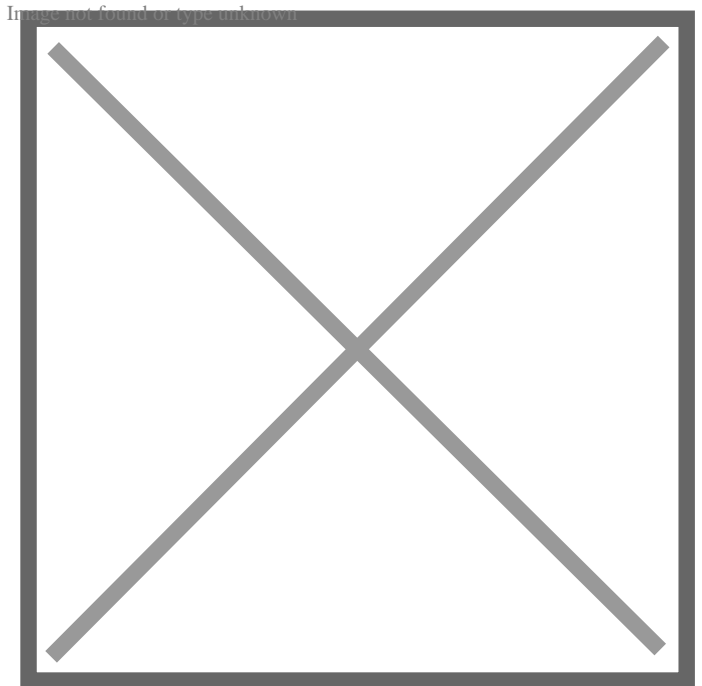
by Robert Docter

This phrase faith-based seems to get thrown around a lot these days. It seems as if the reasons behind the discussion have a lot to do with money—assembling resources through government to pay for programs to deliver compassionate, non-proselytizing aid to those who might otherwise be left out. I think it's a good idea, but I'm not sure everyone in these discussions means the same thing when they use the phrase. Some fear the threat of governmental oversight—"he who pays the piper calls the tune." Others fear invasion of the first amendment with the use of government funds connected to religion.

It seems definitely to be a "faith" problem, and in looking at that word, we must also examine the words "worldview" and "motive," for they are inextricably linked together with faith. They converge and combine through the intricate channels of the mind until they construct a product we call a "belief system" that describes how we believe we ought to be in our world.

Belief is a thought process. As we assemble it in our minds we give meaning to life, and with that meaning we frame the way we perceive our world—our worldview. This becomes the total of our values, attitudes, opinions, how we define events, and determine our behavior.

Values are an important part of this. There are some values held by this culture that seem not to parallel those of Jesus. It seems to me he lived very much in the present and told us not to worry about tomorrow while we tend to be focused on the future and engage in great plans to improve life. He seemed to urge us to be active in attending to our inner selves while we externalize life and turn our activity into hard work in hopes of some kind of reward. I believe the "inner self" he was concerned with involved inviting God as Spirit to fill us.



Another difference between our present culture and the teaching of Jesus relates to where we perceive controlling forces to be. Is life all chance—things happen due to “luck”? Does some external force determine our destiny? The culture tends to see God in this role—external to us—some mighty figure on a distant cloud. I believe God seeks to be an internal support system within us—that he is not concerned with control of us.

It's possible all this planning for a better life in the future, hard work to attain some reward, or confusion as to God's desire to control us could easily be interpreted as an absence of genuine faith. It could easily imply that “if anything's gonna happen—I've got to get it done and if I don't, God's gonna zap me.”

Faith is confidence in the absence of evidence. Simply trusting in God is difficult when the entire culture pushes us in a different direction. Does this mean, then, that we should simply sit around and let God take care of everything? No!

In terms of human interaction—we're all God's got. He will never impose himself on us. He loves us so much that he grants us complete freedom. This doesn't mean He's the kind of parent that ignores his children and leaves them to their own wiles. Not at all. He planted a painful process within us called a conscience that reminds us of the difference between right and wrong. What he seems to want is a connection. He speaks to us in so many ways and reminds us he wants us to love him and love those all around us.

When we perceive his message of love we recognize that this demands some activity from us. This becomes our motive for action. We get up from our comfort zone and relate to others in a spirit of acceptance and love.

Personal, positive, caring relationships become the work exercise of faith. It becomes the growth experience for our development. Some lose sight of the reason for working. They obsess on the task itself and lose sight of God in the process.

If this faith-based thing ever gets implemented, what is required is continual awareness of a motive of love to inspire us, faith in God's presence to guide us, and a worldview that is accepting of all regardless of how much they might differ from us.

I believe our track record indicates a positive trend-line in relation to all of these.