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Religion, Faith, Spirituality and Worldviews?

Narrator:

People today use many different terms to describe their beliefs about the world and the practices and rituals associated with them. In fact, the terms we use have changed markedly over different times and places.

People being people, we don't always use them consistently—but even so, the words we choose can tell us a lot about our beliefs, and the significance they hold in our lives.

When people talk about their religion, they usually mean a tradition that forms a significant part of their identity. There will be institutions with instructions on how to live, connected to beliefs about the nature of the world, often meaning higher powers like gods. But religions are inherently social, with connections to ideas about family, community and nation, and so evolve as societies do.

Faith, on the other hand, originally meant a specifically Christian kind of belief, but over time it has come to mean a special kind of belief specific to religion—so much so that in the UK it is common to use “faiths” as a synonym for “religions”.

Now of course, religion and faith can both involve ‘spirituality’ – but when we talk specifically about spirituality, we should also remember that some people think of themselves as being spiritual without being religious.

This might be something more personal— Maybe to do with our well-being in relation to nature, the creative arts or the world more broadly. There may or may not still be some sense of a higher order, and sometimes we find people mixing ideas from multiple religious traditions.

But worldviews allow us to include all of these, as well as the growing number of people who see themselves as having no religion at all, and that's why it's a term increasingly being used by educators.

Whatever words we use, there is no doubt that our beliefs about the world profoundly impact our actions, our values, and our sense of identity.

So staying alert to the changing terms that people use has a lot to tell us about the place of our beliefs in our lives and societies.