The Benefits of Religious Worship
Positive Outcomes Associated with Weekly Worship

December 14, 2011

U.S. federal surveys repeatedly show the benefits of weekly religious worship of God (one of the five main institutions or tasks of society). Worship’s rewards flow over to all the other major institutions of the nation: to the family, to education, to the marketplace and income, and to government.

Furthermore, the more frequently people worship, the more they profit. If the social sciences say anything clearly about God, it is that the more people take heed of Him, the more He takes care of them. Those who do not worship at all, or who worship less than weekly, miss out on a variety of benefits.

The rewards of worship are myriad and can be seen across all sorts of outcomes, including grade point average, sexuality, family strength, charitable activity, psychological well-being, and a significant decrease in a variety of social ills. Adolescents who worship regularly are (understandably) more likely to do so as adults and this faithfulness to their beliefs will have major impact later on: Their children, in a decade or two, will reap the rewards of this adolescent religious commitment.

What follows are graphics that show the national picture for those who worship at different levels of frequency. They are derived from our largest national surveys on these issues, including the General Social Survey, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, the National Survey of Children’s Health, and the National Survey of Family Growth. These graphs originally appeared in the Marriage and Religion Research Institute’s Mapping America productions.

We hope that the findings shown here encourage our readers, in this holiday season, to worship weekly and to reap the advantages that consistent religious practice offers to families, individuals, their communities, and the nation.

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**Family Strength:** The more frequent the religious attendance, the greater the strength of the family.

### Family Strengths
1. Children's Positive Social Development
2. Married People Who are Happily Married
3. The Personal Importance of Being Married
4. The Personal Importance of Having Children
5. Quality of Parent-Child Relationships

### Education
1. Combined Average in English and Math
2. Received a High School Degree
3. Students Who Received Mostly A's at School
4. Woman Who Have Attained a Bachelor's Degree

### Religion
5. Attending Religious Services Monthly or More Frequently in Adulthood

### Giving
6. Percent Who Have Volunteered in Charitable Activities in the Past Year

### Attitudes
6. I Am Proud of the Work I Do
7. Percent Who Are Very Happy

**Family Weakness:** The less frequent the religious attendance, the greater the weakness of the family.

### Family Weaknesses
8. Divorce or Separation in Adulthood
9. Rate of Adultery
10. Women Who Cohabited with Eventual First Husband
11. Women (aged 14-44) with Two or More Cohabitations in Lifetime
12. Ever Had an Unwed Pregnancy
13. Women Who Aborted First Pregnancy
14. Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies

### Sexuality
11. Sexual Intercourse for High School Girl
12. Ever Had Intercourse at 14 Years of Age or Younger
13. Females Under the Age of 18 at First Sexual Intercourse
14. Cumulative Number of Women’s Lifetime Sexual Partners
15. Women (aged 14-44) Who Had a Homosexual Sexual Partner in Past Year
16. Adolescents Who Have Seen an x-Rated Movie in the Last Year

### Education
15. Expelled or Suspended from School
16. Repeating a Grade

### Addictive Behaviors
16. Sometimes Drinks Too Much Alcohol
Getting Drunk
Hard Drug Use
Ever Smoked before Age 17
Smoking in Adulthood

Social Problems

Behavior Problems
Running Away
Theft
Repeat Shoplifting
Ever Been Arrested
Ever Been Picked up or Charged by Police
Ever Got Into a Fight
Belief That People Try to Take Advantage of Others
Family Strengths

“Children’s Positive Social Development” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Survey of Children’s Health

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Nicholas Zili, Ph.D.

“Married People Who are Happily Married” by Frequency of Religious Attendance in Adolescence

Source: General Social Survey

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.
“The Personal Importance of Being Married” by Religious Attendance

Source: General Social Survey (1972-2006)

Frequency of Religious Attendance

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

“The Personal Importance of Having Children” by Religious Attendance

Source: General Social Survey (1972-2006)

Frequency of Religious Attendance

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.
“Quality of Parent-Child Relationship” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Survey of Children’s Health

This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Education

“Combined Average in English and Math” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health
“Ever Received a High School Degree” by Current Religious Attendance

Source: 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

“Students Who Received Mostly A’s at School” by Current Religious Attendance

Source: 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Scott Talkington, Ph.D.
Religion

“Attending Religious Services Monthly or More Frequently in Adulthood” by Frequency of Religious Attendance during Adolescence

Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)

“Women Who Have Attained a Bachelor’s Degree” by Current Religious Attendance

Giving

“Percent Who Have Volunteered in Charitable Activities in the Past Year” by Frequency of Religious Attendance in Adolescence

Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)

Attitudes

“I Am Proud of the Type of Work I Do” by Religious Attendance

Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)
“Percent Who Are Very Happy” by Frequency of Religious Attendance during Adolescence

Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.
Family Weaknesses

“Divorce or Separation in Adulthood”
by Frequency of Religious Attendance in Adolescence

Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

Frequency of Religious Attendance during Adolescence

Patrick Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

“Rate of Adultery” by Religious Attendance

Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.
“Women Who Cohabited with Eventual First Husband” by Current Religious Attendance


Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

“Women (aged 14-44) with Two or More Cohabitations in Lifetime” by Current Religious Attendance


Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.
“Ever Had an Unwed Pregnancy” by Current Religious Attendance


Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

“Women Who Aborted First Pregnancy” by Current Religious Attendance


Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.
“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies” by Current Religious Attendance


Sexuality

“Sexual Intercourse for High School Girls” by Religious Attendance

Source: Adolescent Health Survey, Wave 1.

This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.
“Ever Had Intercourse at 14 Years of Age or Younger” by Current Religious Attendance


“Females Under the Age 18 at First Sexual Intercourse” by Current Religious Attendance

"Cumulative Number of Women’s Lifetime Sexual Partners" by Current Religious Attendance


Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

"Women (aged 14-44) Who Had a Homosexual Sexual Partner in the Past Year" by Current Religious Attendance


Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.
“Adolescents Who Have Seen an X-Rated Movie in the Last Year” by Frequency of Religious Attendance During Adolescence

Source: General Social Survey

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

Education

“Children Whose Parents Were Contacted by School about Children’s Behavior Problems” by Religious Attendance


Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.
“Expelled or Suspended from School” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Survey of Children’s Health

This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

“Repeating a Grade” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Survey of Children’s Health

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.
Addictive Behaviors

“Sometimes Drinks Too Much Alcohol” by Religious Attendance

Source: General Social Survey (1972-2006)

% Who Sometimes Drink Too Much Alcohol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Religious Attendance</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>&lt;Monthly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

“Getting Drunk” by Religious Attendance

Source: Adolescent Health Survey, Wave 1

This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.
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“Hard Drug Use” by Religious Attendance

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

“Ever Smoked before Age 17” by Current Religious Attendance

“Smoking in Adulthood” by Religious Attendance in Adolescence

Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)

Social Problems

“Behavior Problems” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Survey of Children’s Health
“Running Away” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

“Theft” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.
“Repeat Shoplifting” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

“Ever Been Arrested” by Current Religious Attendance


Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Scott Talkington, Ph.D.
“Ever Been Picked up or Charged by Police” by Religious Attendance during Adolescence

Source: General Social Survey (1972-1987)

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

“Ever Got Into a Fight” by Religious Attendance

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.
“Belief That People Try to Take Advantage of Others” by Religious Attendance

Source: General Social Survey (1972-1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Religious Attendance</th>
<th>Percent Who Believe That People Try to Take Advantage of Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;MONTHLY</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;MONTHLY</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;WEEKLY</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.