



95 Social Science Reasons for Religious Worship and Practice

Pat Fagan

October 16, 2012

Introduction

A century ago, non-believers could push religion aside as an irritating superstition that had to be endured because the majority and the Founder Fathers held to it. To ignore religion today, atheists would also have to throw reason and science aside as well, because developments in sociology, psychology and economics make religion's abundant benefits clear to all who investigate it.

U.S. federal data repeatedly make clear that the practice of religion is a great public and private good. Given its myriad benefits, it is clear religious practice indirectly but powerfully saves the taxpayer much and also adds to public revenues.

Reasonable atheists and agnostics will voice, not opposition to religious practice, but public gratitude for the good it does. Worship's benefits flow over to all the other major institutions of the nation: the family, education, the marketplace and income, and government. Worship's rewards are visible, for example, in education and human capital development, sexual behavior, relational strength, psychological and physical well-being, and in a significant decrease in a variety of social ills.

Presently there is much discussion of religious liberty and its centrality to the American way of life. The data contained in this paper should reinforce the confidence of every believer and instill respect for religion in those who do not believe, for faith is a major enabler of our constitutional system of self-government.

Marriage and Religion Research Institute
801 G St, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202.393.2100

marri.us/reasons-for-religion

I. Reasons for Religion: Family

Marriage

1. Numerous sociological studies have shown that valuing religion and regularly practicing it are associated with greater marital stability, higher levels of marital satisfaction, and an increased inclination to marry.¹
2. Religious attendance is the most important predictor of marital stability,² confirming even studies conducted over 50 years ago.³
3. Couples who acknowledged a divine purpose in their marriage were more likely to collaborate, to have greater marital adjustment, and to perceive more benefits from marriage.⁴
4. These same couples also said that they were less likely to use aggression or to come to a stalemate in their disagreements.⁵
5. Couples whose marriages lasted 30 years or more reported that their faith helped them to deal with difficult times, was a source of moral guidance in making decisions and dealing with conflict, and encouraged them to maintain their commitment to their marriages.⁶
6. The more frequently husbands attended religious services, the happier their wives said they were with the level of affection and understanding they received and the amount of time their husbands spent with them.⁷
7. Sixty percent who attended religious services at least monthly perceived their marriages as “very satisfactory,” compared with 43 percent of those who attended religious services less often.⁸
8. Compared with peers who attend religious services several times a week, young women who never attend are seven times more likely to cohabit. Women who attend weekly are one third less likely to cohabit than those who attend less than once a month.⁹

¹ Andrew J. Weaver, Judith A. Samford, Virginia J. Morgan, David B. Larson, Harold G. Koenig, and Kevin J. Flannelly, “A Systematic Review of Research on Religion in Six Primary Marriage and Family Journals: 1995-1999,” *American Journal of Family Therapy* 30, no. 4 (July 2002): 293-309.

² David B. Larson, Susan S. Larson, and John Gartner, “Families, Relationships and Health,” in *Behavior and Medicine*, ed. Danny Wedding (St. Louis: Mosby Year Book, Inc., 1990), 135-147.

³ Lee G. Burchinal, “Marital Satisfaction and Religious Behavior,” *American Sociological Review* 22, no. 3 (June 1957): 306-310.

⁴ Christopher G. Ellison and Kristin L. Anderson, “Religious Involvement and Domestic Violence Among U.S. Couples,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, issue 2 (June 2001): 269-286.

⁵ Christopher G. Ellison and Kristin L. Anderson, “Religious Involvement and Domestic Violence Among U.S. Couples,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, issue 2 (June 2001): 269-286.

⁶ Linda C. Robinson, “Marital Strengths in Enduring Marriages,” *Family Relations* 42, no. 1 (1993): 38-45.

⁷ W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 186.

⁸ Howard M. Bahr and Bruce A. Chadwick, “Religion and Family in Middleton, USA,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 47 (May 1985): 407-414.

⁹ Arland Thornton, W.G. Axinn, and D.H. Hill, “Reciprocal Effects of Religiosity, Cohabitation, and Marriage,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 3 (November 1992): 628-651.

9. Similarly, churchgoing adults tend to cease regular religious practice when they begin to cohabit.¹⁰
10. Those who attended religious services infrequently as adolescents and considered religion to be of low importance are more likely to cohabit as young adults.¹¹
11. Children whose mothers frequently attended religious services are 50 percent less likely to cohabit than their peers whose mothers were not actively religious.¹²

Parenting

12. Parents who attend religious services are more likely to enjoy a better relationship with their children¹³ and to be more involved in their children's education.¹⁴
13. The greater a child's religious involvement, the more likely both the child and parent will agree about the quality of their relationship,¹⁵ the more similar their values will be, and the greater their emotional closeness will be.¹⁶
14. A child's religious involvement is highly correlated to emotional closeness with his or her parents.¹⁷
15. Mothers who became more religious throughout the first 18 years of their child's life reported a better relationship with their children, regardless of the level of their religious practice before the children were born.¹⁸
16. When 18-year-olds attended religious services with approximately the same frequency as their mothers, the mothers reported significantly better relationships with their children, even many years later, indicating that the effects of similar religious practice endure.¹⁹

¹⁰ Arland Thornton, W.G. Axinn, and D.H. Hill, "Reciprocal Effects of Religiosity, Cohabitation, and Marriage," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 3 (November 1992): 628-651.

¹¹ Kazuo Yamaguchi, "Dynamic Relationships Between Premarital Cohabitation and Illicit Drug Use: An Event-History Analysis of Role Selection and Role Socialization," *American Sociological Review* 50, no. 4 (August 1985): 530-546.

¹² Arland Thornton, W.G. Axinn, and D.H. Hill, "Reciprocal Effects of Religiosity, Cohabitation, and Marriage," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 3 (November 1992): 628-651.

¹³ Lisa D. Pearce and William G. Axinn, "The Impact of Family Religious Life on the Quality of Mother-Child Relations," *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 6 (December 1998): 810-828.

¹⁴ W. Bradford Wilcox, "Religion, Convention, and Paternal Involvement," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no. 3 (August 2002): 780-792.

¹⁵ William S. Aquilino, "Two Views of One Relationship: Comparing Parents' and Young Adult Children's Reports of the Quality of Intergenerational Relations," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61, no. 4 (November 1999): 858-870.

¹⁶ Lisa D. Pearce and Dana L. Haynie, "Intergenerational Religious Dynamics and Adolescent Delinquency," *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (June 2004): 1553-1572.

¹⁷ Lisa D. Pearce and Dana L. Haynie, "Intergenerational Religious Dynamics and Adolescent Delinquency," *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (June 2004): 1553-1572.

¹⁸ Lisa D. Pearce and William G. Axinn, "The Impact of Family Religious Life on the Quality of Mother-Child Relations," *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 6 (December 1998): 810-828.

¹⁹ Lisa D. Pearce and William G. Axinn, "The Impact of Family Religious Life on the Quality of Mother-Child Relations," *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 6 (December 1998): 810-828.

17. A father's religious affiliation and religious attendance are positively associated with his involvement with his children in ways such as interacting one-on-one, having dinner with his family, and volunteering for youth-related activities.²⁰
18. Compared to fathers who have no religious affiliation, those who attend religious services frequently are more likely to monitor, spend time with, and praise and hug their children.²¹
19. A father's frequency of religious attendance is a stronger predictor of paternal involvement in one-on-one activities with children than are employment and income—the factors most frequently cited in the academic literature on fatherhood.²²
20. Compared to children whose parents do not attend church at all, children whose parents attend church services exhibit more self-control while under parental supervision in their homes.²³

Sexual Attitudes and Behavior

21. The 1992 National Health and Social Life Survey shows that, of adults aged 18 to 59, those in intact marriages who worship weekly were most likely to say they felt thrilled and excited during intercourse with their current sexual partner. Almost 92 percent of adults who worship weekly reported feeling thrilled and excited, compared to only about 85 percent who never worship.²⁴
22. Very religious women report greater satisfaction in sexual intercourse with their husbands than do moderately religious or non-religious women.²⁵
23. Greater levels of community religious practice are correlated with lower levels of teen sexual activity.²⁶
24. Traditional values and religious beliefs are among the most common factors cited by teens as their reason for remaining sexually abstinent, second only to fear (e.g., fear of an unwanted pregnancy, a sexually transmitted disease, or parental discipline).²⁷

²⁰ W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 112-118.

²¹ W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 112-118.

²² W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 112-118.

²³ John P. Bartkowski, Xiaohe Xu, and Martin L. Levin, "Religion and Child Development: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study," *Social Science Research* 37, no. 1 (March 2007): 18-36.

²⁴ Patrick F. Fagan and Althea Nagai, "Feels Thrilled, Excited During Intercourse with Current Partner," *Mapping America* 116 (2012). <http://www.frc.org/marri-mappingamerica/mapping-america-116-feels-thrilled-excited-during-intercourse-with-current-sexual-partner> (accessed September 21, 2012).

²⁵ Carol Tavris and Susan Sadd, *The Redbook Report on Female Sexuality* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1977).

²⁶ John O.G. Billy, "Contextual Effects on the Sexual Behavior of Adolescent Women," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56, no. 2 (May 1994): 387-404.

²⁷ Lynn Blinn-Pike, "Why Abstinent Adolescents Report They Have Not Had Sex: Understanding Sexually Resilient Youth," *Family Relations* 48, no. 3 (July 1999): 295-301.

25. Youth who attend religious services more frequently have less permissive attitudes toward sexual activity and less sexual experience than peers who attend religious services less frequently.²⁸
26. An analysis of National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health found that each increase in religiosity on their scale²⁹ reduced the odds of becoming sexually active by 16 percent for girls and by 12 percent for boys.³⁰
27. Men and women who are religious are more likely to have less permissive sexual attitudes, and they are influenced by religion more than any other variable when it comes to their sexual choices.³¹
28. Individuals who attend religious services more often are less likely to have a positive view of extramarital sexual relationships.³²
29. Those with higher levels of religious commitment and who regularly attend religious services are much less likely to engage in premarital sex or extramarital affairs or to have multiple sexual partners.³³
30. Among both conservative and mainline Protestants, religious affiliation and religious attendance consistently predict negative attitudes toward divorce and premarital sexual intercourse.³⁴

Family Weaknesses

31. Couples who share the same religious commitment are less likely to commit acts of domestic violence.³⁵
32. Men who attend religious services at least weekly are less than half as likely to commit an act of violence against their partners as their peers who attend once yearly or less.³⁶

²⁸ Arland Thornton, "Religious Participation and Adolescent Sexual Behavior and Attitudes," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 51, no. 3 (August 1989): 641-653.

²⁹ In this study, religiosity was a composite score between 3 and 12 representing an individual's religious attendance, participation in religious youth activities, and self-rated importance of religion.

³⁰ Sharon Scales Rostosky, Mark D. Regnerus, and Margaret Laurie Comer Wright, "Coital Debut: The Role of Religiosity and Sex Attitudes in the Add Health Survey," *Journal of Sex Research* 40, no. 4 (November 2003): 358-367.

³¹ Lisa D. Wade, "Relationship Dissolution as a Life Stage Transition: Effects on Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no. 4 (November 2002): 898-914.

Sharon Scales Rostosky, Mark D. Regnerus, and Margaret Laurie Comer Wright, "Coital Debut: The Role of Religiosity and Sex Attitudes in the Add Health Survey," *Journal of Sex Research* 40, no. 4 (November 2003): 358-367.

³² Gerbert Kraaykamp, "Trends and Countertrends in Sexual Permissiveness: Three Decades of Attitude Change in the Netherlands: 1965-1995," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no. 1 (February 2002): 225-239.

³³ Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

³⁴ W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 81.

³⁵ Christopher G. Ellison, John P. Bartkowski, and Kristin L. Anderson, "Are There Religious Variations in Domestic Violence?" *Journal of Family Issues* 20, no. 1 (January 1999): 87-113.

³⁶ Christopher G. Ellison, John P. Bartkowski, and Kristin L. Anderson, "Are There Religious Variations in Domestic Violence?" *Journal of Family Issues* 20, no. 1 (January 1999): 87-113.

33. Regular attendance at religious services has a strong and statistically significant inverse association with the incidence of domestic abuse.³⁷
34. Mothers who attended religious services less often over time reported a lower-quality relationship with their adult child.³⁸
35. Compared to those who consider themselves “very religious,” those who are “not at all religious” are far more likely to bear a child out of wedlock (among whites, three times as likely; among Hispanics, 2.5 times as likely; and among blacks, twice as likely).³⁹

Divorce

35. Marriages in which both spouses attend religious services frequently are 2.4 times less likely to end in divorce than marriages in which neither spouse worships.⁴⁰
36. The likelihood of divorce is reduced when husbands and wives share the same religious commitment. Such couples report a greater sense of well-being and more satisfaction with their marital relationship.⁴¹
37. Those who cease attending religious services divorce 2.5 times more frequently than those who continue their religious practice.⁴²
38. Those who consider their religious beliefs “very important” are 22 percent less likely to divorce than those to whom religious beliefs are only “somewhat important.”⁴³
39. Couples who share the same faith are more likely to reunite if they separate than are couples who do not share the same religious affiliation. One study found that fully a third of the separated spouses who had the same religious affiliation reconciled, compared with less than one-fifth of those with different affiliations.⁴⁴
40. Women who are more religious are less likely to experience divorce or separation than are their less religious peers.⁴⁵

³⁷ Christopher G. Ellison and Kristin L. Anderson, “Religious Involvement and Domestic Violence Among U.S. Couples,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, issue 2 (June 2001): 269-286.

³⁸ Lisa D. Pearce and William G. Axinn, “The Impact of Family Religious Life on the Quality of Mother-Child Relations,” *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 6 (December 1998): 810-828.

³⁹ Allan F. Abrahamse, *Beyond Stereotypes: Who Becomes a Single Teenage Mother?* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1988), 37-50.

⁴⁰ Vaughn R.A. Call and Tim B. Heaton, “Religious Influence on Marital Stability,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 3 (September 1997): 382-392.

⁴¹ Lisa D. Pearce and Dana L. Haynie, “Intergenerational Religious Dynamics and Adolescent Delinquency,” *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (June 2004): 1553-1572.

⁴² Timothy T. Clydesdale, “Family Behaviors Among Early U.S. Baby Boomers: Exploring the Effects of Religion and Income Change, 1965-1982,” *Social Forces* 76, no. 2 (December 1997): 605-635.

⁴³ Chris Knoester and Alan Booth, “Barriers to Divorce: When Are They Effective? When Are They Not?” *Journal of Family Issues* 27, no. 1 (January 2000): 78-99.

⁴⁴ Howard Wineberg, “Marital Reconciliation in the United States: Which Couples Are Successful?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56, no. 1 (February 1994): 80-88.

⁴⁵ Karen Price Carver, “Female Employment and First Union Dissolution in Puerto Rico,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 55, no. 3 (1993) 686-698.

II. Reasons for Religion: Education

41. Increased religious attendance is correlated with higher grades.⁴⁶ Students who frequently attend religious services scored 2.32 points higher on tests in math and reading than their less religiously-involved peers.⁴⁷
42. More than 75 percent of students who become more religious during their college years achieve above-average college grades.⁴⁸
43. Religiously involved students spend more time on their homework and work harder in school than non-religious students.⁴⁹
44. Frequent religious attendance correlates with lower dropout rates and greater school attachment.⁵⁰
45. Frequent religious attendance results in a fivefold decrease in the likelihood that youth will skip school, compared to those who seldom or never attend.⁵¹
46. The greater is parents' religious involvement, the more likely they will have higher educational expectations for their children and will communicate with their children about their education.⁵²
47. Frequent religious practice is positively correlated with higher educational aspirations.⁵³
48. Students who attend church weekly while growing up have significantly more years of total schooling by their early thirties than peers who do not attend church at all.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Mark D. Regnerus and Glen H. Elder, "Religion and Vulnerability Among Low-Risk Adolescents," *Social Science Research* 32 (2003): 644, 650. Regnerus and Elder analyzed 9,200 youth from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. They also found that each unit increase in church attendance decreased the likelihood of getting poor grades by 13 percent.

J.L. Glanville, D. Sikkink, and E.I. Hernández, "Religious Involvement and Educational Outcomes: The Role of Social Capital and Extracurricular Participation," *Sociological Quarterly* 49 (2008): 105-137.

⁴⁷ Mark D. Regnerus, "Shaping Schooling Success: Religious Socialization and Educational Outcomes in Metropolitan Public Schools," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, issue 3 (September 2000): 363-370.

⁴⁸ David S. Zern, "Some Connections Between Increasing Religiousness and Academic Accomplishment in a College Population," *Adolescence* 24, no. 93 (1989): 152. Zern, in his sample of 251, also found that neither past nor present religious practice was related to grade point average in college.

⁴⁹ Chandra Muller and Christopher G. Ellison, "Religious Involvement, Social Capital, and Adolescents' Academic Progress: Evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988," *Sociological Focus* 34 (2001): 155-183.

⁵⁰ Mark D. Regnerus, "Shaping Schooling Success: Religious Socialization and Educational Outcomes in Metropolitan Public Schools," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, issue 3 (September 2000): 363-370.

⁵¹ Douglas M. Sloane and Raymond H. Potvin, "Religion and Delinquency: Cutting Through the Maze," *Social Forces* 65, no. 1 (September 1986): 87-105.

⁵² Chandra Muller and Christopher G. Ellison, "Religious Involvement, Social Capital, and Adolescents' Academic Progress: Evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988," *Sociological Focus* 34, no. 2 (May 2001): 155-183.

⁵³ University of Pennsylvania, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Making the Grade: The Influence of Religion upon the Academic Performance of Youth in Disadvantaged Communities*, by Mark D. Regnerus, Report no. 3 (2001).

⁵⁴ L.D. Loury, "Does Church Attendance Really Increase Schooling?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43 (2004): 119-127.

49. Attending religious services and activities positively affects inner-city youths' school attendance, work activity, and allocation of time—all of which are further linked to reduced likelihood to be deviant.⁵⁵

III. Reasons for Religion: Health

50. Men and women who attend church weekly have the lowest mortality rates.⁵⁶
51. Religious practice delivers longevity benefits, most significantly by encouraging a support network among family and friends that helps to maintain a pattern of regimented care, reducing one's mortality risk from infectious diseases and diabetes.⁵⁷
52. Greater longevity is consistently and significantly correlated with higher levels of religious practice and involvement, regardless of the sex, race, education, or health history of those studied.⁵⁸
53. A literature review of medical, public health, and social science literature that empirically addressed the link between religion and mortality found that religious practice decreases mortality rates.⁵⁹
54. Those who are religiously involved live an average of seven years longer than those who are not. This gap is as great as that between non-smokers and those who smoke a pack of cigarettes a day.⁶⁰
55. Among African-Americans, the benefit of religion to longevity is particularly large. The average life span of religious blacks is 14 years longer than that of their nonreligious peers.⁶¹
56. Among African Americans (aged 18 to 54), those who attend church more than weekly have an even lower mortality risk than those who attend just once a week or not at all.⁶²

⁵⁵ National Bureau of Economic Research, *Who Escapes? The Relation of Churchgoing and Other Background Factors to the Socioeconomic Performance of Black Male Youths from Inner-City Tracts*, by Richard B. Freeman, Working Paper No. 1656 (June 1985).

⁵⁶ Douglas Oman and Dwayne Reed, "Religion and Mortality Among the Community-Dwelling Elderly," *American Journal of Public Health* 88, no. 10 (1998): 1471-1472.

⁵⁷ Robert A. Hummer, Richard G. Rogers, Charles B. Nam, and Christopher G. Ellison, "Religious Involvement and U.S. Adult Mortality," *Demography* 36, no. 2 (May 1999): 273-285.

⁵⁸ Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁵⁹ Robert A. Hummer, Christopher G. Ellison, Richard G. Rogers, Benjamin E. Moulton, and Ron R. Romero, "Religious Involvement and Adult Mortality in the United States: Review and Perspective," *Southern Medical Journal* 97, no. 12 (December 2004): 1223-1230.

⁶⁰ Mark D. Regnerus, "Religion and Positive Adolescent Outcomes: A Review of Research and Theory," *Review of Religious Research* 44, no. 4 (June 2003): 394-413.

⁶¹ Robert A. Hummer, Richard G. Rogers, Charles B. Nam, and Christopher G. Ellison, "Religious Involvement and U.S. Adult Mortality," *Demography* 36, no. 2 (May 1999): 273-285.

⁶² Christopher G. Ellison, Robert A. Hummer, Shannon Cormier, and Richard G. Rogers, "Religious Involvement and Mortality Risk among African American Adults," *Research on Aging* 22 (2000): 651-652.

57. Adolescents whose mothers attend religious services at least weekly display better health, greater problem-solving skills, and higher overall satisfaction with their lives, regardless of race, gender, income, or family structure.⁶³
58. Youths who both attend religious services weekly and rate religion as important in their lives are more likely to eat healthfully, sleep sufficiently, and exercise regularly.⁶⁴
59. Young people who both attend religious services weekly and rate religion as important in their lives are less likely to engage in risky behavior, such as drunk driving, riding with drunk drivers, driving without a seatbelt, or engaging in interpersonal violence. They are also less likely to smoke (tobacco or marijuana) or drink heavily.⁶⁵
60. Those with higher levels of religious commitment may have a reduced risk of colitis, various types of cancer, and untimely death.⁶⁶
61. One study shows that religion and spirituality have protective effects against mortality regarding cardiovascular disease.⁶⁷

Mental Health

62. Good mental health is highly correlated to religious participation.⁶⁸
63. An increase in religious practice is associated with having greater hope and a greater sense of purpose in life.⁶⁹
64. A literature review of 99 studies found “some positive association...between religious involvement and greater happiness, life satisfaction, morale, positive affect, or some other measure of well-being” 81 percent of the time. This analysis included a wide diversity among ages, races, and denominations.⁷⁰
65. Religious affiliation and regular church attendance are among the most common reasons people give to explain their own happiness.⁷¹

⁶³ Christopher G. Ellison, John P. Bartkowski, and Kristin L. Anderson, “Are There Religious Variations in Domestic Violence?” *Journal of Family Issues* 20, no. 1 (January 1999): 87-113.

⁶⁴ John M. Wallace, Jr. and Tyrone A. Forman, “Religion's Role in Promoting Health and Reducing Risk Among American Youth,” *Health Education and Behavior* 25, no. 6 (December 1998): 730, 733.

⁶⁵ John M. Wallace, Jr. and Tyrone A. Forman, “Religion's Role in Promoting Health and Reducing Risk Among American Youth,” *Health Education and Behavior* 25, no. 6 (December 1998): 730-733.

⁶⁶ Jeffrey S. Levin and Preston L. Schiller, “Is There a Religious Factor in Health?” *Journal of Religion and Health* 26, no. 1 (March 1987): 9-35.

⁶⁷ Yoichi Chida, Andrew Steptoe, and Lynda H. Powell, “Religiosity/Spirituality and Mortality,” *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 78 (2009): 86, 88.

⁶⁸ Diane R. Brown and Lawrence E. Gary, “Religious Involvement and Health Status Among African-American Males,” *Journal of the National Medical Association* 86, no. 11 (1994): 828.

⁶⁹ Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

| www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁷⁰ Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

| www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁷¹ B. Beit-Hallami, “Psychology of Religion 1880-1939: The Rise and Fall of a Psychological Movement,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 10 (1974): 84-90.

66. Happiness is greater and psychological health is better among those who attend religious services regularly.⁷²
67. A majority of the literature in an extensive review concluded that religious commitment and practice lead to increased self-esteem and that religious practice correlates with increased social support.⁷³
68. First-graders and kindergartners whose parents attend religious services are less likely to experience anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, and sadness.⁷⁴
69. More frequent attendance at religious services predicts less distress among adults⁷⁵ and high school students,⁷⁶ even when controlling for its normal socio-demographic predictors.
70. African-Americans who were more religious reported a greater sense of control than less religious respondents; this greater sense of control was, in turn, correlated with decreased distress.⁷⁷
71. People who are frequently involved in religious activities and highly value their religious faith are at reduced risk of depression, according to a review of more than 100 studies.⁷⁸
72. Those who participate in community religious services have lower levels of depression than those who do not fellowship in a religious community but pray alone.⁷⁹
73. Adolescents at one public school in Texas who frequently attended religious services and derived great meaning and purpose from religion in their lives had lower levels of depression than their less religious peers.⁸⁰

⁷² Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁷³ Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁷⁴ John P. Bartkowski, Xiaohu Xu, and Martin L. Levin, "Religion and Child Development: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study," *Social Science Research* 37, no. 1 (March 2007): 18-36.

⁷⁵ Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁷⁶ Christopher G. Ellison, John P. Bartkowski, and Kristin L. Anderson, "Are There Religious Variations in Domestic Violence?" *Journal of Family Issues* 20, no. 1 (January 1999): 87-113.

J.M. Mosher and P.J. Handal, "The Relationship Between Religion and Psychological Distress in Adolescents," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 25, issue 4 (Winter 1997): 449-457.

⁷⁷ Sung Joon Jang and Byron R. Johnson, "Explaining Religious Effects on Distress Among African Americans," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 2 (June 2004): 239-260.

⁷⁸ Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁷⁹ Christopher G. Ellison, "Race, Religious Involvement, and Depressive Symptomatology in a Southeastern U.S. Community," *Social Science and Medicine* 40, no. 11 (June 1995): 1561-1572.

74. Religious practice correlates with reduced incidence of suicide, as demonstrated by 87 percent of the studies reviewed in a 2002 meta-analysis.⁸¹ By contrast, a lack of religious affiliation correlates with an increased risk of suicide.⁸²

Addictive Behaviors

75. While a strong family remains the best defense against the negative effects of pornography, it is even more effective when coupled with religious worship.⁸³

76. There is a negative correlation between weekly religious participation and the habits of smoking and drinking.⁸⁴

77. Religious activity reduces cigarette consumption among the elderly.⁸⁵

78. There is a high correlation between religious involvement and reduced likelihood to consume alcohol.⁸⁶ This remains true even if a religion does not specifically prohibit consuming alcohol.⁸⁷

79. Adolescents,⁸⁸ psychiatric patients,⁸⁹ and recovering alcohol addicts⁹⁰ all show lower rates of alcohol abuse as they engage more frequently in religious activities.

⁸⁰ Loyd S. Wright, Christopher J. Frost, and Stephen J. Wisecarver, "Church Attendance, Meaningfulness of Religion, and Depressive Symptomatology Among Adolescents," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 22, no. 5 (October 1993): 559-568.

⁸¹ Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).

www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/errucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁸² Frank Tovato, "Domestic/Religious Individualism and Youth Suicide in Canada," *Family Perspective* 24, no. 1 (1990): 69-81.

⁸³ Marriage and Religion Research Institute, *Quality of Parent-Child Relationship, Religious Attendance, and Family Structure*, by Nicholas Zill, Mapping America 48 (2009).

<http://www.frc.org/mappingamerica/mapping-america-48-quality-of-parent-child-relationship-religious-attendance-and-family-structure> (accessed September 6, 2012). See also Mapping America publications on U.S. patterns of viewing x-rated movies (Mapping America 37-39) and adultery (Mapping America 73-75), <http://www.mappingamericaproject.org>.

⁸⁴ William J. Strawbridge, Sarah J. Shema, Richard D. Cohen, and George A. Kaplan, "Religious Attendance Increases Survival by Improving and Maintaining Good Health Behaviors, Mental Health, and Social Relationships," *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 23, no. 1 (2001): 68-74.

⁸⁵ Harold G. Koenig, Linda K. George, Harvey J. Cohen, Judith C. Hays, David B. Larson, and Dan G. Blazer, "The Relationship Between Religious Activities and Cigarette Smoking in Older Adults," *Journals of Gerontology: Medical Sciences* 53A, issue 6 (November 1998): M426-M434.

⁸⁶ Deborah Hasin, Jean Endicott, and Collins Lewis, "Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Patients with Affective Syndrome," *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 26, issue 3 (May-June 1985): 283-295.

Achaempong Y. Amoeateng and Stephen J. Bahr, "Religion, Family, and Drug Abuse," *Sociological Perspectives* 29 (1986): 53-73.

John K. Cochran, Leonard Beghley, and E. Wilbur Block, "Religiosity and Alcohol Behavior: An Exploration of Reference Group Therapy," *Sociological Forum* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 256-276.

⁸⁷ Achaempong Y. Amoeateng and Stephen J. Bahr, "Religion, Family, and Drug Abuse," *Sociological Perspectives* 29 (1986): 53-73.

John K. Cochran, Leonard Beghley, and E. Wilbur Block, "Religiosity and Alcohol Behavior: An Exploration of Reference Group Therapy," *Sociological Forum* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 256-276.

⁸⁸ Marvin D. Free, Jr., "Religiosity, Religious Conservatism, Bonds to School, and Juvenile Delinquency Among Three Categories of Drug Users," *Deviant Behavior* 15, no. 2 (1994) 151-170.

⁸⁹ David A. Brizer, "Religiosity and Drug Abuse Among Psychiatric Inpatients," *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 19, no. 3 (September 1993): 337-345.

80. Higher levels of maternal religious practice are related to significantly lower rates of alcohol abuse among adolescents, even after controlling for religious denomination and adolescents' peer associations—two factors that also influence their level of drinking.⁹¹
81. Religious involvement is associated with less drug abuse and makes one less likely to develop long-term addiction problems.⁹²
82. The more dangerous the drug, the more religious practice deters its use, amplifying the already positive, deterrent effects of strong family relations, strong school achievement, and positive peer influences.⁹³

IV. Reasons for Religion: Society

Social Effects

83. Metropolitan areas with high rates of congregational membership and areas with high levels of religious homogeneity tend to have lower homicide and suicide rates than other metropolitan areas.⁹⁴
84. States with more religious populations tend to have fewer homicides and fewer suicides.⁹⁵
85. Religious attendance is associated with direct decreases in both minor and major forms of crime and deviance, to an extent unrivalled by government welfare programs.⁹⁶
86. There is a 57 percent decrease in likelihood to deal drugs and a 39 percent decrease in likelihood to commit a crime among the young, black inner city population if they attend religious services regularly.⁹⁷
87. In a major national survey of adolescents, a 6 percent reduction in delinquency was associated with a one-point increase on an index that combined adolescents' frequency of religious attendance with their rating of religion's importance.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ Stephanie Carroll, "Spirituality and Purpose in Life in Alcoholism Recovery," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 54, no. 3 (May 1993): 297-301.

⁹¹ Vangie A. Foshee and Bryan R. Hollinger, "Maternal Religiosity, Adolescent Social Bonding, and Adolescent Alcohol Use," *Journal of Early Adolescence* 16, no. 4 (November 1996): 451-468.

⁹² Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, *Objective Hope—Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, by Byron R. Johnson, Ralph Brett Tompkins, and Derek Webb (2002).
www.manhattaninstitute.org/pdf/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf (accessed September 6, 2012).

⁹³ Edward M. Adlaf, "Drug Use and Religious Affiliation: Feelings and Behavior," *British Journal of Addiction* 80, no. 2 (June 1985): 163-171.

⁹⁴ Robert A. Hummer, Christopher G. Ellison, Richard G. Rogers, Benjamin E. Moulton, and Ron R. Romero, "Religious Involvement and Adult Mortality in the United States: Review and Perspective," *Southern Medical Journal* 97, no. 12 (December 2004): 1224-1225.

⁹⁵ David Lester, "Religiosity and Personal Violence: A Regional Analysis of Suicide and Homicide Rates," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 127, no. 6 (December 1987): 685-686.

⁹⁶ Byron R. Johnson, David B. Larson, Spencer De Li, and Sung Joon Jang, "Escaping from the Crime of Inner Cities: Church Attendance and Religious Salience Among Disadvantaged Youth," *Justice Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (June 2000): 377-339.

⁹⁷ Byron R. Johnson, David B. Larson, Spencer De Li, and Sung Joon Jang, "Escaping from the Crime of Inner Cities: Church Attendance and Religious Salience Among Disadvantaged Youth," *Justice Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (June 2000): 377-339.

88. Each unit increase in a mother's religious practice is associated with a 9 percent decline in her child's delinquency. The adolescents at lowest risk for delinquency typically have highly religious mothers and are themselves highly religious.⁹⁹
89. Children who attend religious services at least weekly are more likely to have positive social development than those who never attend religious services.¹⁰⁰

Charitable Giving

90. Religious practice positively affects compassion, regardless of political perspective.¹⁰¹
91. Compared with religiously unaffiliated peers, religious individuals are 15 percent more likely to report having tender, concerned feelings for the disadvantaged. This gap is reduced by only 2 percent when the effects of education, income, marital status, sex, race, and age are taken into account.¹⁰²
92. Religious individuals are 40 percent more likely than their secular counterparts to give money to charities.¹⁰³
93. Among those who feel compassion for the disadvantaged, religious respondents are 23 percentage points more likely to donate to charities at least yearly and 32 percentage points more likely to donate monthly than are their secular counterparts.¹⁰⁴
94. Individuals with a religious affiliation are 30 percent more likely to donate to organizations assisting the poor, compared to their secular counterparts.¹⁰⁵
95. Compared to their secular counterparts, religious individuals are more than twice as likely to volunteer.¹⁰⁶ They are 34 percentage points more likely to volunteer at least yearly and 22 percentage points more likely to volunteer monthly.¹⁰⁷

The Centrality of Religion in American History

The Founding Fathers, without the benefit of modern social science but with knowledge of history, keen observation, and sharp intellect, all saw religion's essential role in the functioning of the state. John Adams, second president of the United States, recognized

⁹⁸ Lisa D. Pearce and Dana L. Haynie, "Intergenerational Religious Dynamics and Adolescent Delinquency," *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (June 2004): 1553-1572.

⁹⁹ Lisa D. Pearce and Dana L. Haynie, "Intergenerational Religious Dynamics and Adolescent Delinquency," *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (June 2004): 1553-1572.

¹⁰⁰ Marriage and Religion Research Institute, *Children's Positive Social Development and Religious Attendance*, by Nicholas Zill and Patrick Fagan, Mapping America 58.

<http://www.frc.org/mappingamerica/mapping-america-58-childrens-positive-social-development-and-religious-attendance> (accessed July 26, 2012).

¹⁰¹ Arthur C. Brooks, "Compassion, Religion, and Politics," *The Public Interest* (Fall 2004): 57-66.

¹⁰² Arthur C. Brooks, "Compassion, Religion, and Politics," *The Public Interest* (Fall 2004): 57-66.

¹⁰³ Arthur C. Brooks, "Compassion, Religion, and Politics," *The Public Interest* (Fall 2004): 57-66.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur C. Brooks, "Compassion, Religion, and Politics," *The Public Interest* (Fall 2004): 57-66.

¹⁰⁵ Mark D. Regnerus, Christian Smith, and David Sikkink, "Who Gives to the Poor? The Influence of Religious Tradition and Political Location on the Personal Generosity of Americans Toward the Poor," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 3 (September 1998): 481-493.

¹⁰⁶ Arthur C. Brooks, "Compassion, Religion, and Politics," *The Public Interest* (Fall 2004): 57-66.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur C. Brooks, "Compassion, Religion, and Politics," *The Public Interest* (Fall 2004): 57-66.

that “[o]ur Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”¹⁰⁸

Thomas Jefferson, keen defender of religious freedom for all—believers and non-believers alike—made clear in the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (January 16, 1786) that religious convictions should not be forcibly taken from nor thrust upon individuals:

We, the General Assembly of Virginia do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief: but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities.”¹⁰⁹

George Washington summarized the importance of religion for the prosperity of the new nation with particular eloquence in his farewell address:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness—these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. . . . 'Tis substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government.¹¹⁰

The morality to which Washington referred is inculcated largely through religious practice.

Conclusion

To those who believe in God, it is no surprise that aligning one’s life with His will helps people to more fully express their nature and achieve happiness. To those who do not believe in God but do place faith in scientific investigation, the data indicate that behaving religiously has benefits for individuals and society that must be factored into public discourse, with due deference to the common good done.

The Founding Fathers would have concurred, from Washington and Adams through to Jefferson, Hamilton, and Franklin. The Republic not only benefits from the practice of the worship of God; it may even depend on it.

¹⁰⁸ Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 9th ed. (NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), 175.

¹⁰⁹ Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 9th ed. (NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), 175.

¹¹⁰ George Washington, Farewell Address, September 19, 1796, in *George Washington: A Collection*, ed. W.B. Allen (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Classics, 1988), 521.