



## DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

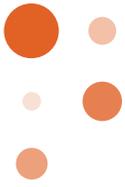
- Towards the beginning of the video, Professor Kreeft argues that, “If God exists, the presence of evil, as hard as it is to accept, makes sense. God allows it for a reason – namely, to give us free will.” Why do you think it’s the case that free will could not exist without evil? Do you agree with Professor Kreeft’s assertion? Why or why not?
- Later, Professor Kreeft shares with us that, “If God exists, morality is a real, objective feature of the world. If there is no God, morality is just rules we make up for this game of life we play.” Why do you think that morality being real could be considered a benefit to belief? Why do you think that the existence of God is necessary for morality to be objective and meaningful?
- Professor Kreeft further explains that, “If God exists, love is the nature of an eternal reality. If there is no God, love is just a fleeting feeling, no more than a bunch of chemical and neurological interactions.” What do you think Professor Kreeft means by ‘the nature of an eternal reality?’ Do you think that the reality of an afterlife can be a benefit of belief during this lifetime? If no, why not? If yes, in what ways?
- Nihilism is philosophy based on the belief that our existence does not have purpose and that an afterlife does not exist, thus life does not have meaning. In making his case for the benefits of belief, Professor Kreeft questions this notion by asking, “Why would anyone not wish that life has some ultimate purpose, that good and evil are real, that there is ultimate justice, that our love for others means something?” How would you answer his question? Why do you think that some people lean towards nihilism to some degree in their beliefs?
- Towards the end of the video, Professor Kreeft points out that, “If you choose to live as if there is a God – even if you are not sure there is a God – you lose nothing and you gain everything.” What do you think he means by this? Do you find this assertion that ‘living with faith can make life better’ a compelling and convincing argument? Why or why not?

## EXTEND THE LEARNING:

### CASE STUDY: Belief

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “The tantalizing proof that belief in God makes you happier and healthier,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What realization was the catalyst for the author to begin examining the relationship between faith and possible correlating benefits? What did the study on depressed patients with a strong ‘intrinsic faith’ conclude? What did the study on twins show? What is the speculative reasoning about why believers enjoy such benefits?
- What other kinds of benefits not mentioned in the article or video can you think of that could come from a belief in God?
- In the video, Professor Kreeft states, “God deliberately doesn’t give us absolute proof so that we’re free to choose or not to choose to believe in Him.” Why is the ability to choose so important to validating belief? If a person has the choice to believe in God or not, do you think that it is then necessarily each person’s responsibility to choose to enjoy all the benefits that come with faith or not, such as a purposeful existence, hope in the afterlife, etc... as well? Why or why not?

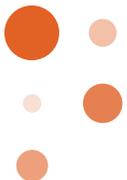


# QUIZ

## THE BENEFITS OF BELIEF

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1. **Why does God allow evil?**
  - a. He doesn't.
  - b. There is no such thing as evil.
  - c. To preserve our free will.
  - d. Because He wants us to suffer.
  
2. **If there is no God, \_\_\_\_\_.**
  - a. the world was deliberately designed
  - b. life is one big crapshoot
  - c. everything will make sense in the end
  - d. morality is a real, objective feature of the world
  
3. **Religious Christians and Jews \_\_\_\_\_?**
  - a. are happier
  - b. live longer
  - c. are more charitable
  - d. All of the above.
  
4. **\_\_\_\_\_ often precedes understanding.**
  - a. Freedom
  - b. Knowledge
  - c. Action
  - d. Oppression
  
5. **You can live as if God exists, even if you hold doubts.**
  - a. True
  - b. False



# QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

## THE BENEFITS OF BELIEF

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1. Why does God allow evil?

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- c. To preserve our free will.
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3. Religious Christians and Jews \_\_\_\_\_?

- a. are happier
- b. live longer
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- d. All of the above.

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- a. Freedom
- b. Knowledge
- c. Action
- d. Oppression

5. You can live as if God exists, even if you hold doubts.

- a. True
- b. False

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1358421/The-tantalising-proof-belief-God-makes-happier-healthier.html>

# The tantalising proof that belief in God makes you happier and healthier

By [Tom Knox](#)

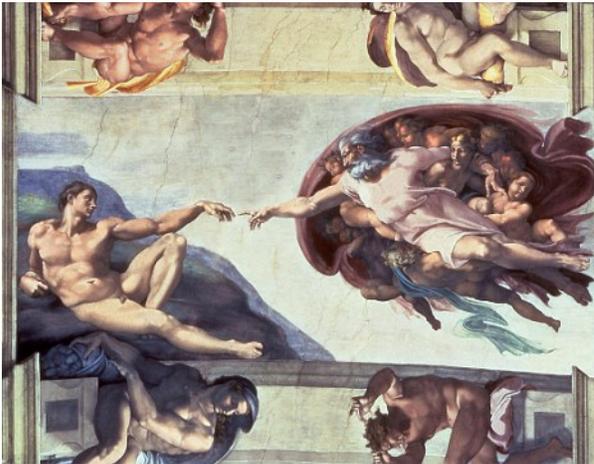
Updated: 16:10 EST, 18 February 2011

God has had a tough time over the past few years. On TV, in newspapers and on the internet, the debate as to whether faith has any relevance in a sceptical modern world has been as ubiquitous as it has been vigorous.

And it has been pretty clear which side is the most splenetic.

From Richard Dawkins' powerful atheist polemics to Christopher Hitchens' public derision of the Roman Catholic Tony Blair and Stephen Hawking's proclamation that the universe 'has no need for God', it seems that unbelievers have had the dwindling faithful on the run.

Or have they?



Proof? Research has found that religious believers have a healthy and happier life, but what is the secret and how does religion work its magic?

As research for my latest novel, *Bible Of The Dead*, I have spent months investigating the science of faith versus atheism, and discovered startling and unexpected evidence. It might just change the way you think about the whole debate, as it has changed my view.

I am not a religious zealot. On the contrary, I was a teenage atheist. And although in adulthood I have had a vague and fuzzy feeling that 'there must be something out there', I was never a regular church-goer. But what I have discovered, on my voyage through the science of faith, has astonished me.

My journey began a couple of years ago when I was travelling in Utah, the home of Mormonism. During my first week there, I approached this eccentric American religion with a typically European cynicism. I teased Mormons about their taste in 'spiritual undergarments'; I despaired at being unable to find a decent cappuccino (Mormons are forbidden coffee, as well as alcohol, smoking, tea and premarital sex).

But then I had something of an epiphany. One night, after a long dinner, I was walking back to my hotel in downtown Salt Lake City at 2am and I suddenly realised: I felt safe. As any transatlantic traveller knows, this is a pretty unusual experience in an American city after midnight.

Why did I feel safe? Because I was in a largely Mormon city, and Mormons are never going to mug you. They might bore or annoy you when they come knocking on your door, touting their faith, but they are not going to attack you.

The Mormons' wholesome religiousness, their endless and charitable kindness, made their city a better place. And that made me think: Why was I so supercilious about such happy, hospitable people? What gave me the right to sneer at their religion?

From that moment I took a deeper, more rigorous interest in the possible benefits of religious faith. Not one particular creed, but all creeds. And I was startled by what I found.

For a growing yet largely unnoticed body of scientific work, amassed over the past 30 years, shows religious belief is medically, socially and psychologically beneficial.

In 2006, the American Society of Hypertension established that church-goers have lower blood pressure than the non-faithful.

Likewise, in 2004, scholars at the University of California, Los Angeles, suggested that college students involved in religious activities are more likely to have better mental and emotional health than those who do not.

Meanwhile, in 2006, population researchers at the University of Texas discovered that the more often you go to church, the longer you live.

As they put it: 'Religious attendance is associated with adult mortality in a graded fashion: there is a seven-year difference in life expectancy between those who never attend church and those who attend weekly.'

Exactly the same outcome was recently reported in the American Journal of Public Health, which studied nearly 2,000 older Californians for five years. Those who attended religious services were 36 per cent less likely to die during this half-decade than those who didn't.

Even those who attended a place of worship irregularly — implying a less than ardent faith — did better than those who never attended.

Pretty impressive. But there's more; so much more that it's positively surreal.

In 1990, the American Journal of Psychiatry discovered believers with broken hips were less depressed, had shorter hospital stays and could even walk further when they were discharged compared to their similarly broken-hipped and hospitalised, but comparatively heathen peers.

It's not just hips. Scientists have revealed that believers recover from breast cancer quicker than non-believers; have better outcomes from coronary disease and rheumatoid arthritis; and are less likely to have children with meningitis.

Intriguing research in 2002 showed that believers have more success with IVF than non-believers.

A 1999 study found that going to a religious service or saying a few prayers actively strengthened your immune system.

These medical benefits accrue even if you adjust for the fact that believers are less likely to smoke, drink or take drugs.

And faith doesn't just heal the body; it salves the mind, too. In 1998, the American Journal of Public Health found that depressed patients with a strong 'intrinsic faith' (a deep personal belief, not just a social inclination to go to a place of worship) recovered 70 per cent faster than those who did not have strong faith.

Another study, in 2002, showed that prayer reduced 'adverse outcomes in heart patients'.

But perhaps this is just an American thing? After all, those Bible-bashing Yanks are a bit credulous compared to us more sceptical Europeans, aren't they?



Proclamation: Professor Stephen Hawking has said that the 'universe has no need for God'

Not so. In 2008, Professor Andrew Clark of the Paris School of Economics and Doctor Orsolya Lelkes of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research conducted a vast survey of Europeans. They found that religious believers, compared to non-believers, record less stress, are better able to cope with losing jobs and divorce, are less prone to suicide, report higher levels of self-esteem, enjoy greater 'life purpose' and report being more happy overall.

What is stunning about this research is that the team didn't go looking for this effect — it came to them unexpectedly. 'We originally started the research to work out why some European countries had more generous unemployment benefits than others,' says Professor Clark.

But as they went on, the pattern of beneficial faith presented itself. 'Our analysis suggested religious people suffered less psychological harm from unemployment than the non-religious. Believers had higher levels of life satisfaction.'

So what's going on? How does religion work this apparent magic?

One of the latest surveys to suggest that religious people are happier than the non-religious was conducted by Professors Chaeyoon Lim and Robert Putnam, from Harvard, and published last year.

They discovered that many of the health benefits of religion materialise only if you go to church regularly and have good friends there. In other words, it's the 'organised' part of organised religion that does a lot of the good stuff.

Going to a friendly church, temple or mosque gives you a strong social network and a ready-made support group, which in turn gives you a more positive outlook on life — and offers vital help in times of need. The Harvard scientists were so startled by their findings that they considered altering their own religious behaviour.

As Professor Lim said: 'I am not a religious person, but . . . I personally began to think about whether I should go to church. It would make my mum happy.'

But if the 'congregation' effect is one explanation for the good health of churchgoers, it's not the only one. Other surveys have found that intrinsic faith is also important.

For instance, a study of nearly 4,000 older adults for the U.S. Journal of Gerontology revealed that atheists had a notably increased chance of dying over a six-year period than the faithful.

Crucially, religious people lived longer than atheists even if they didn't go regularly to a place of worship. This study clearly suggests there is a benefit in pure faith alone — perhaps this religiousness works by affording a greater sense of inner purpose and solace in grief.

This begs the question: Given all this vast evidence that religion is good for you, how come the atheists seem so set against it?

They pride themselves on their rationality, yet so much of the empirical evidence indicates that God is good for you. Surely, then, it is the atheists, not the devout, who are acting irrationally?

All this will come as no surprise to many students of genetics and evolution, who have long speculated that religious faith might be hard-wired into the human mind.

For instance, twin studies (research on identical siblings who are separated at birth) show that religion is a heritable characteristic: if one twin is religious, the other is likely to be a believer as well, even when raised by different parents.



Prayer: Studies have found that even those with a small connection to religion can feel the benefits of it.

Neurologists are making exciting progress in locating the areas of the brain, primarily the frontal cortex, 'responsible' for religious belief — parts of the brain that seem designed to accommodate faith. This research even has its own name: neurotheology.

Why might we be hard-wired to be religious? Precisely because religion makes us happier and healthier, and thus makes us have more children.

In the purest of Darwinian terms, God isn't just good for you, He's good for your genes, too.

All of which means that, contrary to expectation, it is the atheists who are eccentric, flawed and maladaptive, and it's the devout who are healthy, well-adjusted and normal.

Certainly, in purely evolutionary terms, atheism is a blind alley. Across the world, religious people have more children than non-religious (go forth and multiply!), while atheist societies are the ones with the lowest birth rates.

The Czech Republic is a classic example. It proclaims itself the most atheist country in Europe, if not the world; it also has a puny birthrate of 1.28 per woman, one of the lowest on the planet (so soon there won't be any godless Czechs to proclaim their atheism).

The existence of atheism is therefore something of an anomaly. But then again, anomalies are not unknown in evolution.

Think of the dodo or the flightless parrot, doomed to extinction. Are atheists similarly blighted? Are Richard Dawkins and his type destined to vanish off the face of the Earth — the victims of their own intellectual arrogance?

That's not for me to say; it's for you to ponder. All I do know is that reassessing the research has changed the way I think about faith. These days I go to church quite a lot, especially when I am travelling and researching my books.

For instance, the other day I found myself in Cambridge — the home of Stephen Hawking — and took the opportunity to do some sightseeing of the city's intellectual landmarks.

I strolled by the labs where Hawking does his brilliant work, popped into the pub where they announced the discovery of DNA and admired the library where Charles Darwin studied. As I did, I was in awe at the greatness of Man's achievements.

And then I went to Evensong at King's College Chapel, and it was beautiful, sublime and uplifting. And I felt a very different kind of awe.

Sneer at faith all you like. Just don't assume science is on your side.