

Study finds religion helps us gain self-control

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Thinking about religion gives people more self-control on later, unrelated tasks; according to results from a series of recent Queen's University study.

"After unscrambling sentences containing religiously oriented words, participants in our studies exercised significantly more [self-control](#)," says psychology graduate student and lead researcher on the study, Kevin Rounding.

Study participants were given a sentence containing five words to unscramble. Some contained religious themes and others did not. After unscrambling the sentences, participants were asked to complete a number of tasks that required self-control – enduring discomfort, delaying gratification, exerting patience, and refraining from impulsive responses.

Participants who had unscrambled the sentences containing religious themes had more self-control in completing their tasks.

"Our most interesting finding was that religious concepts were able to refuel self-control after it had been depleted by another unrelated task," says Mr. Rounding. "In other words, even when we would predict people to be unable to exert self-control, after completing the religiously themed task they defied logic and were able to muster self-control."

"Until now, I believed [religion](#) was a matter of faith; people had little 'practical' use for religion," Mr. Rounding explains. "This research

actually suggests that religion can serve a very useful function in society. People can turn to religion not just for transcendence and fears regarding death and an after-life but also for practical purposes."

Other members of the research team include psychology graduate student Albert Lee and Queen's professors Jill Jacobson and Li-Jun Ji. The study was published in *Psychological Science*.

Provided by Queen's University

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