

# Does Religion Make People More Ethical?

April 20, 2022

Do children need religion to grow into good people? Sixty-five percent of Americans [think so](#). And even though younger adults have been leaving traditional faiths in droves, about 48% of them still hold this view. The result is a lot of conflicted parents. While they don't necessarily miss going to church, synagogue or mosque, they do worry that without some sort of religious education, their kids might not grow into morally upstanding people. So while many leave formal religion behind in their 20s and 30s, they slowly, and often somewhat reluctantly, begin to return when they have kids.

But belief about how religions work doesn't always match reality, particularly when it comes to the question of virtue. [A study](#) in the journal Science that examined the behavior of 1,200 adults by randomly pinging them five times a day to ask about moral failures found no differences between people who identified with a religion and those who didn't. A 2015 study in the journal Current Biology on the moral behavior of children found the same. So why the discrepancy between people's beliefs and scientific findings? And what's a concerned parent to make of it all?

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