

Inspired to Believe: The Connection between Inspirational Experiences and Belief in God

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[Thomas Alva Edison](#) famously opined that genius is “one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.” Though the inventor and businessman fell short of self-identifying as an atheist, he also asserted, in a 1910 *New York Times Magazine* interview, that “Nature did it all—not the gods of the religions.” New research suggests that Edison’s two statements above—and similar [others](#) he made—could be more intrinsically connected than it might seem at first sight: people who experience more inspiration in their lives tend to be stronger believers in God.

[Research](#) had previously shown that individuals with more analytical cognitive styles are less likely to be believers. The [new study](#), published in *Psychological Science* by Clayton R. Critcher and Chan Jean Lee of University of California, Berkeley, and KAIST, set out to determine the *experimental origins* of belief in God. They conducted a series of studies in California and Korea, to test the hypothesis that feeling inspired encourages a belief in God, and that it does so because “inspiration offers a transcendent experience that produces feelings of connection to something greater than the self.”