

Benefits of religion to society



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This paper is a report on some of the benefits of religion in the society despite what others who think otherwise may believe. This report delves into how religion has fostered social unity, moral values and the overall health and well-being of its adherents.

The question of how the idea of religion came into existence has been around for some time now. Researchers trace back the birth of spirituality in the ancient times by examining archeological records such as symbols, human burials, artifacts etc. An example is the people at the Blombos Cave who carved geometric designs into pieces of ochre dating about 100, 000 years back. It was no surprise to Charles Darwin when man began to actively engage in religious practices after the faculties of imagination, curiosity and wonder developed. He believed that religion is simply a by-product of workings of the mind. In the past, subjects related to the study of the origin of religion was a task exclusively undertaken by theologians whose conclusions seemed somewhat unreliable because of their predisposition to being biased. Regardless of how religion came about and contrary to what other people may believe, it plays a very crucial role in the society. Based on the research I did, I agree that though the practice of religion may have its downfalls, in the grand scheme of things, it has helped the society more than it has destroyed it. My research results went beyond my expectation because it happens that the practice of religion does not only provide us with answers, but it promotes social, physical and psychological health.

Some scientists have theorized that the practice of religion came as a result of human's cognitive faculties. While some people believe that religion is not a product of evolution, some scientists believe it exists because of

adaptation. It is believed that people who actively participated in religion passed down this trait to subsequent generations. Robin Dunbar, a psychologist and an anthropologist, who studies primates such as baboons thinks that religion may have developed as a group-level adaptation. This makes sense because goals are more likely to be achieved when there are a group of people involved who strive to work cooperatively. Some of the common goals may include farming and hunting which are activities that ensure continued survival. Others who were not part of a group were less likely to succeed at these activities and so their continued survival was threatened. Religious groups therefore serve to provide an avenue through which people can come together to work towards a common goal. Durkheim believed that social cohesion is promoted through the practice of religion. This is evident in the rites and rituals practiced by different faiths around the world. These rites unite people who identify as belonging to the said group. Rites performed at birth, death and marriage serve an integrative function among members of that society. Furthermore, through religion, members of a society can receive the needed support in times of emotional, financial and physical crisis. A classic example of the financial support less fortunate people receive can be seen in the practice of fast offering by the members of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints denomination. They go without food the first Sunday of every month and the money that they would have spent is given to the bishop to help fund the purchase of food, clothing and other necessities for the needy. According to a study by Hovey J. D, religious support from religion-based groups strongly predicts decreased hopelessness, depression, and suicidal tendencies. Religious people are generally happier and less stressed than their non-religious counterparts

because of the social support that is available to them when critically needed.

Religion promotes good morals and provides a source of answers. It serves as a mechanism for social control. Religion and morality are closely related. Religion is a system of beliefs and practices that a group of people interpret and respond to what they think is divine. Morality on the other hand is a set of principles that restrain the behavior of members of the society who are more powerful so that weaker members are not treated unfairly. It draws the line between what is right and wrong. The fact that most religions preach peace and love for humanity indirectly enforces morality in the society. An example is the ten commandments in the Bible which admonishes all its adherents to love the Lord with all their hearts, and to love their neighbors as themselves. The belief of supernatural beings would deter them from oppressing others. Frank E. Manuel once said that religion inspires terror for the preservation of the society. Secondly, religion provides more credible answers to questions that have been around since the dawn of time. Over the past centuries, scientists have come up with theories pertaining to how the universe was formed. One of such theories is the big bang theory which states that the universe came into existence because of an explosion. It beats imagination that as complex and well-coordinated as the organization of the stars and planets are, it all came from one big explosion. As once stated by a British astronomer called Fred Hoyle, the chances of that happening is comparable to a tornado sweeping through a junk-yard and assembling a Boeing 747 from the materials. Because of religion, we now know that a superpower is the architect of the universe and all that is in it.

Furthermore, religion creates a moral community. Religion and morality affect each other reciprocally. Morality paves way for the continuation of religious beliefs while religion reinforces morality with supernatural sanctions. These beliefs that are enforced create a community for those who share the same ideology and hence a social order is made. These beliefs provide us with ways of dealing with moral dilemmas. A moral community is necessary to provide moral guidance and standards of virtuous behavior in a degenerate world.

Religion is a great proponent of the overall health of its adherents. Firstly, religion promotes physical health. In 1998, Ellison and Levin conducted some studies to investigate how religion correlates with physical health. They found out that mortality rates decreased with people who professed to be a part of a religious group. This is because most religions discourage their adherents from indulging in lifestyles that may be detrimental to their physical health. For instance, the Bible and Koran speak strongly against alcoholism and debauchery. Extreme alcohol intake has been associated chronic liver damage. Secondly, religion promotes emotional and social health. Extensive research results suggest that people who are part of a religious group are happier and less stressed than their non-religious counterparts. The factors that underlie this phenomenon are numerous. Members of a religious group feel like they are part of a bigger family which would provide a safety net should they be faced with any crisis beyond their control. Because of this, they are less likely to be stressed about the unknown future. Kosmin and Lachman concluded in their study that people who did not identify with any religion showed a greater risk for developing

depression. Furthermore, a study that involved 200 subjects suggested that religiousness predicts a lower risk of depression, drug abuse and even suicide attempts. Lastly, religion promotes social health. Social health is the ability to create fulfilling interpersonal relationships with people around us. This forms the core of religious beliefs because most of them advocate unity and togetherness. To honor these core beliefs, individual members tend to empathize and account for one another. This consequently fosters great social relationship among members of religious institutions. In 2010, Neal Krause and colleague sought to find out if encouragement from fellow church members helps older people develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The results indicated that informal church-based support is positively correlated with healthy lifestyles among older African Americans. This confirms that the church fosters interpersonal relationships among its members.

In conclusion, religion has and still plays a very crucial role in the society. Not only does religion provide us with answers to controversial age-old questions, it promotes social integration and support. Above all and perhaps most importantly, it promotes social health and ensures that good moral values are upheld.

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