

Meta-Analyses Results Indicate That a Faith And Family Orientation is Regaining Popularity and Helpful to Children

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Speaking at Istanbul Kultur University in two speeches William Jaynes presented evidence from meta-analyses of over 130 studies and over half a million students indicating that a faith and family orientation is regaining popularity and is helpful to children and adolescents. It is particularly helpful in improving pupil scholastic achievement and overall behavior. The meta-analysis indicates that, on average, a student being a person of faith, from an intact family, and having highly engaged parents are all associated with higher level of grades, test scores, and positive behavior. William Jaynes, is a Harvard graduate and Senior Fellow at the Witherspoon Institute in Princeton.



William Jaynes, Professor

The measures of faith considered both external expressions of faith, such as attending worship services and religious youth group meetings, and internal expressions, such as the extent to which they consider themselves religious. Dr. Jaynes commented, "The results indicate that students of faith do better in school than their counterparts, who are not people of faith." Dr. Jaynes continued, "The results of the meta-analysis also indicate that in recent years there are somewhat more students turning to their faith than was the case six, eight, or more years ago.

Dr. Jaynes also noted some of the findings that impressed him the most. "It is worthy of our attention that family structure played such a major role in its relationship with pupil scholastic achievement. In one way, this should not surprise us, because historically in various studies done over time, parental family structure is one of the most salient variables in predicting student achievement. However, it is quite impressive, when one considers how little attention family structure receives when propounding some of the foremost solutions. American and world leaders generally appear unwilling to discuss the effects, on average, of parental divorce and single parenthood. Moreover, this reluctance is also patent when it comes to parental remarriage. Not only are leaders hesitant to address the influence of family structure, but this appears to be the case in the American and global general public as well. A lot of this hesitancy is a result of the belief that it is insensitive to discuss how the presence of two parents can help children and adolescents to thrive. However, the reality is that in actuality, it is insensitive not to

talk about it. If there are major ways of improving the educational outcomes of students, it is insensitive to pretend they do not exist.

Dr. William Jeynes was asked about the public policy implications of his findings. That is, he was asked what policy actions would he recommend, in light of the results of the meta-analyses. Dr. Jeynes replied that, "There are both changes in actions and attitudes that are necessary. It is a profound truth, that it is vital that the government and society realize that the attitudes that each possesses are often as important or more important than the actions that are taken. First, one attitude that needs to change is that there is a lot anti-religious bigotry particularly against those of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This is often very apparent in the public schools. Do Americans and people around the globe really want to do this when the evidence strongly indicates that faith is a source of strength for many young people? Countless numbers of students have an overwhelming number of obstacles working against them and their faith often carries them through. In fact, for many pupils, God is their only hope. Do we as Americans really want to undermine that strength and hope?"

Second, the U.S. Congress should consider legislation that will strengthen marriages. For example, one option is to create a law that would encourage several sessions of marital counseling from either clergy members or counselors in exchange for financial breaks such as a first-year marriage tax credit, the cancellation of marriage license fees, etc.

Third, the U.S. Congress should eliminate the "marriage penalty" from the U.S. Federal tax system. It is nothing less than despicable that financially speaking, the U.S. Government punishes people for getting married. This is a major reason why many people personally regard themselves as married, but choose not to marry, because taxation is too expensive.

Such a policy is very insensitive not only to the couple that desires to be married, but also to the children born from this relationship. Any such children are regarded as born out of wedlock and face a lower level of chances for success than they otherwise would have because their parents are less likely to remain together, etc.

Fourth, churches, schools, and other sources should offer training in parental involvement.

Parents and teachers both need to receive this training to become as effective as they can be.

Dr. Jeynes indicated that it is the sooner Americans act on these public policy implications the more that children and adolescents will benefit.

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