



"Every community needs to know about this strategy!"

- Jon Gordon, 14x Best Selling Author

~~before~~  
~~after~~

# DURING SCHOOL HOURS

WHY and HOW LifeWise Academy  
is reinstalling religious education  
into the *public school day*.

— Joel Penton, Founder & CEO of LifeWise Academy —

# CHAPTER

## UNEXPECTED IMPACT

WHY Reinstalling Religious Education Is a Game Changer

Not long ago, I had breakfast with a local superintendent.

He had a reputation for being opposed to religious programs in his district, so I was intrigued by his request. I had no idea what he wanted to discuss.

At breakfast, we chatted about football, some mutual friends, and OSU (Go Bucks!), and then he shifted abruptly to his point.

“Joel, what is your vision for LifeWise Academy in my district?”

I took a moment to answer. “Well, there is no vision for your district, really. We don’t have any hidden agenda. LifeWise Academy is a tool we offer to all communities. If your community wants to use LifeWise, we’re ready to help.”

His response floored me. “Well, we’re ready,” he said.

I must have looked stunned because he continued, “Our students need values, Joel. Other administrators I know have nothing but good things to say about LifeWise and

its influence in their districts. So just tell me my next steps. I'll do whatever I can to get it running in my district."<sup>1</sup>

## THE (NOT SO) HIDDEN TRUTH

I have talked to a lot of administrators, both as a public school speaker and as the founder of LifeWise. While I was not expecting that particular administrator's response, to be honest, I was not surprised at all that this was the feedback he had gotten.

At that point, LifeWise Academy was live in over twenty local school districts, and literally dozens more were in the works. We already knew that our program is effective. Administrators have seen these positive trends in every district that LifeWise serves.

Let me give you just one example. One school district served by LifeWise recently reviewed the data on the students who were most frequently referred to the principal's office for behavioral reasons. The students who did not attend LifeWise had increased numbers of office referrals from the first to second semester while the office referrals for students who did attend LifeWise dropped by more than 60%.

But these effects are not new or surprising. The positive impact of religion and religious education has been recognized for decades. And while researchers do not agree on exactly why the positive results exist,<sup>2</sup> they are almost unanimous that religion and religious education have a clear, significant, and positive impact on students.

Let me break that down.

The link is *clear* because it exists even when researchers control for other variables. And it isn't just measurable; it is *significant*. The positive influence of religion on education is highly correlated. And the link is *positive*, meaning that the students and their outcomes are better when religion is included in their education.

Most powerfully, this clear, significant, and positive impact appears in exactly the four major areas that administrators, teachers,

parents, and community members are already deeply concerned about—character education, mental health, academic outcomes and community involvement.

## BEFORE WE START

I should warn you now, though, there is a lot of information in this chapter. And there's so much more that I had to leave out.

Many of these studies are academic in tone. The results are filled with percentages and citations and references to even more studies. And this is the longest chapter in the book.

So you may be seriously tempted to skim, but I encourage you to take the time to let it all sink in.

Because these studies, numbers, and research do not lie. Religious education has a *very* powerful and positive impact on students and schools. And seeing it all laid out like this is actually very exciting.

So let's get started with those four areas of impact.

## AREA OF IMPACT #1: CHARACTER EDUCATION

As we saw in Chapter 2, we want our students to thrive, but to do that, they need to develop good character.

Character ... provides the foundation for everything else. Without qualities such as good judgment, responsibility, the ability to overcome difficulties, and self-discipline ... students will be handicapped in all areas of their lives. Character underlies personal relationships and personal achievement.<sup>3</sup>

Character is particularly necessary in today's digital society, where our kids face opportunities and dangers that have never existed before.<sup>4</sup> In our fast-paced, online world, where both information and decisions are presented to students at top speed, character is what will anchor them and help them cope—wisely and effectively.<sup>5</sup>

# A LIFEWISE

*“Tidbit”*

LifeWise has already seen practical evidence of character change. Not long ago, some students at a school that LifeWise serves got in a bit of trouble during recess. While the teacher was dealing with one of the students who’d been involved, a second young man came back to confess that he, too, had been involved. “We just talked about honesty at LifeWise,” he told her, “so I knew I needed to tell the truth about what I’d done.”



Unfortunately, many students now have to develop good character, as well as math and reading, at school.

Teachers and administrators have shared this reality with me over and over. “You know Joel, these days it’s not enough to simply educate students. You have to be their parent as well,” they say. Or, as one principal admitted, “We have a crisis of character.”

To deal with this crisis, dozens of character education programs have been created, each one claiming to instill character, promote prosocial behaviors, or develop social-emotional maturity in our students.

But religion and religious education have the same (or better) positive impact on character as any of these new programs, even in the twenty-first century. We’ll look at three areas where this is true: general character, delinquency, and risk behaviors.

## *General Character*

The lack of character often shows up as bullying, a loss of decision-making skills, and an inability to connect and engage with others. However, the loss of “respect, trust and responsibility”<sup>6</sup> can be offset by adding religion to the equation.

When the National Council on Crime and Delinquency studied a released time religious instruction program in Oakland, California, they found that studying the Bible along with their school curriculum helped the students develop good character.

According to the report, engaging with Bible lessons and positive adult mentors introduced the students to “themes that support positive character development that can lay a strong foundation for healthy and moral behavior through adolescence and adulthood.”<sup>7</sup>

## *Honesty*

Because it is easy to pinpoint, honesty is often the focus of studies on character. And it also demonstrates the positive impact of religion.

In one study, for example, a professor purposely mis-graded a test. After going over the answers, he asked students to let him know if their grades were wrong. Based on an earlier questionnaire, the results were clear: “45 percent of weekly [church] attenders were honest, compared with 13 percent of those who never or rarely attended church.”<sup>8</sup>

### *Delinquency and Violence*

Good character also combats the rising rates of truancy and school violence,<sup>9</sup> and once again, religion has a powerful impact.

Rodney Stark, a leading expert on religion and sociology, reports that “religious American teenagers are more likely to attend school regularly (rather than be truants)”<sup>10</sup> and that “religious Americans are far less likely to have dropped out of school.”<sup>11</sup>

Like truancy, violence is also reduced by religious engagement because religion tends to “crowd out negative influences”<sup>12</sup> and encourage good behavior, making its influence doubly effective.<sup>13</sup>

According to one study, a survey of 247 studies published over 60 years “reported a positive effect of religion on reducing crime, deviance, and delinquency—often a very strong effect.”<sup>14</sup>

### *Risk Behaviors*

For most schools, though, character is most important for discouraging risk behaviors and encouraging good decision-making skills.

From internet safety and the impact of social media to drug and alcohol use and sexual activity, equipping students to make wise choices has lasting and positive impact.

And again, study after study demonstrates that religious participation and education make a big difference. Here are just a few examples:

- ✦ “Religious involvement is generally associated with greater wellbeing, less depression and anxiety, greater social support, and less substance abuse.”<sup>15</sup>
- ✦ The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reported that “rates of drug and alcohol abuse have been found to be significantly lower in those who are religious compared to their nonreligious counterparts.”<sup>16</sup>
- ✦ One survey of studies, over half of which focused on teens, found that “the research is almost unanimous in reporting that religious persons are less likely to abuse alcohol or take illicit drugs.”<sup>17</sup>

Religion and good character go hand in hand. From encouraging respectful behavior and avoiding negative or harmful ones, religion and religious education have a powerful, positive effect that protects and empowers students to live a safer, healthier life.

## **AREA OF IMPACT #2: MENTAL HEALTH**

It is one of the scariest statistics in education today—1 in 5 children are dealing with some form of mental illness, and nearly 80% of those children won’t receive appropriate treatment.<sup>18</sup>

This problem is significant, at all levels of education, and schools are trying admirably to address this health emergency. Religious education could be another powerful tool in that arsenal.

With only a few exceptions, decades of research have clearly demonstrated that religious participation effectively lowers rates of suicide as well as anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders.

- ✦ “84% [of studies] found lower rates of suicide or more negative attitudes toward suicide among the more religious.”<sup>19</sup>

Students often find real, measurable success when their academic studies are paired with religious education.

- ✦ “Research has shown that religion and spirituality are generally associated with better mental health [as well as] lower levels of depressive symptoms, fewer symptoms of posttraumatic stress, fewer eating disorder symptoms, fewer negative symptoms in schizophrenia, less perceived stress, lower risk of suicide, and less personality disorder.”<sup>20</sup>
- ✦ “Religion can ‘serve to ease dread and anxiety, reduce personal and group tension and aggressiveness, allay fears, and moderate loneliness, depression, anomie, and/or feelings of entrapment and inferiority.’”<sup>21</sup>

Even better, religious participation also seems to have a direct correlation to positive mental health.

- ✦ “[Psychologists] not only were wrong to blame mental illness on religion but were doubly wrong for failing to realize that religiousness provides substantial protection against mental illness. It can even make people happier.”<sup>22</sup>
- ✦ “Nearly 80% [of studies] found religious beliefs and practices consistently related to greater life satisfaction, happiness, positive affect, and higher morale.”<sup>23</sup>

Amazingly, there doesn’t seem to be any group for which religion does not benefit mental health. “Studies of subjects in different settings ... ethnic backgrounds ... age groups ... and locations ... find that religious involvement is related to better coping with stress and less depression, suicide, anxiety, and substance abuse.”<sup>24</sup>

The research is abundantly clear. In the face of rising rates of mental illness among even the youngest school children, reinstalling religious education can reduce negative effects and increase positive effects on students’ mental health.



# EXPLAINING AWAY THE CONNECTION

*“They’re probably just good kids.”*

Some people think the connection is more about the students than about religion. That students who are more likely to be religious are also more likely to do better in school.<sup>32</sup> (Smith qtd Stark 135) However, the “evidence [is] that these positive outcomes ... are not simply a reflection of “selection effects” [or] the likelihood that religious teens are also the kind of youth who would perform well in school.”<sup>33</sup>

*“It’s just a family thing.”*

Or perhaps it is just family support that makes the difference? Again, no. A 2020 study of sibling pairs found that personal religiosity was a positive factor on GPA, college expectations, and education completed, separate from family influence. While good grades were somewhat connected to family support, the study found that long-term measures (college aspirations and degrees completed) were more connected to personal religiousness.<sup>34</sup>

## A QUICK BREAK

*Are you still with me?*

I get really excited when I see just how easily we can demonstrate the measurable, positive impact of religion and religious education.

I hope you’re seeing it and getting excited too.

Because our next section is one of the most significant in terms of education. Contrary to popular belief, religious involvement actually has a positive impact on students’ academic performance.

## AREA OF IMPACT #3: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Students often find real, measurable success when their academic studies are paired with religious education. “It seems that religiosity instills values that when affirmed and reinforced, [create] an environment that motivates students to be successful academically.”<sup>25</sup>

Religion can help students stay “on track” academically. Being on track means “maintaining an adequate GPA, keeping up with homework, maintaining progress through grades, getting along with classmates, avoiding disciplinary action, and refraining from skipping class.”<sup>26</sup>

Other studies have found that “students who take the time to commit to spiritual activities enhance their ability to excel academically”<sup>27</sup> and those “who participated in religious activities and/or had spiritual beliefs had better academic performance.”<sup>28</sup>

Rodney Stark agrees: “Religious students have a superior level of academic achievement, however it is measured.”<sup>29</sup> He continues:

Compared with less religious students, religious students

- ✦ Score higher on all standardized achievement tests.
- ✦ Get better grades.

- ✦ Are more likely to do their homework.
- ✦ Are less likely to be expelled or suspended.
- ✦ Are less likely to drop out of school.<sup>30</sup>

Christian Smith sums it up this way: “After controlling for ... family and individual effects, a significant religious effect on academic achievement remains.”<sup>31</sup>

#### *At-Risk Advantage*

This positive influence of religion on academics seems to be even stronger for at-risk and disadvantaged students.

Studies have shown that, “as the level of poverty rises within the neighborhood, the relationship between church attendance and being on-track in school becomes more positive, indicating a uniquely protective influence of church attendance among youth in more impoverished neighborhoods.”<sup>35</sup>

And according to Ivory Toldson, editor of *The Journal of Negro Education*, “religious involvement shows especially positive relationships with achievement for students in lower-income neighborhoods than students in higher-income neighborhoods.”<sup>36</sup>

This connection has been demonstrated in study after study for decades.

A 1996 study concluded that “religious socialization was related to educational attainment for younger blacks, regardless of whether they enjoyed the positive influence of a two-parent home or a residence outside the central city,”<sup>37</sup> a conclusion shared by Harvard economist Richard Freeman in his study on religion and academic achievement for “African-American male youth in high-poverty neighborhoods.”<sup>38</sup>

# A LIFEWISE

“Tidbit”

Many school administrators that we meet want to offer their students the opportunity to receive religious instruction and connect with the faith community, but they often feel their hands are tied. Recently, one inner-city elementary school principal shared with a LifeWise team member that she had been looking for a church that would come alongside the school to invest in her students. In our meeting, she was overjoyed to learn about the launch of a LifeWise Academy to serve her students.





Religion and  
religious  
education  
positively  
impact  
character,  
mental health,  
and academic  
achievement.

### *Bridging the Achievement Gap*

The research even indicates that religious education may help address the achievement gap that “exists on every measure of achievement: standardized test scores, grades, being held back a grade, and staying in school.”<sup>39</sup>

Patrick Fagan noted religion’s “wide-ranging capacity to boost the academic potential of young people, especially for those who need it most.”<sup>40</sup>

And David Hodge found that, rather than struggling on standardized tests, Latino students in a released time program did equally well as their peers who did not attend the program.<sup>41</sup> Many other researchers have reported similar results.<sup>42</sup>

William Jeynes, a leading expert on the positive effects of religion on education is adamant that religion does positively address the achievement gap.

“Of all the variables included ... religious faith [whether personal, school-based, or a character-based curriculum] was the one that produced the largest effect size [on the achievement gap].”<sup>43</sup> It’s significant enough that, according to Jeynes, “religious faith can reduce the achievement gap by more than 50%.”<sup>44</sup>

### **AREA OF IMPACT #4: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT—THE HOLY GRAIL OF EDUCATION**

Still tracking? I hope so, because we made it to the last point in the chapter. And for many schools, this one may be the most important of all.

Religion and religious education positively impact character, mental health, and academic achievement, but they also correspond to positive and effective community involvement.

Administrators and teachers have long recognized the influence of community involvement on schools. “The positive impact of

connecting community resources with student needs is well documented. In fact, community support of the educational process is considered one of the characteristics common to high-performing schools.”<sup>45</sup>

So what does this have to do with religion? Local churches and church attenders often provide a powerful, positive community influence for many students.

Churches are highly committed to their communities. “[They] are often among the last institutions of civil society to leave and first to return to low-income urban neighborhoods and communities,”<sup>46</sup> making them a powerful “socializing agent” for students.<sup>47</sup>

And they provide a highly positive influence.

Churches can “create an ‘umbrella of legitimacy’ for youth” by creating “a place where social attitudes and behaviors, academic achievement, and future-oriented planning is valued and encouraged.”<sup>48</sup>

And they “can [provide] the sorts of social and cultural capital rewarded by schools and teachers, and [promote] attitudes and practices conducive to positive educational outcomes.”<sup>49</sup>

Simply put, when community groups, including religious groups and churches, invest in schools, positive outcomes result.

Religion helps to reinforce the importance of staying in school, working hard to attain good grades, and achieving a diploma. ... Youth in church communities are motivated to excel (and behave properly, etc.) not simply by their own will, but by their connection to others who expect it.<sup>50</sup>

The NEA put it this way: “When schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs.”<sup>51</sup>

## **DID YOU START SKIMMING?**

That was a lot. I get it. But I think it’s valuable to see all the evidence laid out this way.

(I actually had even more info in this chapter that I chopped and moved to Appendix 2 – “Even More Impact: Chapter 3 Deleted Scenes.” For those who are interested in more, or who are just major nerds, flip there for extra goodness.)

The evidence is clear. When we reinstall religious education during school hours, schools and students benefit—in character, mental health, academic achievement and community involvement.

Most people know it. Researchers can prove it. I’ve seen it.

I hope that you can see it now, too. I hope you’re beginning to see the value and benefits religious education could bring. But maybe you still find yourself hesitating.

In that case, let’s push on to chapter 4 and hopefully we can lock in the WHY of reinstalling religious education for you.

; "Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Data Summary & Trends Report 2009–2019," CDC (2019), [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth).

11. "Bullying and Cyberbullying," [SchoolSafety.gov](http://www.schoolsafety.gov), 2022, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.schoolsafety.gov/bullying-and-cyberbullying?subtopic%5B107%5D=107#-block-views-block-resources-by-subtopic-block-1>; "Facts About Bullying," [StopBullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov), September 9, 2021, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/facts>; "Fast Facts: Bullying," NCES, 2022, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=719>.
12. "Bullying and Cyberbullying," [SchoolSafety.gov](http://www.schoolsafety.gov), 2022, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.schoolsafety.gov/bullying-and-cyberbullying?subtopic%5B107%5D=107#-block-views-block-resources-by-subtopic-block-1>; "How Students Can Benefit from Character Education," [Teachnology.com](http://www.teach-nology.com), accessed May 26, 2022, [https://www.teach-nology.com/current-trends/character\\_education/](https://www.teach-nology.com/current-trends/character_education/).
13. Culture Translator. "Mr. Beast's Burgers, Rings of Sour, and Spoonies." [Axis.org](https://app.axis.org/explore/ctp-2022-09-09) email. <https://app.axis.org/explore/ctp-2022-09-09>
14. William Brangham and Gretchen Frazee, "Growing Number of Young Americans Feel Climate Anxiety," [PBS NewsHour](http://www.pbs.org), November 10, 2021, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/growing-number-of-young-americans-feel-climate-anxiety-heres-what-they-need-to-cope>; "Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health," CDC, June 3, 2022, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>; "Mental Health," CDC, September 12, 2022, Accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm>. "More than 1 in 3 high school students had experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019, a 40 percent increase since 2009."
15. "Mental Health," CDC, September 12, 2022, Accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm>. "In 2019, approximately 1 in 6 youth reported making a suicide plan in the past year, a 44% increase since 2009."
16. "The Whole Child Approach to Education," ASCD, 2015, accessed August 31, 2022, <http://www.wholechildeducation.org/about/>.
17. Paul Barnwell, "Students' Broken Moral Compass," *The Atlantic*, July 25, 2016, accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/07/students-broken-moral-compasses/492866/>. "William Anderson, a high-school teacher in Denver, ... emphasized that schools should promote this approach [blending academics "with an exploration of character and ethics"] to develop well-rounded students. Addressing academic skills and challenging students to consider ethics and character should not, he argued, be mutually exclusive."
18. Jeff Myers, *Unquestioned Answers: Rethinking Ten Christian Cliches to Rediscover Biblical Truths* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2020), 120–21.
19. Max Glaskin, "The Science Behind Spokes," *Cyclist UK*, April 28, 2015, accessed October 13, 2022, <https://www.cyclist.co.uk/in-depth/85/the-science-behind-spokes>.
20. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 1997), 9–10.
21. Steven Spielberg, director, *Jurassic Park*, 1993, Universal, 1993, 127 min.

## CHAPTER 3

1. My answer, in case you were wondering, was that he needed to wait for the community to bring a proposal and that he could cooperate with the effort but not explicitly encourage or discourage participation.

2. Erkan Acar, "Effects of Social Capital on Academic Success: A narrative synthesis," *Educational Research and Reviews* 6, no. 6 (June 2011): 456–461, accessed May 26, 2022, <http://www.academicjournals.org/ERR>; Sunia Fukofuka, "The Impact of Spirituality on Academic Performance," *International Forum*, 10, no. 2 (October 2007), 37, accessed May 21, 2022, [https://scholar.google.com.ph/citations?view\\_op=view\\_citation&hl=en&user=0Os8InUAAAAJ&citation\\_for\\_view=0Os8InUAAAAJ:u5HHmVD\\_uO8C](https://scholar.google.com.ph/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=0Os8InUAAAAJ&citation_for_view=0Os8InUAAAAJ:u5HHmVD_uO8C);
- William H. Jeynes, "Religiosity, Religious Schools, and Their Relationship with the Achievement Gap: A Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis," *The Journal of Negro Education* 79, no. 3 (2010): 263–79. [www.jstor.org/stable/20798348](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20798348); and William H. Jeynes, "The Effects of Religious Commitment on the Academic Achievement of Black and Hispanic Children," *Urban Education* 34, no. 4 (1999): 458–479. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.860.6145&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.
3. Thomas Lickona, "Character Education: The Heart of School Reform," *Religion & Education* 27, no. 1 (2000): 59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2000.11000917>.
4. "How Students Can Benefit from Character Education," [Teachnology.com](http://www.teach-nology.com), accessed May 26, 2022, [https://www.teach-nology.com/currenttrends/character\\_education/](https://www.teach-nology.com/currenttrends/character_education/)
5. Jessica Spallino, "How Character Education Helps Children Learn and Develop," [Method Schools](http://www.methodschoools.org), January 23, 2017, accessed October 23, 2022, <https://www.methodschoools.org/blog/how-character-education-helps-kids-learn-and-develop>.
6. Gary Skaggs and Nancy Bodenhorn, "Relationships Between Implementing Character Education, Student Behavior, and Student Achievement," *Journal of Advanced Academics* 18, no. 1 (2006): 107, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ753972.pdf>.
7. Monique W. Morris, Barry Krisberg, and Sharan Dhanoa, "Summary of Findings: Released Time Bible Education," (2003) National Council on Crime and Delinquency: 11, accessed May 2020.
8. Rodney Stark, *America's Blessings: How religion benefits everyone, including atheists* (Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2012), 53.
9. Christopher A. Was, Dan J. Woltz, and Clif Drew, "Evaluating Character Education Programs and Missing the Target: A Critique of Existing Research," *Educational Science Review* 1 (2006): 148–156, doi:10.1016/j.edurev.2006.08.001
10. Stark, 55.
11. Ibid, 4–5.
12. Brian Barrett, "Religion and Habitus: Exploring the relationship between religious involvement and educational outcomes and orientations among urban African American students," *Urban Education* 45, no. 4 (2010): 464, accessed March 22, 2022, DOI: 10.1177/0042085910372349.
13. Mark D. Regnerus, "Making the Grade: The influence of religion upon the academic performance of youth in disadvantaged communities," [Baylor ISR: Baylor University](http://www.baylorisr.org), 2008, accessed May 21, 2022, 11 [http://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/ISR\\_Making\\_Grade.pdf](http://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/ISR_Making_Grade.pdf).
14. Stark, 37.
15. Harold G. Koenig and David B. Larson, "Religion and mental health: Evidence for an association," *International Review of Psychiatry* 13, no. 2 (2001): 75.
16. Simon Dein, Christopher CH Cook, and Harold Koenig, "Religion, spirituality, and mental health: current controversies and future directions," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 200, no. 10 (2012): 5.

17. Koenig and Larson, 71.
18. Meg Anderson and Kavitha Cardoza, "Mental Health in Schools: A Hidden crisis affecting millions of students," nprED, August 31, 2016, <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/08/31/464727159/mental-health-in-schools-a-hidden-crisis-affecting-millions-of-students>.
19. Koenig and Larson, 71.
20. Samuel R. Weber and Kenneth I. Pargament, "The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Mental Health," *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 27, no. 5 (2014): 358–363.
21. Stark, 107–08.
22. Stark, 95.
23. Koenig and Larson, 71.
24. Maria Archer, "The Positive Effects of Religion on Mental Illness." Institute for Family Studies, July 28, 2017, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-positive-effects-of-religion-on-mental-illness>. Citing Koenig, 289.
25. Sunia Fukofuka, "The Impact of Spirituality on Academic Performance." *International Forum*, 10, no. 2 (October 2007), 37, accessed May 21, 2022, [https://scholar.google.com.ph/citations?view\\_op=view\\_citation&hl=en&user=0Os8InUAAAAJ&citation\\_for\\_view=0Os8InUAAAAJ:u5HHmVD\\_uO8C](https://scholar.google.com.ph/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=0Os8InUAAAAJ&citation_for_view=0Os8InUAAAAJ:u5HHmVD_uO8C).
26. Regnerus, "Making the Grade," 6.
27. Fukofuka, 36.
28. Ibid.
29. Stark, 134.
30. Ibid.
31. qtd. in Stark, 135.
32. [text box] Christian Smith, qtd in Stark, 135.
33. [text box] Mark Regnerus, Christian Smith, and Melissa Fritsch, "Religion in the Lives of American Adolescents: A review of the literature." *A Research Report of the National Study of Youth and Religion* No. 3. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC, 2003, 14, accessed May 21, 2022, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED473896.pdf>.
34. [text box] Ilana M. Horwitz, Benjamin W. Domingue, and Kathleen Mullan Harris, "Not a family matter: the effects of religiosity on academic outcomes based on evidence from siblings," *Social Science Research* (2020): 88–89. Accessed May 27, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2020.102426>.
35. Regnerus, "Making the Grade," 8.
36. Ivory A. Toldson, and Kenneth Alonzo Anderson, "Editor's Comment: The Role of Religion in Promoting Academic Success for Black Students," *The Journal of Negro Education* 79, no. 3 (2010): 206, accessed May 19, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/20798343](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20798343).
37. Regnerus, Smith, and Fritsch, 18.
38. Regnerus, "Making the Grade," 5.
39. Stark, 137.
40. Patrick F. Fagan, "Religious Practice and Educational Attainment," *MarriResearch* (2010), 22, <https://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF12D59.pdf>.
41. David R. Hodge, "Latino Students and Spiritual Release Time Programs: Does Releasing Students From Class for Spiritual Instruction Impede Academic Achievement?" *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 93, no. 2 (2012): 146.
42. Jonathan Luke Wood, "Spirituality and Academic Success: Perceptions of Black Males in the Community College," (2012), 44, [https://works.bepress.com/jluke\\_wood/12/](https://works.bepress.com/jluke_wood/12/); William H. Jeynes, "The Effects of Religious Commitment on the Academic Achievement of Black and Hispanic Children," *Urban Education* 34, no. 4 (1999): 473, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.860.6145&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
43. William H. Jeynes, "Religiosity, Religious Schools, and Their Relationship with the Achievement Gap: A Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis," *The Journal of Negro Education* 79, no. 3 (2010): 273, [www.jstor.org/stable/20798348](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20798348)
44. Ibid, 275.
45. "Parent, Family, Community Involvement in Education," NEA Policy Brief, (2008), <https://www.coursehero.com/file/35617307/NEA-Poly-Brief-Parent-Family-Community-Involvement-pdf/>.
46. Barrett, 449.
47. Barrett, 457.
48. Regnerus, "Making the Grade," 11.
49. Barrett, 457.
50. Regnerus, "Making the Grade," 5.
51. "Parent, Family, Community Involvement in Education."

## CHAPTER 4

1. Marquand, "Rise and Fall."
2. John R. Vile, "Board of Education of the City of Cincinnati v. Minor (1872)," *First Amendment Encyclopedia*, 2009, Accessed May 11, 2022. <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/660/board-of-education-of-the-city-of-cincinnati-v-minor>.
3. Skaggs, 84.
4. Barnwell, "Students' Broken Moral Compass." "By omission, are U.S. schools teaching their students that character, morality, and ethics aren't important in becoming productive, successful citizens?"
5. William H. Jeynes, "A Meta-Analysis on the Relationship Between Prayer and Student Outcomes," *Education and Urban Society* 52, no. 8 (2020), 1232.
6. Ibid, 1232, emphasis added.
7. Ibid, 1232.
8. Jude Schwalbach, "Combating Value-Neutrality and Creating Classrooms of Character," *The Heritage Foundation*, December 13, 2019, accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/education/commentary/combating-value-neutrality-and-creating-classrooms-character>.
9. Ibid.

# WE PROMISE THIS WHOLE THING IS **NOT ILLEGAL.**

Decades ago, we systematically removed religious education from the public school day. LifeWise Academy is bringing it back.

**DURING SCHOOL HOURS** is the two-part (true) story of how it's happening right now.

- ✦ Part 1 investigates **WHY** religious education was removed from public schools, the unintended consequences of its removal, and why reinstalling it is a game-changer for future generations.
- ✦ Part 2 shows exactly **HOW** Lifewise Academy is doing it now — bringing Bible education to public school students **DURING SCHOOL HOURS**.

Find out why this future-changing movement is growing faster than anyone could have imagined and learn exactly how your community can get started today.

By the way — did we mention it's **NOT** illegal?



**JOEL PENTON** is the Founder and CEO of LifeWise Academy, a nonprofit that provides Bible education to public school students during school hours. Joel lives in Columbus, Ohio with his wife, Bethany, and their five children.

  
**LIFEWISE  
PRESS**

[lifewise.org](http://lifewise.org)

ISBN 979-8-9876175-0-2



9 798987 617502