

# Entrepreneurs pray more, Baylor researchers discover

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WACO—Does risk-taking drive people who launch businesses to their knees in prayer? Or are people who pray often simply more willing to take risks and trust God with the results?

American entrepreneurs pray more frequently, are more likely to see God as personal and are more likely to attend services in congregations that encourage business and profit-making, according to a study by [Baylor University](#) scholars in business and sociology.

Their research, published in the current *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, is an analysis of data from the ongoing [Baylor Religion Survey](#). A total of 1,714 adults chosen randomly from across the country answered more than 300 items in the survey, designed by Baylor scholars and administered by the [Gallup Organization](#) in 2010. The study is part of a larger research project on religion and entrepreneurship funded by the National Science Foundation.



Mitchell J. Neubert  
Entrepreneurs are categorized in the study as those who have started a new business or who are trying to do so.

“Entrepreneurs take on tasks that are yet unproven,” said Mitchell J. Neubert, associate professor and Chavanne Chair of Christian Ethics in Business in Baylor’s Hankamer School of Business. “We know they are praying more, but we don’t know yet what they’re praying about. It might be for the wisdom to navigate uncertainty. It could be ‘Please give me more success,’ or ‘Give me more energy.’”

When it comes to entrepreneurs’ concept of God, “they tend to think of God as a more personal, interactive being, and that is tightly related to why they pray more frequently,” said Kevin Dougherty, an associate professor of sociology in Baylor’s College of Arts & Sciences.

More than half of the entrepreneurs in the survey pray daily, while a third pray several times a day.



Kevin Dougherty “Another interesting finding is where they worship,” Dougherty said. The researchers determined entrepreneurs tend to worship in pro-business religious communities, which is “a novel and fascinating discovery,” the scholars wrote in the journal article.

The study reported survey respondents in the eastern United States are less likely than those in the South to report their place of worship encourages participants to start a business or make a profit.

The study raises considerations for faith communities. While congregations

are recognized for such actions as mobilizing individuals to vote and volunteer, “previous research on congregations says very little about the emphasis given to work and business,” the article notes.

Because of the country’s “competitive religious market,” congregations specialize to attract and retain members. Catering to entrepreneurial individuals may offer “a competitive advantage,” the researchers wrote.

Other questions the study raises are whether entrepreneurs pick a congregation that matches their entrepreneurial orientation—and whether a faith community can help prepare someone for entrepreneurship.

“How is religion related to entrepreneurial behavior? And more importantly, why?” the article asks. “Equally fascinating, how do religious individuals engaged in business creation reconcile the teachings of their faith on material gain with their entrepreneurial endeavors? Prompted by these initial findings, we hope others will join us to expand understanding of if, how and why religion and entrepreneurial behavior intersect.”