

Want your kids to keep faith? Take a chance on college degree

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—Apparently the ivory tower is not undermining the faith, after all.

A new study from the University of Texas indicates college graduates are far more likely to maintain their religious beliefs and practices than those who never attended college.

Researchers found four-year college students and graduates are least likely to neglect church attendance, say religion is less important in their lives or abandon their faith altogether. Those who do not pursue a degree are the most likely to leave religion behind.

“Many people assume college is public enemy No. 1 for religion,” said assistant professor of sociology Mark Regnerus, author of *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers*. “But we found young adults who don’t experience college are far more likely to turn away from

religion."

Jeremy Uecker, a graduate student and lead author of the study, said the findings suggest the culture of campuses is changing.

"Religion and spirituality are becoming more accepted in higher education, both in intellectual circles and in campus life," he said. "Religious students are encountering a much less hostile environment than in years past."

Among those least likely to leave their faith are Jews, Catholics and black Protestants, who often tie religion to cultural heritage.

Women, Southerners and individuals whose parents still are married also are unlikely to abandon religion.

Researchers drew from the [National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health](#), which tracked more than 10,000 Americans from adolescence through early adulthood from 1994 to 1995 and again from 2001 to 2002.

The complete study, titled "Losing My Religion," appears in the June 2007 issue of the sociology journal *Social Forces*.

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