

Being psychologists for a day



Dr Carissa and her colleagues wondered if someone's idea of God made a difference to how they behave. So, they asked about lots of ideas to do with people's attitudes and beliefs and matched them to their view of God.

Have a go yourself before you look at the bottom of the page. What do you think?

If someone thinks God is how might they behave?
boundless and infinite (Limitless)	
strict and punishing (Authoritarian)	
cosmic energy (Mystical)	
forgiving and compassionate (Benevolent)	
unimaginable and unknowable (Ineffable)	

Dr Carissa's research (and research from other psychologists) showed that:

If someone thinks God is they are more likely to:	They are less likely to:
boundless and infinite (Limitless)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enjoy religious diversity focus on individual spirituality rather than groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feel close to nature believe in reincarnation.
strict and punishing (Authoritarian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> see God as a personal being be committed to following God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feel close to nature cheat!
cosmic energy (Mystical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feel close to nature believe God is involved in human affairs believe in reincarnation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> see God as a personal being (more of a cosmic force).
forgiving and compassionate (Benevolent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> see God as a personal being involved in people's lives be committed to following God believe that God supports them in their lives find their belief in God helps them to cope in tough times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> believe in reincarnation.
unimaginable and unknowable (Ineffable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask lots of questions about God and spirituality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be certain about what God is like.

- Which of these findings match your predictions?
- Why do you think people with these ideas of God think or behave in this way?
- Think about your own ideas of God's – whether you think a God exists or not. Do your ideas about 'God' make any difference to how you think or behave?