Wellbeing Review

The Source and Impact of Specific Parameters that Enhance Wellbeing in Daily Life - Sponsored by our very own Teleios, Stewart et al. evaluated four parameters (forgiveness, gratitude, hope and empathy) for their relationship to wellbeing. This study suggested that these parameters may improve either one of general wellbeing, pro-social and positive relational behavior and demonstrate positive health effects. To view the complete abstract go to http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26087913.

Teleios News!

Pastors Hold True to Bible!

Teleios recently conducted a survey of pastors graduating from 3 Bible believing seminaries to assess if they maintained Biblical exhortations or support extra Biblical attitudes in their church.

Our results showed that pastors believed it was ‘important to ‘very important’ for church members to maintain Biblical exhortations in their Christian life (96%). Extra-Biblical attitudes, although perhaps accepted or fashionable within the church, were less often considered either ‘important’ to ‘very important’ (33%). From the pooled responses we found statistically higher ratings for each of the four questions about Biblical exhortations compared to extra-Biblical attitudes questions (P<0.0001).
These findings should encourage church members and clergy because: they demonstrate that many pastors recognize the importance of maintaining fidelity to Biblical teachings; and extra-Biblical attitudes are deemed generally less important. As adherence to God’s word has been shown in the medical literature to be associated with greater wellbeing, these findings should further inspire pastors and seminaries not to bend their theological stance to cultural trends. This study showed that individuals trained in Bible believing seminaries continue to hold to those principles once they become pastors.

**Do Pastors Face Persecution?**

*Teleios conducted a survey of pastors graduating from Bible believing seminaries to assess their perception of their role society and the impact of adversarial attitudes of culture or government against their ministry.*

The survey was sent to 1064 pastors of whom 164 (15%) responded. Pastors believed Christianity played a positive role in promoting an ethical society and government (96%) as well as individual healthy wellbeing (95%). Pastors noted generally that protecting constitutional freedoms is vital to allow expression of religious faith (74%) and a large government may lead to repression of religion (76%). Many pastors felt suppressed in their ability to express a political opinion while preaching because of the current culture (34%) or IRS regulations (37%). Almost half indicated they had suffered abuse (generally emotional) because of antagonism to their faith (44%). Many pastors agreed they should be able to express a political view from the pulpit (40%). The majority of respondents indicated that they should encourage political candidates who back freedom of expression in society (73%).

**Bible adherent pastors believe that Christianity’s teaching is beneficial for individuals and society. However, many pastors perceive negative societal and governmental pressure because of their beliefs. Accordingly, pastors generally assert the importance of constitutional freedoms to maintain their ability to express themselves.**
How Church Contributes to Your Wellbeing!

Teleios surveyed pastors for their perceptions of how church-based activities influence wellbeing.

We sent the survey to 976 pastors who were graduates from 3 Bible-believing seminaries, of whom 105 (11%) responded. Survey questions were developed from Scriptural references to spirituality or service encouraged church activities (Acts 2:42, 47, 1 Tim 4:14-16, I Tim 2:2) and from common administrative tasks within the modern church. Questions focused on 3 categories: teaching/worship, service outside the church and church communication.

Pastors indicated overwhelmingly that spiritual based activities improved wellbeing (top 5 responses of which they selected ‘very positive’ or ‘positive’)

Pastors indicated teaching/worship, educational and small group meetings all positively affected well-being of attendees. The most positive aspects of teaching/worship activities were praise, prayer, sermons and baptismal services and were the highest rated of all assessed church activities. For service outside the church the activities were positive for church life with teaching the gospel/Bible. For church administration issues and communication patterns the highest rated response were the attendees’ relationship with the pastors, but also along with other church leaders and associate pastors.

Church activities, and especially those spiritually-based, may improve attendee’s wellbeing.

The Christian Life is Good for You!

Teleios evaluated the benefit of Christianity on general wellbeing and specific aspects of daily living in healthy populations.

Forty-three articles were reviewed for the influence of religion on: general wellbeing, specific Christian measures of adherence and wellbeing and effect on life measures. There was a positive effect of religion in the lives of generally healthy individuals, seen in all age groups, genders, African-American and
Caucasian races and included improvements in general wellbeing, sense of community, purpose, satisfaction, hope, and ability to forgive.

The confidence of God’s acceptance can help remove guilt and insecurity about an individual’s eternal standing before God. Importantly the Bible states we can be secure in our relationship with God because He sacrificed his Son as a free gift so all our sins may be forgiven. We access this free gift of forgiveness and salvation through our faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 3:21-26). In daily life Scripture offers advice on benefits of proper living in regards to family life, career, ethical choices, and treatment of others (i.e., forgiveness, thankfulness, etc.).

Improvements were observed in specific areas of life such as family, career and socialization. Christianity provides enhanced wellbeing across various age and ethnic groups for general wellbeing and specifically in relationships and career.

Recent Important Medical Research in Religion

**Religiosity/spirituality: Relationships with non-suicidal self-harm behaviors and attempted suicide** – Sansone & Weiderman examined religiosity/spirituality in relationship to both non-suicidal self-harm behavior and past history of suicide attempts. The authors found that some aspects of religiosity/spirituality were associated with lowered risk for self-harm. To view the complete abstract go to [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25862549](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25862549).

**Religious beliefs, practices, and health in colorectal cancer patients in Saudi Arabia** – Shaheen Al Ahwal et al. examined the prevalence of religious beliefs and practices in colorectal cancer patients and correlation with demographic, social, psychological and physical health characteristics. The authors demonstrated religious involvement was related to fewer depressive symptoms and less suicidal ideation. To view the complete abstract go to [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25990540](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25990540).

**Impact of spiritual wellbeing, spiritual perspective, and religiosity on the self-rated health of Jordanian Arab Christians** – Musa et al. explored associations of spiritual wellbeing, spiritual perspective and religiosity with self-rated health. The authors showed spirituality and religiosity are important to Jordanian Arab Christians’ health and wellbeing. To view the complete abstract go to [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25990460](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25990460).

**Are religiosity and prayer use related with multiple behavioral risk factors for chronic diseases in European adults aged 50+ years?** – Linardakis et al. examined the relationship of religious and spiritual beliefs with the adoption and presence of multiple behavioral risk factors in European adults. The authors found that having received religious education and prayer use were related to the presence of fewer multiple behavioral risk factors. To view the complete abstract go to [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25769346](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25769346).
Here are a few of our recent blogs. To see more go to [http://teleiosblog.blogspot.com/](http://teleiosblog.blogspot.com)

**June 10, 2015 – How to know God!**

Can we further improve our lives with the benefits of Christianity and the Bible? The answer comes from the Bible’s 5-step approach to maturing our relationship with God which helps us access additional benefits to our wellbeing. I call this method the ‘5 tools to maturity’ and they are taken from Acts 2:42 and 47. They are as follows: prayer, praise, fellowship, receiving Biblical teaching and reach others with Biblical truth.

These five tools describe the activities in the very first church in Jerusalem and provide a model to us today for what actions individuals and the church should perform routinely. Importantly, these five activities are confirmed in later verses in the epistles. Why are these 5 tools important? When implemented consistently, and in balance with each other, these activities appropriate God's Word into our daily lives. We will consider them individually in upcoming blogs.

For now it is important to emphasize that the 5 tools may enhance personal wellbeing, not only when performed individually, but even more so done in aggregate. A number of studies have shown that church attendance, which would allow for these five tools to be expressed in a community setting, may enhance personal wellbeing (1-4). Further, several studies sponsored by Teleios also have noted that individuals who perform these activities have enhanced wellbeing and especially when performed in aggregate (5-6).

This is exciting news! Consequently, scripture tells us that we can have a sure and certain relationship with God, guilt free, and He provides us measures to propel our spiritual growth leading to better personal wellbeing. What great promises! Join us in upcoming blogs as we look individually at these 5 tools, and why and how they can promote wellbeing. Thank you for joining me today. I look forward to seeing you next time. Please tell me your questions and comments and please share this blog with your friends.

**May 20, 2015 – Be double sure you are Christian!**

Now we want to turn our attention to specific Scripture that can impact our wellbeing. Let's start from the beginning: salvation! Prior psychological research has shown that an adverse relationship with God hurts wellbeing and places a person at risk for depression. In contrast, Christianity is generally associated with positive wellbeing and a positive relationship with God. How does a person transition from a negative to positive relationship with God?
Scripture provides the clear sure pathway! It states an adverse relationship with God may be corrected by admitting our need for forgiveness, recognizing that Christ died on the cross for all wrongdoings so we could receive forgiveness. We receive this forgiveness by simply asking God by faith to forgive us and correct our relationship with Him. Scripture declares: Eph 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast; and Rom 10:9 - If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

It's as simple as that, 3 steps: recognize that you need a correction in your relationship with God because of your past wrongdoings; recognize He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross on your behalf because of your past wrongdoings; and trust God by faith that you're forgiven as activate the free gift of salvation.

This is the first and ground-laying step to increased wellbeing in your life. If you have not done so, take this first step to a sure relationship with God. We will then explore together how it will enhance your life and you will in turn benefit others.

May 6, 2015 - Is the young generation lost?

Many of us “older wiser” folk fear the younger generation, the Millennials, are leaving Christianity and do not realize its values. Such data have come from a number of respected survey houses. I thought Teleios should examine the question as well, but in more detail regarding the perceived value of Christianity in daily life. We randomly surveyed 105 students at the University of Georgia in Athens for influences on their wellbeing, their ability to recognize advice from an individual source, its perceived benefit as contributing to wellbeing, and how they would respond to this advice.

This survey showed that college students believe that maintenance of good health and close relations with friends, family and God, as well as satisfaction with career goals, are important to wellbeing! Detractions from wellbeing were noted most often as poor health, bad self-image and stress/fatigue from course work. When students were provided a list of advice statements from an undisclosed source, in the majority of cases students agreed the provided statements were wise. They mostly common identified: be grateful, be slow to speak and quick to listen, and work hard to provide for yourself and others, to be sage advice. Most students correctly identified the advice statements as coming from the Bible. When the students were told on the survey the advice statements were indeed paraphrased from the Bible, and were asked how they would change their relationship to the source of the guidance, 57% indicated they would seek further advice from the Bible and most of the remaining group said they would at least maintain their current knowledge base.

What motivated their responses? I can think of several choices: there is a predominant Christian culture in the Southeastern United States that may have eased acceptance of the maxims coming from this religion; many students may have possessed already a Christian commitment and recognized the importance of such advice in their lives apart from any cultural influence; and some student may have suffered enough emotional trials in their life to attract them to the wisdom and its source.
Of interest was the low number of respondents who indicated sexual relations, drugs/alcohol or social media were a source of positive wellbeing. These factors have been studied in the last generation and have been shown potentially to reduce wellbeing when used in excess.1-3 The results of our survey, however, are positive in that it appears the great majority of students limited their dependence on these activities increasing their wellbeing.

So good news! College students most commonly identify health, close relationships with family, friends, and God, as well as satisfaction with career goals, as positive sources of wellbeing. Further, about half are willing to pursue Biblical knowledge to change their lives and most of the rest recognize the wisdom of Biblical advice.

April 29, 2015 - Does Bible study really help?

“Oh, do I have to study the Bible every day?” Many people consider Bible study a time-consuming chore that they must endure to prove their faithfulness to God. The Teleios team considers Bible study as a wonderful life-enhancing activity that is part of our vital relationship with God.

We decided to evaluate the effect of a Bible study on the wellbeing of 46 healthy young adults from a Christian community environment. This was a “proof of concept” study since we don’t know of any prior research about this topic. The design was a prospective, randomized, active-controlled, single-blind intervention trial. Subjects were randomized to either an active (detailed bible study program) or a control (minimally detailed bible study program) group in a 3:1 ratio. Ephesians Chapter 1 was chosen as the study text since it details many wonderful characteristics of our great salvation.

The results showed no differences between the active and control groups for any general or specific wellbeing measure. However, when the active group was compared to its own baseline data significant differences were observed in overall wellbeing. It is unclear from our results why there was an increase of overall wellbeing in the active group. We speculate that the gain in knowledge about the security of their relationship with God, by faith alone, allowed for less guilt and greater confidence.

Interestingly, increased wellbeing was also observed in the control group, but did not quite reach significance, possibly because of the smaller sample size. This group also studied Scripture, but about events surrounding the creation of man in Genesis Chapters 1-4 that did not contain the salvation information from Ephesians provided to the active-intervention group. Consequently, with a larger sample size it could be that greater wellbeing would have been statistically significant in both groups. If true, it might be that studying any Scripture, regardless of the specific content, could have a positive effect on wellbeing.

This proof of concept study suggests that increases in short-term well-being potentially can be achieved by a Scripture study program over the course of 4-weeks in young Christian adults. More research is needed to better understand the effect of improved wellbeing associated with Scripture study both in the short and long term.
Other Newsletters and Websites of Interest

Harold Koenig’s newsletter –
http://www.spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu/index.php/publications/crossroads

Josh McDowell Ministries –
http://www.josh.org/

Abdu Murray at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries –
http://www.rzim.org/