

# Church attendance vs. meditation: Which is better?

## Why we studied church and meditation

Medical researchers often study or mention meditation for patients as an assumed “religion-free” method to reduce stress, but typically avoid mentioning church or Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Does church help reduce stress and should it also be recommended?

## What we did

- Teleios reviewed medical articles from 1966 to 2015 in peer-reviewed medical literature that evaluated meditation\* and church attendance# in physically healthy populations.



- Measures explored were general wellbeing and mental health markers including stress, anxiety and depression.

## What it showed

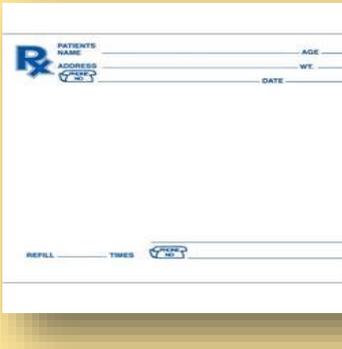
**Great news! Both church attendance and meditation have a positive impact on your wellbeing!**

- Of 37 articles reviewed, 16/16 meditation studies, and 18/21 church attendance papers, generally enhanced wellbeing (P=0.84).
- However, church attendance may have additional benefits beyond stress reduction as noted in prior studies, such as: community service, prayer, socialization, praise, and confidence in a positive relationship with God based in a Biblical definition of eternal

life as a free gift through faith in Christ's sacrifice.<sup>2-5</sup>

## What it means?

### For docs, go ahead, prescribe church to help!



A clinical practitioner, who believes a patient would benefit from a lifestyle improvement to reduce stress and enhance wellbeing, can feel confident in suggesting church attendance without promoting a specific denomination.

### For the rest of us, hey, church helps us feel better!



**Summary: Attending church potentially may be considered by medical personnel, and society in general, as a way to enhance wellbeing.**

\*Meditation types reviewed

Mindfulness-based meditation  
Transcendental meditation  
Brain Wave Vibration meditation  
Vipassana meditation  
Maum meditation  
Focused meditation  
Mental silence-orientated meditation  
Zen instruction meditation

#Church types reviewed

Christian  
Protestant  
Baptist  
Church of Scotland  
Greek Orthodox  
Calvinist  
Presbyterian

1. McCord G, et al. Discussing spirituality with patients: a rational and ethical approach. *Ann Fam Med* 2004;2:356-61.
2. MacIlvaine WR, et al. Association of strength of religious adherence to quality of life measures. *Complement Ther Clin Pract* 2013;19:251-5.
3. van Olphen J, et al. Religious involvement, social support, and health among African-American women on the east side of Detroit. *J Gen Intern Med* 2003;18:549-57.
4. Ryrie CC. *Basic theology*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1999.
5. MacIlvaine WR, et al. Association of strength of community service to personal wellbeing. *Community Ment Health J* 2014;50:577-82.

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