

BENEFIT OF CHRISTIANITY

Purpose: To evaluate the benefit of religion on general well-being and specific aspects of daily living in healthy populations.

Methods: Studies were reviewed that evaluated well-being in peer-reviewed medical literature from 1966 to present identified using search terms in PubMed and Google Scholar. Articles were limited to those evaluating Christianity or religion in historically Christian countries.

Results: There was a positive effect of religion in the lives of generally healthy individuals, seen in all age groups (10 years and older), both genders, African-American and Caucasian races and included improvements in general well-being, sense of community, purpose, satisfaction, hope, and ability to forgive. Benefits were observed in specific areas of life such as family, career and socialization.

Conclusions: Religion, and Christianity in particular, provides enhanced well-being across various age and ethnic groups for general well-being and specifically in relationships and career.

Table 1: Summary of General Well-being Articles

First author	Location	Subjects	Results and Conclusions
Macllvaine	USA	303	Greater religious adherence promoted well-being
Francis	Australia	989	Belief in God, church attendance, and personal prayer related to higher level of psychological well-being
Leondari	Greece	363	Religiosity positively related to psychological well-being
Francis	Wales & Ireland	246	Positive attitude toward Christianity correlated with better health
Laurencelle	USA	210	Intrinsic faith correlated with lower anxiety, depression, signs of character pathology, and higher ego strength
Peacock	USA	1030	All religiosity measures, except petitionary prayer, positively related to life satisfaction
Wnuk	Poland	115	Meaning of life and hope improve life satisfaction and positive affect
Ferraro	USA	2939	Conservative religious affiliation related to poorer health; greater religious practice related to better health
Perry	Canada	26	Christian faith provides tools to combat distress

Table 2: Summary of Church Attendance/Association Articles

First author	Location	Subjects	Results and Conclusions
Koenig	USA	456	Frequent church attendance increased subjective well-being at age 70
Krause	USA	1011	Church attendance increased feelings of meaning in life, optimism, and health
Demir	USA	618	Church attendance related to greater well-being, indicated by greater happiness and less depressed mood
Robbins	Wales	417	Church attendance promoted purpose in life and psychological well-being
Varon	USA	143	Greater health satisfaction and social involvement of children with greater maternal church attendance
Markstrom	USA	125	Frequent church attendance associated with higher ego strengths for hope and will of adolescents
Smith	USA	1418	Parental church attendance improved children's social networks ties with families of friends and school teachers
Ellison	USA	2956	Frequent church attendees reported larger social networks and better support
Koenig	USA	3968	Those who attended church more frequently were likely to smoke cigarettes
Lewis	USA	2610	Church attendance increased civic engagement due to strong social networks

Table 3: Summary of Frequent Prayer Articles

First author	Location	Subjects	Results and Conclusions
Benzein	Sweden	15	Hope strengthened by reading Bible and praying
Arcury	USA	145	Prayer, reading Bible, and church service help manage health
Helm	USA	3851	Private religious activity increased survival advantage
Krause	USA	1258	Negative effects of financial strain on health reduced for those who pray frequently
Maltby	UK	474	Personal religious practice, like prayer, is factor of well-being, orientation is not

Table 4: Summary of Bible Instruction Articles

First author	Location	Subjects	Results and Conclusions
Benzein	Sweden	15	Hope strengthened by reading Bible and praying
Arcury	USA	145	Prayer, reading Bible, and church service help manage health
Hamilton	USA	54	Reading scripture is a mental health promoting strategy during stressful life events

Table 5: Summary of Expressions of Praise Articles

First author	Location	Subjects	Results and Conclusions
Tshabalala	South Africa	40	Praise and worship increased feelings of upliftment, wellbeing and connection
Krause	USA	1500	Religious music created greater social connection and health

Table 6: Summary of Christian Service Articles

First author	Location	Subjects	Results and Conclusions
MacIrvine	USA	309	Community service positively influences personal well-being
Lewis	USA	2610	Frequent church attendees showed increased civic engagement due to strong social networks
Garland	USA	25	Motivations for religious volunteering: response to God, other's needs, relationships, personal benefits
Torres-Harding	USA	213	Religious engagement positively associated with greater intentions to engage in social justice activities/action
Hunsberger	Canada	295	Intrinsic orientation positively correlated with behavioral intentions to volunteer
Bernt	USA	245	More frequent helping associated with intrinsic religious orientation

Table 7: Summary of Family Life Articles

First author	Location	Subjects	Results and Conclusions
Smith	USA	1418	Parent church attendance and youth group correlated with greater social network closure
Caputo	USA	1911	Parent religiosity associated with better health, higher education, lower substance abuse for adolescents
Agate	USA	220	Family religiosity associated with improved family functioning
Krause	USA	1500	Increased worship attendance associated with more forgiveness, less depression
Dudley	USA	228	Sharing of worship activities increased marital happiness
Wilcox	USA	2034	Church promoted happy couple relationships

Table 8: Summary of Career Articles

First author	Location	Subjects	Results and Conclusions
Duffy	USA	144	Intrinsic religiosity enhanced confidence about career decisions and exploration
Robert	USA	200	Spiritual wellness and job satisfaction positively correlated
Martinson	USA	323	Religion helped produce positive feelings toward work

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