

The Need: 82% of Americans report an affiliation with the Christian faith (Baylor University, 2006) yet few researchers, medical professionals, health educators or individuals have explored the spirituality and health connection, in depth, from a Christian perspective. The research community also recognizes a need to better understand the effects of traditional religious beliefs and practices on mental, physical, and social health.

Rationale: Those who live by principles provided by their Creator are better equipped to manage life stressors and more likely to enjoy good health. The Bible contains such guidelines that anyone can apply to their life.

Methods: The Bible was studied to understand which principles might be most relevant and conducive to a person's health and well-being. The literature, especially material on wholeness and the Christian faith, was also reviewed to learn what others have documented about this topic.

Facts: Medical Truths Relevant to Health & Well-Being

- Man's spirit, soul, mind and body are inextricably interwoven.
- Unresolved problems and attitudes of the heart (ex. bitterness) contribute to poor health.
- Chronic stress and unhealthy reactions and coping mechanisms contribute to poor health.
- Lifestyle has significant impact on one's health.
- Beliefs, attitudes and thinking patterns largely determine one's lifestyle choices/behaviors.
- Spiritual beliefs, choices and practices impact on one's health and quality of life.
- Peace, joy, love, kindness, thankfulness, gratitude, hope and optimism are health-promoting.

Facts: Spiritual Truths Relevant to Health and Well-Being

God is love. He created us to be in a loving relationship with himself and to glorify him with our lives. 1 John 4:7-10, Gen 1:27, Eph 2:10, Col 1:16, Mk 12:30

God inspired writers of the Bible to give us his perfect principles for living a life of well-being. 2 Tim 3:16-17, Jn 20:31, Ps 119:138

God's will is that we enjoy good health so we can best use the gifts he has given us and that we live eternally in heaven. 1 Jn 2:17, 3 Jn 1:2

We inherit spiritual death and a sinful nature because of the original sins of Adam and Eve. This separates us from God. Gen 3, Eph 2:1-3, Rom 5:12-19

We try to cope with life stressors and meet our deepest needs of love, acceptance, worth and security apart from God - very often in unhealthy ways. Gal 5:19-21, Rom 3:23; 8:7-8, Jer 2:13

Because God loves us, Jesus lived, died and was resurrected for our sins. If we believe in him we are saved*, reunited with God, and can live a full, eternal life. Jn 3:16; 10:10, Rom 10:9-10

As we live in relationship with Jesus, are submitted to God's Holy Spirit, and believe the truths of the Bible, we will experience love, joy, peace, kindness, hope and optimism. John 15:1-5, Gal 5:22-23, Rom 8:28; 15:4, Heb 10:23

*The Greek word is *sozo* meaning salvation, healing and wholeness.

The Spirituality - Health Connection Why It Exists

A Christian Faith Perspective

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"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator."

-Blaise Pascal, French Physicist and Philosopher

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

-Jesus in Matthew 11:28-29

Findings: Christian Principles That Are Health-Promoting

- Believe the Bible is Truth¹
- Believe God Forgives Your Sins²
- Receive God's Forgiveness³
- Accept Jesus as Savior⁴
- Read and Study the Bible⁵
- Believe God Loves You and Accepts You⁶
- Receive God's Love⁷
- Love God⁸
- Believe in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit⁹
- Be in a Meaningful Relationship with God & Jesus¹⁰
- Believe You Will Live Eternally in Heaven After You Die¹¹
- Believe the Holy Spirit Lives in You and Empowers You¹²
- Appropriate The Holy Spirit's Power¹³
- Remain Connected to Jesus¹⁴
- Know & Believe Your True Identity in Jesus¹⁵
- Pray¹⁶
- Meditate on God's Truths¹⁷
- Obey God's Commandments¹⁸
- Cry Out to God¹⁹
- Surrender to & Be Dependent on God²⁰
- Spend Time in God's Presence²¹
- Trust in God²²
- Confess Your Sins to God and Others²³
- Forgive Others and Yourself²⁴
- Do Not Worry or Be Anxious²⁵
- Give Your Worries, Burdens and Stressors to Jesus²⁶
- Let Go of Anger, Bitterness & Resentment²⁷
- Attend Church²⁸
- Worship & Praise God²⁹
- Love Others³⁰
- Be in Relationship with Other Believers³¹
- Be Kind to Others³²
- Bear the Burdens of Others³³
- Serve God & Others, Especially the Poor & Needy³⁴
- Renew Your Mind with God's Truths³⁵
- Think About Things that Are True & Pure³⁶
- Replace the Lies of Satan with God's Truths³⁷
- Humble Yourself Before God³⁸
- Be Thankful to God³⁹
- Do Not Worship False Gods/Idols⁴⁰
- When Sick, Have Elders Pray for You & Anoint You with Oil⁴¹

Conclusion: When individuals, regardless of their faith, incorporate these powerful biblical principles of the Christian faith into their lives, the spirituality and health connection occurs and they will tend to enjoy better health and well-being.

Application: This deeper understanding of biblical truths related to well-being creates fresh opportunities for **researchers** to improve study designs and thus improve documentation of the spirituality and health connection. **Physicians and clinicians** can better appreciate patients' spiritual status and thus better care for the whole person. Health **educators** and **parish nurses** can weave these biblical truths about the spirituality and health connection into their instruction, thereby increasing learner/patient awareness to improve well being. **Individuals** can benefit from knowing how to better care for themselves according to God's design for them.

An Invitation for Further Work: Organizations who would like to partner with us on research or educational initiatives are encouraged to contact Dale Fletcher through the website www.faithandhealthconnection.org.

Key Scripture References:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words (biblical truths). Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body." Proverbs 4:20-22

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:31-32

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." Romans 12:2

"Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." Philippians 4:8

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Jesus in John 3:16

"The thief (Satan) comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Jesus in John 10:10

"We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Ephesians 2:10

"And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness." Colossians 2:6-7

"Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." Jesus in John 15:5

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23

"With God all things are possible." Jesus in Matthew 19:26

Scripture References in Support of Findings

1. Ps 119, Jn 8:32
2. Col 2:13-14
3. Acts 26:17-18, 1 Jn 1:9
4. Rom 10:9, Jn 3:3, 1 Tim 2:4
5. Jn 8:32, 2 Tim 3:16-17
6. Jn 3:16, Col 1:19-22, 1 Jn 4:9-10
7. 1 Jn 4:16
8. Mk 12:29-30
9. Gen 1:1, Jn 4:26; 17:3; 20:31, Rom 8:11
10. Jn 5:37-40; 14:6; 17:21, Mk 12:30
11. Jn 14:1-3
12. Jn 15:5, 1 Cor 3:16, Rom 8:9-11
13. Eph 3:16-20
14. Jn 15:4-5
15. Rom 6:11; 8:11, 2 Cor 5:17, Col 1:27
16. Jas 5:13-16, Mt 6:6-13, 1 Thess 5:17, 1 Tim 2:1-3
17. 2 Tim 2:7, Phil 4:8, Prov 3:1-3; 4:20-22
18. Jn 14:15, Ps 119; 128:1
19. Ps 69:33; 34:15-17
20. Lk 18:22, Gal 2:20, Jas 4:10
21. Jer 29:13-14, Ps 46:10
22. Ps 34:8-10, Prov 3:5
23. 1 Jn 1:9, Jas 5:16
24. Mt 6:12-15, Col 3:13, Eph 4:31-32
25. Prov 12:25, Phil 4:6-7
26. Mt 11:28-30, 1 Pet 5:7
27. Mt 5:23-25, Eph 4:26; 4:31-32
28. Heb 10:24-25
29. Mt 4:10, Ps 103:1-2
30. Mk 12:31, Jn 13:34; 15:12-17, 1 Jn 4:12
31. Jn 17:21
32. Eph 4:32
33. Gal 6:2
34. Prov 14:31; 19:17; 21:13; 28:27
35. Rom 12:2
36. Phil 4:8
37. Eph 4:17-24, 2 Cor 10:4-5
38. Jas 4:7, Mt 18:4, Ps 25:9, Lk 14:11
39. 1 Thess 5:18, Eph 5:20, Col 2:6-7, Ps 118:1
40. Ex 20:3, Jon 2:8, Jer 2:13, Deut 8:19-20
41. Jas 5:14-15