

THE MEROS CENTER

Research to Practice Notice

Integrating Faith and Health

Background/Context

- The Bible and scientific research each have wisdom to share about how to improve the health of a person or community, but results are rarely compared to one another.
- The appropriate integration of faith and science can help to address health problems for oneself, a family member, within a church congregation, or as a health worker.

Methodology

- This was a review of Biblical and published literature about which faith practices can positively influence health.

Key Findings

- The Bible gives seven specific practices to navigate physical and mental health concerns, which include Prayer, Trust, Fellowship, Gratefulness, Service, Listening, and Keeping an Eternal Perspective.
- Scientific findings are generally consistent and have demonstrated a positive, measurable impact of each of these practices on health outcomes.
- Given the nature of humanity (body and soul), physical healing is not always the ideal outcome measure, although most scientific research focuses on physical outcomes.
- The expanded information and references are provided on the attached one-page summary page.

Recommendation

- Pastors, ministry leaders, health workers, and community leaders can share this information with people under their care that experience mental or physical health challenges.
- Find creative ways to support and encourage these individual faith-based health practices, especially among those with health limitations.

Prayer, Trust,
Fellowship,
Gratefulness, Service,
Listening, and
Keeping an Eternal
Perspective are health
practices supported
by both the Bible &
scientific evidence.

Conclusion

- God, in His grace, has given us several effective tools to navigate life's difficulties, especially when it comes to physical and mental health.
- Just like any other spiritual practice, we don't need to perform them perfectly to get started—it can take a lifetime to refine them over time.

7 Ways to Integrate Faith and Health



Pray

Talk to God about your worries and cares.

Prayer brings peace, which is crucial for healing.

(1 Peter 5:7) (Philippians 4:6-7) (Mark 14:36)

Most research studies have found better health outcomes for those receiving prayer¹



Trust

Remember that God is in control.

Reflect on times when He has been faithful.

(Colossians 1:16-17) (Romans 5:8) (Hebrews 4:13) (Romans 8:28)

Trusting God has been shown to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress in serious health situations²



Fellowship

Attend church, arrange personal visits, stay connected to be encouraged & supported.

(1 Corinthians 14:26) (Colossians 3:16) (Galatians 6:2) (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Attending church is linked to lower risks of death, depression, suicide, and better overall health³



Be Grateful

Be thankful even during health challenges, which helps you have a healthier mindset.

(1 Thessalonians 5:18) (1 Chronicles 16:34) (Romans 5:3-5)

Those practicing gratitude have better well-being, better sleep, and fewer symptoms³

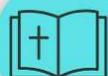


Serve Others

Shift your focus from your own problems to help and serve those around you.

(Mark 12:31) (1 Peter 4:10) (Proverbs 11:25)

People that serve others have more happiness and life satisfaction, better physical and mental health, and a longer life³



Listen

Spend quiet time with God, read the Bible, and seek advice from mature Christians.

(1 Samuel 3:10) (2 Timothy 3:16-17) (James 4:17)

Mindfulness, like listening for God's guidance, has been shown to improve pain levels and stress-related disease outcomes⁴



Keep an Eternal Perspective

The soul is more important than the body--death cannot separate Christians from God, and we look forward to a reunion with other Christians.

That hope is a powerful antidote to suffering & uncertainty!

(2 Corinthians 4:7-15) (Mark 8:36) (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Acceptance of death has been shown to ease the dying process and helps palliative caregivers provide better care⁵

References:

1. Simão, T. P., Caldeira, S., & De Carvalho, E. C. (2016). The effect of prayer on patients' health: systematic literature review. *Religions*, 7(1), 11.
2. Almaraz, D., Saiz, J., Moreno Martín, F., Sánchez-Iglesias, I., Molina, A. J., Goldsby, T. L., & Rosmarin, D. H. (2022). Religiosity, Emotions and Health: The Role of Trust/ Mistrust in God in People Affected by Cancer. *In Healthcare*, 10 (6). 1138.
3. VanderWeele, T. J. (2020). Activities for flourishing: An evidence-based guide. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 4(1), 79-91.
4. Creswell, J. D., Lindsay, E. K., Villalba, D. K., & Chin, B. (2019). Mindfulness training and physical health: mechanisms and outcomes. *Psychosomatic medicine*, 81(3), 224-232.
5. Zimmermann, C. (2012). Acceptance of dying: A discourse analysis of palliative care literature. *Social science & medicine*, 75(1), 217-224.