



Review Article

Measuring God through science: A review of christian prayer as complementary medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background: Prayer is paramount in the spiritual welfare and development of an individual. Prayer is also considered a form of complementary alternative medicine if employed in primary healthcare delivery.

Objective: This paper examines if God can be measured based on the impact Christian activities have on humanity, and explores the impact of Christian activities such as prayer as a form of complementary medicine.

Materials and Methods: This paper presents a review of the empirical literature.

Findings: Christian activities such as prayer, as ordered by God, have many health benefits such as better sleep, less stress, mood stabilizing, improvements in cardiovascular symptoms, and improvements from physical illnesses.

Conclusion: The impact of prayer as a Christian activity is not only biblical but also scientifically confirmed.

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1. Introduction

In Ghana, some people hold the view that the church has become a burden to the State, and has contributed to the many challenges facing the nation Ghana in recent times. Nonetheless, the church has contributed immensely to the social development of the Nation, including the individual well-being of its citizens.

The Pew Research Center Surveys¹ revealed that close to 90% of Christians in Ghana are highly religious juxtaposed to 58% of Christians in Israel and 82% in Nigeria. On the other hand, Ethiopia, Honduras, and the Philippines have 98%, 94%, and 91% respectively.

Another study by The Gallup International,² found that 37% of Americans went to church weekly or near-weekly in the year 2013. This is similar to the Pew Research Center³

study which found that 37% of all Americans went to church every week.

On the contrary, Robinson, B. A⁴ also found Nigeria to dominate church attendance with (89%) with the Soviet Union taking just (2%). In this study, Ghana had 83% of church attendance by the same organization.⁴

Pew Research¹ notes that more than 75% of people in every nation agree that they can't do without religion. Though for countries such as Europe, importance of religion is not as important. This is also different in Africa where over 60% of Christians go to church daily. They found that Africa housed more Christians, followed by Latin America, and the U.S.⁵

Ellison et al.⁶ were able to prove that the more we go to church, the more we experienced the health benefits. Koenig et al.⁷ found this benefit to reduce blood pressure in older adults as compared to those who don't go to church.

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2. Prayer as Complementary Medicine

As a complementary healing tool, Wahbeh et al.,⁸ found that prayer can be considered a mind-body remedy. On the other hand, Kang et al.,⁹ found that for those diagnosed with cancer of the breast, prayer was regarded as a CAM remedy after the patients used them for 6 months.

Perez et al.,¹⁰ study also found thanksgiving prayers to improve the quality of life of cancer patients. Another large study conducted by Leibovici¹¹ which included prayer as part of the treatment protocol found improvement in the test group. Bernardi et al.¹² study which centered on a more Spiritual or meditative prayer as a form of standing in for someone was found to support the cardiovascular system. Another by Bar¹³ revealed a reduction in blood pressure. Apart from being prayed for, one large study by Meisenhelder and Chandler¹⁴ found clergymen praying for themselves to improve their health status.

Another large review by Astin et al.¹⁵ found distant interceding prayer to support the patient though some proved otherwise. The same result was found in Powell et al.¹⁶ However, others found mixed results including Masters et al.¹⁷ and Hodge.,¹⁸ Abell and Schwartz¹⁹ found that high faith improves holistic mental health as compared to those with little faith.

Having constant prayer life improves one individual health as espoused by Boe and Byrd²⁰ and a correlation exists between the number of times one prays and their age, Baesler²¹ and their religious satisfaction, Poloma and Pendleton's.²² Christian songs were also found to bring people together, Krause and Hayward.²³ Finally, Newberg et al.,²⁴ found that prayer can be considered mind-body therapy.

3. Conclusion

It is evident from this review of literature, that several empirical studies confirm that several biblical principles have a positive effect on human existence. This paper has thus revealed that God can be measured, and the measurement is dependent on several scientific explorations attesting to the health benefits of Christian activities such as frequent church attendance, and prayer. Studies have also revealed that prayer can be incorporated as a form of complementary medicine in primary healthcare. The impact of Christian activities is, thus, not only biblical but there are scientific confirmations.

4. Competing Interests

None.

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