



Adventist  
Health Ministries  
GENERAL CONFERENCE



Seventh-day  
Adventist Church

# LET'S CELEBRATE **BELIEF**

**B** is for belief, the foundation of life



**CELEBRATIONS**  
LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

How do we respond to warning signs of danger? Some of us ignore the signs, others are skeptical, and others take them seriously. A story is told of Uttarakhand, India (also called "The Land of Deities"). It is a very beautiful state, full of mountains, hills, valleys, plains, and pleasant weather, rich with culture and traditions. One of the famous hill stations of Nainital lies there, near the Nayagaon waterfall, known for the peace and relaxation it brings to its visitors. The residents of Nainital are well aware of the dangers of the waterfall. Their belief is based on strong evidence of regular tragedies that have occurred there involving visitors or their own loved ones. The waterfall appears safe to the eyes due to the marshy area around the waterfall. This has led many visitors to ignore the warning signs posted on the notice board and from residents living there. Many visitors have lost their lives after jumping into the waterfall. Even though many signs clearly display the dangers and commemorate those who have died in the waterfall, visitors continue to ignore the warning signs.

In what or whom can we truly believe? Sometimes determining the answer to this question is tough! Yet we all believe in something. Even the greatest skeptics have beliefs, even if it's the belief that no one can be trusted. The survival of all humans is based on beliefs of some kind. Belief is essential to human existence and organization.



*Power of Belief*

# Power of Belief

One day a physician was examining a patient who had many problems. The patient told the doctor that perhaps an evil spell had been cast on him and was making him ill. The doctor began treating the patient. He filled two containers, one with hydrogen peroxide and the other with water. The patient didn't know the two liquids were different. The physician then drew a small amount of blood from the patient and put a few drops into the tube with the hydrogen peroxide. There was an immediate foaming reaction, and the doctor knowingly nodded. "Ah-ha," he said. "You would benefit from this." He then gave the patient a saline injection and told him to wait in the waiting room.

After a short time, the doctor called the patient back into his office and again drew a small amount of blood, this time putting a few drops into the tube containing plain water. As expected, it mixed without any reaction. The doctor told the patient that the evil spell had been broken, and the patient left feeling much better. The story goes that the patient told all his friends about how he had been healed, and many of them came to the doctor wanting the same treatment!



pray more!



As this story demonstrates, there is tremendous power in belief. Many unscrupulous salespersons create a false need in the minds of their targets. They then sell herbal concoctions, nonessential mineral supplements, special diet plans, and magnetic or electrical cures. They are trading on the “gullibility factor.” It’s important to place our belief and trust in that which is reliable and not on such unproven methods.

Belief — or faith, within a religious setting — has been shown to have statistically significant benefits. When the religious experience of Americans who reached the age of 100 was studied, researchers found that religiosity significantly enhanced health.<sup>1</sup> Although many questions are still unanswered, the benefits of trust in God result from more than simply attending religious services.



# IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE

---

One of the most consistent findings across all racial groups is that spirituality profoundly improves the quality of life. Ellison describes these significant benefits:<sup>2</sup>

- Religious attendance and private devotion strengthen a person's religious belief system.
- Strong religious systems, when accompanied by a high level of religious certainty, have a substantial and positive influence on well-being.
- Individuals with strong religious faith report higher levels of life satisfaction, greater personal happiness, and fewer negative psychosocial consequences of traumatic life events.

Spirituality not only helps believers but also benefits the nonbelievers in their community. Research has found that communities gain health benefits when they have higher numbers of adherents to faiths who emphasize implicit obedience to God and His standards of conduct.<sup>3</sup>

Religious people — particularly adolescents from religious homes who frequently attend religious services, pray, and read scripture — have fewer problems with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs than do their nonreligious peers.<sup>4</sup>

Religion has also been positively associated with emotionally healthful values and socially accepted behaviors, such as tutoring or other volunteer activities often promoted by religious organizations.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Harold G. Koenig discusses the findings of Idler and Kasl. These researchers noted a connection between healthier emotional lives and closer social ties in religiously active people, which often resulted in lower levels of disability. The increased physical activity associated with leisure and social activities did not fully account for the increased benefits in these people's lifestyles, and the authors concluded, "A significant effect of religiousness remains even after social activities have been considered."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, we find that belief in a loving God produces a very positive and powerful health-promoting state of mind. There is nothing more reassuring than the peace and satisfaction experienced by those who place their lives in the hands of a loving God and who are aware of His love for them. This brings health, happiness and a sense of purpose. As the Bible says, "Those who love your instructions have great peace and do not stumble" (Psalm 119:165, NLT).

## STRESS ISSUES

Belief in God may be associated with a reduction in stress, depression and loneliness. Medical science has discovered that when you feel stressed as a result of facing challenges, the negative emotions trigger the release of certain hormones that stimulate the nervous system in such a way as to put stress on the various organs of the body. If these organs are subjected to stress over long periods of time, they become weakened. Once weakened, they are more susceptible to a variety of disease processes. The order and intensity with which organs are affected depend upon a person's heredity, constitution, environment and lifestyle. For example:



*Belief in God!*





- Stress may lead to a release of adrenaline, making the heart beat more rapidly and powerfully. Such stress can cause one to suffer from heart palpitations (an awareness that one's heart is racing or fluttering).
- When stress hormones cause the blood vessels to constrict, they may augment the effects of hypertension and cause diminished peripheral vascular flow, leading to cold hands and feet.
- Stress may induce shallow and rapid breathing with bronchial dilation, which causes hyperventilation.
- Stress results in diversion of the blood supply away from the digestive system, possibly affecting digestive processes.
- Stress induces a state of increased clotting of the blood; though protective in some circumstances, it could have detrimental effects in others.
- Chronic stressful conditions may increase perspiration, leading to unpleasant dampness.
- Stress causes an increase in blood glucose (to serve as a rapid source of energy); in those predisposed to diabetes, chronic stress may lead to the hastening of the onset or exacerbation of diabetes mellitus.
- Stress may cause alterations in gastrointestinal and urinary functions. Some may suffer from urinary frequency and irritable bowel syndrome.
- A stressed person may visit the doctor for numerous physical complaints and suffer from emotional disorders such as anxiety, depression, phobias, cognitive disorders, memory problems and sleep disorders.





# BENEFITS OF PRAYER

An Ohio study<sup>7</sup> examined the effects of prayer on well-being. Of the 560 respondents, 95% classified themselves as religious people. Four types of prayer were identified:

01

**Petitionary prayer:** asking for material things you may need.

02

**Ritual prayer:** reading the book of prayers.

03

**Meditative prayer:** "feeling," or being, in His presence.

04

**Colloquial prayer:** talking as to a friend and asking God for guidance in making decisions.

Of all these types of prayer, this study revealed that colloquial prayer correlates best with happiness and religious satisfaction, whereas ritual prayer is associated with a negative affect, found more often in those who expressed feeling sad, lonely, tense, and fearful. Talking to God as to a friend, telling Him all our joys and sorrows, can bring happiness, healing and religious satisfaction.







# LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1

How gullible am I? What methods do I use when choosing what to believe? Which influences can I trust: the Internet, advertisements, research backed by vested interests, friends, past experience?

2

What benefits have I noticed by having faith in God? How well have I coped with stressful situations? Do I feel peaceful most of the time? Do I have a strong sense of purpose in life? Is the community in which I live and work aware of this, and are they benefiting as well? Are adolescents in my community better less involved in disruptive and risky behaviors because of my association with them and the faith I exhibit?

3

Which of the effects of stress have I experienced? How many visits to the doctor could possibly be related to my not having an ongoing, meaningful relationship of trust with my Savior? Do I need to spend more time growing my faith through the study of God's Word and association with those who have the same beliefs I do?

4

A classmate of Bruce from his academy days has stopped attending church. He had a few bad experiences and doubts God's interest in his life situation. What would I have done if those things had happened to me? Would my faith have been stronger? How can I encourage Bruce? Can I choose to start a fellowship group or small group Bible study? What particularly encouraging experiences can I share with him?

5

Which of the four types of prayer do I practice most often? In what ways can I change my prayer habits in order to become more joyful and inwardly peaceful, even amid tumultuous events?



# SPIRITUAL AND MORAL VALUES

Most civilizations have been founded on a set of beliefs and moral values that lead to an orderly society. Throughout the centuries, belief in spiritual values has been a strong motivator to treat others well and to develop peaceful human relationships. History demonstrates that faithless and amoral societies become so corrupt that they cannot survive.

Studies indicate that those with regular spiritual practices who meet with a faith community live longer, live better, and are far less likely to have a stroke or heart attack. Faith can provide strength to overcome stress and destructive habits. Belief can give you peace of mind and enable you to reach your full potential through positive choices. Celebrate belief — it is the foundation of life!



# PEACE OF MIND

The Holy Bible says, "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" (Isaiah 26:3). When we have a close relationship with God, we experience peace of mind.

This does not mean that those who believe in God and trust Him implicitly will be free from problems. "Trouble and turmoil may surround us, yet we enjoy a calmness and peace of mind of which the world knows nothing. This inward peace is reflected in a...vigorous, glowing experience that stimulates all with whom we come in contact. The peace of the Christian depends not upon peaceful conditions in the world about him but upon the indwelling of the Spirit of God." 8





1 J. S. Levin and H. Y. Vanderpool, "Is Frequent Religious Attendance Really Conducive to Better Health? Toward an Epidemiology of Religion," *Social Science and Medicine* 24, no. 7 (1987), 589-600.2 C. G. Ellison, "Religious Involvement and Subjective Well-being," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 32, no. 1 (1991), 80-99.3 J. W. Dwyer, L. L. Clarke, and M. K. Miller, "The Effect of Religious Concentration and Affiliation on County Cancer Mortality Rates," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 31, no. 2 (1990), 185-202.4 P. H. Hardestyn and K. M. Kirby, "Relation Between Family Religious and Drug Use Within Adolescent Peer Groups," *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality* 10, no. 1 (1995), 421-30, quoted in H. G. Koenig, *The Healing Power of Faith* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 72.5 A. Y. Amoateng and S. J. Bahr, "Religion, Family and Adolescent Drug Use," *Social Perspectives* 29, no. 1 (1986), 53-76.6 H. G. Koenig, *The Healing Power of Faith* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 177.7 M. M. Poloma and B. F. Pendleton, "The Effects of Prayer and Prayer Experiences on Measures of General Well-being," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 19, no. 1 (1991), 71-83.8 "In Perfect Peace" [Isaiah 26:3], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1966), 4:203.



## CELEBRATIONS

LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

**Sign up today!**



**[www.healthministries.com/celebration](http://www.healthministries.com/celebration)**



Adventist  
Health Ministries  
GENERAL CONFERENCE



Seventh-day  
Adventist Church