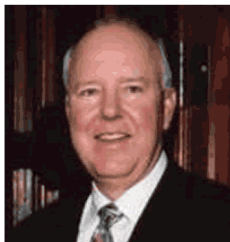


November 1, 2005

Gleanings

by Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.

Want to Be Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise?



Would you like to be healthier, wealthier, and wiser? This is clearly a rhetorical question—after all, who wouldn't want to enjoy these benefits? So how can you enjoy an enhanced quality of life? According to a recent study by MIT economist, Jonathan Gruber, the key is religion. ("Study Says Churchgoers Are Wealthier, Less Likely to Divorce, Better Educated," by Janet Kidd Stewart, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, October 17, 2005.)

In a study of communities with church attendance rates double those of the general population, Mr. Gruber discovered that the income level was 9 percent higher and the education level was higher than that of the general population. Consequently, welfare participation was lower. He also noted that people in those same communities were more likely to be married than divorced, creating more stable families.

The article goes on to note that more than a dozen studies show a positive correlation between religious practices—such as prayer and meditation—and health. The studies point out the efficacy of these activities in lowering stress, which is a major risk factor for disease. In addition, religious activities are noted by researchers as contributing to a better sense of well-being, which seems to facilitate an enhanced ability to work more efficiently and effectively, thereby producing more wealth.

The researchers opined that the above noted benefits don't apply to those who merely go through the motions of being religious. The people sincerely engaged in heartfelt religious activities are the ones most likely to enjoy these life-enhancing qualities.

This research was performed by academics seeking to understand whether or not religion is good for people. The methodologies employed do not appear to be biased in favor of religion. Nevertheless, the conclusion of Mr. Gruber and others seems to be unequivocal: relative to the general population, people who genuinely practice their faith tend to be better educated, enjoy better personal and family lives, have an enhanced ability to create wealth, and are healthier.

The message is abundantly clear, God blesses those who seek Him. Why would anyone not want to participate in this blessing?

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