

# Longevity of Life



## Christian View: Longevity

There is a strong tradition in Christianity describing “miraculous” and “spiritual” cures, such as produced by the power of prayer and the laying on of hands: those produced by Christ, early saints, by the Church fathers, and by modern Christian devotees canonized for their “miracles.”. Consider also the examples of alleged super-longevity of venerated Christian saints, such as Saint Servatius (Tongeren, current Belgium, 8-384 AD, 297 years), Saint Shenouda (Egypt, 348-466, 118 years), Saint Llywarch Hen (Wales, 350-500, 150 years), Saint Kevin of Glendalough (Ireland, 498-618, 120 years), Scolastica Oliveri (Bivona, Italy, 1448-1578, 130 years), Theodosius of Caucasus (a Pravoslav Saint, Stavropol, 1841-1948, 107 years) and others.[6] One may wonder whether the stories of “miraculous” and “spiritual” healing and life-extension do not undermine the scientific pursuit of healing and life-prolongation, while relying on “miracles,” perhaps “wishful thinking”.

Spiritual healing may be eventually attributed to psychosomatic effects, potentially within the realm of empirical science. The “spiritual” influence for health and longevity has been a well established tenet in the Christian tradition. While positing the goals of healing and life-prolongation as worthy of pursuit, the proposed methods of their achievement were far from being exclusively “spiritual,” but very often quite practical, material and scientific.

The Mormon Transhumanist Association has been devoted to life-extension and life-enhancement, promoting “active faith in human exaltation through charitable use of science and technology.” There has been strong support from representatives of the Mormon community for life extensionist endeavors, for example for Human Longevity Inc.

## **Longevity in Bible**

1) Genesis 6:3 The Lord said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”

2) Exodus 20:12

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you”.

3) Proverbs 10:27; The fear of the Lord prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.

4) Isaiah 65:20; No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

5) Job 42:16; And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations.

6) Genesis 47:28; And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.

7) Genesis 25:7; These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years.

8) John 3:16; “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”.

9) Genesis 5:23; Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years.

10) Genesis 5:20; Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died.

11) Genesis 5:17; Thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years, and he died.

12) Genesis 5:8; Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.

13) Genesis 5:5; Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.

14) Genesis 11:17; Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

15) Genesis 9:29; All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

16) Genesis 5:14; Thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years, and he died.

17) Genesis 5:11; Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died.

18) Genesis 11:23; And Serug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

## **Buddhism in Longevity**

Buddhism is more than an Eastern religion: it is a healthy longevity promoter. Buddhism focuses on the balanced interaction between the mind and the body as a prerequisite for healthy longevity; disease is a result of their imbalance and disharmony. The Buddhist approach to health and wellness is its emphasis on spiritual strength of the mind to overcome illness and disease. Concurring with Hippocrates, the father of medicine, who believed in the innate healing power in humans, Buddha also believed that you could seek cure through a drastic change in lifestyle and healthy attitudes towards the real meaning of life and existence.

Healing begins with the mind first, not the body. The reason is that disease originates from the disharmony of the mind and the spirit, leading to their imbalance with the physical body, resulting in disease. Optimal health for longevity is achieved when the mind and the body are functioning and interacting together as one entity.

One of the most damaging factors to the mind is stress. Nowadays, stress comes in many forms. Stress adversely affects your physical, mental, and spiritual health. In the Buddhist world, there is no stress, and you create your own stress through your ego-self, which is essentially your "no-self" because it simply does not exist, except in your own mind. Buddhism focuses on "emptiness" which is not self-denial, but rather the wisdom of knowing the impermanence of material things and therefore the abandonment of the futile pursuit of these elusive and evasive goals in life. With enlightenment, you will change your perception of what you really are, and more importantly, the insignificance of your attachment to all material things, including success and love of money. Buddha said, "Craving is the fountainhead of all human miseries." Once your craving ceases, your stress

dissipates, and you are filled with composure, which constitutes wellness in your body and mind. Even if there are remnants of stress, they can be dispelled through Buddhist meditation. According to Buddha, everyone has a "light" within him or her. To find that "light", you need to practice meditation. Through meditation, you are awakened to self-knowledge, which opens the door to ultimate wisdom: you see who you are, and what is important to you in life. In other words, you begin to see the realities of things around you; you begin to prioritize your life; and you begin to perceive the true meaning of your existence.

Natural healing of the mind, body, and spirit begins with a healthy love relationship in which Buddhist compassion and loving kindness naturally thrive. In Chinese, the word "compassion" means "removing suffering and giving happiness." From Buddha's view, true compassion has the power to root out the cause of misery in people's lives and direct them to the true cause of happiness. Loving kindness, closely connected with compassion, is also a prominent feature of the Buddhist way of live. Compassion and loving kindness complement each other. Extending good will, care and consideration to all beings is critical to mental and spiritual health of an individual.

If you are truly committed to altruistic compassion and loving kindness, you will be armed with inner strength to face any health adversity in your life, thereby instrumental in inspiring hope in others, and by doing so, helping relieve their own suffering. Aging and illness simply provide an opportunity for you to inspire others through your own example. Healing is a natural blend of science and philosophy of living. Buddhism certainly plays a pivotal role in the philosophy of living for healthy longevity.

## **Confucianism and Longevity**

Confucius, the great philosopher of ancient China, attained great influence on Chinese civilization through his famous teachings. Confucianism affected virtually all aspects of Chinese philosophy, including health and longevity. Confucius, a politician and scholar, lived from 552 to 479 B.C. His impact on healthy longevity consists of practical advice for application in everyday life.

Confucianism advice on everyday healthy longevity includes his exemplary daily living, such as the following:

He did not eat rice, meat, or fish that was spoiled (not fresh) and badly cooked; he ate meat in proportion to the amount of rice consumed; he used ginger to spice his food; he drank wine but only moderately; he dressed for comfort and convenience; and he slept, curling up his body, using his bent arm as a pillow (keeping his spine in alignment). Confucianism advocates mental health in the form of peace and harmony. Confucius was against strong emotions of anger, joy or sorrow, and pleasure - the stirrings of these human feelings do not keep the mind in a state of equilibrium.

Confucianism is expressed in two basic concepts of healthy longevity living: Equilibrium (Chung) and "Persistence (Yung), "Chung" is "equilibrium" or "being without inclination to either side." Confucius did not refrain from the pleasures of life, such as eating and sex. However, he sought to achieve balance between extremes, and to avoid excess. His way of life was based on "the golden mean" concept of equilibrium.

"Yung" is "persistence" or "continuing without change." Confucius said, "The path may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the path. Therefore, the superior person does not wait until he sees things to be cautious, nor till he hears things to be apprehensive." In other words, your pursuit of good health should be persistent. Your health practices, whether they involve exercise, diet, or meditation, should become your regular habits of healthy longevity living. You do not wait until you are sick to begin these intense efforts for healthy longevity. Prevention is always better than cure. You cannot reap their beneficial effects on a particular occasion or after a short period of practice.

Confucianism was subsequently expanded by Meng Tzu (Mencius), second only to Confucius as a Confucian sage. Mencius went beyond Confucius in being concerned not only with the physical aspects of healthy longevity, but also with the spiritual. To Mencius, spiritual health is as important as physical well-being. Mencius said, "To preserve one's mind and to nourish one's spirit is the way to serve nature (heaven). When a man realizes that there is no real difference between a short lifespan and a long one, and does not worry, but wait, cultivating his own personal character, for whatever may come to pass - this is the way he carries out his fate-ordained being."

Mencius also said, "The human will is the leader (commander) of the 'qi' (internal vital energy). The 'qi' pervades the body and moves it. The will is of primary importance; the 'qi' is secondary. Therefore, maintain a firm will and do no harm to your 'qi.' When the will is concentrated, it moves the 'qi'; when the 'qi' is concentrated, it moves the will." By nourishing the spirit as well as the body, Mencius lived to a ripe old age. In Chinese medicine, 'qi' signifies vital energy that embraces correct breathing, good blood circulation, and mind consciousness through meditation. In summary, Confucianism emphasized balance and harmony achieved through the concepts of "chung" and "yung" in everyday living with focus on spiritual well-being. These health practices can be applicable in contemporary living to attain healthy longevity.