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March 2020 “THE POWER OF BIBLE READING”

Dear Friends,

On January 30, 2020, the following article by Elyse Hauser was published at <https://www.lifesavvy.com/17031/5-fascinating-ways-reading-benefits-your-body/>

5 FASCINATING WAYS READING BENEFITS YOUR BODY

When you pick up a book, you might look forward to the intellectual benefits it will bring you: new knowledge, an expanded vocabulary, or even a chance to get more in touch with your feelings. But did you know that reading is good for your body, too?

The brain and the body don't exist independently of each other—they're part of an interconnected whole, and what affects one can affect the other. While reading stimulates your mind, its effects also translate to some cool physical benefits. Don't just take our word for it: Here are the research-supported ways reading is good for your body.

It Reduces Stress

A 2009 study on students in high-stress health science programs compared the effects of reading, yoga, and humor. What the researchers found might surprise you: Reading was just as effective as yoga and humor for reducing stress, and students had to read for only 30 minutes to get these stress-reducing results.

Reading didn't just reduce the psychological feeling of stress for these students—it actually lowered their heart rates and blood pressures, reducing the physical effects of stress, too. So, even if you can't get to a yoga class or a comedy club to reduce your stress, picking up a book for half an hour can be just as effective.

In fact, you might even be able to reap stress-reducing benefits from shorter reading sessions. Still another study (also from 2009) found that reading for just six minutes could reduce stress by 68 percent—more so than taking a walk or listening to music. Study participants who read had reduced muscle tension and slower heart rates, whether they were reading newspapers or books.

It Helps You Sleep

For many of us, the last thing we do before bed is to check our email or social media one last time. While most people know this isn't good for their sleep, it can be a

welcome distraction from worrying about tomorrow's responsibilities. If you get that distraction from a book instead, your sleep will show serious improvement.

Studies have established that using our smartphones right before bed results in low-quality sleep, and less of it. Meanwhile, as seen above, books help reduce stress in the mind and body, which can help prepare you for a good night's sleep. If you have trouble falling asleep, try to make reading a part of your normal pre-bedtime routine and see what happens when you switch off the light.

It Assists Medical Recovery

Bibliotherapy is a therapeutic method that uses reading to help patients heal and address medical issues. Although it's most often used in the context of mental illness, bibliotherapy can also help people recover from physical ailments.

Through reading, these patients find it easier to deal with diagnosis, recovery, and all the effects that come with this process. For example, in one study, recovering heart attack patients used poetry therapy to address the PTSD and anxiety they experienced during recovery.

It Increases Blood Flow

Many of your body parts need blood flow in order to function, and your brain is no exception—yet another example of how the mind and body work together for your health.

Researchers at Stanford discovered something surprising while measuring reading's effects on the brain: Blood flow to various parts of the brain actually increased while participants read literary novels. Cerebral circulation is important for your brain to function properly because that's how your brain gets the oxygen and nutrients it needs.

It Can Extend Your Lifespan

Lastly, it's possible that reading might actually help you live longer.

One study of over 3,500 people found that book readers lived longer, on average, than those who just read magazines or not at all. People who spent more than three and a half hours a week reading tended to live the longest. While a single study isn't exactly conclusive, given the other health benefits reading can offer, it's not hard to see how it might help lengthen lifespans.

Want to reap these benefits for yourself? Easy—all you have to do is pick up a book. Trust us: Cutting back on your social media or television time is well worth the benefits reading has to offer. Even if you're not in the habit of reading regularly, get started now, and soon you'll wonder how you ever survived without this healthy and fun habit.

The author of this article, Elyse Hauser, is a Seattle-based writer and editor with a Master's Degree in Writing Studies from Saint Joseph's University. I do not know her beliefs concerning God, Jesus, the Bible or salvation. I do not know if she considers herself liberal or conservative. What I do know is that the article she has written should motivate Christians more than ever to read their Bible. Yes, prayer, worship and fasting are all very important. But consider the following verses as they reveal what the Bible – God's Word – will do for a Believer.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)

Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. (Psalm 17:4)

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. (Proverbs 30:5)

He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. (Psalm 107:20)

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. (Proverbs 4:20-22)

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:4)

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. (Psalm 119:130)

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (Joshua 1:8)

These are just a few of the verses which emphasize the value of God's Word. This is about reading, not performing in-depth research on Greek or Hebrew words. It is not about studying specific topics. It is not about developing sermons and lessons. It is about reading, sowing the Word of God into our hearts.

My uncle Ernest (on my mother's side) was one of the smartest and interesting men I've ever known. He held a very important, high-level job with the U.S. government and I always enjoyed every moment I spent with him. I remember my mother once telling me that one of his favorite

past times growing up was reading. But he didn't read just any book he could find; his favorite reading material consisted of dictionaries and encyclopedias. That may sound boring to most people, but it helped him develop both an expansive vocabulary and a knowledge of a wide variety of topics. Though he learned a lot in school, that education was tremendously enhanced by all his reading. Uncle Ernest was a living example of how just reading can be of benefit to a person.

In John 6:63, Jesus said, "...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The article above discusses the benefits of reading that impact both Christians and unbelievers. How much more of a benefit is it for Christians who develop a lifestyle of simply reading the Bible? The Apostle Paul explains that we are "...born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God..." This means the life of our born again is 100% compatible with Living Word, the Bible. Thus, as we read the Bible, the life of its words are immediately joining with God's life in us to produce all that is written therein. The more we read, the more we are experiencing both the benefits of reading, plus the benefits of engrafting the Words of Life into our spirit of life.

In Isaiah 55:11, God tells us His Word will not return void, and that it will accomplish every purpose for which He has given it to accomplish. This includes every benefit we will reap by simply reading the Bible. May a hunger for reading His Word fill our hearts and soul in ever-increasing measure!

In His Grace,

Jim

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