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### Gratitude, Spirituality, and Attachment to God

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## ABSTRACT

Aspects of positive psychology, such as gratitude, have been widely studied to show improvements in one's overall perception of their well-being. Similarly, religion/spirituality is a common avenue that is sought to find peace and comfort during difficult circumstances in the hope of increasing their subjective well-being and perceived meaning in life. This study seeks to explore if gratitude to God could affect one's spiritual well-being in a similar fashion to how gratitude may improve other aspects of an individual's well-being. Particularly, this study explores if divine gratitude mediates the relationship between spiritual well-being and attachment to God. Although most initial predictions were supported, the mediation analysis was not founded by the research in this study. Nonetheless, novel connections were discovered between how gratitude, well-being, and religion/spirituality interconnect with one another in ways that are beneficial for to know for researchers and clinicians alike. Implication of the findings, limitations, and future directions are discussed.

Gratitude, Spirituality, and Attachment to God

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

Clinical Psychology

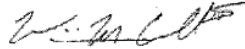
By

Jessica Guajardo

May 2022

This thesis, directed and approved by the committee for the thesis candidate Jessica Guajardo, has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Programs of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Science in Psychology



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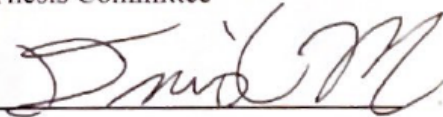
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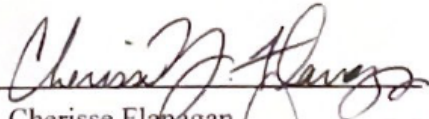
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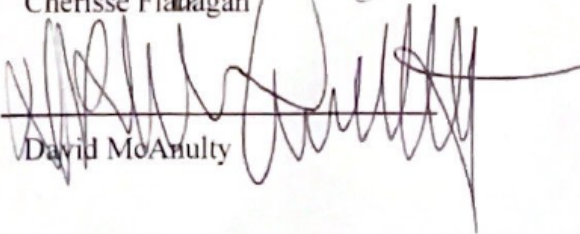
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David Mosher, Chair



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Cherisse Flanagan



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David McAnulty

It is with immense gratitude that I dedicate this thesis to the four most beloved people in my life. To my parents, for their unconditional support, their patient ears, and for demonstrating to me the value of hard work. To my brothers, J.R. and Jacob, for their special contribution my life, for never leaving my side, and for being the best cheerleaders. In each of you is how I found the person that I aspire to be, thank you.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

It is commonly regarded that religion dates back several hundred thousand years, with individuals, communities, and cultures seeking to gain meaning, purpose, and well-being through various religious avenues. Additionally, psychologists have noted how individuals turn toward religion/spirituality when faced with negative emotions or traumas. This body of literature has boomed in recent years as religion is an often-sought avenue to combat difficult circumstances (Bonab et al., 2013). Moreover, religion and spirituality have a well-documented link to better physical and mental health (Koenig, 2012).

Similarly, a large body of research examines the link between gratefulness to subjective well-being (e.g., social connectedness and meaning in life) (Liao & Weng, 2018). The positive emotional experience of gratitude enhances a person's well-being in that it 1) alters their perception (e.g., shifting away from rumination over stressors), 2) contributes to moments of social connectedness that then build lasting social resources, and 3) increases a sense of meaning in life (Liao & Weng, 2018). In a similar way, various studies have demonstrated that a secure attachment to God can lead to a greater sense of spiritual well-being, such as lowering depression and grief while increasing meaning (Kelley et al., 2012). Yet, the pathways for how religious and spiritual constructs (i.e., attachment to God) lead to positive health are still being explored. Many

avenues could lead to a secure attachment to God (e.g., church attendance, turning to God for support), and this relationship could give religious people a stronger sense of meaning in life, which likely to contributes to feeling grateful to God for the things and people in their lives (Krause et al., 2015). However, while the link between gratitude and subjective well-being is well documented (Emmons & McCullough, 2003), investigations into the effects of gratitude expressed to the Sacred (i.e., divine gratitude) being have only just begun.

This thesis seeks to explore whether divine gratitude could influence one's spiritual well-being in ways that are similar to how gratitude promotes other aspects of well-being. Specifically, this study explores a new area of research and examines if divine gratitude mediates the relationship between attachment to God and spiritual well-being. I briefly give definitions and review the research on gratitude and its correlates before discussing the latest research on divine gratitude and related topics.

## **Gratitude**

### **Definition**

Although widely studied, researchers initially found it difficult to come to a consensus on the definition of *gratitude* as a construct (Olson et al., 2019), but most researchers agree that gratitude comprises the recognition of life's benefits and an appreciation of the positives in this world (Bono & Sender, 2018; Seligman et al., 2005). The word *gratitude* originates from the Latin root *gratia*, which can be translated as "favour," and *gratus*, meaning "pleasing" (Manala, 2018). All derivatives from that Latin root relate to "kindness, generosity, gifts, the beauty of giving, receiving, and repaying benefits and kindness" (Manala, 2018, p. 2). Thomas and Watkins (2003) define

*gratitude* as a broader life orientation that reflects widely on the positives in life, such as abundance, appreciating the little things, and appreciating what others have done for us. Additionally, McCullough et al. (2008) describe gratitude as a positive emotion that is preceded by the perception that one has benefitted from the intentional, voluntary, and altruistic action of another person. Islamic Scholar Ghazali claims that there are three elements of gratitude: (1) knowledge of the gift; (2) the joy caused by the gift; and (3) the action to reciprocate under the will of the giver (Van den Bergh, 1957).

In a broad conceptualization, gratitude contains elements of an emotion, a cognition, a personality trait, and an attitude, while also frequently considered an outcome of personal, positive experiences (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). From a global, cross-cultural perspective, gratitude recognizes that a gift must come from a giver, and joyful thankfulness in response to this gift is considered gratitude (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

Although typically considered as a positive emotion, researchers examine gratitude within a large range of pleasant and unpleasant conditions. For example, gratitude has been observed in the contexts of joy, reunion, and even trauma (Tennen & Affleck, 2002). Notably, those who experience gratitude in trauma are better able to flourish by experiencing high levels of emotional, social, and psychological well-being (Tennen & Affleck, 2002). Along with a better ability to flourish, gratefulness has contributed as a source of human strength in regard to achieving and maintaining a good mental health status (e.g., positive outlook on life, increased happiness) across various life conditions (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000).

## **Benefits of Gratitude**

Unsurprisingly, gratitude is a prominent component of positive psychology, which counters the preceding medical model of human functioning that focuses heavily on distress and pathology (Chopnik et al., 2019). Positive psychology hones in on factors that contribute to well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction (Chopnik et al., 2019). In particular, gratitude and its related interventions (e.g., feeling and expressing gratitude) relate to a wide variety of positive emotional, relational, and health outcomes (Chopnik et al., 2019). Further, Althaus et al. (2018) concluded that gratitude may have a positive effect on an individual's quality of life, while also reducing psychological distress. On one hand, gratitude is a temporary emotional state, such as feeling grateful when a person shows an undeserved act of kindness to another. On the other hand, gratitude can be a characteristic or trait that varies in intensity, frequency, or duration (Gabana et al., 2019). Both instances have factors that contribute positively to an individual's well-being. State gratitude, which is experienced temporarily, correlates with higher optimism, life satisfaction, prosocial behavior, social support, and lower negative affect (Gabana et al., 2019). Additionally, Gabana et al. (2019) claim that trait gratitude, which is an inherent characteristic of an individual, predicts both psychological well-being and perceived life satisfaction.

In light of this, O'Connell and Byrt (2018) suggest that gratitude holds the ability to predict enhanced subjective physical health through reducing self-reported perceptions of loneliness and stress. In essence, gratitude shifts one's mind and perceptions away from the stressors and towards the silver linings. In an adult sample of 790 people, gratitude had no effect on individual's physical health when controlling for loneliness and

stress levels. This finding suggests that it is gratitude that directly influences levels of loneliness and stress outside of physical health. Along with psychological and physical health benefits, the cognitive tendencies of gratefulness predict positive joy and happiness (Watkins et al., 2018). In a sample of 481 first-year undergraduate college students, trait gratitude mediated the relationship between needs satisfaction and subjective well-being in four distinct pathways: (1) holding highly positive views of others, (2) experiencing active expectations about life, (3) positively facing social situations, and (4) maintaining a positive perspective on life (Wang, 2020). Overall, the outcome of higher levels of gratitude allowed individuals to have more harmonious relationships, improved life adjustment, and more personal energy, which all contributed to the development of greater subjective well-being in these individuals (Wang, 2020).

### **Gratitude as it Relates to Meaning in Life and Subjective Well-Being**

*Meaning in life* has been defined as “the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one’s being and existence” (Steger et al., 2006, p. 81). Other definitions suggest that fulfillment of meaning also includes a sense of significance, coherence, and purpose (Van Tongeren et al., 2016). Similar to *gratitude*, *meaning in life* has been difficult to define. Liao and Weng (2018) propose that some predictors for a sense of significant meaning in one’s life may include religious faith, financial resources, and positive affect. Van Tongeren et al. (2016) propose that people experience a sense of meaning when their lives have connection and significance that goes beyond themselves (i.e., individuals believing that they have a positive impact on other people) and that prosocial behavior (i.e., expressing gratitude towards others) may help provide meaning



in one's life. Thus, the presence of meaning in life may also be a contributing factor in creating a link between gratefulness and subjective well-being (Liao & Weng, 2018).

Diener et al. (2002) define *subjective well-being* (SWB) as “a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life” (p. 187). Subjective well-being is traditionally thought of in three parts: (1) high levels of positive emotions, (2) low levels of negative emotions, and (3) satisfaction with life. Simply put, SWB is how an individual may think and feel about his/her life based on their own perceptions. A study by Liao and Weng (2018) suggests that the positive emotion of gratefulness can help provide the cognitive resources needed for establishing social connectedness and the presence of meaning in life, both of which have both been shown to be effective in increasing one's own subjective well-being. The resulting positive affect from experiencing gratitude broadens an individual's way of thinking (e.g., thought-action repertoire), which enables people to build enduring resources past a temporary positive feeling, such as connecting to people, learning skills, and garnering insight about the meaning in their current life (King et al., 2006). Gratitude as a positive emotion predicts four things: (1) positive emotions directly enhance subjective well-being, (2) gratitude strengthens the social bonds used in maintaining good mental health in times of adversity or hardships, (3) gratitude is an adaptive coping strategy that lowers stress and enhances well-being, and (4) grateful individuals are more altruistic, which also contributes to the enhancement of social bonds and subjective well-being (Jans-Beken et al., 2017).

Gratitude also encompasses the potential to aid individuals in feeling satisfied with their lives, while still feeling eager to achieve more and improve their endeavors (Armenta et al., 2020). A large body of research suggests that this boost of well-being is

often accompanied by a strong sense of life satisfaction that may increase effort, motivation, success, productivity at work, perseverance, and can serve as a catalyst for individuals to set higher goals for themselves (Armenta et al., 2020). In a study of 797 adult participants, gratitude and meaning in life motivated individuals with clinical levels of depression to engage in positive life events, such as religion or spirituality, pleasure activities, and intimacy (Disabato et al., 2017). Further, increased levels of meaning in life partially influenced the remission of depressive symptoms in individuals with relatively few symptoms (Disabato et al., 2017).

## **Divine Gratitude**

### **Definition**

The concept of gratitude is prevalent in most religious teachings, and is a common emotion that religion seeks to cultivate (Tudder et al., 2017). While there are various studies that examine gratitude and its subjective benefits, there is a notable lack of empirical research exploring gratitude as it relates to religion, spirituality, or expressing gratitude to a divine being (Tudder et al., 2017). Generally, spirituality refers to an intrinsic search for the Sacred, a deity or ultimate truth deemed worthy of veneration. That intrinsic, spiritual search for the Sacred often involves beliefs in something outside of oneself or a belief in/connection to a higher power (Olsen et al., 2019). Religion searches for the Sacred while adhering to agreed-upon traditions, beliefs, and practices (Beringer, 2000). Religion and spirituality may encompass the ability to promote gratitude by developing the individual's perception of gratitude through a divine lens, such as gratefulness to God (Rosmarin et al., 2011). Olsen et al. (2019) claimed that spirituality may also play a vital role in relation to gratitude because spiritual people often

attribute positive events or outcomes in their life to a higher power. If individuals believe that their higher power (e.g., God) is benevolent, absolute, and all-powerful, then these emotions likely elicit feelings of gratefulness to God (Krause et al., 2015). Similar to the act of feeling gratitude towards another person from whom an individual has received benefits, gratitude toward God is most likely to be felt by people who feel they have been recipients of God's kindness, generosity, and mercy in the past (Krause et al., 2015). To explain further, Tudder et al. (2017) claim that gratefulness in the sense of religion contributes to social benefits such as a sense of belonging, community support, and religious coping strategies that can help reduce stress (e.g., prayer, church attendance).

The idea of divine gratitude was described by Hlava et al. (2014) as recognizing gratitude to be that the other "is no longer a gift or a person, but a recognition of benefit that comes from a source beyond the self or through a deep connection with nature" (pp. 2-3). Manala (2018) describes religious gratitude in a Christian perspective as (1) to be given voluntarily of one's free will and in privacy, (2) to be given freely to express gratitude toward the Lord for the blessings that one has received, (3) to never be given in a begrudging manner, and (4) to be given as a spontaneous expression of gratitude to the Lord.

One key theoretical difference between divine gratitude and non-divine gratitude is how one can repay another human being, but many religions emphasize doctrines that make reciprocation or repayment of debts impossible. In other words, a person can verbally thank their neighbor and instigate some altruistic action that benefits their neighbor, but how can a person thank God and repay a deity for their salvation? Moreover, various religions could emphasize unique ways people 1) recognize divine

gratitude, 2) experience divine gratitude, and 3) express divine gratitude. For instance, a Jewish rabbi might utilize different religious traditions or spiritual practices to express gratitude than a Catholic priest.

### **Divine Gratitude, Spiritual Well-Being, and Meaning in Life**

Although many studies correlate religious coping to positive outcomes of stressful events, other studies link religious coping to negative outcomes, such as increased distress while coping with the loss of family member to homicide, more instances of negative mood, lower self-esteem, and greater anxiety while coping with major negative life events such as illness, injury, death, or relational problems (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). This is largely determined by how a person positively or negatively engages with the Sacred. Thus, divine gratitude may encompass the ability to increase one's well-being, especially spiritual well-being, during stressful situations through the use of positive religious coping.

Spiritual well-being can also be understood in three parts: (1) high levels of feeling close to/comforted by God, (2) low levels of doubt/anger to God, and (3) spiritual purpose in life. Ellison (1983) conceptualizes spiritual well-being as having both vertical (religious) and horizontal (social-psychological) components that contribute to the transcendent spiritual experience. Tudder et al. (2017) expand this definition to describe this spiritual experience of gratitude toward the divine as “appreciating and interacting with that which is bigger than us” (p. 122). Therefore, the experience of divine gratitude is not restricted to a particular religion but is a grateful acknowledgement and/or grateful expression towards the transcendent (Tudder et al., 2017).

Little research has explored the link between divine gratitude and a sense of spiritual well-being. Still, spiritual well-being has been distinguished from general religiosity and general subjective well-being (Tudder et al., 2017). Specifically, spiritual well-being relates to a person's satisfaction from religious practices, quality of relationship with God, perceptions of God, perceptions on life experiences, beliefs about the future, and general quality of life (Tudder et al., 2017). Elosúa (2015) described spiritual well-being as containing five elements: (1) positive emotion (e.g., pleasure, ecstasy, friendship), (2) engagement (e.g., to be present with who and where you are), (3) meaning (e.g., belonging to and/or serving a cause that is believed to be greater than the self), (4) personal accomplishment (e.g., living a life dedicated to personal fulfillment that leads to positive emotion when achieved), and (5) and positive relationships (e.g., meaningful relationships with others).

In a sample of 465 undergraduate students, spiritual well-being uniquely predicted non-divine gratitude, and this unique variance could not be explained by other related constructs, like positive affect and affect intensity (Tudder et al., 2017). Thus, it is possible divine gratitude enhances one's spiritual well-being in unique ways that cannot be captured by non-divine gratitude. For instance, divine gratitude affects how people perceive his/her meaning in life (Barton & Miller, 2015), which is commonly tied to the worldviews of religious/spiritual people. Barton and Miller (2015) demonstrated this link between personal spirituality and gratitude and meaning in life in a sample of 5,661 adults from diverse backgrounds in the United States. In this study, the relationship with a Higher Power and sense of the Sacred was fundamental to the formation of emotions, such as meaning (Barton & Miller, 2015).

Spirituality often forms the bedrock for how religious/spiritual people make meaning, process information, and interpret their stress (Park, 2013). Specifically, Park (2013) suggests that

Spirituality can inform all aspects of global meaning, informing beliefs (e.g., the nature of God and humanity, control, destiny, karma) and providing ultimate motivation and primary goals for living and guidelines for achieving those goals, along with a deep sense of purpose and mattering. (p. 42)

Multiple religions (e.g., Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity) hold the idea that transformation can be achieved through suffering (e.g., illness, trauma), with religious and spiritual coping being among the most consistent predictors of growth through suffering (Park, 2013). Thus, the essence of a relationship with a Higher Power, along with a sense of gratitude to the Sacred, contributes positively to an individual's ability to cope (Barton & Miller, 2015).

## **Attachment to God**

### **Definition**

It is consistent within most religious traditions to conceptualize God as an attachment figure (Bradshaw et al., 2019). For example, in Christianity and other monotheistic religions, the perceived availability and responsiveness of God is a fundamental pillar that underlies the belief system, as well as the process in which individuals can interact with God through prayer, and that He may protect and comfort them when danger appears present (Bradshaw et al., 2019). Generally, *attachment* can be defined as including four criteria: (1) maintaining proximity with an attachment figure, (2) seeing the attachment figure as a secure base of explorative behavior, (3) considering

the attachment figure as providing a haven of safety, and (4) experiencing separation anxiety when removed from the attachment figure (Ainsworth, 1985). Additionally, attachment theorist Bowlby (1969) defines *attachment* in the realm of attachment theory as a biosocial behavioral system, comprising contextual, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral elements, which has the primary function of protecting the individual from danger and/or predators.

Attachment can be split into secure or insecure attachment styles. A secure attachment style is characterized with an adept use of emotion regulation strategies in the presence of a crisis and with positive indicators of psychological well-being (Miner et al., 2014). Securely attached individuals display greater empathy, creativity, stability in sense of worth, effective interpersonal functioning and social competence, satisfaction in relationships, healthy emotional expression, ability to cope with negative affect, and the capacity to respond well to negative situations compared to those individuals with more insecure attachment styles (Miner et al., 2014). Those with an insecure attachment style tend to be more anxious, less adept at using psychological strategies, and have compromised well-being (Miner et al., 2014). Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) further delineated attachment into three styles when it comes to attachment to God. First, individuals with a secure attachment to God view God as caring and responsive. Second, individuals with an avoidant attachment to God discern God as uncaring and rejecting. Third, those with an anxious/ambivalent attachment to God perceive God as inconsistent in His caring and responsiveness to His people (Parenteau et al., 2019).

Attachment to God may be defined as the ultimate source of safety and protection from cosmic forces since God is deemed to be all-powerful and benevolent (Miner et al.,

2014). Attachment to God can be demonstrated in behaviors such as seeking proximity to God, viewing God as a safe haven in times of difficulty as a secure base for activities in the world, and protesting perceived separation from God by lamentations (Miner et al., 2014). Kimball et al. (2013) conclude that this spiritual relationship (i.e., attachment to God) meets the defining criteria for an attachment relationship that functions meaningfully like any other attachment relationship. This defining criterion can be specified as (1) perceived relationships with God as central to many people's religious beliefs and experiences, (2) the emotional bond experienced in this relationship is a form of love akin to the infant-caregiver attachment bond, and (3) images of God tend to parallel the characteristics of sensitive attachment figures (Kimball et al., 2013).

Findings from Bradshaw et al. (2019) highlight the importance of understanding the spiritual struggles within the difficulties of life, especially when they lead to psychological distress. Attachment to God represents an inclination to recognize that the divine is distinct from man (Bradshaw et al., 2019). An individual's emotional disposition towards the divine, independent of their stated beliefs towards God, may affect both how they feel about themselves and how they treat others (Bradshaw et al. 2019).

### **Benefits of Attachment to God**

Individuals with a higher religious commitment have both better mental health and coping ability (Bonab et al., 2013). From an attachment perspective, people benefit from their personal relationship with the Sacred when they feel safe, soothed, or comforted by the Sacred during times of distress (Bonab et al., 2013). From this secure base, individuals can explore and find courage to engage with the inherent and inevitable



challenges of life. In two studies done by Ellison et al. (2012), 906 participants participated in a national survey regarding religiousness, attachment to God, psychological distress, and stressful life events. Results of this study show consistencies with previous research that link a secure attachment to God with improvement in distress (Ellison et al., 2012). Additionally, a secure attachment to God predicted less emotional reactivity to social stressors (especially those involving conflict or loss), and greater resilience in the face of such negative events and conditions (Ellison et al., 2012).

Moreover, multiple studies suggest that a positive relationship with the Sacred supports well-being through many pathways, such as positive coping strategies, social bonds, self-control, increased positive emotions, as well as decreases in several indicators of psychological distress (i.e., depressive symptoms, anxiety, substance use, and eating disorders; Tung et al., 2018). In a study of 548 participants recruited from Belgium Catholic parishes, religious service attendance was a strong predictor of well-being in the sense of positive emotions (i.e., awe, gratitude, love, peace; Cappellen et al., 2016). These self-transcendent, positive emotions mediated the relationships between spirituality and well-being (Cappellen et al., 2016). Clearly, divine gratitude has the potential to reap the fertile ground for positive emotional experiences that contribute to a secure attachment to God.

### **Attachment to God as Positive Religious Coping**

Broadly, religious coping can be defined as efforts to understand and deal with life stressors in ways that relate to the Sacred, such as finding spiritual meaning, gaining mastery and control with the help of God, and gaining spiritual comfort (Kim et al., 2020). Pargament et al. (2011) posit the presence of both positive and negative religious

coping. Positive religious coping can be understood as a secure relationship with a transcendent force, a sense of spiritual connectedness with others, a benevolent worldview, and negative religious coping can be understood as underlying spiritual tensions and struggles within oneself, with others, and with the divine (Pargament et al., 2011).

Similar to early attachment theories, Pargament et al. (2011) viewed religious coping behaviors as synonymous with many attachment behaviors. They theorized that a secure attachment to God was the cornerstone for positive religious coping, whereas an insecure attachment to God was a core feature for negative religious coping (Pargament et al., 2011). Due to this association, Pargament et al. (2011) assumed that when a religious/spiritual system was translated into coping strategies, the individual's relationship with their higher power would affect the translation process and result in various coping mechanisms, which helps to conceptually link attachment to God and religious coping.

For instance, individuals who experience avoidant or anxious attachment to God report higher levels of anxiety and depression, lower levels of life satisfaction, and poorer physical health compared to those individuals with a secure attachment to God (Parenteau et al., 2019). Further, people with a secure attachment to God are better able to buffer negative impacts of stressful life events than those who have an anxious attachment to God, which have their relationship struggles with God exacerbated by the threatening effects of such negative events (Ellison et al., 2012).

## **Attachment to God and Divine Gratitude**

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive link between gratitude and subjective well-being (e.g., increased positive emotions, increased social connectedness) which all contribute to an individual's ability to develop and increase their sense of meaning in life (Chopnik et al., 2019; Liao & Weng, 2018). Considering this, divine gratitude could link with spiritual well-being in ways that are similarly demonstrated with other positive religious coping research. Barton and Miller (2015) suggest that divine gratitude can benefit one's experience with spirituality as well as increase the presence of meaning in one's life. Additionally, Park (2013) suggests that spirituality increases meaning in life, motivation, goals for living, guidelines to achieve those goals, as well as acquiring a deep sense of purpose. Given attachment to God likely predicts spiritual well-being, divine gratitude could be a mechanism underlying this relationship. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between attachment to God and spiritual well-being and whether this will be mediated by the presence of divine gratitude.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Methods**

##### **Sample**

An online sample was recruited to participate in this study through the virtual marketplace Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Huff and Tingley (2015) claim that samples through Mechanical Turk have had similar correlations to various student samples across other platforms. Therefore, Mechanical Turk has been found to be an effective tool for conducting survey-based research. Although effective, it is worth noting that Mechanical Turk has been found to be approximately two times more secular than other heavily student and general based platform populations (Lewis et al., 2015). Nonetheless, Mechanical Turk samples have been found to be reliable in remaining consistent with stating their religious beliefs. In addition, these samples also have been found to state how these beliefs affect their opinions. A cumulation of this information has led researchers to conclude that Mechanical Turk is a viable option in conducting religious research, so long as a larger sample is used to gain a diverse population (Lewis et al., 2015).

##### **Participants**

A total sample of 518 participants were collected with a mean age of 35.91 ( $SD = 10.67$ ). Of this sample, 60.6% reported identifying as male ( $n = 314$ ), 39.0% as female ( $n = 202$ ), 0.2% as gender queer ( $n = 1$ ), and 0.2% as other ( $n = 1$ ). A total of 89%

identified as White/Caucasian ( $n = 461$ ), 7.1% as Black/African American ( $n = 37$ ), 1.7% as Native American ( $n = 9$ ), 1.2% as Asian/Pacific Islander ( $n = 6$ ), 0.8% as Latino/Hispanic ( $n = 4$ ), and 0.2% as other ( $n = 1$ ). For sexual orientation, 71.2% reported to be heterosexual ( $n = 369$ ), 25.9% bisexual ( $n = 134$ ), 1.4% gay ( $n = 7$ ), 0.6% lesbian ( $n = 3$ ), 0.2% queer ( $n = 1$ ), 0.2% other ( $n = 1$ ), and 0.6% reported to prefer not to say ( $n = 3$ ). When asked about religious affiliation, 85.5% reported to be Christian-Catholic ( $n = 443$ ), 6.0% reported to be Christian-Evangelical Protestant ( $n = 31$ ), 2.3% reported to be Christian-Mainline Protestant ( $n = 12$ ), 0.8% reported to be Christian-Black Protestant ( $n = 4$ ), 1.0% reported to be Muslim ( $n = 4$ ), 1.5% reported to be Buddhist ( $n = 8$ ), 0.4% reported to be Hindu ( $n = 2$ ), and 2.5% reported to be Jewish ( $n = 13$ ).

## Measures

### Demographic Questionnaire

A 15-item questionnaire was used to collect demographic information from participants. Participants were asked a variety of questions in multiple choice and short answer format, such as their assigned gender at birth, current gender, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, education level, occupation, current family annual income, political views, religious affiliation.

### Gratitude

Secular gratitude was measured using the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6; McCullough et al., 2002). The GQ-6 is a six-item form with strong reliability ( $\alpha = .76-.84$ ) in which participants rated each item from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly*

*agree*). An example item is “I have so much in life to be thankful for” (McCullough et al., 2002). For this study, a Cronbach’s alpha of .716 was found.

### **Gratitude to God**

Divine gratitude was measured using a Gratitude to God scale developed by Krause and Hayward (2015) with additional items added by the researcher. The scale includes a total of ten items. The first three indicators are modified items originally developed by Emmons and colleagues (2003). The fourth item is developed by Krause and Hayward (2015) was taken from Peterson and Seligman (2004) measure of gratitude. Participants rated each item on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). An example of the item is “If I were to make a list of all the things God has done for me, it would be a very long list.” Higher scores indicate stronger feelings of gratitude toward God. For this sample, a Cronbach’s alpha of .891 was found.

### **Meaning in Life**

Meaning in Life was measured using the five-item Presence of Meaning subscale from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006). This scale assesses the extent to which one perceives meaning to be present in their life. An example item is “I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.” Participants rated items on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*absolutely untrue*) to 7 (*absolutely true*). Higher scores indicate a greater sense of subjective meaning. The Presence of Meaning subscale has strong reliability, and convergent validity of the subscale was supported by positive correlation with the scores on Purpose in Life Test scale (Steger et al., 2006). For this sample, a Cronbach’s alpha of .816 was found.

## **Subjective Well-Being**

Subjective well-being was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS is a five-item scale that measures individuals' perception of life satisfaction as a whole. Participants were asked to rate each item using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher overall scores indicate greater satisfaction with life than lower scores. The SWLS has been normed on diverse samples (e.g., college students, psychotherapy clients, prisoners, abused women, older adults) and has been shown to be complementary to alternative scales that assess psychopathology or emotional well-being (Pavot & Diener, 1993). An example item is "I am satisfied with my life." (Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS has strong internal reliability and moderate temporal validity. For example, Diener et al. (1985) reported a coefficient alpha of .87 for the scale and a 2-month test-retest stability coefficient of .82. For the current sample, a Cronbach's alpha of .789 was found.

## **Spiritual Well-Being**

Spiritual well-being was measured using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). The SWBS is a twenty-item measure that assesses personal perceptions about the spiritual quality of life and has two subscales: (1) Religious Well-Being and (2) Existential Well-Being. Participants were asked to rate each item on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*). Higher overall scores indicate a greater personal sense of spiritual well-being and closeness to God. An example item is "My relationship with God (i.e., the Sacred) contributes to my sense of well-being." (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). Paloutzian and Ellison (1982) indicated a 1-week test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.93, 0.96, and 0.86 for the SWB,

RWB, and EWB among college students attending various colleges. This construct is considered to be valid (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). For this sample, a Cronbach's alpha of .872 was found.

### **Attachment to God**

Attachment to God was measured using the Attachment to God Scale (AGS; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). The AGS is a nine-item measure that assesses the attachment dimensions of avoidance of intimacy and anxiety about abandonment as they relate to a relationship with God (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). Participants were asked to rate each item on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*). An example item is "I prefer not to depend too much on God." (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). In the current sample, a Cronbach's alpha of .828 was found.

## **Hypotheses**

### **Hypothesis 1**

#### ***Statement***

Gratitude and divine gratitude will be positively correlated to subjective well-being.

#### ***Justification***

There is substantial evidence in previous research that supports the link of gratefulness to well-being (Liao & Weng, 2018). Research done by Liao and Weng (2018) suggests that the positive emotion of gratefulness builds on resources such as social connectedness and meaning in life, which contribute to higher levels of subjective well-being. Also, gratitude is an emotion that pushes people towards noticing the positive



aspects of one's life, which likely contributes to both a presence of meaning and significance in their lives (Liao & Weng, 2018). The similarity of virtue between gratitude and divine gratitude lead to the hypothesis that divine gratitude will also be positively correlated with subjective well-being, although this is exploratory.

### ***Planned Analysis***

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient will be calculated between (a) gratitude, (b) divine gratitude, and (c) subjective well-being.

### **Hypothesis 2**

#### ***Statement***

Attachment to God will be positively correlated with spiritual well-being.

#### ***Justification***

Multiple studies have demonstrated that a secure attachment to God through a variety of domains can lead to a greater sense of spiritual well-being (Kelley et al., 2012). Kelley and Chan suggest that a greater attachment to God can lower depression and grief, and increase meaning, which in turn leads to a subjective sense of greater spiritual well-being. In a study done by Krause and Hayward (2015), data indicated that people who go to church more often are more committed to their faith; those more committed to their faith have higher levels of compassion; those who are more compassionate provide emotional support to others more often; those who give emotional support have a stronger sense of religious meaning in life; and those who have discovered a deeper sense of meaning are more likely to feel grateful to God. Therefore, individuals who have a stronger attachment to God are hypothesized to have a greater sense of spiritual well-being (Krause et al., 2015).

### ***Planned Analysis***

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient will be calculated between (a) attachment to God and (b) spiritual well-being.

### **Hypothesis 3**

#### ***Statement***

The relationship between attachment to God and spiritual well-being will be mediated by divine gratitude. Participants with high levels of divine gratitude will experience a greater sense of spiritual well-being. Those with lower levels of divine gratitude will not experience such spiritual well-being through their attachment to God.

#### ***Justification***

Positive religious coping is theorized to be synonymous with attachment behavior in religious/spiritual individuals. Divine gratitude is one theorized to operate similarly to non-divine gratitude as a positive coping strategy that could enhance a person's relational bond with the Sacred, thus improving their spiritual well-being.

### ***Planned Analysis***

I will test whether divine gratitude mediates the relation between attachment to God and spiritual well-being by using a series of bootstrapping analyses outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Using a bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure based on 5,000 resamples, I will look for direct and indirect effects of divine gratitude I will use the  $R^2$  effect size measure for mediation analysis (Fairchild et al., 2009) to explain the amount of variance of divine gratitude.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for all scales measuring gratitude, divine gratitude, subjective well-being, spiritual well-being, meaning in life, and attachment to God can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Scales Measuring Gratitude, Gratitude to God, Subjective Well-being, Spiritual Well-Being, Meaning in Life, and Attachment to God*

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Gratitude	27.86	3.68
Gratitude to God	54.79	9.07
Meaning in Life	25.32	4.28
Subjective Well-Being	27.26	4.45
Attachment to God	35.21	6.54
<i>Spiritual Well-Being</i>		
Religious Well-Being	39.61	5.84
Existential Well-Being	38.56	6.78

#### Gratitude and Well-Being

The first of four initial goals of the study were to replicate the positively correlated link between gratitude and subjective well-being as demonstrated by Liao and Weng (2018). The positive emotion of gratitude was predicted to be positively correlated with an individual's subjective well-being. The correlation between gratitude and

subjective well-being can be seen in Table 2. As can be seen in Table 2, a positive correlation between gratitude and subjective well-being was demonstrated.

A second goal of the study was to demonstrate the novel link between divine gratitude and subjective well-being. The initial prediction was developed through the similarity of virtue between gratitude and gratitude to God, which led to the hypothesis that gratitude to God, as well as gratitude, would be positively correlated with subjective well-being. The correlation between gratitude to God and subjective well-being can be seen in Table 2. As can be seen in Table 2, a moderate, positive correlation was found between gratitude to God and subjective well-being.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Correlations Between Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being*

Subjective Well-Being:	Gratitude	<u>Gratitude</u>	Gratitude to God
1. Subjective Well-Being	.47**		.56**

\*\* $p < .001$

### **Attachment to God and Spiritual Well-Being**

A third aspect of the study was to replicate tentative links that have been established between attachment to God and spiritual well-being. Considering the relationship between gratitude to God and subjective well-being, it was hypothesized that attachment to God and spiritual well-being would also be related to some capacity.

Predictions were that attachment to God would be positively correlated to spiritual well-being. The correlation between attachment to God and spiritual well-being can be found in Table 3. As seen in Table 3, there is a strong, positive, and significant relationship between attachment to God and spiritual well-being. The summary of correlations also includes the correlation summary between meaning in life and attachment to God, which

can be found in Table 3. As can be seen in Table 3, there was, unexpectedly, a weak correlation between meaning in life and attachment to God.

**Table 3**

*Correlation Matrix Between All Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Attachment to God	-					
2. Meaning in Life	.23**	-				
3. Spiritual Well-Being	.63**	.54**	-			
4. Gratitude	.38**	.57**	.56**	-		
5. Subjective Well-Being	-.11*	.51**	.24**	.32**	-	
6. Gratitude To God	.09*	.62**	.47**	.53**	.64**	-

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$

### **Attachment to God, Spiritual Well-Being, and Divine Gratitude**

My fourth and final hypothesis was that gratitude to God would mediate the relationship between spiritual well-being and attachment to God. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. Baron and Kenny (1986) reflect four conditions necessary to demonstrate mediation. In testing the first condition, the direct association between the predictor variable (spiritual well-being) and the criterion variable (attachment to God) was significant ( $\beta = .63, p < .001$ ; See Figure 1). In testing the second condition, the direct association between the predictor variable (spiritual well-being) and the mediator variable (gratitude to God) was significant ( $\beta = .09, p = .047$ ). In testing the third condition, I controlled for the predictor variable (spiritual well-being) and found the association between the mediator variable (gratitude to God) and the criterion variable (attachment to God) to be significant ( $\beta = -.26, p < .001$ ). However, in the fourth condition, the final regression analysis showed that spiritual well-being predicted more

variance in attachment to God ( $\beta = .75, p < .001$ ). Because there was no reduction in the relationship between the predictor variable (spiritual well-being) and the outcome variable (attachment to God), there is no supported evidence for the presence of a mediating variable (gratitude to God).

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

#### **Gratitude and Well-Being**

##### **Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being**

Gratitude is a positive emotion that precedes the perception that one has benefitted from the intentional, voluntary, and altruistic action of another person (McCullough et al., 2008). As predicted, both gratitude and gratitude to God had a moderately strong positive correlation to subjective well-being. This supports previous findings of the positive connection between the variables. The positive emotion of gratefulness establishes a foundation for increasing experiences of subjective well-being (i.e., social connectedness, presence of meaning in life). The first hypothesis of the study, which states that gratitude would be positively correlated to subjective well-being, was supported. This finding further supports that actions of gratitude can increase an individual's overall perception of their well-being. The study's second hypothesis of divine gratitude being positively correlated with subjective well-being was also supported, which also supports findings in previous literature. With this in mind, it may be that gratefulness to others and to a divine being can assist an individual in finding meaning in his or her current experiences while increasing psychological and physical health.

## **Gratitude and Spiritual Well-Being**

Tudder et al. (2017) define *spiritual well-being* as a person's satisfaction with religious practices, quality of relationship one has with God, perceptions of God and life experiences, beliefs about the future, and general quality of life. The third hypothesis of the study—that attachment to God would positively correlate with spiritual well-being—was supported with the findings. This finding supports the limited research that attachment to God can serve as a predictor for an individual's spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being was strongly related to attachment to God. Further, spiritual well-being was strongly related to gratitude to God and meaning in life. With these findings, it seems as though practices of proclaiming gratitude to God (e.g., prayer) could lead to increased levels of one's satisfaction in their relationship with the Divine. Similarly, spiritual well-being and meaning in life had a strong positive correlation, meaning that as an individual's spiritual well-being increased, so did their levels of perception of meaning in life (e.g., felt sense of significance).

## **Gratitude to God and Attachment to God**

Gratitude to God is explained by Tudder et al. (2017) as increasing one's social benefits regarding their sense of belonging, community support, and religious coping strategies (e.g., prayer, church attendance). Gratitude to God demonstrated a strong positive correlation with both subjective well-being and meaning in life and had the strongest relationship with subjective well-being. Considering the similar virtue of gratitude and gratitude to God, this strong correlation makes theoretical sense when regarding the same strong positive correlation between gratitude and subjective well-being. Notably, the relationship between gratitude to God and the presence of meaning in



life is also significant. This finding supports previous research from Barton and Miller (2015), which demonstrated the formation of emotions, such as meaning in life, through the avenue of divine gratitude. Along with these variables, gratitude to God also showed a moderate effect size with significance to other variables of the study such as spiritual well-being, and gratitude.

The variable with which gratitude to God had the lowest correlation, and barely significance, was attachment to God, which is an odd and complex finding. Miner et al. (2014) define *attachment to God* as the ultimate source of safety and protection from cosmic forces that can be achieved through behaviors such as seeking proximity to God, viewing God as a safe haven in times of difficulty, and resisting perceived separation from God. The correlation between these variables was considerably low ( $r = .09$ ) compared to what was assumed to be found. This could be because as an individual's gratitude to God increases, one's desire to be close to God may go down. It has been thought that individuals will turn towards a Divine being when well-being is low (e.g., increased mental/physical health difficulties, financial struggles), which could be a possible explanation for this finding.

My final hypothesis stated that gratitude to God would mediate the relationship between spiritual well-being and attachment to God, which was not supported by the findings of the study. These results were confirmed by running it twice, and the mediation did not prove significant.

### **Overview of Results**

As indicated by the results, the findings of the study were not entirely as predicted but still provide a unique picture. Correlations between gratitude and divine gratitude

with subjective well-being were demonstrated (see Table 1). Additionally, attachment to God and spiritual well-being were positively correlated (see Table 2). However, the primary issue occurred when running the analysis of divine gratitude to be mediating the relationship between spiritual well-being and attachment to God as originally predicted. Initially, the study sought to demonstrate the extent to which gratitude to God participated in the indirect change in ratings of attachment to God from levels of spiritual well-being, yet this finding was not supported. Due to the failure of the mediation analysis, the study was unable to give a clear picture of how gratitude to God contributes to one's attachment to God. One surprising finding, although not an initial goal of the study, was that having a close relationship (i.e., attachment) with God is what gives an individual more spiritual well-being. The correlation between these two variables was higher than attachment to God and gratitude to God. This observation suggests that individuals who report high levels of spiritual well-being also feel as though they have a close and meaningful relationship with the Sacred. Behaviors that demonstrate attachment to God may even contribute to one's perception of their spiritual well-being, or perceived closeness to the Divine. The exact nuances of this remain to be explored, but the mutual contribution that attachment to God and spiritual well-being play into each other indicates that further exploration could be done for both theoretical and practical applications.

Although attachment to God gives one the most spiritual well-being, another notable finding is that expressing gratitude to God gives one the most subjective well-being and meaning in life. It seems as though gratitude to God is more strongly related to

subjective wellbeing (i.e., life satisfaction), whereas attachment to God is more strongly related to spiritual well-being, as opposed to generic well-being.

## **Implications**

### ***Theoretical***

Research regarding mental health and religion have noted how individuals have the tendency to turn toward religion/spirituality when presented with difficult circumstances or negative emotions (Bonab et al., 2013). Additionally, Koenig (2012) suggests that religion and spirituality have the ability to be an avenue to achieve improved mental and physical health. The theoretical implications are abounding in how religion and spirituality may hold the capacity to improve one's subjective well-being. Regarding the specific aspects of spirituality and religion that contribute to one's improved mental health has yet to be explored, as well the specifics of improvements to one's well-being. Flushing out the nuances of this dynamic holds an important area of research for both contributing to the related literature and clinical work alike. The state of the world continues to dispense difficult circumstances, which has been shown to be a valid indicator of when individuals turn to religion/spirituality for comfort and solace. As the field of psychology evolves and continues incorporating religion and spirituality into practice, a deeper understanding of religious variables will be of primary importance to the field of psychological research and practical environments.

### ***Clinical***

Findings of the current study indicate that the positive variables used could play a much larger role in a clinical setting than many clinicians have considered. Particularly, many clinicians follow the medical model of the DSM-5 when formulating client issues,

focusing on the negative aspects of the human experience, but it may be helpful to incorporate more aspects of positive psychology (e.g., gratitude) to decrease negative symptoms. For religious individuals in particular, it may be beneficial for clinicians to better understand how to incorporate aspects of gratitude/gratitude to God, as these demonstrated a positive relationship with one's perceived well-being. Although the goals to each approach to therapy remain the same, the difference of approach may have a different effect depending upon an individual's unique personality and perception of the world.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of the study first include a fairly homogeneous demographic population of participants in regard to race/ethnicity and religious orientation (89% White/Caucasian, 85.5% Christian-Catholic), as well as a slightly homogeneous gender pool with 60.6% of participants identifying as male.

The study also used a cross-sectional design instead of longitudinal, where we measured constructs in only one moment of time and it is possible that in a longitudinal design these constructs could change. This study does not account for any growth curve analysis or movement over time. It is possible that gratitude to God is best studied as a developmental process that occurs over a length in time. Notably, the study's sample does include a non-clinical population, which serves as a limitation for implications in a clinical setting. Further, the use of a cross sectional research design also makes it impossible to draw causal conclusions about the relationships found between variables. The self-report nature of the measures used in this study impart another limitation. Participants did not have set experimental environments, but the freedom to simply

complete the survey online. Various environmental settings could be reasonably assumed to alter testing reliability and validity. Additionally, as mentioned above, the demographic homogeneity of participants provides a limited scope in which to view the interactions of gratitude, spirituality, and attachment to God. A more diverse sample size could lead to a greater understanding of findings regarding the specific interactions of these variables.

### **Future Directions**

Continued research in the domain of positive psychology and religion/spirituality will continue to remain an important aspect in the broad field of psychology and mental health. While positive factors such as gratitude have been shown to be clear pathways to one's overall improved well-being, understanding how spirituality and religion coincide with this, is still largely unknown and could be a fruitful area of future research.

Further research could benefit from a more heterogeneous sample in regard to race, religion, and sexual orientation, as well as longitudinal research style. Both gratitude and religiosity can be viewed as a developmental process, making a study over time a likely better way to fully grasp how these variables change as time passes and difficult situations occur throughout one's life. A comprehensive understanding of how these variables work together could provide clinicians with a complete picture of not only how these variables integrate with each other, but how they can integrate them into clinical practice.

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## APPENDIX A

### IRB Letter of Approval

#### ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103  
325-674-2885

December 1, 2021.

David Mosher  
Department of Psychology  
ACU Box 28011  
Abilene Christian University



Dear David,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Gratitude, Spirituality, and Attachment to God",

(IRB# 21-169 ) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.  
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

## APPENDIX B

### The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6)

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

**1 = strongly disagree**

**2 = disagree**

**3 = slightly disagree**

**4 = neutral**

**5 = slightly agree**

**6 = agree**

**7 = strongly agree**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for. \*

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. As I get older, I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.

\*

\*Items 3 and 6 are reverse scored.



## APPENDIX C

### Gratitude to God Scale

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

**1 = Strongly Disagree**

**2 = Disagree**

**3 = Slightly Disagree**

**4 = Neutral**

**5 = Slightly Agree**

**6 = Agree**

**7 = Strongly Agree**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I am grateful to God for all He has done for me.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ If I were to make a list of all the things God has done for me, it would be a very long list.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ As I look back on my life, I feel I have been richly blessed by God.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I am grateful to God for all he has done for my family members and close friends.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I can easily recall situations where God blessed me.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Looking back, it is easy to recognize God's blessings during difficult times in my life.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I engage in appreciative reflection toward God.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ In my own way, I express or communicate my thankfulness to God.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ During difficult situations, I appreciate the resources God gives me.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Expressing thankfulness to God is beneficial to me.

## APPENDIX D

### Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

Please take a moment to think about what makes your life and existence feel important and significant to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer according to the scale below:

<b>Absolutely Untrue</b>	<b>Mostly Untrue</b>	<b>Somewhat Untrue</b>	<b>Can't Say True or False</b>	<b>Somewhat True</b>	<b>Mostly True</b>	<b>Absolutely True</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand my life's meaning.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I am always looking to find my life's purpose.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ My life has a clear sense of purpose.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ My life has no clear purpose.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I am searching for meaning in my life.

MLQ syntax to create Presence and Search subscales:

Presence = 1, 4, 5, 6, & 9-reverse-coded

Search = 2, 3, 7, 8, & 10

## APPENDIX E

### Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

\_\_\_\_\_ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

\_\_\_\_\_ The conditions of my life are excellent.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am satisfied with my life.

\_\_\_\_\_ So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.

\_\_\_\_\_ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied
- 26 - 30 Satisfied
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

## APPENDIX F

### Spiritual Well-Being Scale

For each item, mark the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following key:

1 = Strongly disagree

6 = Strongly agree

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't find much satisfaction in private prayer with God (i.e., the Sacred).
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't know who I am, where I came from, or where I'm going.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe God (i.e., the Sacred) loves me and cares about me.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel that life is a positive experience.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that God (i.e., the Sacred) is impersonal and not interested in my daily situations.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel unsettled about my future.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I have a personally meaningful relationship with God (i.e., the Sacred).
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't get much personal strength and support from my God (i.e., the Sacred).
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel a sense of well-being about the direction my life is headed in.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that God (i.e., the Sacred) is concerned about my problems.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't enjoy much about life.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with God (i.e., the Sacred).
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel good about my future.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ My relationship with God (i.e., the Sacred) helps me not to feel lonely.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel most fulfilled when I'm in close communion with God (i.e., the Sacred).
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Life doesn't have much meaning.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ My relationship with God (i.e., the Sacred) contributes to my sense of well-being.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe there is some real purpose for my life.

## APPENDIX G

### The Attachment to God Scale

The following statements concern how you generally think and feel in your relationship with God (or any other supernatural force you believe in). Using the following scale, respond to each statement by indicating how characteristic it is of you.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Strongly			Neutral/Mixed			Agree Strongly

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. God seems impersonal to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. God seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I have a warm relationship with God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. God knows when I need support.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I feel that God is generally responsive to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. God sometimes seems responsive to my needs, but sometimes not.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. God's reactions to me seem to be inconsistent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. God sometimes seems very warm and other times very cold to me.