

THE BENEFITS OF A MERRY HEART

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Introduction:

1) A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.
(Proverbs 17:22)

(1) These words, along many others in God's Word, inform us of the benefits of a merry heart.

(2) Although there are times of sadness, sickness & sorrow, God does not intend for us to live a life of gloom and doom.

(3) This does not minimize life's sorrows, but that a Christian, through the strength of God, has the ability to rise above life's discouragements.

2) Perhaps you know someone who battles sickness and discouragement seemingly every day – yet they have a cheerful disposition.

3) On the other hand, you may know someone who has little difficulties, yet always seem to never be happy or cheerful. In fact they seem to enjoy their sorrow!!

4) Some people are a joy to be around because of their optimistic outlook on life, while others are avoided because of their continual pessimism. (One sickly man stated "I have always expected the worse and I have never been disappointed yet.")

5) Someone observed: "You are not what you think you are, but you are what you think."

6) One should consider the importance of right thinking.

(1) "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee" (Proverbs 23:7),

(2) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

I. MIND AND BODY – THINKING AND GOOD HEALTH.

1) It should be no surprise to us that a way person thinks **directly** affects the organs of his body.

(1) Tell someone to speak in public and his heart rate and adrenalin may increase.

affects.) (2) Some literally get sick. (There are psychological & physiological

(3) The mind has affected the body.

2) Dr. McMillen wrote:

(1) With each passing year, we obtain a wider comprehension of the ability of the mind (psche) to produce varied disturbances of the body (soma): hence the term psychosomatic. Invisible emotional tension in the mind can produce striking visible changes in the body, changes that can become serious and fatal.

(2) And – A large percentage of most physicians' practices are made up of patients whose illnesses are directly or indirectly the result of emotional stress.... Stress often reduces a person's ability to fight off infections.... The brain, where all the emotional stress is processed, is the control center of the entire body. From the brain millions of nerve fibers course out to every organ in the body. Chemical released from these nerve fibers control or influence every chemical reaction in every organ of the body. Because our health is dependent on the proper balance of all these chemical reactions, it is no wonder that emotional upset in our brains can disrupt chemical reactions in a far-removed organ and cause disease.

3) Among the things that Dr. McMillen list that are caused or affected by stress include; disorders of the digestive system, disorders of the circulatory system, disorders of the genito-urinary system, disorders of the nervous system, disorder of glands, allergic disorders, muscle-joint disorders, infections, inflammatory and skin diseases, nutritional and drug disorders and cancer.

4) This is not to say that every sickness or illness is the result of faulty thinking.

5) There are going to be times of stress and sadness in our lives

(1) Right thinking does not keep bad things from happening unto us.

(2) However, right thinking does help cope with the tragedies that do come.

(3) Even Jesus wept –

1)“Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.” (John 11:30)

(4) The Godhead can be grieved – “And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Genesis 6:6).

(5) Solomon said a time to weep and a time to laugh (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).

6) Leroy Brownlow observed: “Being endowed by the Creator to live life realistically, we were also given the fatiguing emotions of fear, anger, anxiety and sorrow.

(1) All our emotions have their proper place.

(2) However, these negative emotions should not dominate our lives.

(3) “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

(4) “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

II. THE BENEFITS OF A MERRY HEART.

1) Just as stress, anxiety and fear have an adverse affect on the body, so does a merry heart have good effects on our body.

2) It is like a medicine:

(1) “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).

(2) Medicines sometimes treat the symptoms while a merry heart may prevent the illness from ever occurring.

(3) A content and pleasant disposition protects one against disease; for the mind has a powerful influence over the body. If there are non-physical factors which cause disease, then there must be non-physical factors to cure it. The merry heart is the life of a man and prolongation of his days. Inasmuch as the whole man is involved in the prevention and cure of illness, then the emotions are included, too — and more and more this is being appreciated.

3) Both the Word of God and science teach us that a merry heart is good for one physically.

4) It produces a cheerful countenance.

(1) “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Proverbs 15:13)

(2) A person’s face many times reflects what is in the heart. (Affliction, worry or peace)

4) It helps one enjoy life.

(1) “All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart [hath] a continual feast” (Proverbs 15:15).

5) It makes one more enjoyable.

(1) A person who has a merry heart is much more enjoyable socially than the one who always displays a “poor me” attitude.

(2) We should sympathize with those who are in pain or grief.

(3) “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15).

(4) However, some think that sympathy and encouragement is a one way street - to them!

(5) Jesus suffered tremendously – yet we never find him complaining.

(6) “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

6) It demonstrates trust in God. See Acts 16:24-25 – what if they had acted differently. Would the jailor have wanted to be a Christian?

III. CULTIVATING A MERRY HEART.

1) Most people desire to be happy (cf. Offices of Psychologist are full).

2) God wants His children to have the abundant life! – It is attainable!!

3) Replace fear with faith.

(1) Fear can rob us of a merry heart.

(2) Not talking about throwing caution to the wind (picking us rattlesnake)

(3) God does not want us to be fearful.

(4) “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

(5) Mark 4:39-40, Joshua 1:6-7

(6) Must have faith in God.

(7) “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

4) Have a optimistic outlook.

(1) Paul was always optimistic in Christ.

(2) “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

5) **Don't be selfish:** (miserable!)

- (1) Philippians 2:5-8
- (2) Romans 5:6-8

6) **Overcome worry and insecurity with trust and confidence.**

(1) "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:25-26).

- (2) John 10:27-30
- (3) Psalm 23

7. **Replace enmity with Peace:** (with God, man. self)

IV. SOME DANGERS TO AVOID IN SEEKING A MERRY HEART

1) Alcohol and drug abuse.

(1) Example – Nabal.
(2) "And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light" (1Samuel 25:36).

2) Seeking pleasure as primary goal.

(1) "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

(2) "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14).

3) Corrupting worship into a "fun time." (Gimmickry - "holy circus")

4) Using sin as justification for happiness - "God doesn't want me to be unhappy." (Hedonism)

CONCLUSION:

1) There are legitimate ways to have a merry heart. God wants us to have a merry heart.

2) If the merry heart, described by God, is within our reach, why not seek it!

3) "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (Proverbs15:13).

4) "All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast" (Proverbs 15:15).

5) "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." (Proverbs 17:22).

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