

A Good Medicine

By David Wright

A typical proverb of Solomon is a concise, two-line saying revealing or emphasizing some truth about human conduct. When taken to heart, a biblical proverb has transforming power. The wise saying in Proverbs 17:22 is a case in point: “A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.”

Modern medical research definitely supports this claim. Optimistic people are more likely than pessimists to stay healthy and recover from illnesses. According to a blog at www.britannica.com, studies “have provided insight into the amazing influence of laughter on healing.”

Some years ago I read an inspiring story about Brooke Ellison, a young woman who overcame daunting circumstances. As an 11-year-old girl, she was struck by a car while crossing a Long Island highway. The accident paralyzed her from the neck down, leaving her dependent on a ventilator. In spite of these painful physical limitations, Brooke insisted on continuing her education. After finishing high school at the top of her class and scoring an outstanding 1510 on the SAT, she attended Harvard and graduated magna cum laude. Clearly, this remarkable achievement would have been impossible had Brooke wallowed in self-pity.

But how do we avoid a “downcast spirit” and keep a “cheerful heart”? Changing our feelings is essentially impossible. What we can change is our thinking, which, in turn, affects our feelings. The celebration of Thanksgiving provides an excellent opportunity for an attitude shift. God has absolutely showered blessings upon us. Taking time to dwell on his many rich gifts will lift our spirits.

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