

**START WITH A STORY:**

Q: Why didn't the skeleton want to play football, anymore?

A: Because his heart wasn't in it!

Q: What did the skeleton say while riding his Harley Davidson motorcycle?

A: I'm bone to be wild!

Q: Why did the skeleton have to go to church to play music?

A: They don't have any organs!

Q: Why wasn't the naughty skeleton afraid of the police?

A: Because he knew they couldn't pin anything on him!

**LESSON THEME:** A Merry Heart or a Broken Spirit

**INTRODUCTION:** It's God's desire that today be the best day of my life and that tomorrow be better. When a person is obedient to all of God's commandments, the results are like having heaven on earth.

**Deuteronomy 11:21:** *"That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth."*

The only thing standing in the way of such a glorious idea is me.

Once one has repented of his sins and surrendered his life to Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, he enters into salvation - the Born-Again - born a second time experience. It is at this moment that the mystery of Godliness begins in a believer's life. Because of Christ, Satan's back is broken. He is spoiled and no longer has authority over the blood-bought soul—none! Each day, as a believer strives to put on more of the mind of Christ, Satan's influence in his life diminishes.

Upon initial salvation, the miraculous leap from death to life occurs and every day after that gets better - providing I say so. **Proverbs 4:18:** *"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."*

The day of my salvation was the first best day of my life and each day after, as I put on more of the mind of Christ, it gets even better - if I say so. Jesus Christ says in **John 10:10:** *"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."*

Seeking and serving Jesus Christ is simply a matter of practicing excellent life.



All of God's commandments are enhancers of life. When a man disobeys, he suffers a "piece of death"—the evil result of simply doing the wrong thing. If I want a life that is compared to heaven on earth, it behooves me to surrender to the Word of God.

Isn't it amazing that when science discovers a marvelous truth, it's ballyhooed around the world, yet the same truth—which has been in the Word of God for thousands of years - is not considered necessary to mention? Some fields of endeavor would call such a thing plagiarism. Now, how about our lesson.

We learned last week that God said in **Proverbs 17:22:** *"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."*

And in **1 Thessalonians 5:18:** *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*

And once again in **Philippians 4:4:** *"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."*

God, in at least 100 different places in His Word, directs us to maintain a **happy disposition**. The world on the other hand says, "There is no God, therefore the Bible cannot be His Word and its dictums are irrelevant."

**LESSON:** It comes as a surprise to many that spiritual positions have a direct effect on the physical body's health and well-being. **3 John 1:2:** "*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*"

God created all things out of that which is invisible. God is a spirit and He is invisible if He chooses to be. Spirit created physical things and not the other way around; therefore, physical things respond to spiritual stimuli. This concept is about to become very obvious.

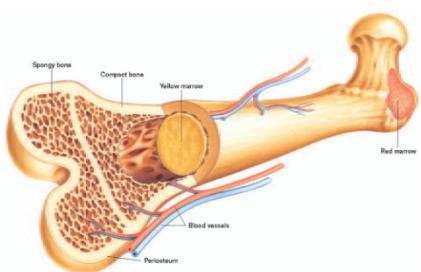
Jesus Christ our Lord said in **Luke 6:45:** "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*"

The thoughts of your heart will define you and your future.

The verse I quoted, **Proverbs 17: 22:** "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones,*" speaks directly of the results of thoughts. *God speaks of a merry heart doing good like a medicine and that a broken spirit dries up the bones.*" Remember, this passage was authored thousands of years before science began to certify its truth. Obviously God doesn't need man to certify His truth, but the gainsayers do.



**1. THE IMPORTANCE OF BONES** - The bones in our bodies are key to excellent living and their role is much more than simply a structure upon which hang organs and flesh. Inside our bones is found a spongy, moist tissue called bone marrow where all of our body's blood cells are produced. The blood cells begin life in the moist marrow as stem cells. These stem cells divide and form the various cells that make up our blood and immune system. Out of this moist bone marrow come red blood cells, which carry oxygen and nutrients to the body, and also the white blood cells that fight infections. Without bone marrow, there could be no human life.



The amazing bone is strong as steel but light as aluminum, and inside the cancellous bones of the ribs, vertebrae, sternum and pelvis is bone marrow, a moist hive of activity. Imagine, two million red blood cells are being replaced every second and they're being generated in the body's bone marrow. So then, the red blood cells carry oxygen and nutrients to the body and the white blood cells defend against disease; both find their beginnings in moist bone marrow. New fields of study have arisen concerning white blood cells and immune system malfunction called "psychoneuroimmunology" or "neuroimmunomodulation." It is now known that stress, depression, sorrow, grief, anger, and negative thoughts have a direct negative effect on white blood cells and happy, joyful, restful, positive thoughts have a direct positive effect on white and red blood cell production and activity. Remember, red blood cells bring oxygen and nutrients to the body and white blood cells defend it against disease and sickness.

**Dr. Berk**, a researcher at *Loma Linda University School of Medicine's Dept. of Clinical Immunology*, has shown that laughter lowers serum cortisol levels. Cortisol is part of the body's fight-or-flight response but too much of it can dampen immune response and shut down the very process that attacks life-threatening microbes or keeps malignant cells from proliferating into an invasive tumor. Laughter also increases the

amount of activated *T lymphocytes*, increases the number and activity of natural killer cells, and increases the number of *T cells* that carry helper, suppressor receptors. **Simply put, the immune system is positively benefited by laughter.**



Our first line of defense against infectious organisms trying to enter through our respiratory tract is *salivary immunoglobulin A*. Confirmed research shows that *salivary*

immunoglobulin A is lower when one is in a negative mood and higher on days when one is in a positive mood. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine. **Dr. Berk**'s research cited earlier also shows that laughter helps boost the production of NK cells, which fight upper respiratory infections, such as pneumonia and bronchitis. Laughter boosts energy levels, strengthens organs and increases circulatory capacity. A few seconds of laughter could be as good as 1 minute of aerobic exercise.

**Dr. William Fry**, an emeritus associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Stanford University Medical School in California, weighs in with studies on laughter that reveals, among its many other benefits, that it produces increased activity of white blood cells, which fight disease. Remember what the Bible records: A merry heart doeth good like medicine.



The following is an excerpt from an article in *Ladies Home Journal*, titled "30 Days to More Self-esteem:"

*"The latest scientific research shows that all our thoughts create chemicals in our body, called neuropeptides. Happy thoughts produce chemicals that actually strengthen the body, and negative thoughts produce chemicals that weaken the body."*

Note that spiritual things such as thoughts produce physical things such as chemicals. Our God, who created the body, gives explicit instructions in His owner's manual, the Bible, concerning the attitude from which we should approach life. Happy, cheerful, joyous, courageous, positive and loving thoughts cause our bone marrow to produce red and white blood cells prolifically. The red blood cells bring oxygen and life and the white blood cells destroy infectious disease. Thousands of years before man conceived this wisdom, God declared that a merry heart doeth good like a medicine-a medicine man can only dream of duplicating.



A final quote concerning a merry heart was found in a sub headline in a *USA Weekend* tabloid dated May 30-June 1, 1997. It reads, *"More doctors insist: Laughter is a miracle drug. Now some are even prescribing it."*

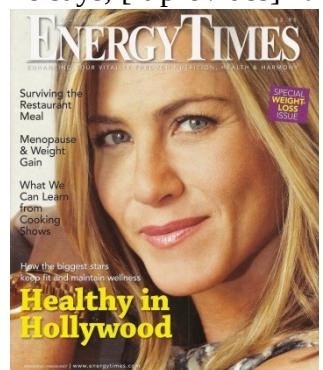
Unfortunately, the merry heart is becoming more and more scarce. According to the **World Health Organization**, by the year 2020, depression will likely be the second leading cause of death and lost productivity, right behind cardiovascular disease. The other half of **Proverbs 17: 22** says, *"but a broken spirit drieth the bones."*



You'll be amazed at what you hear next. In an article in *Psychology Today* titled, *"The Blues Are A Bone-Breaker,"* research conducted by **Dr. Ulrich Schweiger** of the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry in Germany was cited. **Schweiger** measured bone density of 18 depressed, hospitalized men and women and another group of 21 patients who were free of depression. All were over the age of 40. The results were shocking. The research took place over a period of two years. At the end of two years, Schweiger compared the bone density of both groups. The depressed patients lost significantly more bone mass than those who were not depressed. The following is a direct quote from **Dr. Schweiger**. He says, [It provides] *"a vital link in explaining the increased mortality observed particularly in men with major depression."*

Another piece of **research reported that 75% of our daily thoughts are negative**, which cause a responding negative physical reaction. Remember, a broken spirit drieth up the bones, the manufacturing plant of red and white blood cells. The following two passages were reported in *Energy Times*:

Scientists investigating why people under chronic stress, such as those caring for someone with a degenerative disease, are especially prone to ill health recently closed in on an answer: Their bodies can't produce enough white blood cells - called lymphocytes - to fight off invaders.





**Paul J. Mills, Ph.D.**, of the *University of California at San Diego*, with his colleagues at UCSD and researchers from the Veterans Administration, reported in the March 1999 issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine* that a group of "vulnerable" caregivers, who care for their spouses more than 12 hours a day and get a break less than once a month, had an average of only 40% as many lymphocytes as a less burdened, "nonvulnerable" group.

And then again under the subheadline, "Studying an Urgent Topic:"

The link between stress and illness is a familiar yet subtle one. Scientists must connect psychology and biology, as does **Sheldon Cohen, Ph.D.**, of *Carnegie Mellon University* in Pittsburgh. In his *New England Journal of Medicine* report (1991, 325(9):606), he conclusively associated psychological stress and the tendency to be infected by respiratory viruses--the common cold.

Researchers at the world-famous **Mayo Clinic** followed up on the results of a personality test conducted 30 years ago. Eight hundred thirty-nine were tested. Those who tested as pessimists had a 19% increased risk of death. The merry heart of the optimist yielded the fruits of a healthier, longer life. God's commandment in **Philippians 4: 8-9** reads: "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*"

Research conducted among older, happily-married couples by Ohio State University found that abrasive arguments weakened the couple's immune systems. Again remember, the bone marrow is the manufacturer of white blood cells, your immune system. **Ronald Glaser**, a microbiology and immunology professor who helped conduct the survey said: "The more negative behaviors the couples exhibited around each other, the more their immune systems weakened."

On December 1, 2000, an **AP** article written by science writer **Paul Recer** discussed two different scientific studies which discovered that transplanted bone marrow can naturally transform itself into neurons, which are brain cells. The medical world was shocked at this discovery, which **suggests that natural resident bone marrow regularly converts bone marrow cells into brain neurons, a previously unknown natural healing process to replace failed brain cells.**

Fix your mind on cheerful thoughts and your body will respond with excellence. **Proverbs 3: 7-8**: "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."



Thousands of years before science began to discover its truth, God declared it in His Word. God tells us in **Proverbs 17:22**: "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.*"

The world says, "There is no God, therefore the Bible can't be His Word and its dictums are irrelevant."

Do you have a merry heart? Are you resting in the peace that passes understanding? A merry heart is a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ to those who surrender their lives unto him and to the Word of God. It will be the most important thing you will ever do.

