

The Power of Positive Thinking: Happiness and Healing



SABBATH—JUNE 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Kings 19:2–18; Psalm 27; Psalm 42; Luke 8:14; Luke 10:38–42; Romans 8:35–39; 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10; 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 17.

MEMORY VERSE: “But here is something else I remember. And it gives me hope. The Lord loves us very much. So we haven’t [have not] been completely destroyed. His loving concern never fails. His great love is new every morning. Lord, how faithful you are!” (Lamentations 3:21–23, NIV).

TWO MEN ARE IN PRISON. One is watching the shiny stars twinkling like jewels in the night sky. He enjoys the beauty of this scene. He feels very positive and hopeful. He knows that there is something better beyond the bars! The other person watches the muddy ground around the prison cells. There is nothing there to encourage him. He becomes less and less positive. He has no hope because he is looking down.

Hope influences¹ how we deal with every life situation. It helps us to be positive even in times of trouble or worry. This optimism² influences how we feel emotionally. It also influences our physical health positively.

We often cannot change things that happen around us. But we so often can change our attitude (feeling) toward them. This week we will study this principle (rule). From the Bible’s point of view, we can learn why we have so much to be hopeful about.

To view and/or download a Hope Channel show on this week’s lesson, visit www.lifesbeat.org.

1. influences—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

2. optimism—a feeling or belief that good things will happen in the future; a feeling or belief that what you hope for will happen.

SUNDAY—JUNE 6

**DEPRESSION AND DESPAIR³
(Psalm 42)**

Depression is a common problem today. There are two main kinds of depression. The first comes from unpleasant events of life, such as a death, an illness, a job loss, or a broken relationship.⁴ Everyone experiences some of these at one time or another. The other kind of depression is related to chemical imbalances⁵ in the central nervous system.⁶ This often is a family problem. Depression is as much an illness as any disease. We need to be careful about not being judgmental against people with depression.



Death, illness, job loss, or a broken relationship can cause depression.

In Psalm 42 and in 1 Kings 19:2–8, we find examples from the Bible of great characters who suffered problems of depression. Who were they, and what were their problems?

3. despair—the feeling of no longer having any hope.
4. relationship—your emotional connection (tie) to another person and how deep your feelings are for that person.
5. chemical imbalances—a state or condition in the body in which different things do not occur in equal or proper amounts.
6. central nervous system—the part of the nervous system that includes the brain and spinal cord.
7. suicidal—wanting to kill yourself.
8. mission—a task that you consider to be a very important duty; the religious work that a person or group of people are sent to a foreign country to do.

These two champions of the Old Testament suffered times when their lives were darkened by depression and despair. David spent days and nights weeping. Elijah was suicidal.⁷ But he would not take his own life. Instead, he asked the Lord to do it (1 Kings 19:4). If Elijah were alive today, he might have complained that he was the only Seventh-day Adventist who was faithful to God!

God deals gently with both David and Elijah. David is impressed (feels) that he must put his hope in God (Psalm 42:11). And the result will be a life full of praise for God. With a still, small voice, God reminds Elijah of his mission⁸ and from where his strength comes. Elijah then goes ahead and starts the in-service training of Elisha, who was to take his place.

Everyone at some point struggles with depression. Depression may be unavoidable, but you still can make choices to avoid it. What kind of choices are you making? And where will they likely lead?

MONDAY—JUNE 7

THE CARES (WORRIES) OF THIS LIFE (Micah 6:8)

What do Micah 6:8; Luke 8:14;

Lesson 11 THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING: HAPPINESS AND HEALING

Luke 10:38–42; and Luke 12:16–21 tell us about how we are to live our lives? What are the lessons we can learn from each of these examples?

People are always working hard to be a success. They often spend long hours chasing this goal. How often we follow after success while neglecting our relationship with Jesus. Is what we do, say, and think important? Or are we like the “successful” farmer in the parable who ended up being a fool? (Read also Luke 21:34.)

Martha was busy with preparing food and drink for her guest (Jesus). Like us, she became so busy in the work for the Lord that she forgot the life-giving relationship with the Lord of the work. Jesus reminded Martha that Mary had made a wiser choice of relationship with God over work success.

And sometimes, like the seed, we can become trapped with the problems of this life in just trying to survive. This can include caring for family needs, education for our children, or just keeping up with living in this rebellious (sinful) planet. Keeping up our relationship with Jesus influences every part of our lives. It also encourages an optimistic and hope-filled attitude (thinking), even in times of trouble and pressure.

How much of what you are doing will be remembered in eternity?⁹ But how much are you doing that will one day be eternally forgotten?

9. eternity—forever; for all time; life without end.

10. temporary—lasting for a short or limited amount of time; not permanent (forever).



Martha became so busy in the work for the Lord that she forgot the Lord of the work.

What does your answer tell you about yourself, how you are living, and what choices you need to make?

TUESDAY—JUNE 8

BE JOYFUL ALWAYS (1 Thessalonians 5:16, 17)

How are the two warnings related in 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 17?

Even with all the pain and sadness in life, we still can have reason for joy and optimism. It does not matter how much these reasons might feel buried under the troubles and problems that so greatly bother us. Thanks to Jesus and the promises we have from Him, we know that these things are only temporary.¹⁰ We also know that these things have not taken God by surprise. No matter how hard and puzzling our sufferings are, God loves and cares about us. It is when we live with suffering that we hold on to these

Lesson 11 THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING: HAPPINESS AND HEALING

promises. We also hold on to the hope before us. For these reasons we can find joy and optimism even among the worst situations.



No matter how hard and puzzling our sufferings are, God loves and cares about us.

What hope and optimism can you learn from the promises found in Romans 8:31, 35–39; 1 John 3:1; and Revelation 21:4?

What other Bible promises can you claim that give you reasons to be optimistic and hopeful even during troubled times? How have these verses helped you work through difficult situations?

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 9

LAUGHTER AND HEALING (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10)

What is Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10? How can we use

this principle in our own lives, especially in times of distress?¹¹

Norman Cousins, the author of a book called *Anatomy of an Illness*, was the editor of a popular magazine in the United States for about thirty years. In 1964 Cousins was struck down by a disease that attacked his collagen.¹² Collagen is the body's connective tissue. He suffered great pain. He had a hard time moving his fingers, his arms and legs, even his jaw. He found it hard to turn over in bed. Meanwhile, lumps started forming all over his body. After the doctors decided what was wrong, they ordered all kinds of painkillers and sedatives,¹³ such as aspirin and codeine,¹⁴ and many different sleeping pills. At one point, Cousins' body started to have a reaction to the drugs. Then he broke out in hives that were even more painful than the disease itself. Things were looking bad for Cousins, especially because only 1 in about 500 patients ever gets well from this disease.

Finally, fed up with all these medicines, Cousins started to watch some funny films from a popular TV show called *Candid Camera*. In bed he would laugh and laugh at the funny acts. Almost quickly Cousins noticed a change. The more he laughed, the better he felt. The nurse would sometimes read him funny stories that would make him laugh hard. Over

11. distress—unhappiness or pain; suffering that affects the mind or body.

12. collagen—a substance that occurs naturally in the bodies of people and animals and is often put into creams and other products that are sold to make a person's skin smoother and less wrinkled.

13. sedatives—drugs that calm or relax someone.

14. codeine—a drug used to reduce (make less) pain.

Lesson 11 THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING: HAPPINESS AND HEALING

time, the tests showed that Cousins was getting better. Before long, the lumps on his body began to shrink, and he returned to his job. Soon after, the man who had found it hard to turn over in bed was playing tennis, playing golf, riding horses, and playing the piano!

No one is saying that laughter is the best answer to all our medical problems. But there is no question that a good attitude (thoughts and feelings) can have a positive influence¹⁵ on our health.

So often attitude is something that you can control if you really want to. What is your general attitude? How can you learn to be more optimistic? How should focusing on the Cross help you have a more positive attitude on life?

THURSDAY—JUNE 10

A CHEERFUL HEART (Proverbs 17:22)

Yes, laughter and joy are good for the body. Laughter exercises the lungs. It improves the blood flow to the heart. As a result, increased oxygen enters the blood. Laughter helps a person to relax. It may even help blood pressure to drop some. Laughter causes the body to make more of the chemicals called endorphins. Endorphins help to soothe and relax the mind, relieve pain, put a person in a better mood,

and increase immune cell activity.¹⁶ This optimism and merry heart is possible when people know that God is in control of our lives.



Laughter exercises the lungs.

Read Isaiah 26:1–4. How can you make good use of these verses in your life?

When our minds are steadfast and we trust in God, we gain a lot. Studies have shown that viewing others in a positive way can help prevent infection. (And it can make us pleasant to be around too!) As we make our relationship with Christ grow, our physical health is improved. We also can find the kind of emotional (heart) and spiritual healing that can help with physical (body) healing.

We are faced with a choice in Proverbs 17:22: a merry (cheerful) heart does good; a broken spirit has negative results on our total health. David learned the importance of this choice. David also reminded himself of God's protecting care in this struggle.

15. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

16. immune cell activity—the fight against diseases and infections by immune cells. Immune cells are very small parts in the body that together form the system that protects your body from disease and infections.

Lesson 11 THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING: HAPPINESS AND HEALING

What hope is presented in Psalm 27? How can we use these words in our lives?

There is enough proof that a strong relationship with God influences our total health. What changes do you need to make to have a better relationship with the Lord?

FRIDAY—JUNE 11

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Mind Cure,” pages 241–259, in *The Ministry [Work Done for God] of Healing*.

“Nothing does more to promote [create] health of body and of soul than a thankful spirit filled with praise. It is a positive duty to deny sad, dissatisfied thoughts and feelings. It is the same duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a group of mourners, complaining all along the way to our Father’s house?”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 251.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Do you know someone who is suffering from depression? If so, what

can you do to help? So often a kind word can help much in making someone feel better. What can your class or the church do to help those struggling with depression?

❷ Proverbs 3:7, 8, NIV reads, “Don’t [Do not] be wise in your own eyes. Have respect for the Lord and avoid evil. That will bring health to your body. It will make your bones strong.” How does this fit in with the lesson this week?

❸ Next time you are feeling down, try hard to think about positive things. Think about God’s love. Read some Bible verses that you like very much. Praise the Lord in song and in prayer. You might be surprised at how much better you feel.

❹ The lesson this week has talked about our feelings and the importance of feeling good. But we must remember that faith is not feeling. When we are feeling down, depressed, or discouraged, it does not mean that we have lost our connection with God. What is the difference between faith and feeling? Why is it important to know that difference?