

Laughter, Health, and God's Law

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | April 30, 2019



The Bible says that “a merry heart does good, like medicine” (Proverbs 17:22 NKJV).

But does being merry and cheerful actually bring real, measurable health benefits? According to science, the answer is a resounding “yes.” Here are just a few findings

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- Mirthful laughter reduces inflammation, improves diabetes control, and reduces incidence of heart attacks.^[1]
- Cardiologists at the University of Maryland found that patients who were suffering from myocardial infarction (heart attack) were 40 percent less likely to laugh. However, laughter was shown to reduce the risk of having a heart attack^[2]
- Other researchers found beneficial effects of laughter on the blood vessel. Nitric oxide is a chemical that the body uses to dilate blood vessels. Mental stress was shown to degrade nitric oxide. This would mean that laughter minimizes the negative effects of stress by reducing the breakdown of nitric oxide, leading to vasodilatation and better blood flow.^[3] On average, laughter increased blood flow by 22 percent and stress decreased blood flow by 35 percent.^[4]
- Laughter has been shown to improve the response of the immune system.^[5]

- In a study performed by Berk LS, et al., they found increased blood levels of interferon-gamma (an immune product that fights infections and cancers) in ten healthy fasting males after being shown a comedy video ($p=0.02$).^[6] As a result, interferons have become a line of pharmacotherapy in viral infections, systemic carcinomas, hepatitis B and C, in addition to the development of antiretroviral drugs.
- There are two types of stress: distress (the negative type) and eustress (the positive type, which is also known as mirthful laughter). Distress increases stress hormones—such as beta-endorphins, corticotrophins, and catecholamines—but laughter (a form eustress) decreased these hormones, fortified activity of natural killer (NK) cells, activated T cells and B cells, and increased Ig levels. This means that laughter is capable of combating the negative aspects of distress and fortifying the individual's immune system to help fight against various immune mediated illnesses.^[7]

In addition to the benefits listed above, laughter provides you with many more benefits: reduced anger and irritability, improved mood, decreased stress and tension, improved pain threshold, improved lung function, and reduced blood sugar levels.^[8]

I should point out here for those with certain medical conditions that, while mirthfulness and a cheerful attitude remain beneficial, vigorous or forceful laughter could cause problems: a hernia could be worsened; an aneurysm could be ruptured; uncontrolled asthmatics could have breathing difficulty; etc.

The attitude of our hearts has a real impact on our health and well-being. And this gives insight into why the Bible says we must call the Sabbath a delight (Isaiah 58:13). If we observe the Sabbath as a rule—merely an obligation to fulfill—a restriction, a time of all the things we can't do, then the Sabbath isn't a delight but a burden. Rather than being a blessing to us, the Sabbath observed in such a way, as a checklist of obedience, becomes a hardship. Health is not improved; in fact, it is actually worsened.

God's laws are design law—the protocols upon which reality is built to operate, including the laws of health, physics, gravity, time, *and* the moral laws. Harmony with God's laws always brings health and happiness, while violations are always damaging. Human beings cannot create reality; our laws are not the protocols upon which reality operates. Instead, sinful humans make up rules and then inflict punishments for breaking those rules, as there are no inherent consequences to violating such arbitrary rules.

When we replace the truth of God's design laws for human imposed laws and experience obedience to God in the same we do human law (that is, under the threat of punishment), then we incite fear, stress, and anxiety, which damages our physical and mental well-being.

We can see that Ellen White, a pioneer of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, understood this principle. She wrote in *Christ's Object Lessons*,

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God **from a sense of obligation—merely because he is required to do so**—will never enter into the joy of obedience. **He does not obey.** When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. **True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God.** The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God (p. 97., my emphasis).

What kind of law would one obey “merely because he is required to do so”? The answer is imperial

law—a human-constructed system of rules, the same basis upon which penal-substitution law operates, in which rules are arbitrarily created, enforced, and punished. It's a fraudulent law because it prevents people from experiencing God's true healing plan. Why? Because it incites fear, stress, anxiety, which all lead to self-protecting behavior.

What kind of law would one obey “from the love of righteousness”—of right-doing? Only design law, in which God heals the heart so that we *willingly follow* the underlying protocols of His universe. This cannot be done from legal accounting, but by healing the heart and mind with true joy and peace.

This is a key to all God's laws. They are *design laws*, with the real benefit of healing the human heart/character. Imperial law coerces your behavior by threats of punishment, but such law cannot change the heart. They are never an “outworking of a principle within.” Why? Because human-made laws don't care about your heart; human governments care only about your obedience.

Love cannot be commanded; therefore, we cannot enforce God's laws with threats. Likewise, God cannot change hearts, heal minds, nor transform characters by threatening to kill people who won't love and trust Him. The only way to truly keep God's law is from a free heart. To promote God's kingdom with any other method than love, truth, and freedom is to advance Satan's kingdom.

I invite you to rejoice, laugh, and be cheerful because God is our Creator and His laws of love are the protocols reality is built upon—understand these protocols and choose, with a free heart, to live in harmony with them. Reject the imperial-law lie infecting Christianity, which brings only stress, anxiety, and coerced behavior.

A merry heart is truly good medicine!

[1] Berk, L., et al, Mirthful laughter, as adjunct therapy in diabetic care, attenuates catecholamines, inflammatory cytokines, C-RP, and myocardial infarction occurrence, *FASEB Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1_supplement, March 2008

[2] Vascular Medicine; Watching funny movies boosts blood flow to the heart. *Health & Medicine Week*,1660. Research Library database. (Document ID: 980266611); 2006.

[3] Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Nitric oxide; [Revised December 24, 2008].https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nitric_oxide&oldid=259865728.

[4] Vascular Medicine; Watching funny movies boosts blood flow to the heart. *Health & Medicine Week*,1660. Research Library database.(Document ID: 980266611); 2006.

[5] Berk LS, Tan SA, Fry WF. Eustress of humor associated laughter modulates specific immune system components. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*. 1993;15:11.

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[6] The Laughter - Immune Connection. Berk LS, Tan SA; [Revised November, 1996].<https://www.hospitalclown.com/Past%20Issues/Final%20PDFs/Vol%202-2Berk.pdf>.

[7] Berk LS, Tan SA, Napier BJ. et al. Eustress of mirthful laughter modifies natural killer cell activity. *Clinical Research*. 1989;37:115A.

[8] <https://www.bmj.com/content/347/bmj.f7274.long>