

A Spoonful of Sugar

I have never been much of a movie watcher, so I have a limited repertoire of movies to recommend. But one that I have enjoyed over the years is "Mary Poppins." Most of the movie has to do with having a positive outlook on life and not being neglectful to encourage others in doing the same. To that end, the song "A Spoonful of Sugar Makes the Medicine Go Down," although it seems like a bit of silliness, has a useful message: A positive outlook on life can truly help everyone deal with the troublesome, discouraging events that occur with regularity.

Solomon said, *"A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones"* (Prov. 17:22). A variant of the translation reads, *"A merry heart makes medicine better."* In either case, the word of God teaches that a positive attitude will have a profoundly good effect upon our overall state of being. Conversely, *"a broken spirit"* (despondent and depressed) has an equally profound negative effect upon our state of being. A positive attitude can be nurtured by refusing to dwell upon and be controlled by problems which are beyond our control. Job said, *"If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad face and wear a smile"* (Job 9:27). This does not mean that we should ignore sin in our lives, for dealing with the guilt of sin is within our control (Acts 22:16). Appropriately dealing with personal sin is *"... the answer of a good conscience toward God"* (1 Pet. 3:20-21), and a good conscience is so vital to a good attitude. Unresolved sin is a prime culprit in discouragement, depression, disillusionment, disobedience to the gospel and delinquent church membership. When sin is dealt with Biblically (Acts 8:30-39; 8:18-22; 1 Jn. 1:9), the Christian is free to go on his way rejoicing, to forget those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead (Phil. 3:13-14) and to meditate upon *"...whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things"* (Phil. 4:8).

Have you noticed how quickly a smile can be removed from someone's face by an ill-conceived word or action from someone else? Solomon counsels, *"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad"* (Prov. 12:25). We are impacted by how others behave toward us and how we behave toward others. Jesus said, *"And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise"* (Lk. 6:31). What has been variously called a tongue that is "tart," "sharp," "barbed," "caustic," or otherwise uncontrolled by the gentle spirit of a servant (1 Tim. 2:24), has opened wounds that are a long time in healing in others who are vulnerable. *"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one"* (Col. 4:6). *"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers"* (Eph. 4:29).

The state of our inward self has more to do with our personal choices regarding the things which affect our lives for the better or for the worse. Often, having a good attitude and a positive outlook is as simple as choosing to have them and refusing to allow the negative and evil to rule in our lives. It will be of immense help to others, though, in maturely and joyfully coping with the difficulties of life if they can see the counsel of God at work in the joyfulness of our own lives and when we remember that, *"A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness"* (Prov. 15:1-2).

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