Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Robin Basselin. And I’m Ryan Geertsma. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. The lion roars in pain. This wild animal has stepped on a small, sharp thorn. He is hurt, but he cannot remove the thorn himself. He searches for someone to help. Finally, he sees a boy watching over sheep. The lion says to the shepherd, “Do not be afraid. Please, help me.” The boy can see pain in the lion’s eyes. He pulls out the thorn. Years later, a king arrests the shepherd for a crime he did not do. The king declares that the shepherd will be killed. The king releases a lion to kill the shepherd. But suddenly, the lion stops. He walks slowly towards the shepherd. The lion puts his foot gently on the shepherd. This is the same lion the boy helped years before. The king is amazed by their story. And he releases both the boy and the lion. This ancient story was written by the Greek writer Aseop. The story shows how the shepherd’s life was saved because of his past kindness. Today’s Spotlight is on how modern science is supporting this old idea - that doing good is good for you. People have long understood that kindness is good for the person receiving help. For example, when a person gives food to a hungry person, the hungry person is blessed. His stomach is no longer empty and he has received a good gift. However, scientists have recently begun to study the effect acts of kindness have on the person doing them. What they have found is that doing good is, in fact, good for the doer. Acts of kindness can improve health, help a person reach goals and even add years to a person’s life. Many scientific studies have shown the connection between doing good and long life. The first study to show this connection was a study on aging. Beginning in 1956, scientists studied a group of married mothers for 30 years. They thought the women with the most children would die first. But what they found surprised them. The number of children a woman had did not matter. Wealth did not matter. Education did not matter. Class did not matter. What did matter was if they volunteered - if they gave their time to help other people. Women that volunteered had fewer major diseases during their life. This helped them live much longer than the women who did not volunteer. Since that first study, many other studies have found the same positive effects. Helping other people improves long-term health. It works even better than exercising four times a week. The gains are the same for men, women, old people and young. In fact, many different studies have been done with older adults over the age of 65. Each time, the study showed the same results. Those people who volunteered had fewer major sicknesses than those who did not volunteer. This included sicknesses like heart attack, cancer or stroke. One study, done in 1995, had a surprising result. It found that volunteering often reduced an older adult’s chance of dying by 44%. But why would this be? Scientist are researching many possible causes. They want to answer this question. One possible cause is an increase in antibodies. Antibodies are made by the body to fight against disease. One study showed a strong link between showing kindness to other people and an increase in antibodies. The body produces more antibodies after an act of kindness. This increase in antibodies can last nearly an hour after the act of kindness is finished. Scientists think these antibodies might have an effect on long term health. However, antibodies are not the only possible cause. Another possible cause is an increase in a chemical that fights the effects of stress or pressure from life. Normally, the body produces chemicals when stressed. Over time, these stress chemicals can lead to many diseases, such as high blood pressure and heart disease. But scientists have found a link between being kind to people and an increase in the chemical oxytocin. Oxytocin is a chemical produced in the brain. It reduces many of the harmful chemicals the body produces under stress. There is another positive change in the body that scientists have found in many studies. Doing kind acts also releases endorphins in a person’s brain. Endorphins are the body’s natural drug. They reduce pain and produce pleasant emotions. Negative emotions can lead to poor health. When a person feels good more often, they are likely to have better health. Health and long life are just two positive effects of doing good. Researchers believe that doing kind acts can also help people perform better in life. In 2010, three studies were done by Harvard University scientist, Kurt Gray. The studies tested to see if kindness had any effect on physical strength. They found that it did. People were stronger while they helped other people. They worked harder, too. In a study report, Gray said, “Doing good gives people the strength to act more effectively and better achieve their goals.” Science is still discovering positive effects from acts of kindness. This idea is new to the world of science, but not to the world of faith. For thousands of years, religions have encouraged people to love and care for those around them. In the Christian faith, God promises to bless the people who care for other people in need. Proverbs is a list of wise sayings in the Christian Bible. One of these sayings is, “The person who blesses other people is richly blessed; those people who help other people are helped themselves.” For now, researchers are still working to understand the science of doing good. But there is one thing they do know from all of the evidence. Doing good things for other people is good for you, too. Why do you do good things for other people? Do you feel better when you are kind? Do you think it helps your health? How does your religion affect how you treat others? You can email your thoughts to radio@radioenglish.net. The writer of this program was Ann Wilds. The producer was Mark Drenth. The voices were from the United States. All quotes were adapted and voiced by Spotlight. You can find our programs on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called, “Doing Good is Good for You.” We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye!