

evidence is strong enough that doctors and scholars have speculated about it for centuries.

The gift of laughter may be one of our greatest blessings from God. Maybe that's why the enemy has corrupted humor the same way he's corrupted music. Today's humor is often crude, derogatory, or sexually exploitative. It makes fun of the weak, the needy – or the different. I call this the "easy" non-thinking person's type of humor. It's not creative. And it's *not* the kind of humor I'm referring to.

The Bible tells us to stay away from coarse jesting – but that still leaves lots and lots of funny stuff to laugh about!

Let's learn to laugh at ourselves in a healthy way, and not always take ourselves so seriously. Nobody likes to be around a sourpuss. Ever tried to kid with a friend who has lost the ability to tease, or *be* teased? Life is a very dull place for them – and for those around them.

Nobody can see the underside of life's "tapestry" as clearly as God, but He doesn't get uptight and stressed out. Maybe it's because He can see the final victorious outcome! Jesus said, "*In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer! For I have overcome the world.*" (John 16:33 AV)

As Christians we want to be taken seriously because we *are* serious about God. We want to be seen as credible, stable, single-minded people – but let's not get "hyper-spiritual" while trying to prove our integrity. And let's not let the enemy rob us of the ability to see the funny side of life and laugh at the downright silliness of some situations!

In Genesis we read that, "... Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, 'God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.'" (Gen. 21:5,6) Sarah accepted God's blessing, but not without laughter at the absurdity of the situation! Several years ago our whole LDM leadership team had a gifting/personality profile done by a Christian organization. I took the analyst out to dinner to talk about an important issue and asked her, "Aside from the obvious, what qualities should I look for in a husband?"

She quickly said, "I'll tell you one thing. You'd better marry someone with a sense of humor. Your life is just too serious not to have someone to laugh with." It wasn't the answer I expected – but she was right.

Can you keep a sense of humor in the midst of life's difficult situations? Do you laugh enough? Do you have friends to laugh with? I seek out these kinds of friends like rare jewels. If joyful laughter is an element that's missing from your life, then begin to smile more today than you did yesterday and let the Lord fill your mouth with laughter.

My husband and I have given each other a "humor prescription." We try to tell each other something funny every day. We even have those joke books – you know, the "Ten Zillion Clean Jokes" kind –

in case our day is just too serious to yield anything we'd consider really humorous. No kidding!

I'll close with a story about a man who wouldn't get dressed for church one Sunday. He told his wife, "I'm not going to church for three reasons. The congregation is cold. Nobody likes me. And besides, I just don't *want* to go." His wife gently replied, "I'll give you three reasons why you should go. The congregation is really very warm. A few people like you. And besides, you *have* to go – you're the pastor!"



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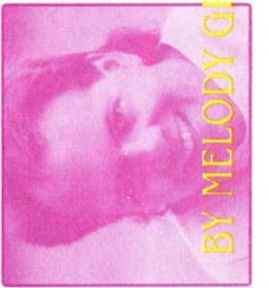
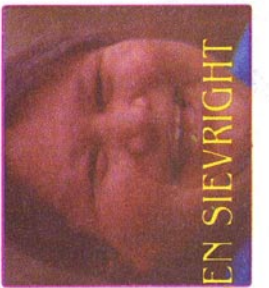
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# GOOD NEWS A HAPPY HEART IS GOOD MEDICINE



BY MELODY GREEN SIEVRIGHT



Someone once said, "The work of the ministry is just that... a lot of hard work!" Someone else said, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy!"

Everyone at LDM works very hard. It's serious stuff, reaching a hurting world... and we take it *seriously*. But recently we've felt the Lord encourage us to enjoy each other more and not lose that wonderful gift from Him called "a sense of humor."

I will admit that, in the intensity of serving the Lord in a lost and dying world, it seems frivolous to talk about having a sense of humor. But I'm not writing to those who need to take the Lord – and reaching the world – *more* seriously. I'm writing to those who are sold-out to God and trying to serve Him with all their hearts.

The most godly people I know – those who have had the greatest spiritual impact on my life – always seem to have the greatest sense of humor! I'm serious. They're at home with laughter as long as it's not at someone's expense. And they can laugh at themselves too. People who are "too spiritual" to enjoy a good belly laugh are missing the point.

I don't know about you, but my life is very intense. The pressure rarely lets up unless I grab what fleeting moments there are to look on the lighter side.



For instance, my daughter recently took a bath in my bathtub. I walked in to find that the running water had whipped Mr. Bubble into a dense frothy mountain rising over the tub and spilling onto the carpet. Not only that, my daughter had an eight-inch mound of the stuff piled high on her head. It looked like the whole room was about to be swallowed up by a goopy white monster!

I stood there speechless, planning to take it "very seriously" and correct her – but my spirit didn't feel grieved. In fact, what I really felt was laughter bubbling up (pardon my pun!) inside me. I hesitated, then burst out laughing, which made her laugh too. We giggled together – then I got the camera and made a memory. A good one.

We did have a little talk about "being more careful next time..." but I would have missed a special moment had I lost my sense of humor.

There are two kinds of people with no sense of humor: Those who think *nothing* is funny and those who think *everything* is funny. A "sense" of humor is like a "sense" of smell. They both require discernment to function properly. Those who can't smell anything are in as much trouble as those who think everything smells the same. The Bible tells us, "*There is an appointed time for everything... a time to weep, and a time to laugh.*" One is not more spiritual than the other, but we need discernment to know which is appropriate when.

Few people are more serious about the Lord than my dear friend Leonard Ravenhill, but his writings are laced with wit and the clever turning of a phrase. When I think of him, I always think of his warm laughter and ready smile.

George MacDonald, the famous Christian author from Scotland, said, "It is the

heart that is not yet sure of its God that is afraid to laugh in His presence."

The biographers of Martin Luther (usually viewed as a stern man) said he "abounded in unguarded transparency. Plain, honest, and playful was Martin Luther."

Some people wrongly associate somberness with spirituality.

Charles Spurgeon, who carried a pressing burden for England and lived through poverty and the great plague of London, was often criticized for "frivolity" in the pulpit. But he replied, "This preacher thinks it less a crime to cause momentary laughter than one hour of profound slumber!"

And God has a sense of humor too. Look at the giraffe, the hippopotamus – and, well, look at... *us*. People are funny! Volumes could be filled on the "humor of life" and all its little inconsistencies by just observing one day of silly human habits. Real-life situations are the funniest.

When Jesus walked the earth the little children loved Him. His eyes must have had a playful sparkle as He scooped them up into His arms. They must have felt totally accepted and loved by Jesus, who commanded *us* to become like *them* in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven. No one knows how to delight in the simple pleasures of life, or giggle as easily, as a little kid.

Ever wonder where the term "just kidding" originated?

Too many of us have lost our sense of humor. This is dangerous. If we lose our sense of humor, our mind might be the next thing to go! How many times has a good laugh rescued a totally disastrous day? We might not think we can laugh in the midst of all the pressures of life, but we won't make it unless we do!

Dr. Albert Schweitzer used humor at his African jungle hospital to reduce the effects of temperature, humidity, and tension. Dr. Schweitzer always had a few amusing stories to tell when his medical staff gathered for dinner. It was said that, "Laughter at the dinner hour was probably the most important course... the staff seemed to be rejuvenated by the wryness of his humor."

Science has proven the existence of something called *endorphins* in the human brain – a substance like morphine in its molecular structure and effects. When released, endorphins are the body's own anesthesia and relaxant. They even help human beings sustain pain.

Tim Hansel, author of the Christian best seller *You Gotta Keep Dancin' – In The Midst Of Life's Hurts, You Can Choose Joy!*, said, "Although it is still not known exactly how endorphins are released, there is evidence to support the thought that they are released by such things as exercise and, yes, laughter."

The Bible tells us, "*A happy heart is good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing...*" (Prov. 17:22 AV) No one knows for sure what happens inside the human heart and mind as a result of humor, but the positive

**"It is the heart that is not yet sure of its God that is afraid to laugh in His presence."**

**– George MacDonald**