

# Laugh Again!

***“A joyful heart (one that can laugh) is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.” Proverbs 17:22***

*When is the last time you had a good laugh?*

Has grief, sadness, depression or anger suppressed laughter and kept you from enjoying the lighter side of life?

## **Did you know that laughter is good medicine?**

Years ago I suffered from severe reactive depression that landed me in a psychiatric hospital on suicide watch. A major life disappointment had broken my heart, crushed my spirit, and unmercifully dumped me in a scary pit of deep, dark despair. I felt hopeless, helpless and joyless. Steve Roll was an unhappy camper.

I remember being so depressed that I didn't smile or laugh for months on end. One day in a group session my counselor/therapist remarked that I was one of the saddest looking people he had ever met. I looked sad because I felt sad.

While battling depression and the incessant sadness that stalked and shadowed my soul, I wondered if I would ever be happy again. Would my former warm and contagious smile return? Would I laugh again? Would I ever know the joy of the Lord again?

I will never forget the day, after months of healing and restoration, when I laughed again. I was sitting with my family watching a sit com. Something tickled my funny bone, and lo and behold, I laughed! My wife, young children, and I cried with joy because daddy laughed again. I will always remember the day when laughter resurfaced in my life and gladness replaced sadness in my heart and my home.

## **So how did I begin to laugh again? How did I shrug off the spirit of sadness and experience gladness and joy once again?**

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:4 that there is *“A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”* The message of verses 1-11 in Ecclesiastes 3 is this: Life consists of seasons. The wisdom writer tells us that there is a time for all of these seasons. God Himself has made everything appropriate in its time. Seasons are seasonal. They have a definite duration. A time. Seasons come and go throughout life. No season lasts forever.

Our spiritual/emotional/relational life is made up of what I call seasons of the soul. Some seasons we weep and mourn. Other seasons we laugh and dance. Personally, I prefer laughing and dancing to weeping and mourning.

**For me, as God healed my broken heart and restored my crushed spirit to wholeness and wellness, the time for weeping and mourning came to an end. I experienced what David expressed in *Psalm 30:5* “Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.” My nights of weeping seemed interminably long. But one morning, and then morning after morning after morning, joy returned. I began to enjoy life once more. And I started laughing again.**

In his outstanding book Laugh Again, Charles Swindoll writes “This is a book about joy. It’s about relaxing more, releasing the tension, and refusing to let circumstances dominate our attitudes. It’s about giving the child within us permission to look at life and laugh again. Life is meant to be enjoyed, not endured, and therefore every day I find something ...anything...to laugh about.” Tremendous thoughts and timely advice for those who have forgotten how to laugh.

You and I forget to laugh when we listen to the bad news on the evening news rather than the Good News in God’s book the Bible. We forget to laugh when the “rat race” to get ahead and succeed transforms us from fun-loving, life enjoying, carefree childlike characters into overly serious, joyless, uptight, grumpy, multi-tasking human doing machines who only care about how to get to the top of the heap (whatever that is!). You and I forget to laugh when busyness and business replaces fun, rest, relaxation and recreation. How can one find time to laugh when life is so serious?

Here are some other reasons why we lose laughter in our lives.

- Laughter flees when we choose to focus on our loss and sorrow.
- Laughter takes a hike when our hurt and pain takes center stage in our lives.
- Laughter vanishes over the horizon like a sunset when self-pity overshadows our attitude and behavior.
- Laughter’s light is dimmed when depressive thoughts dominate our minds and cloud our hearts with emotional darkness.
- Laughter’s joy is suppressed when troubles and affliction are given more attention than they deserve.
- Bottom line: It’s hard to laugh and smile when unhappiness rules our hearts and dictates our day.

**A life without joy and laughter is a life headed for trouble. You and I must make time to laugh and enjoy life...or we will find ourselves burned out, used up, spent and crashing in a mid-life crisis or worse.**

## **Laughter Is Good Medicine**

**A joyful heart is good medicine.** Why? Because God says so, that's why. Joy and laughter lightens the load of life. Laughter unburdens our hearts from the burdens and cares that weigh us down. Laughter stimulates endorphins, the happy hormones, that send unhappiness away.

*"A joyful heart makes a cheerful face. But when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken "*  
*Proverbs 15:13*

**Restoring joy, laughter and happiness starts in our hearts.** Laughter and lightheartedness is part of God's prescription for healing broken hearts. A happy heart makes a happy face! If God, who is the Great Physician, would write you and me a prescription for restoring health and happiness to our hearts, it might read something like this.

**Medicine:** LAUGHTER

**Dosage:** Take laughter at least ten times a day or as needed for defeating depression and unhappiness.

**Side Effects:** A lighter, happier, more enjoyable life.

**Refill:** For the rest of your life.

Now that is a prescription that all of us need, can take and can afford because it is free!

## **The Source of Joy**

**Jesus Christ came to give us His joy. Joy has nothing to do with circumstances. Happiness and joy are not the same thing. You and I can still have joy in the middle of unhappy circumstances. Notice what Jesus says in the following scriptures about joy.**

*"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."*  
*John 15:11*

*"Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world.*

*"Therefore you to now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you."*  
*John 16:21-22*

**A Christian's joy is Christ's joy in their heart. Think about this for a moment. The joy of God's only Son Jesus Christ is in you if you confess Him as**

**your personal Savior and Lord. Amazing! God’s joy in us! And His joy in us is a joy that no one can take from us. We can laugh and enjoy life because our heart is full of Jesus’ joy!**

Here are some more scriptures about joy and laughter.

*“All the days of the afflicted are bad, but a cheerful heart has a continual feast.”*

*Proverbs*

*15:15.*

*Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with joyful shouting.”*

*Psalm 126:2*

*“He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting.”*

*Job 8:21*

*“To grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning. The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”*

*Isaiah 61:3*

*“Bless are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”*

*Luke 6:21b*

*The joy of the Lord is your strength”*

*Nehemiah 8:10*

*“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”*

*Philippians 4:4*

**It is a fact of life: When we lose sight of our joy in Christ, we will stop smiling and laughing. Joyless living is not abundant, fulfilling living.**

### **Some Things I Learned About Laughing**

Out of my depression I learned four things about joy and laughing.

**First, I need to laugh at life.**

Life is really funny at times. Don’t think so? Just look around. God gave us a funny bone because life can be hilarious. You and I need to laugh at life so we don’t get too serious. And laughing is fun. A good, gut-busting belly laugh feels so good. I have learned to laugh so hard that I have rolled on the floor with tears streaming down my face. And that is healthy. You should try it for yourself.

### **Secondly, I need to laugh at myself.**

This is a BIGGY. When is the last time you laughed at you? Some of my best laughs come at my own expense. I mean, I do some really stupid, dorky things sometimes. And you do too. So why not laugh it off? Instead of being so serious and getting so upset with yourself, lighten up. Laugh. Loosen up. Most of us take ourselves far too seriously. Healthy, mature, well-balanced people have the ability to laugh at themselves. And others will laugh with us when we are humble and secure enough to laugh at ourselves. Go look in the mirror and laugh!

### **Third, I need to laugh at other people.**

Go to the mall, sit down on a bench, and watch people. You will laugh. People dress weird, walk funny, talk strangely, and do some of the dumbest stuff in public. Laugh at people on the television. So many so called “experts” are downright hilarious when they espouse the expertise so seriously. People crack me up. I have learned that when I crack up around people I will be less critical of them.

### **Fourth, I need to laugh at the devil.**

Never fear Satan. Jesus has defeated him and stripped the devil of all authority and power over a believer’s life. So why not laugh at him once in a while.

When the evil one tries to tempt you, when he lies to you, when he tries to trick you and pick your pocket, laugh at him. Laugh him off. Chase the enemy of your soul away with the joy of the Lord!

## **Here Is How You Can Start Laughing Again!**

- Remember who you are in Christ and that you possess His joy!
- Study and meditate on God’s Word concerning joy and laughter.
- Look in a mirror. Refuse to frown. Choose to smile.
- When you don’t feel like laughing, force yourself to laugh. Take a baby step and laugh just a little. Little by little, laughing will return if you let it.
- Watch wholesome, humorous, movies and sitcoms that promote good, old fashioned, clean fun. And when something is funny...let laughter rip!
- Surround yourself with happy, joyful people. Fellowship with laughers. Laugh until you cry from the laughter! That’s a good time for all.
- When Satan tempts you to be sad, tell him with authority “Devil, get behind me in Jesus’ name. I choose to be glad, not sad. I will laugh and not cry today. The joy of the Lord is my strength and makes me happy. So take a hike evil one.”
- Laugh a lot because other people need to see you smile and share the joy of the Lord with them. You will lighten their load and brighten their day. Life is not about us. It is about Christ in us reaching people for the Kingdom of God.

## **Jump Start Laughter**

Here are a few funny comments and nuggets of wisdom from Will Rogers to jump start your laughter.

1. Never slap a man who is chewing tobacco.
2. Never kick a cow chip on a hot day.
3. There are two theories to arguing with a woman....neither works.
4. Never miss a good chance to shut up.
5. Always drink upstream from the herd.
6. If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.
7. The quickest way to double your money is to fold it and put it back into your pocket.
8. Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.
9. If you are riding ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.
10. After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring. He kept it up until a hunter came along and shot him. The moral: When you're full of bull, keep your mouth shut!

## **Permission To Laugh Again**

As your brother in Christ, I give you permission to laugh again. It is okay for you to be joyful and to enjoy life. It really is. It is God's good, perfect and acceptable will for you to be filled with His joy. Smiling, laughing, and rejoicing is the healthy and right thing to do.

So go ahead. Laugh. You can do it. It is all right. Take a step away from sadness and start experiencing gladness. Turn your sorrows into joy. Start today by taking a baby step of laughter. Come on. It is in you if you will let it loose. When you begin laughing again, don't be surprised if you like it. Your life will lighten up. You and the people who love you will be glad you learned to laugh again!

**Do yourself a favor.....LAUGH AGAIN!!!**

*"The redeemed of the Lord will return, and come with joyful shouting to Zion; and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."*  
*Isaiah 51:11*

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