

A Time to Laugh

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet Sources)

Introduction:

- A. OT - Gen. 18:9-15, 17:17; Prov. 31:25; Psalm 30:5; Ecc. 3:1, 4
 1. NT - Luke 6:21; John 16:33, 15:11
 2. The word laugh, in its various forms, is used 38 times in the Bible. Sometimes laughter is right and sometimes it's wrong. Sometimes it is a fool who is laughing. Sometimes it is God Himself.
- B. "A time to laugh" means more than merely appropriate.
 1. Ecc. 3:11 - It is beautiful and healthy in its time; therefore, in a season of laughter, to refrain from laughter is not beautiful or healthy
 2. We were created in the image of God; those noble and healthy emotions we experience are part of the nature given to us by God
 3. How do you think God reacts to the innocent expressions of children?
 - a. Dear Lord: Thank you for the baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy.
 - b. Dear Lord: I bet it is very hard for You to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only four people in our family and I can never do it.
 - c. Dear Lord: If You watch me in church Sunday, I'll show You my new shoes.
 4. God who is so wise that from His perspective there is little difference between the endearingly amusing words of children and the things adults think and say... don't you think He is equally amused by us?
 - a. Don't you think He would rather be amused by our humanness than be grieved by our sinfulness?
 5. We tend to judge Sarah (but not Abraham) for laughing. It wasn't derisive, or scoffing, or evil. It was a surprised reaction of someone who for the moment forgot that God can do anything
- C. Laughter is a good thing
 1. Laughing is an involuntary reaction to external or internal stimuli. It can arise from activities like being tickled, or from humorous stories or thoughts. Most commonly, it is considered a visual expression of a number of positive emotional states, such as joy, mirth, happiness, relief, etc. Laughter is a part of human behavior regulated by the brain, helping humans clarify their intentions in social interaction and providing an emotional context to conversations. Laughter is used as a signal for being part of a group; it signals acceptance and positive interactions with others. (Wikipedia)
 2. Laughing helps us not to take ourselves too seriously. It can keep us honest about ourselves.
 3. Laughter helps promote health. A link between laughter and healthy function of the circulatory system was reported in 2005 by researchers at the University of Maryland Medical Center. Laughter has been shown to lead to reductions in stress hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine. When laughing, the brain also releases endorphins that can relieve some physical pain. Laughter also boosts the number of

antibody-producing cells and enhances the effectiveness of T-cells, leading to a stronger immune system.

4. Laughter helps us maintain balance in a world that is overly earnest, overtly brutal, and often vindictive.

5. Laughter helps individuals and communities stay sane. Maya Angelou recalls that in the antebellum American south, slaves had a practice of going to the “Laughing Barrel” to express themselves. Laughing was forbidden on many plantations, so when they couldn’t help themselves, they’d go to a barrel and lean way over, as if they were trying to retrieve something, and laugh themselves silly. Laughing instead of crying.

I. FOUR KINDS OF LAUGHTER

A. The laughter of unbelief - Luke 8:50-56; 2Peter 3:3-4

1. Making fun of the faith is like whistling past the graveyard.

B. The laughter of a fool - Ecc. 7:6; Prov. 14:13; Luke 6:25

1. The laughter of a fool is one of the saddest sounds I know

C. The laughter of God - Psalm 2:1-4

1. The greater a man thinks himself to be, the more ridiculous his follies are to the Almighty - Prov. 1:24-26; Psalm 37:12-13

2. Matthew Henry comments, “Sinners' follies are just the sport of God's infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in His are despicable” (quoted in Spurgeon, C. H., The Treasury of David, Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, n.d., volume 1, p. 16).

D. The laughter of God’s children - Luke 6:21; Deut. 33:29; Psalm 126:1-3

1. God promises His children seasons of laughter - Job 8:20-21

II. TEXTS THAT AMUSE

A. Prov. 27:14-16, 29:20; Num. 22:21-29, 11:18-20; Job 13:5; 1Kings 22:2-18

B. I remember growing up here that a couple of brethren took me to task for saying something amusing to illustrate a point.

1. They could not have been more mistaken in their view that there are no occasions for laughter when God’s people come together

2. However, the pendulum has swung in the other direction; many try to be amusing for its own sake.

3. God ordained that there be balance; a time to laugh and a time to weep

4. Men are not permitted to take away the time to laugh

5. Nor are men permitted to casually treat worship and reverence of God

C. Enjoy the blessing of laughter in season; and then put it aside out of season