

Laughter Is the Best Medicine

I have heard the above saying many times throughout my life and I believe that it is true. Studies have been done that show how laughter helps physiological systems in the body such as clearing secretions from the lungs. Many times I have experienced a fit of laughter followed by a fit of coughing.

I remember as a kid laughing for the sake of laughing. We would get into trouble for laughing for no reason. Grandma said we were being silly and to stop laughing. And for some reason we would laugh when we knew we would really be in trouble like in church or when the baby was sleeping. All it took to begin a barrage of laughter was to make eye contact with a mischievous cousin. The real challenge was to hide the giggling and laughing from the adults so as to not get caught. But they always knew, especially when the church pew would vibrate from all the giggling going on.

Kids grow up to be adults and many times much of the laughter fades or it becomes a coping mechanism to cover up true feelings or to mask anxiety. The laughter is lacking the honesty of something really being funny in exchange for hollow feelings and unfulfilled longings. In everyday life, laughter should be the response to many of life's circumstances.



I remember my Granny Jones and her hardy laugh as she would throw her head back and laugh at the little things in life. I would be frustrated with some small thing and she would show me the humor in it just

by her response based on years of experience and having been there herself. She wasn't laughing at me but with me. I would then see my foolish ways or how if I had exercised patience a little more, I could have avoided frustration.



Laughter Can Penetrate Despair

The different seasons experienced in life can bring challenges that are frustrating and life changing. These changes can be very threatening and limiting, turning peoples' worlds upside down. This can leave them feeling lonely and depressed often in a physiological state of despair absent of laughter.

There are many elders in the community facing these kinds of challenges now. These situations aren't funny or humorous and are difficult for families to cope with.

One elderly lady, Rita, was "put" into the nursing home. For a year and a half she had attended church less and less as living alone became a greater struggle for her. She resisted help from her family and it was decided that she would do better in a nursing home.

Rita perceived this as a horrible circumstance and the worst thing that could happen to her. She was underweight, in poor health, and confused about what was happening to her. Would she ever smile again or laugh again?

After a couple of weeks, Rita started eating better. However, it was apparent that she was depressed. She rarely smiled and refused to join in any activities at the nursing home.

A church member who had been visiting her mother at the nursing home noticed Rita. She began to visit with Rita to try to cheer her up. She tried several tactics and at first did not get much response. But she stayed consistent and eventually Rita began to view her circumstances differently and looked forward to her new friend's visits. It started with a smile and the laughter did return.



Ways to Produce Laughter

One person made a difference in Rita's life during what she perceived as a terrible situation. Since her new friend did not give up, Rita responded, although slowly at first. If you are trying to make a difference in someone's life, try these suggestions:

- Smile and look on the bright side
- Tell funny anecdotal jokes
- Laugh at humorous life situations
- Engage in fun activities
- Look at cute or funny pictures
- Watch a funny movie

Never give up, but be sensitive to other peoples' humor tolerance. Pray together and share painful circumstances with the Lord. The morning always comes after the dark night.



Rejoice in the Lord always. Phil 4:4