

DOES GOD HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR?

By John Gagliardi



Anyone looking at the depictions of Jesus Christ in religious art throughout the centuries, could be forgiven for believing that God is a totally humorless individual, more intent on sucking lemons than bringing joy to a hurting world.

And yet nothing could be further from the truth – Jesus is the Word of God personified, according to the Bible, and the Bible tells us very clearly that the Word of God brings “*joy* to the heart” (Psalm 19: 8). Romans 14: 17 says that the Kingdom of God is “...righteousness, peace and *joy* in the Holy Spirit”, and we know that the “*joy* of the Lord” is our strength (Nehemiah 8: 10).

Jesus Himself says in John 15: 11, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” – can you imagine any situation in which the joy of the Lord remains in us, making our joy “full”, and yet be without laughter? Joy and laughter are cause and effect – if you have great joy, you automatically manifest it through laughter.

To try and separate laughter from God is to try to separate joy from God – and that is totally unscriptural. So if you’re a lemon and dill pickle type of Christian, get a laugh!

Indeed, if there is any doubt as to whether God has a sense of humor, just get up right now and ... look in the mirror! Human beings are born with an innate sense of humor, and we are, according to the Word, created in the image of God. So if we have a sense of humor, it stands to reason that God also must have a sense of humor – in spite of the dour representations of Christians by medieval artists.

If you read the words of Jesus Himself with an open mind, it is clear that He often spoke lightheartedly, and had a very acute sense of wit and irony. He spoke of straining out gnats and swallowing camels, cleaning the outside of cups and leaving the inside dirty, and he regularly mixed with the rougher elements of society – fishermen, tax-collectors, “wine-bibbers” and even prostitutes - who would hardly be likely to put up with a sour-faced sermonizer.

One writer put it this way: "Humor was often the howitzer He used to shell the veneer of piety surrounding 'Fortress Pharisee' ... who couldn't help but laugh when Jesus exposed the arrogance or blindness of the religious leaders..." Martin Luther, the great church reformer who replaced the emphasis on works with salvation by faith, is quoted as saying: "If they don't allow laughter in heaven, then I don't want to go there...If the earth is fit for laughter, then surely heaven is filled with it. Heaven is the birthplace of laughter."

Several times in the Bible God is depicted as laughing (Psalm 2:4, 37:13 and 59:8), while Abraham fell about laughing when God told him he and Sarah, geriatrics both, would have a son of their own. The punch line of this particular Biblical joke is that they called this miraculous son Isaac, which means "laughter" or "he laughs" in Hebrew (Genesis 17: 17-19).

I was inspired to do this piece on God's sense of humor when I had dinner in Singapore recently with Dr John Haggai, the great Christian leader and founder of the Haggai Institute, an advanced leadership organization with more than 43,000 alumni in 166 countries. The evening brimmed over with good fellowship and laughter, as Dr Haggai recounted one hilarious episode after another from his almost 80 years of ebullient Christian witness.

At the end of the dinner I was given a marvelous little book written by David Wong, a Singaporean who is now the Haggai Institute's Vice President, International Training, based in Maui, Hawaii. The book is called "Make Them Laugh, Help Them Learn", and is a compilation of 151 jokes and hilarious anecdotes he has collected during his speaking engagements around the world (maybe living in Hawaii improves one's sense of humor).

David gives advice on how to select and tell jokes effectively, and how to use them to help people to grow and learn. But best of all he presents his readers with a hilarious collection of good, clean jokes, and I could do no better than to finish this with one of them:

A skeptical teacher said to a little girl in the class, "You mean you believe all those things written in the Bible?"

"Yes, I do," she replied.

"You mean, even the story about a man who was swallowed by a whale and came out alive?"

"Yes, I do," she replied.

"How can it be so?"

"I don't know," she said, "but I will ask him when I see him in heaven."

"And what if he went to hell?" the teacher mocked.

"Then you ask him," she replied.

And one final word for you business people – **Jesus invested His life in you! Have your shown any interest?**