

Hope and Joy

Gelotology = the study of humour and laughter and its psychological and physiological effects on the human body.

Proverbs 17:22 – *“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”*

The science – Doctors and health care professionals have recognized the benefits of laughter:

- Decreases stress hormone levels
- Strengthens the immune system
- Helps muscle relaxation
- Brings pain reduction
- Lowers blood pressure
- Produces cardiovascular conditioning
- Is a natural anti-depressant

“Your sense of humour is one of the most powerful tools you have to make certain that your daily mood and emotional state support good health.”

Paul E. McGhee, Ph.D.

In his research, Norman Cousins (journalist, peace activist and involved in medicine. Got ill and trained himself to laugh) developed a recovery programme incorporating mega-doses of vitamin C, along with a positive attitude, love, faith, hope and laughter induced by Marx Brothers films, *“I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anaesthetic effect and would give him two hours of pain free sleep. When the pain-killing effect of laughter wore off, we would switch on the motion picture projector again and not infrequently, it would lead to another pain-free interval.”*

Laughter opens our minds better to receive information – why children and young people like humorous teachers and why preachers who use humour well can open our hearts and minds to a deeper message.

Are you suffering from laughter deprivation and do you think it's all about where you are on the scales!? I.e. good things v bad things happening.

How to get your daily dose of laughter therapy:

- Learn to laugh at yourself (and at others!). Example of Anita pointing out that when talking to foreign people I would talk really slowly – I can get annoyed at her for pointing it out or have a good laugh at myself
- Don't take life too seriously – focus a bit more on the lighter side of life. Spend time with people/friends who make you laugh, watch a film that makes you laugh
- Spend some time with children – their ability to laugh freely is contagious. The average baby laughs 300-400 times a day compared to an adult who laughs only 15-20 times day (on a good day!) (see film clip of children singing!)
- Jokes? Let's invite Steve Olney to start a joke of the day e-bulletin!!
- Host a games evening with a group of people

Wikipedia:

“Laughter is used as a signal for being part of a group – it signals acceptance and positive interactions with others.”

Social Benefits:

- Strengthens relationships
- Attracts others to us
- Enhances teamwork
- Helps defuse conflict
- Promotes group bonding

The church family should therefore be a place of lots of laughter and joy.

Does God have a sense of humour?

God has a sense of humour and this comes across when He names Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac, which literally means; *'he laughs.'* Remember that both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the news that they were to have a son in old age. They laughed for different reasons. Genesis 17:19 & 21:6

⁶ Sarah said, *“God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”*

Psalm 126:2 – laughter following freedom from captivity and in celebration of God's goodness;

“Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.”

Psalm 126:5 – sowing in tears, reaping in joy (and laughter)

“Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy”.

Luke 6:21 – blessed are you who weep, for you shall laugh (Jesus)

“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh”.

Job 8:21 – Job’s friend Bildad prophesies that *“He will yet fill your mouth with laughing, and your lips with rejoicing.”*

Ecclesiastes 3:4 – *time to weep and time to laugh*

Psalm 2:4 & 37:13 – God laughs at the rulers of this world and His enemies

Psalm 16:11 *“in your presence there is fullness of joy”* – mirth, laughter

Steve Prince