

## LAUGHTER

One of the most common disclosures I get from people is, "Pastor, I've lost my joy!" Very often this simply means, "I'm not happy with life." There is a distinct difference between joy and happiness. Joy is an internal spiritual experience, whereas happiness is external and affected by our circumstances. Happiness is a conditional response subject to the fulfilment of our desires. Therefore, we are happy when we get what we want. In contrast, joy is an unconditional commitment to rejoice from within, regardless of outside conditions. We cannot be happy without being joyful, but we can be joyful without being happy. Joy will carry us beyond all our circumstances. That being the case, where does laughter fit in? Laughter creates a cheerful heart, and this is good for us. Proverbs 17:22 says, "***A cheerful heart is good medicine.***" Another translation reads, "*A cheerful heart makes you healthy.*"

Laughter is something we all do, whether we are little babies or senior adults, and it comes naturally. Doctors say it is such good medicine that it relieves stress. You cannot maintain muscle tension when you are laughing! The deeper you laugh, the greater the benefit. Your liver sends out enzymes, which flow throughout your body. Laughing is a form of exercise; a good belly laugh gives your whole body a workout, your cells respond to laughter; your muscles shrink and your lungs expand which releases hormones throughout the blood stream. Laughter is so beneficial for your body that it is like "inner jogging". But as you know, we don't always feel like jogging, likewise, we don't always feel like laughing. The reason we laugh, generally speaking, is because something or someone has made us happy. A child laughs 400 times a day on the average, while an adult laughs only 15 times each day, which is puzzling since laughter feels so good - and is so healthy for us! An old Jewish proverb says, "*What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul.*"

Proverbs 15:13-15 declares, "***A glad heart makes a happy face; a broken heart crushes the spirit. A wise person is hungry for knowledge, while the fool feeds on trash. For the despondent, every day brings trouble; for the cheerful heart, life is a continual feast.***" Laughter is joy flowing from a cheerful heart, and we can live in continual feast! The best thing about laughter is that it does not cost you a penny. Dr. Crocker (a heart specialist) says, "Those who laugh quickly and easily seldom have a heart attack." We can laugh easily when we think that nothing is too hard for God. In Jeremiah 32:27 the Lord says, "***Behold I am the Lord Yahweh, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for Me?***" We can laugh in the face of any adverse circumstances because there isn't anything that's too hard for God. Remember also, we can cast our cares on Him and ask Him for wisdom to relieve any situation. God is our defender. As we start to praise God, our joy is elevated and we go from glory to glory. From that position of strength we can laugh and keep on laughing. I heard someone once say, "*Life may make the world go round, but laughter keeps us from getting dizzy.*"