

# **This Overlooked Attribute of God Might Be Exactly What You Need**

**"Laughter is America's most important export." –Walt Disney**

I was sitting in church several years ago and our now retired pastor, Jack Hayford, spoke to the audience, "Shout out to me, anyone ... what do you love about God?"

Someone shouted, "He never fails," while another yelled, "He answers prayer" and yet another bellowed "He brings peace." I sat intimidated but wanted to scream out, "He cracks me up!" does. He makes me laugh—all the time. He laughs at us too. Psalm 2:4 says, "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord ridicules them."

**We take being a Christian so seriously and we forget He brings joy and laughter.**

Every Christmas we sing the carol, "Joy to the World." When are we going to let it sink into our heads and hearts? Four years ago, I co-founded a women's conference called the ASCEND Conference (). We focused that first year on "Fearless Joy." The other co-producers and I wanted women to learn how to laugh—be joyous when life brought devastation. To take the power of God's promises in His Word and shatter any fear that held them back from fulfilling God's divine purpose and destiny in their lives. We wanted to teach women how to be unique—different from our world that tells us we have to react negatively and sorrowfully when a crisis strikes. Where is the joy at funerals? If we know Jesus ... Yay! We're out of this damaged, fallen world and with our Father in heaven. Rejoice!

Jesus was joyous, and He continually urged His followers to be happy. In fact, scholars many times substitute the word

“blessed” at the beginning of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 3-12) with the world “happy.”

I love what LynnMarie Rink, a five-time Grammy-nominated musical artist, actress and mother to a 6-year-old Down Syndrome little boy says: “Peace and laughter in life enters through vulnerability and honesty. Hiding behind a façade of what we women try to be—”altogether” and “strong all the time”—doesn’t really give you the freedom that I believe God wants us to have to live joyously every day.”

### **God likes a good party.**

Hollywood likes to party. All the major award events—Grammys, Emmys, Golden Globes and the granddaddy of them all, the Oscars, are all followed by huge multiple extravaganzas. A few years ago, I was invited to Oscar Shorts Awards and Gala in Beverly Hills. At the event that night, there were two perfectly chiseled body dancers scantily clothed in gold lame tights and fully painted in gold lacquer who walked around so you could take your picture with a human Oscar. Then later that night, they performed an elaborate dance of contorted body positions that I never knew a person’s torso could make. Most of us watching were wincing and squirming inside. These events can be, well, let’s just say—interesting?

Jesus liked to party too. His first miracle was at a wedding party and the prodigal son parable ended with a feast—a party. We also see Jesus say in Mark 14:25, “Truly I say to you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” That tells me I think we’ll get to party in heaven. Maybe I’ll get to wear that gold lame bodysuit on my perfectly chiseled body!

God wants us to have fun when we pray as well. Maybe we should start calling prayer meetings “prayer parties” instead. More people might show up. Karen Covell, founder of the Hollywood Prayer Network, says, “I love to laugh and have a great time

with my faith. Jim, (my husband) and I laugh all the time, we get very silly in prayer and always have—especially with our boys. We made prayer time a really fun and creative time. Our house is full of bad jokes, laughter, teasing and fun. In fact, it's an important aspect of my faith. The world gets too intense if we don't laugh, play and have fun!"

**Finally, when I read the Scriptures, I see how Jesus had fun with His followers, leaving them belly-laughing.**

In the Beatitudes—Matthew 5: 3–12, Jesus talked about how it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of needle than get into heaven, and that you should take the plank out of your eye before you criticize and judge your neighbor for his mistakes, issues and sins. I think He said this kiddingly, not judgmentally, as so many times I have heard preached. I think Jesus knew that some things sink into our thick heads better when we make a joke about them.

Several years ago, my daughter Kelsey and I worked on the *The Visual Bible: The Gospel of Matthew* film starring Bruce Marchiano as Jesus. The film was scripted so that all dialogue spoken on camera by the actors in the film would be quoted Scripture, verse for verse, from the book of Matthew.

I got to know Bruce on the film set, and the joy of Jesus was evident in his life. His depiction of Jesus is one of my favorite portrayals I have ever seen. People called him the "laughing Jesus" when the film was released because Bruce brought the joy and laughter of Jesus' personality to the screen that most people miss when reading the Bible. They instead focus on Jesus being "a man of sorrows" when He was a man of great joy, charisma and, as Bruce portrayed, belly laughter.

Jesus says it best in John 15:11, "I have spoken these things to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

Now go have some fun with Jesus and get laughing!

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