

Don't Forget to Laugh!

A Godly Response to a Pandemic – Part 11

Series Overview

Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” The COVID-19 outbreak certainly shows that this is true. When 2020 began, we had no idea we would face this new kind of challenge. Though it caught us by surprise, we know God was not surprised. He knew this would happen and will guide us through this challenging time.

This study guide is the second in a new Faith Baptist Bible study series called “A Godly Response to a Pandemic.” Each lesson will provide biblical teaching that enables us to think, feel, and live in a Christlike way throughout this pandemic experience.

Together, we'll tackle topics like fear, anxiety, and loneliness. We'll also examine our behavior as a church. Most importantly, we'll learn about our loving, sovereign God who is all-knowing, almighty, always present, and trustworthy in every way.

Series Guidelines

This series will continue throughout our period of “social isolation” in New York City. To participate, please take the following approach.

1. A new study guide will be provided each Saturday at Shepherd Thoughts. You can follow the guide online or download and print it as a PDF.
2. Use each guide for an in-home Bible study from 9:30-10:30 a.m. on Sunday.
3. If you live with a Christian family, you can study together. If not, try studying together with another believer from Faith by phone or internet using a service like Facebook Video Chat, Google Hangouts, Skype, or Zoom.
4. For each study: (1) begin with prayer, (2) read the Scripture passage, (3) work through the study guide, then (4) end with prayer.
5. Then tune in early to the Faith Baptist Livestream on Facebook at 10:45 a.m. to post questions, feedback, and comments about the lesson. Pastor Overmiller will respond to your feedback before the 11:00 a.m. service begins.
6. You can also leave comments on the blogsite at the end of the study guide page and Pastor Overmiller will respond by sometime Sunday.
7. As a bonus, memorize a verse or more from the passage and think about it throughout the week ahead.

Lesson Introduction

Well, now that we've successfully (or not so successfully) endured more than two long months of social isolation, here in New York City, I have a very important question to ask. "Are we happy?" I'm asking this because long, extended periods of seriousness and sadness, sorrow and stress can have a negative, harmful effect on our spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health.

Now I'm not joking when I say that we need to laugh sometimes. Seriously! Laughter, gladness, dancing, and wholesome entertainment are gifts of God that enable us to balance out the difficult, harsh, and negative things we see, hear, and experience in this fallen world. Without these things, we'd lose our health, our sanity, and our spiritual focus for sure.

But here's the question, "How well have we done at blending laughter, gladness, and humor into our lives during this pandemic? You see, it's very possible that we're suffering in varying degrees with the negative personal effects that come from a period of prolonged stress and sorrow. That's why I want to remind us all to make time for laughter and gladness. Prov 17:22 and other verses in the Bible teach us about this very important truth that's especially important in our lives right now. Together, let's take a look at our laughter.

Proverbs 17:22

A merry heart does good, like medicine,
but a broken spirit dries the bones.

Study Guide

Consider the Background

This statement appears in the Old Testament book of Proverbs, which provides an extensive collection of insights for a wide variety of situations. They teach us how to live in a skillful, successful, and satisfying way.

Most importantly, they teach you how to make choices in light of what you know about God, for "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7). Since God is who he says he is, does what he says he does, and rules over every aspect of our lives, we should give him the respect he deserves by making choices with him in mind.

Examine the Scripture

- How does the first line (A-line) of this proverb relate to the second line (B-line)? (Do they say something similar or something different?)
- The word *merry* means to be "glad, joyful, happy, or delighted."

- The word *broken* means to be “crushed, defeated, beaten down.”
- The words *heart* and *spirit* both refer to our inner state of mind and emotions.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- What kind of images, events, or memories does *merry* bring to mind?
- What kind of images, events, or memories does *broken* bring to mind?
- Which of these words more closely describes your recent mental and emotional state?

Examine the Scripture

- The phrase “does good, like a medicine” may also be translated as “is good medicine,” “brings good healing,” or “is a good cure.”
- The phrase “dries the bones” is a poetic way to describe diminishing health, decreasing energy, and a deterioration of your physical and psychological state.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- Why is it important to be aware of your inner, emotional state?
- What are the potential (inevitable?) side-effects to you of prolonged anxiety and a continual stream of negative information and perspectives?
- What major benefit or result will you enjoy to a greater degree when you learn to embrace gladness as a value in your life.

Examine the Scripture

- Compare Prov 17:22 with Prov 15:30.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- According to Prov 15:30, what are two things that spark gladness in our hearts?
- How much exposure do you have to cheerful countenances and good news?
- What can you do to increase your exposure to these things?

Examine the Scripture

- According to Eph 5:4, not all humor is good humor. “Bad humor” includes *filthiness* (obscene words and subjects), *foolish talking* (stupid, moronic, senseless ideas), *coarse jesting* (vulgar, risqué, indecent content). As believers, we should not engage or entertain ourselves with this kind of humor.
- Yet according to Eccl 3:4, we should learn to value good humor through laughter and dancing in our lives whenever appropriate or needed. *Laugh* refers to feelings or expressions of amusement, celebration, and pleasure. *Dance* refers to repeated

physical movements like hopping, skipping, leaping, and jumping around with energy and excitement.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- How well do you avoid bad humor and inappropriate entertainment?
- How well do you make time for good humor and entertainment?
- How well do you make time for energetic, excited behavior?

Conclusion

We need to be balanced for sure. As believers we shouldn't dance, laugh, and entertain ourselves all the time, for there is a time to be somber and sad for sure. Yet, when we go through long periods of seriousness and sorrow, we should be aware of the potentially negative impact this will have on our spiritual, emotional, and physical condition. Knowing this, it is wise to make time to "cheer ourselves up" in appropriate ways, through good humor and wholesome, enjoyable activities and experiences. In fact, as those who enjoy the salvation and hope that Jesus Christ provides, we should know better than anyone else how to laugh, celebrate, and have a truly good time.

Share Your Feedback

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