



## Lighten Up!

by Phil Ware

I recently saw a bumper sticker on the back of a car that read: If God is your co-pilot, you'd better switch seats!

Stuck at a stop light in rush hour traffic, that bumper sticker was just what I needed! I got a chuckle out of it and I also got a powerful message. It's okay for Christianity and our walk with Christ to be winsome occasionally. Yes, I know our hero was nailed to the Cross for our sins and that is very serious business. But, that's not the end of the salvation story: He rose from the dead, He went back to heaven, and He will return to take us to glory! While that may not be funny, if you catch a glimpse of that glory then you are at least going to smile.

Everywhere in the Bible story we find touches of humor that light the way through the darkness and give testimony to God's Sovereignty, love for surprises, and sense of humor. Here are just a few of my favorites.

When you want to overthrow the powerful empire holding your people hostage and murdering your babies, want to know where to find your people a savior? In the palace of the evil empire... or out in the desert chasing sheep for his father-in-law... or in the reluctant voice of a stuttering leader no one wanted to follow at first. That's the story of Moses.

When you want to defeat an overwhelming enemy, what's going to be your strategy? You send most of the troops home, then have the few remaining warriors run around the hillside breaking jugs, waving torches, and screaming at the top of their lungs! That's the story of Gideon.

When you want to change the world, whom do you choose to be your "change-agents"? Twelve obscure Jewish guys, one of whom will betray you (Judas), one of whom was hated by his fellow-countrymen for being a traitor to the Romans (Matthew), a twin, several otherwise nondescript guys, and four fishermen — one of whom was always running off at the mouth before putting his brain in gear (Peter). Then after three years of training, you get yourself executed as the worst of

criminal scum before a mocking crowd, then when you've defeated death and returned with power, you turn the whole operation over to the same group of guys who let you down when things got tough. That's the story of Jesus and his apostles.

When you have a vicious and educated enemy who is terrorizing and brutalizing your people, what do you do to eliminate him as a danger? You transform him to become your greatest preachers, church planters, and cross-cultural missionaries ever. That's the story of the apostle Paul.

Christianity isn't a silly enterprise. That doesn't mean, however, that it should be dull, boring, or somber. Faith is a journey to our ultimate victory and our joyous homecoming. God is incredible along the way, and also full of joyous surprises. He takes our worst messes, and when our hearts are truly open to Him and His power, He makes wonderful, joyous, and even humorous stories of victory out of them.

So like Jesus (Luke 2:52), and like His newly born church (Acts 2:47), let's live winsome lives, full of joy and in anticipation of victory. There's a world watching us that already knows enough negativity, gloom, and despair. Let's lighten up just a bit, so the Light of Life is more apparent, and a lot more appealing, to those trapped in darkness around us.

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 126:2

Recently there was a report in the newspaper about a man who walked into a Circle-K, put a \$20 bill on the counter, and asked for change. When the clerk opened the cash drawer, the man pulled a gun and asked for all the cash in the register. The clerk promptly complied with the thief's request. The man took the cash from the clerk and fled, leaving the \$20 bill on the counter. The total amount of cash he got from the drawer? Fifteen dollars!

Another man attempted to siphon gasoline from a motor home parked on a Seattle, Washington street. He got more than he bargained for. Police arrived at the scene to find an ill man curled up next to a motor home near spilled sewage. A

policeman spokesman said that the man admitted to trying to steal gasoline and plugged his hose into the sewage tank by mistake. The owner of the vehicle declined to press charges, saying that it was the best laugh he'd ever had.

Solomon reminds us, "a cheerful heart is good medicine" (Prov. 17:22). While I'm not sure the stories we just shared make us cheerful, it sure feels good to get a good laugh at evil deeds getting their just reward (cf. Ps. 37:12-13; 52:1-9).

Laughter, at the right time for the right things and for the right reasons, is a positive experience. We all need to laugh more in order to be physically healthy. Proverbs reminds us that it's not a bad spiritual idea, either. We are a redeemed people who know what really matters in life. That means we can laugh.

Today, learn to lighten up and laugh at yourself, a cartoon, or a situation. Whatever it may be, seek out the lighter side of things today. I guarantee you'll feel better... for sure better than person robbing the Circle-K and a whole lot better than the person with the siphon hose. Who knows, maybe a lot better than the person you looked at in the mirror this morning!