

# What Does the Bible Say About Joking & Laughter■

by Tim Conway

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*This sermon delves into the Christian's attitude towards joking, exploring the fine line between humor that uplifts and jokes that may be hurtful or inappropriate. It discusses the importance of aligning jokes with biblical principles, avoiding coarse jesting, and considering the impact of comedy on one's thoughts and character. The sermon also reflects on the balance between laughter and seriousness, emphasizing the need for jokes to be edifying and glorifying to God.*

**Duration:** 30:34

**Scripture:** Proverbs 26:18, Ecclesiastes 3:4, Proverbs 17:22, Ephesians 5:4, Philipians 4:8, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Romans 13:14

**Topics:** "Humor in Christianity", "Edifying Speech"

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## Description

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## Transcript

In relation to this verse, so let's look at this verse, Proverbs 26 verses 18 and 19. 18 and 19. Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, I am only joking.

Okay, that's good. The question is this, I was just wondering what a Christian's attitude should be towards joking in general. Joking.

You've been around serious people that never joke. You've been around some people that, you know, they, they joke enough. And when they do it, you think they're funny.

There are people who joke, maybe it's sarcasm of some sort. It's not really funny. It's maybe more hurtful.

They make jabs at people. You can think of a pastor, certain pastors, they want to tell a joke every time they get up in the pulpit. The question here is this, I was just wondering what a Christian's attitude should

be towards joking in general.

So you tell me, I mean, if somebody, if somebody comes up to you at work, on the street, or even in the service Sunday, and they were to ask you, what do you think? Give me your opinion. Give me your opinion. But of course, look, if I were to ask you for your opinion, like I'm going to ask you right now, if, if it's just your opinion and you don't back it with any scripture, then it makes your opinion weak.

I mean, look, we're supposed to be people of truth and just everybody has an opinion, but lots of opinions are wrong. And so Christians need to have opinions based on something like Romans 14. We need to have opinions that are based on some, some semblance of scripture.

I mean, we need to have, we need to have Bible verses backing up, giving us a flavor, at least some general principles. What are your opinions on joking? Let me ask you this. Could, do you think biblically we could make a case that it is never under any circumstances whatsoever to say something that is considered a joke or a prank or anything of that nature? Is it wrong all the time? When the, um, when the, I don't know where in the Bible it was, but when they was talking about like sarcasm, won't be sarcastic with the people who was like the magicians and the sorcerers.

Do you know what I mean? When they, they actually, do you know what I mean? A lot was Elijah. Yeah. Elijah on Mount Carmel was sarcastic.

In fact, in the original, it, in the Hebrew, it sounds like he said, has Baal gone to the bathroom? So how do you balance that with in Colossians, um, chapter three, say where it speaks of obscene talk. So I don't know that that's obscene saying that somebody's gone to the bathroom. Now there is a line we can cross, but let's, let's back away.

Okay. We, maybe we recognize there's a line we'll talk about perhaps where that line is, but is it, I mean, what do you think just about people who talk and say things in a way that they're trained to pull laughter out of others? Because the thing about Elijah, he wasn't trying to pull laughter out of anybody. His sarcasm was a derogatory remark against a false God and those priests that represented that false God.

I mean, it was, it was a, uh, actually you hear God give the same kind of sarcasm and, uh, yeah, God himself can be sarcastic with people. But, um, what about, what about, and we're talking Christians here. What about Christians who try to get a laugh? They say what they say.

I mean, look, we have to recognize some people are just funny, but some people don't try to make you laugh, but they do make you laugh. They're not trying. Other people try to make you laugh and they're funny.

And, and you do laugh other people. They try to make you laugh and they're not funny. And sometimes you laugh because they try to make you laugh and they're not funny.

And sometimes it's just not funny at all. You don't laugh at all, but should life not be so serious? Should we have light times? Does laughter actually produce something good for the soul for in the life? Is, is it good to laugh sometimes? Why didn't, why don't we have any example of Jesus laughing? Do we think Jesus told jokes? I mean, what's, what do, what do you do with all that? How do you, what sort of ethical, by ethics, we're talking about just the standard of right and wrong. What's, what's, uh, what do you say? What, what scriptures jump out? Are there any scriptures? Is there a time where like laughter is appropriate? Cause I think it says, uh, I'm sure it does, uh, a time to weep and a time to laugh in

Ecclesiastes.

So it's more of like when it's appropriate. Is it, does it, do the Proverbs say anything about something being good medicine? Laughter. A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

So is joyful and laughter the same thing? Maybe not. What do you think? It seems like laughing in scripture is not always like positive thing. When you see it, like when you take a word search and see when laughter is used, it's like, you know, even God laughing.

Yeah. When God laughs, it's, it's not like a joke. It's not, it's like somebody's destruction.

It's, it's like, it's like mockery, isn't it? And it sounds good when God laughs. You know, we recognize that Ephesians chapter five says coarse jesting is not appropriate. Coarse.

Now it doesn't just say jesting. It says coarse jesting. What do you do with the word coarse? Like jesting that involves something that's bad.

A lot of jesting has to do with sexual innuendo. A lot of jesting has to do with foul language. I mean, if we're just talking about the world and the way they, I mean, you know, even Ruby and I, we were, we were at this hotel in London and we turned the TV on at one point, one of the nights we were watching some of the news reports and what was happening in different places.

And, and we, we saw that there's famine actually down in the area we want to visit in, in Africa, but the show came up and it was British and it was British humor. And, and Ruby and I were just recognizing that British humor is just so dry. It is so different, but sure enough, I mean, we, we, we didn't have to watch it for long.

And so suddenly some, you know, very graphically perverse sexual thing is said, and you know, that's what the world does. And, and so obviously God doesn't want us going there. But what, any other thoughts come to your mind on this? It said a lot, it says when she abandoned the baby, it says come and laugh with me.

Like, that's what it says. Obviously it wasn't like they were laughing at the baby. Laughter, laughter in itself.

Yeah. I mean, I think we could, having a good gut wrenching laughter can be good medicine. We hear joyful, but it can, I mean, you can go through a long time of seriousness, but like one of the things I remember John Piper, when he was doing William Wilberforce's biography, as he said, one of the things like Piper would say, he said, you know, after he got done studying George Miller, he just said, I didn't think I would've liked him.

But when he got done studying William Wilberforce, he said, you just got to love a guy like this, that he could just laugh, just roll in laughter. And he could play with the children and just laugh with them. I mean, we love people like that.

It's that, that is not, even though scripture leaves laughter out and that, isn't that an odd, it's, it's an odd absence that Jesus never laughed. Don't you find that odd? Well, he was a man of sorrows. And I remember John MacArthur saying one time that the further he got in life, the less he laughed because he just more and more saw how serious everything is here.

And that doesn't mean Sam Patron was saying that he either had somebody come to his church or he met somebody that was one of John MacArthur's neighbors. And he said, John would just come over and come in their house. And like, he was, he, he was just like a super nice guy and really nice to have as a neighbor.

And, you know, I can just see him walking in and, and laughing and we don't, people that are overly somber and serious is, you know, I think if we're all honest, it's, they're not the nicest people to be around all the time. And, you know, I, I'm probably that kind of person, 95% of my life. I like to hear Ruby laugh.

Ruby laughs a lot more than I do. And I like, I like, I mean, you know, I really liked the family situation when we, you know, we, we did laugh a lot. We played, we laughed.

Anyway, it's but think about this. When you think of an elder in a church, I think of words like grave and sober have to describe that, the character of that man. And let me ask you this.

Do you think that the characteristic of an elder is something that everybody in the church should be pursuing? Does an elder have characteristics that need to be in place? Because not just because of the situation he's in, but also because other people need to be following his example, patterning after his life. Do you think, do you think that every quality described in first Timothy three and Titus one is something that everybody in the church should be pursuing? It would seem, right? I mean, doesn't Hebrews 13 say that you should be imitating those men? It does. It doesn't just say you should be obeying them in verse 17.

It says that you should imitate them in verse seven. And they are supposed, even young men, you know, Titus two gives instruction for young men. What does it say young men are supposed to do? They're supposed to be self-controlled, but what else? Sober.

Okay. So let me ask you this. Does sober mean that I can laugh? Yeah.

It's more of awareness of like circumstances. Does sober does have to do with an alertness? But if I think about sobriety, I mean, what do you think about characterizes drunk people? Obviously the opposite of sober is drunk. You can say excess.

It's just excess. No, no limits, like no control. No.

I don't know what to stop. I kind of, on lots of things. What do you think about comedy? Just in general? Okay.

Wait, now I can remember from years ago. Okay. You guys had a guy over here called Monty Python.

Should a Christian sit down and watch Monty Python? But why? Okay. Abed says maybe it's not the best, but why? You see, we need to be people that ask questions. Is it okay to sit down and watch something funny? What if, what if all of a sudden you found out, so you guys, you got, you have another guy over here.

What if somebody in the church told you on Sunday that they watch Mr. Bean? They love it. So, I mean, okay. Let's say, let's say one of the young guys up and coming.

I don't want to put the image in your mind, so I won't use George as an example, but this just, let's, I mean, but let's say you got a young up and coming guy in the church and everybody's considering him for

possible future, future possibilities in ministry of some sort. And then you find out he watches Mr. Bean. Does that discredit him in your mind? He's watching it with his wife and they just think it's hysterical together and they laugh like crazy.

They have, they have TV night one night a week. So that's okay. What if they said they watch Monty Python? So yeah, if you, if you have sexual innuendo or if, or if you have just sacrilegious, didn't they do one? I mean, they, they, they seem like that Monty Python guy did a lot of takeoffs on religious things.

Yeah, I don't know. Is it like the type of things you should be like? Yeah, that's a good thing. I mean, think about that's Philippians chapter four.

What kinds of things does Philippians four tell us that we should think on things that are both that are what? Honorable. What else? Lovely, true, worthy of praise. And that's what we should be thinking on.

And so that does, you know, if you surround yourself by comedy, I think we all recognize this, whatever we entertain ourselves with, whatever we set before our eyes, whether it's on a computer or on a TV or on our phone, if you're absorbing this, you're thinking on it. You will, your mind will go there. Your mind will be occupied by it.

And you can't get away from that. So I think that's one of the things we have to ask ourselves is, is, is it profitable in that sense? I mean, what's something, what's, what would be a way of, what do you think about Christian comedians? I, I personally despise those guys, but do you, do you know what happened years ago? And you can find this online. Years ago, John Piper went to a conference of Christian counselors, I think in Memphis, Memphis or Nashville, Tennessee.

And on the, on the brochure for the conference, they had him and a Christian comedian flip-flopped. And a lot of these people didn't know Piper. And so when he got up, they thought he was the comedian.

Yeah. And if you go back and listen to it, he starts talking very seriously and he's talking honestly. He's like, he's being vulnerable and transparent and, and putting his sins out on the table and they are roaring in laughter.

Isn't that amazing? Like you're programmed that it's going to be a comedian. And so you just automatically go into funny mode. Yeah.

He said, you, you are the oddest crowd I have ever preached to. And that just got them roaring all the more. It's like Christian rock club.

It's like, I just think it's real world. Like it's trying to be entertaining, you know, like we can cover every area of Canada. Yeah.

It's like, it's like, why, I mean, what are you doing? You're trying to give us a kind of a moralized, I mean, look, Ruby years ago, Ruby found, I know when the kids were growing up, there were a couple of things that there was a guy who he didn't just do this wild comedy and just trying to clean it up a little bit. He actually, he pointed out things about the church that were legitimately funny. And then the kids, they found, they found these guys.

The what? Oh, I don't know who I'm talking about. I never really got into that stuff that much, but there was the guys that did the mommy glasses. You guys were watching those for seasons.

Anyway, every once in a while over the year, something came up that I thought was legitimately funny, but yeah, most of that, I don't have any use for that stuff. How about doing pranks when you, I mean, I think you ever prank somebody and just cut all their hair off. I don't think they'd find that that funny.

Is it like, would it be the appropriateness is making it clearly aware that this is not serious and then the other person gets it rather than like, like you said, if it's not clear that it's a joke and then someone could be offended by it. What about you put a rubber snake somewhere in under the sheets. They're going to enjoy it rather than have a heart attack.

I said, you know, they're going to enjoy it rather than have a heart attack. Ruby, what were you saying? Like in general, in regards to and pray and you know, that category of life as Christians, I think a lot has to do with the motivation. Like I always told the kids, like it's only something's only funny if it's not at their expense and you're not shaming them, making fun of them, humiliating them.

It's funny if both parties are genuinely laughing, right? People joke and it's very prideful and they, they speak condescendingly and jokingly quote unquote, really they're trying to make themselves look good and even maybe trying to make somebody else look bad or stupid. Because laughing can be very therapeutic. So, and it's biblical.

I mean, you know, I was just looking at laughing verses, so it's in there. Yeah, it can be therapeutic. I mean, that would be the thing about something caustic or something that is just some kind of jesting that gets into the realm of inappropriate.

If it hurts, harms somebody else, if it's crude, if it's vulgar, if it's impure, if, if you're dealing with profanity, obviously if it's dealing with just sexual innuendo of some sort, you know, whether it is something necessarily vulgar, if it has to do with bodily functions and fluids and, you know, people like to find all sorts of hilarious things with regards to that. But I guess, you know, that, that can get into the realm of crude as well. I mean, we want to be appropriate.

We have testimonies to uphold. I, I threw down something here about, oh, I mean, one other thing, because I, obviously if we use foul language, we cross the line, but I know that growing up and especially being around a bunch of crude friends and crude family members and a crude father, you know, a lot of times the, the, the crude aspect crosses over into racist and racial slurs as well. And, but James talks about bridling the tongue.

First Corinthians 10 talks about doing everything we do to God's glory. Romans 13 put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And so I think, I think just contemplating these broad principles, if I'm going to do everything, whether I eat or drink everything, how I speak, whether I'm going to jest, whether I'm going to tell a joke, whether I'm going to, whatever I'm going to do, if I'm going to try to pull laughs out of somebody, am I doing it for the glory of God? Is he being glorified? Does it look like I'm putting on the Lord Jesus Christ? I mean, just because the scriptures are silent with regards to his laughing, I, he was, he was a man.

He was made in every respect like us. That has to include laughter. If he didn't, if he never laughed, then he wasn't made in every respect like us.

But I think that there is also a reason why God left that out, because he was indeed a man of sorrows. And, you know, like John MacArthur's talking about, the longer he lives, the more serious life gets. He sees how serious things are.

Can you imagine the Lord Jesus? He looked at men and he knew, you deny me and you're going to lose your soul. And he was confronted by that. His own, he came to his own and his own received him not.

And he full well knew the extent of what that meant. He wept over Jerusalem. I mean, and you know, he didn't live in this world long, just barely into his thirties.

So in his few years here, he was indeed that man of sorrows. And the thing that we have to remember too, is what we have other than as a babe in a manger and a 12 year old boy at the time of the Passover feast, is we have Jesus during the years of ministry, his ministry. And he was moving towards Calvary.

I mean, Calvary road was before him. And he talked about the fact that he was under distress until that was accomplished. And so just those last three years of his life, which is basically 99% of what we get in the four gospels, he was under that constant.

I mean, it did like culminated in the garden where it's just pressing blood out of him. But he would say that he made comments along the way as to the distress that that caused him. For further study on this topic, you could watch Tim Conway's Bible study.

Are you a man of sorrows or laughter? Which is part 10 of his battle with sin series.

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Video: [https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Y\\_D8zr84ATM.mp4](https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Y_D8zr84ATM.mp4)

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