

5 Surprising Things God Loves

Week 1 | Laughter

■ BOTTOM LINE

When you discover what a person loves, you discover what is at the heart of that person. It is no different with God. We often have misconceptions about the heart and character of God. This series will reveal a God that many of us don't really know. We will look at 5 things that God loves...and they might surprise you.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

The goal of this week's group is to consider and discuss how God and joy go together, and how it could be a misconception that the more spiritual we become, the more serious we are.

■ SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 8:8-10, Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22, Philippians 4:4-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** While growing up, would you describe your impression of God as joyful and laughing? Explain.
2. **Read Nehemiah 8:8-10 and Discuss:**
 - a. This meeting is comparable to what we would call a church service. The Israelites are gathered, someone is reading from the scriptures and teaching about it. As the people are listening, they are serious and mournful. Does that sound like church to you? Have you had an experience of being in church and being told or sensing you should not laugh?
 - b. Look again at verse 10. The people are told there should be joy and celebration on a sacred day. But celebration is not intended to merely be self-centered. What does Nehemiah suggest? How do you see the modern church living this out?
3. **Read Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22 and Discuss:**
 - a. The book of Proverbs contains a collection of timeless wise sayings. Can you think of recent discoveries in science or medicine that confirm these two ancient sayings hold truth?
 - b. Have you ever experienced or witnessed laughter as good medicine?
4. **Read Philippians 4:4-5 and Discuss:**
 - a. This is a letter Paul wrote to a church while he was in prison and unsure if he would ever get out! It seems strange that he would be telling a church to rejoice. How do you think Paul was able to have joy in the midst of what appears to be dire circumstances? Have you ever experienced joy that transcends circumstances?
 - b. It is said that there is a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness can be a reaction to circumstances, but where does joy come from?
 - c. We see again, in this letter from Paul, there is more to joy than simply enjoyment. Look at verse 5 and imagine what the joy of the church could look like to those who do not know joy! In what ways do you see Christ followers living this out? In what ways do you think we have missed this opportunity?

Statistically, a child laughs about 500 times a day and an adult laughs about 15 times a day. Have we equated "growing up" with "being serious"? Laughter can cause increased heart and respiratory rate, relaxation of muscles and even an increase in production of disease fighting immune cells.

Laughter is good medicine.



TRY THIS

Fun and laughter are really good for you emotionally, physically and spiritually. Do you find humor in every day things? Have you gotten a bit too serious? What cracks you up? A comedian? A funny movie? A funny friend? Intentionally spend some time, just for fun, pursuing laughter this week!