

- Announcement: The Mennonite Church now allows dancing since everyone has to keep six feet apart.
- Observation: You think dogs are hard to train – look how hard it is for people to sit and stay!
- Danger: The best thing about quarantine are the 5 gallon pails of ice cream in the freezer!
- Advice: Out of toilet paper? Take a roll of Bounty or Brawny paper towels. Cut in half
- Warning: The new model of fighting for your life in our apocalyptic society is going to Costco,” one of many retail chains emptied out by panicked shoppers.” Can’t wait for the movie.
- Advice: You can save the whole human race by staying home and doing absolutely nothing. This opportunity will not come again. Don’t mess this up.
- Sarcasm: If you feel sick, please don’t waste the few COVID-19 tests they have. There are still a LOT of movie and sports stars and politicians and millionaires with no symptoms that haven’t been tested yet. The rest of us need to STAY HOME and WASH OUR HANDS!
- News: Nine months from now a new people group will be born and named – the Quarantines.
- Resolutions: Day 1 of Social Distancing: “I’m going to meditate and do body-weight training.”  
Day 4: “Just put the ice cream onto the pasta.”

These and many other tweets, emails, face book messages, and many with pictures are what we need during this time of stress. It’s essential to have a **good sense of humor** and to be able to laugh at ourselves. Yes, other things are important, like keeping to a schedule, prayer time, exercise, not watching too much news, and so on. But the ability to see the absurd, to laugh, to relax our fears, and to simply loosen up is essential for living. It’s one way to express outrage as well as highlight the ridiculous.

I encourage you to exercise your funny bones. Find TV shows and movies that cause you to laugh. Right now I’m enjoying a daily dose of McHale’s Navy. It’s an old sitcom – with each plot basically the same – but it diverts my attention. Look up Dry Bar Comedy when you need a change of pace and some laughter. Share those facebook meme’s that catch you by surprise and cause you to break out in laughter.

There are a lot of animal memes with pictures, like with a big dog standing up on a chair, clearly very nervous – and about 5 little kittens on the floor – looking at the dog. The caption is: “Gang violence has to stop.” People are clearly taking the time to be humorously creative.

There are lots of reasons why a good sense of humor is necessary in life. Mark Twain said that "Humor is the great thing, the saving thing after all. The minute it crops up, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations, and resentments flit away, and a sunny spirit takes their place."

**What are the benefits of a sense of humor?** Matt Davis in an article with this title shares: Being funny is possibly one of the best things you can do for your health. You can almost think of a sense of humor as your mind's immune system. People at risk for depression tend to fall into depressive episodes when exposed to some kind of negative stimuli, and afterward, it becomes easier and easier for them to relapse into depression. However, reframing a negative event in a humorous light acts as a kind of emotional filter, preventing the negativity from triggering a depressive episode.

Humor doesn't just guard against depression. It also **improves people's overall quality of life**. Researchers have found that people who score highly in certain types of humor have better self-esteem, more positive affect, greater self-competency, more control over anxiety, and better performance in social interactions. Not all kinds of humor are made equal, however. In the same study, the researchers identified four types of humor: affiliative humor, or humor designed to strengthen social bonds; self-enhancing humor, which is akin

to having a humorous view of life in general; aggressive humor, such is mocking others; and self-defeating humor, in which an individual encourages jokes that have themselves as the target or self-deprecate.

The positive contributions mentioned above only occurred when individuals scored highly in affiliative and self-enhancing humor, while aggressive and self-defeating humor was associated with poorer overall well-being and higher anxiety and depression. So, when cultivating your sense of humor, it's important to strive for the right kind — besides, it's a crummy thing to make fun of others, anyhow.

In addition to working as a **mental immune system**, research has shown that humor can actually improve your **physical immune system**. Laughter can also improve cardiovascular health and lowers heart rates, blood pressure, and muscular tension.

Aside from improving your health, laughter can also lead to **greater creativity and productivity** tool as well. A study from Northeastern University found that volunteers who watched a comedy were measurably better at solving a word association puzzle that relied on creative thinking as compared to control groups that watched horror films or quantum physics lectures. This is because laughter lights up the anterior cingulate cortex, an area of the brain associated with attention and decision-making.

A study measured people's performance on a brainstorming task and found that participants who were asked to come up with a *New Yorker*-style (cartoon) caption generated 20 % more ideas than those who did not.

I think an argument can be made that humor helps **build character and fosters community**. It's a life skill that everyone needs. Cognitive neuroscientists have found there is a tight link between brain development and humor. So jogging the mind to produce laughter in teaching and parenting is part of what makes us human. Isn't that what Jesus did when he said, "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:24)

Focus on the Family in a Boundless article says the benefits of humor are: it can **defuse tension**. **It can be an opportunity for new relationships. And it can bring us closer to God.** Have the cares, worries and disappointments of life left you despondent and in despair? Sometimes, when we encounter something which makes us smile, it reminds us of the *joy* that God wants for our lives to bring us hope through His Spirit (Romans 15:13). C.S. Lewis wrote that joy is never in our power like pleasure is, and he would probably agree such joy ultimately comes from God.

So go relax your mind and tickle your funny bones:

Judging others: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" "Matthew 7:3)

Hypocrisy: "You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. (Matthew 23:24)

Economics: "If I had a dollar for every woman who found me unattractive, eventually they would find me attractive."

Conspiracy: The weight loss businesses conspired to create this. How do we know? It's named Covid 19 – signifying the average weight gain each person will have.

Mixed Blessing: Since I can't work its good I can't go out and spend money. Opps! Forgot about my cards!

History: "Every disaster movie starts with the government ignoring a scientist!"

Question: What could the term COVID stand for? In a humorous way?

Homework: Research Jesus' humor. Thirty Humorous Passages in the Synoptic Gospels by Trueblood

Observations: While everything is shut down – maybe they should repair and pave the roads!  
Honestly, I had not planned on giving up this much for Lent!