

DISCOVERING HOPE

BEGINNING THE JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE IN CHRONIC ILLNESS

Humor 5

As my littlest daughter lay sprawled across my lap during family devotions, she was clearly upset and wanted us all to know how unbearably uncomfortable she was. She's usually a pretty enthusiastic, happy six-year-old – until her eczema flares and she groans, "I hate this lotion and the medicine stings!"

She's right. Her lotion is sticky and causes her clothes to cling to her skin like Saran Wrap, but it does work in time if we persevere. Now personally, I'd welcome three to four mini-massages a day, but I'm not six, and tonight, Megan wasn't tolerant. Exasperated, she peeled her sticky little self off my lap, muttering under her breath, "I'm NEVER taking a bath again, and I'm going to STINK LIKE THE GRINCH!"

I caught my husband's eye and those sixteen simple words bubbled over into laughter.

Humor, sometimes born of frustration and pain, can become moments that connect us with others, easing tensions and breaking down walls – oases of God's perfect peace and joy in the midst of life's storms.

Finding humor in the midst of our trials isn't easy, but it is a choice. We don't have to like our trials, but we can choose to find small moments of humor in the midst of them.

Proverbs 17:22 says, "A cheerful heart is good medicine." I agree. Nothing lifts my spirit, eases the moment or more successfully dulls my pain than laughing with others.

The next time you find yourself in troubling circumstances, look for the amusing, the surprising, the ridiculous in the midst of it all, and if you come up empty, consider my daughter's phrase and make it your own, "I'm never going to (fill in the blank), and I'm going to STINK LIKE THE GRINCH!"

STEPPING IN:

1. Let's start easy. How would you fill in the blank today?

I'm never going to _____, and I'm going to STINK LIKE THE GRINCH!

2. Have you experienced moments of humor in the midst of a trial? Something that took you by surprise and made you laugh out loud?

I have. The last time my daughter was hospitalized for infusions, as she tried to sleep off the unpleasant side effects, her boyfriend sat beside her on the bed, holding her hand. The room was dark and still though it was early afternoon. Quietly, the nurse reached for my daughter's wrist to take her pulse, and I caught the instant look of surprise on her boyfriend's face. Seconds later, we were laughing – silently, shoulders gently rocking so we wouldn't wake my daughter. The nurse had unexpectedly been taking *not* my daughter's pulse, but her *boyfriend's*. Describe a funny moment you've experienced.

3. Share your favorite joke, witty sayings or one-liners.

Here are a few of mine:

- If people were meant to pop out of bed, we'd all sleep in toasters. - Garfield
 - If it requires pants or a bra, it's not happening today.
 - Laughter is the best medicine, unless you have diarrhea.
 - They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. At this point, I should be able to bench press a Buick.
1. Humor can help us take ourselves less seriously, yet in the midst of illness, pain and sometimes humiliating circumstances, seeing the lighter side of life can be hard.

Name the funniest person you know and why.

5. What kinds of humor do you like best?

- Slapstick
- Practical jokes
- Wit
- Surprise
- Irony
- Puns
- Sarcasm

God has graciously sewn laughter into our days, bright moments tucked among the shadows of illness and pain, and while those moments don't change our circumstances, they can lessen our pain and shift our hearts toward joy.

6. Laughter reduces stress, soothes tension, improves the immune system, relieves pain, enhances our ability to learn and recall information, lifts our mood and helps us connect with others. Yet often in the midst of chronic illness, laughter can drain from our days.

When was the last time you unexpectedly belly laughed – tears-streaming-down-your-cheeks, can't-catch-your-breath belly-laughed in the midst of trying circumstances?

What made you laugh? Who were you with? List as many details as you can remember.

GOING DEEPER:

7. Maybe it's been a while since you felt light enough to laugh. How about a little Humor Challenge this week?

Keep an eye out for the illogical, the absurd, the "Wow, did that just happen?" moments over the next few days and when something tickles your funny bone, describe it on the Humor Journal pages at the end of this section.

8. Read the following verses and fill in the blanks:

Luke 6:21b:

_____ are you who _____ now, for you will _____.

Psalm 126:2-3:

Our mouths were _____ with _____, and our tongues with _____ of _____.

Job 8:21:

He will yet _____ your mouth with _____ and your lips with _____ of _____.

Ecclesiastes 3:4:

...a time to _____ and a time to _____, a time to _____ and a time to _____...

9. Henry Ward Beecher wrote, "A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs. It's jolted by every pebble on the road."

The Bible says it like this in **Proverbs 31:25:**

She is clothed with _____ and _____; she can _____ at the _____ to _____.

What allows us to "laugh at the days to come"?

How do we find strength in the midst of illness?

PRESSING ON:

10. **Isaiah 40:28b-31** offers us an answer to the questions above:

The Lord is the _____ God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow _____ or _____, and his _____ no one can fathom. He gives _____ to the weary, and increases the _____ of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men shall stumble and fall; but those who _____ in the Lord will renew their _____. They will _____ on wings like eagles; they will _____ and not grow weary, they will _____ and not be faint.

PRAYER:

Lord, open my eyes to the laughter dancing at the edges of my days. Give me courage to shed the heavy and embrace Your delightful gift of humor. Amen.

Humor Journal