



Our Mouths Were Filled With Laughter

Text: Psalm 126

Bible Teacher Duffy Robbins

1. Duffy began his message by saying that one of the greatest gifts that his parents gave him growing up was the gift of laughter. What is the greatest gift that you remember from your childhood?
2. Conversely, Duffy also mentioned that reflection can also remind us of the hard things in life, and we can't honestly look back on 2017 without saying, "There have been some really tough days behind us." What trials did 2017 bring for you?
3. Psalm 126 teaches us that it is sometimes in the midst of our problems that God does his most beautiful work, a theme that recurs often in Scripture. Read Romans 5:2-5, Romans 8:14-28, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, and James 1:2-12.
 - a. Based on what we learn from these Scriptures, how would you describe the relationship between suffering and how God can use that to do a beautiful work?
 - b. According to these passages, what must be true in order for God to bring good from bad and for us to have hope for the future? Why is this so?
 - c. Have you ever experienced this to be true in your life? Please share that story and how you saw God work with your group.
 - d. Have you seen this to be true in another group member's life? If so, please spend time encouraging them with how you have seen God use their story.
4. Psalm 126 also teaches us that faithful laughter comes, not in the absence of problems, but in the presence of faith.
 - a. How does this differ from other ways we often try to "cheer ourselves up" and move from tears to laughter? What specifically are you drawn to other than faith when things get tough to try to numb, suppress, or ignore the pain?
 - b. Where did the writer of this Psalm find hope for the future?
 - c. How can we do this? What have you seen God do in your life, and how could that be a source of encouragement, hope, and joy in current or future trials? Above all, remember the hope of the gospel! (See Study Deeper)
 - d. How can you remind yourself of these things?
5. Read Psalm 100.
 - a. What actions are connected with our ability to make a "joyful noise to the Lord"?
 - b. Which are present in your life? Which are not? Are there any changes you need to implement in the new year to bolster your faith and empower you to remain hopeful when (not if) trials come?
 - c. What is it about gratitude that causes an increase in joy?

Challenge: Social Psychologists Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough performed a study on the effects of gratitude titled "Counting Blessings Versus Burdens". They concluded, "Feelings of gratitude lead to increase feelings of joy and positive emotions." There is a reason why we are commanded repeatedly throughout scripture to offer prayers of thanksgiving; when we receive everything in life as a gift our joy will increase. What are tangible ways that you can practice gratitude in your daily routine?

Prayer:

Dear God,

Some days feel too hard. We're hurting. Struggling. Fighting fear and worry at every turn. Thank you in the midst of it all, you haven't left us to fend for ourselves. Forgive us for doubting you are there. Forgive us for thinking you've forgotten. Forgive us for believing we somehow know the better way.

You are fully trustworthy. You are All Powerful. You are Able. You are Lord over every situation no matter how difficult it may seem. You are Healer and will never waste the grief we carry today. You will use all things for good in some way. Anything is possible with you. Nothing is too difficult for you.

We pray for those who grieve today. We ask for your comfort to surround those who weep. We pray for the peace of your presence to cover our minds and thoughts, as you remind us, the enemy can never steal us out of your hands. He never has the final say over our lives. We are kept safe in your presence forever, whether in life or in death.

We thank you that your ways are higher than our ways and your thoughts are bigger than our thoughts.

We lay it all down at your feet, every burden, every care. Believing that is the safest place for it to be.

We love you Lord, we need your fresh grace.

In the Powerful Name of Jesus,

Amen.

<https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/debbie-mcdaniel/a-prayer-for-when-youre-hurting-10-verses-of-comfort-for-tough-times.html>

STUDY DEEPER

Hope for the Despairing Heart

The gospel gives hope.

The Gospel of Hope

Jesus told the disciples, “In this world you will have sorrow, but take heart I have overcome the world” ([John 16:33](#)). This life is not trouble free. Jesus did not sugarcoat what it means to follow him. Life will be hard. But our hope lies in what Christ has done: *he overcame sin and death*.

The gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that Jesus was a man of sorrows. He was not unfamiliar with the pain and suffering of this life. He knew temptation, sorrow, fear, illness, and death. He experienced rejection, loss, poverty, loneliness, and abuse. There is not one tear we have shed that he does not understand. Jesus took on all our sin, shame, and sorrow at the cross. He bore the weight of our guilt and punishment. He suffered the torment of separation from God that was rightfully ours.

But because he was sinless, the grave could not hold him. When he rose from the grave he conquered sin and death. Through faith in his complete work of redemption, we have the hope of eternal life forever in a place where there will be no more sorrow and tears.

There's more. Not only do we have the hope of forever, but we have hope *right now*. Because of what Jesus accomplished for us, we have been adopted into the family of God. He is our Father. We are co-heirs with Christ. All of God's promises are for us.

Everything We Need

This means that when life is hard, we have free and complete access to the throne of grace. We can come to him and know that he hears us, that he cares, and that he will help us. As a beloved child, we can trust that he will provide for us. We can rest in assurance that his love for us is not dependent on what we do but on what Jesus has already done. And with that is the promise:

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ([Romans 8:38–39](#))

We also have the promise that Jesus will finish what he started in us. He will not leave us unchanged. He will use every pain, every sorrow, and every tear in our lives for our good and his glory. We are not on our own in this, he promises to be our strength in weakness and will give us everything we need to live for him.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/hope-for-the-despairing-heart>