

All Joked Up

His lessons were uplifting, a rich sustaining spiritual feast from God's word. That was the first time I heard him preach. Then, a few years later, something had changed. I do not really know what he *talked* about, he didn't preach, he just entertained. We opened our Bibles, but the 'lessons' were filled with jokes and amusing stories.

"Well that's like the man who..." (one liner) LOL
"And that reminds me of the little girl who..." (joke) LOL

"On one occasion when my boys were little..." (Illustration or just another funny? Hard to tell.) LOL

The funny business was so distracting that I decided to count the jokes, but it was too discouraging. One friend's young daughter did however. She had tallied 15 'funnies' during the first half of the 'lesson' and then lost count.

To put things in perspective, compare one of the current late night shows and count the funnies in the opening 'stand-up' segment which lasts only 4-5 minutes.

Jesus, jokester? John, personal anecdotes? Peter, one-liners? None of those fit! Where is Paul's amusing introduction to *draw the crowd's attention!*?

"Jesus taught by telling stories," I have heard many times. I'm sure you like a good story; I do too. Yet how do the 'stories' that Jesus told compare to the stories told by preachers today? I have never once heard a preacher tell anything like the parables of Jesus that contain inexhaustible spiritual riches.

Almost 2,000 years ago Paul described our times:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to

have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires. (2 Timothy 4:3)

Too many times I have heard people remember the jokes and stories that preachers tell, yet have no idea of the 'lesson' content. Illustrations can be meaningful; they are also sometimes amusing. However, when the humor distracts from God's word, divine truth becomes secondary and is rendered ineffective.

Consider Peter's words in 2 Peter 1:12-15

I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. (v. 12)

Read through the first 11 verses to identify "these things." He was not interested in new or clever or funny. Rather, he was always ready to remind them of *things they already knew*.

I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder. (v. 13)

What did Peter use to *stir the people up*?

To *remind* them was the *right thing to do*.

And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind. (v. 15)

Peter was not interested in his audience *getting all joked up*. His goal was that they would *remember, remember, remember* the truths taught *after* he was gone.

To those who listen to me week after week, for your sake and the sake of the gospel, and yes, for my own sake...Here I make my stand!

To God's glory in 2016.

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