

Humor and Sarcasm in the Bible

1. How many times do we find Humor and Sarcasm in the Bible?

- The actual words, ZERO but the Bible is rich in both

2. Why would the HUMOR and SARCASM be in such a serious book as the Bible?

- God made us in his image with humor and other use of language
- It is a human book as well as divine; full of human language and emotion
- 73 books written by over 45 authors — full of every style and figure of speech
- Jesus was a man of his age using current forms of communication and figures of speech

HUMOR

3. Do you think Jesus had a sense of humor?

- We have a sense of humor and we are made in the image of God
- *The Chosen* portrays a fun and humorous Jesus

4. What are your favorite displays of Jesus humor?

- John was young and probably his brother James too; they wanted to sit at Jesus's right and left in Heaven AND to call down fire from Heaven to burn up the Samaritans!!

Luke 9:52-54 “Entered a village of the Samaritans ... James and John said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

- Mark 3:17 “James and John to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, “Sons of Thunder”
- Can you imagine the laugh as Jesus called these enthusiastic young guys “Sons of Thunder”!?!?

5. Jesus' humor scandalizes most modern readers?

- People don't understand the cultural context of Jesus seeming to call a Gentile woman a dog
- Mark 7:25–30 “A Gentile woman came and begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. Jesus said, “Let the children be fed first [Jews], for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs [Gentiles].”
She answered, “Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.”
He said to her, “For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.”
- To understand we need to understand the cultural context and the bantering of Middle Eastern dialog and humor.
- Twinkle in the eyes and the flash of a knowing smile.

- The dialogue is the kind of wit that was (and is) admired in the Near East — the ability to match riddle with riddle, to cap one wise saying with another, to match insult with insult, or— as here—to turn the insult into a commitment.

Jesus would not have been a genuine Middle Easterner if he had not occasionally engaged in a duel of wits. The scene is much more a scene of peasant good humor than it is of solemn theological debate — a straightforward Middle-Eastern style friendly joke, not an insult.

Jesus freely used humor, irony and satire" and offers the examples of "the blind leading the blind; straining out a gnat, then swallowing a camel; meticulously cleaning the outside of a cup while leaving the inside filthy; maintaining whitewashed tombs that are outwardly beautiful but inwardly full of dead men's bones; loudly honoring past prophets while plotting to kill present ones who preach the same message."

6. Sarah laughs — was that humor?

- God is present, talking to Abraham and makes him a promise. Sarah is in the tent eavesdropping — which has to be read humorously by the first readers. She laughs at God. And gets caught!

But the message puts them into the absurd situation of a ninety year old having a baby.

It is a humorous situation: "Abraham laughs, Sarah laughs, everybody else laughs, and they name the baby 'laughter' — Isaac.

7. Lastly, Elijah adds a humorous moment (even sarcasm) in a tense moment. What was it?

Elijah ridiculed "the priests of Baal who wailed ... in the hope that Baal would send fire from Heaven.

Elijah shouts, "Yell louder!...Perhaps he is on a journey, or on the toilet!"

8. Does God ever laugh with humor or sarcasm?

- Psalm 2:2–4 “The kings of the earth set themselves ... against the Lord and against his Anointed, but He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.”
- Psalm 37:13 “But the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.”
- Actually this is a comfort and hope for persecuted Christians - despised subculture

SARCASM

9. Is sarcasm always a negative manner of speech?

- No, sarcasm is be used to communicate morality, to point out folly or to chastise.
- Consider exposing adultery with this, ““Can a man take fire in his bosom And his clothes not be burned?” (Prov 6:27)
- *Proverbs* are full of funny and serious sarcasm
- Prov 26:17 “Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears.”
- Why bother a passing dog, and why pull his ears? Stay out of things that are not your business!

10. Was Jesus ever sarcastic?

- Matt 23:27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.
- Can’t get more sarcastic than this! They tried to make people follow laws of cleansing, but by contact with Pharisees they are made unclean!
- Matt 23:25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.”

11. Explain Jesus’ sarcastic pun on the name of Jacob

- Jn 1:47 Jesus said to Nathanael, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”
- Jacob’s name means “deceit”. His name was changed to Israel. Jesus is saying Nathaniel is an Israelite (a Jacob) in whom there is no Jacob! Clever pun indeed!

12. Paul has a LOT of sarcasm, tell us about the Judaizers

- To those who insisted the Gentiles be circumcised to be Christians, Paul says,

Gal 5:12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

- English Bibles soften Paul’s biting sarcasm, but Paul actually said, “castrate themselves, cut the whole thing off.”

13. St. James also incorporates biting sarcasm comparing the believers to demons.

- James 2:19 “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!
- So saying that you believe in God makes you as good as a demon. Congratulations. They are better than you because they shudder at the thought!