



Rick & Sue McCoy

# *The Love Letter*

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## Ideas to Increase Laughter, Joy, and Rejoicing

**"He who laughs, lasts!"** Mary Pettibone Poole

Begin having more fun as you check out some of the ideas listed below:

1. **Watch funny movies** (Some of our favorites) **RV, Mrs. Doubtfire, Trains, Planes, & Automobiles, Cheaper by the Dozen, Flubber, Chitty Chitty Bang-Bang.**

**Animated movies** – **Sing, Over the Hedge, Happy Feet, Finding Dory, Horton Hears a Who**

2. **Watch stand-up comedy** – (Here are a few with clean comedy you can find on YouTube)

**Michael Jr.**

**Jeannie Robertson**

**Mark Lowry**

**Taylor Mason**

3. **Watch TV series** from the past on YouTube **Home Improvement, Muppets, America's Funniest Home Videos, I Love Lucy...**

4. **Videos of Funny Things** – Babies laughing, different kinds of animals doing crazy things, etc.

5. **Buy a joke book or find funny jokes** to share with others on the internet, but make sure the jokes aren't making fun of others!

6. **Play fun games** that illicit laughing like Charades and Pictionary

7. **Sing silly light-hearted songs, dance and be childlike**– Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah, Whistle While We Work, Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo

8. **Sing lively Praise songs to the Lord to stir up Joy** – (Check YouTube) Jewish Medley by Julie Meyer, O Happy Day & In the River by Jesus

Culture, God's Great Dance Floor by Chris Tomlin, I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy Down in my Heart



## Benefits of a Merry Heart

Have you ever seen a little baby laughing and giggling? They're so free to just enjoy life! All of us need to laugh and be joyful! Earlier this year, Holy Spirit showed me (Sue) I had been "too serious" and I needed to intentionally laugh and be merry every day! All of us have experienced major changes in how we do life since the spring of 2020. The turmoil and chaos of the world tries to get our attention and cause us to dwell on the negatives, making it hard to laugh or be joyful. Rick and I have had our challenges too! It's not automatic for me to laugh when circumstances are not my preference! But Holy Spirit is helping me practice laughing more every day because of what He revealed to me as I prepared to write this! **Psalms 2:4** says our God sits in the heavens laughing at men who think they are above Him. Do you know what is going on in Heaven right now? C. S. Lewis said, "The most serious thing in Heaven is joy!" Wow! He wants us to see things from His perspective and know He is working His plan for good, not evil, to give us a future and a hope! **Jer. 29:11**

Living with a merry heart not only keeps us joyful and connected to our good Father, but brings physical benefits and much more. I am convinced He wants us to enjoy every day of our lives, and show others the way to come home to live loved and experience joy too. Let's explore the joy-filled life He always planned for His kids. May He help all of us to choose to walk in His ways, have a merry heart, and find joy in each day!

### Merry, Cheerful, Joyful, Rejoicing

After looking up many verses on merry, glad, rejoice, joy, good cheer and more, my heart was overflowing with laughter, smiles, and a desire to share it with you! But He delayed my writing this for almost two weeks. Suddenly my life went out of my control! Nothing went as I expected and daily my time disappeared with many interruptions, extra phone calls, emergency prayer needs, etc. Papa assured me this article would get written at the right time. *I never anticipated all the opportunities that I would have to practice what I am writing about!* His Word has much to say about all the words I listed above, but they mean nothing if we don't actively let them become a part of our daily lives. When things are good, it's easier to rejoice and laugh, but when life doesn't go the way we expect or plan, having a merry heart takes effort!

How do we get a merry heart and what does that look like? We may wish others a “Merry Christmas!” but I only knew one Bible verse that uses “merry.” **Proverbs 17:22 NKJV** says, “**A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.**” Merry in Hebrew means **to shine, to celebrate, rejoicing, be glad, to brighten up**, and more. Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines merry as “**jovial, exhilarated to laughter and mirth, delightful.**” Those words are describing a person who is rejoicing, lighthearted, and enjoying life. When I try to “do” too many tasks and let the things of this world weigh me down, I can feel pressured, overwhelmed, sad, and unpleasant to be around! My heart can be far from merry! Proverbs gives us three images of what we experience when we have a merry heart -1) **healing like medicine** that we shared above, 2) **makes a cheerful countenance NKJV** or **brings a smile to your face MSG Prov. 15:13**, and 3) **it has a continual feast regardless of circumstances or fills the day with song. Prov. 15:15 AMP & MSG**

These past two weeks, I have started smiling when things didn’t go the way I planned and practiced thanking Him for the good things that did happen. A couple times He had me pause and express appreciation for a sweet memory from the past. It quieted my heart, changed my attitude and more smiles and joy followed. One night last week I didn’t sleep well, but as I walked to mail a card, I was impressed to sing “The Joy of the Lord is My Strength!” By the time I got back home, all the tiredness was gone and I felt energized! Wow! Another day also turned out differently than I had planned, but with each change I was able to rejoice and laugh knowing that Papa has got me and He is directing my steps! This article took longer to write, but what was important to Him took place; I connected, encouraged, and prayed with others. Being able to trust His big heart and knowing He is always with me gives me reason to rejoice and be merry every day! Living with a merry heart is becoming more of a reality to me each day!

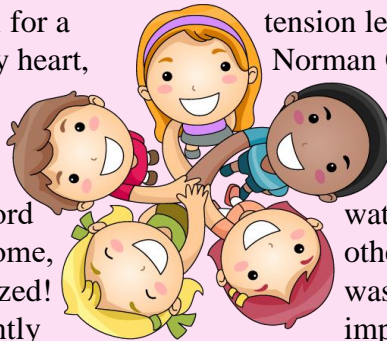
### Physical Benefits of Laughter

Laughter is literally the cheapest form of therapy and the most pleasant. It has the power to heal not only your soul but your body! Medical science is now agreeing with what God has always said in His Word. Researchers are finding that there are many physical, emotional and psychological benefits that come when we are cheerful, joyful, laugh, smile, and are glad! I

read several articles affirming that a merry heart does many positive things to our bodies like medicine can! Research by Ramon Mora-Ripoll, MD and PhD, has shown that humor and laughter are related to our health. He says, “**Laughter releases physical and emotional tension, improves immune functioning, stimulates circulation, elevates mood, and increases friendliness.**” In **Time magazine 2018**, an article, **The Science of Laughter – Why We Laugh**, stated that “**Laughter boosts your pain tolerance, cardiovascular health and memory.**” A study by a cardiology group in Baltimore found that laughing can actually prolong your life! Hospitals are beginning to see the importance of humor. A university hospital in Pittsburgh has a 24-hour television station devoted to humor. Another hospital in California has an Rx Laughter program that prescribes funny movies for patients going through difficult procedures.

Laughing benefits many of the systems in our bodies! Researchers have found that laughing activates muscles, increases the heart rate, and increases oxygen exchange in the lungs, similar to what athletic exercises do. William F. Fry, Professor Emeritus of Stanford University has seen that mirthful laughter decreases stress and emotional tension leading to physical relaxation also. Years ago, Norman Cousins used laughter to decrease the constant pain he lived with from inflammatory arthritis. He found that **10 minutes of genuine belly laughing** while watching *Candid Camera*, Marx Brothers and others gave him **2 hours of pain free sleep!** He was one of the first to use laughter therapy to improve his health! Today there are Laughter Clubs in the world! Laughter causes us to lighten up, be more positive, hopeful as well as more friendly!

Have you been around babies and young children? They find it easy to laugh at almost anything! **Babies and young children typically have around 300 belly laughs each day**, but **adults only have 15-30 belly laughs!** It is important that we become more childlike and carefree letting our Father direct our steps or we can get too serious about life and lose our merry heart! A good belly laugh relaxes us and makes us feel more alive and energized too. When we laugh about something, we can smile and laugh about it again later too. My goal is to be more childlike and have 100’s of belly laughs every day! You may be thinking, how do I laugh when I don’t feel like it? Consider this question: If you go to the gym even when you don’t feel like working out, is it a fake workout? Likewise laughing even when we don’t feel like it is not fake and does impact our bodies and our hearts!



Years ago, a man of God shared that the devil tried to get him to believe he was having a heart attack, but he simply said, “Ha, ha! Ho, ho!” Even though he started on purpose with what felt like a fake or artificial laugh, he quickly found himself truly laughing and all the symptoms left his body! A few months ago my mind and heart got stuck on something negative when I went to bed and sleep never came. I got up and read a blog, “My Laughter feels Fake.” I decided to simply start laughing on purpose! Ha, Ha! Hee, Hee! Ho, Ho! By the time I did that for a minute or so, I found myself totally laughing from my belly! After continuing for probably 5-8 minutes, my mind was free of any negative focus and my body was relaxed and at total peace! I had never experienced such an amazing thing! I quickly fell asleep and slept soundly the rest of the night! I also became more aware of Him, trusting my good Father to take care of everything!

### The Power of Smiles

Smiles on our faces also make our hearts cheerful and merry! Seeing someone smile at us lets us know they are excited and pleased to be with us which increases joy! Babies look right into their parents’ eyes, see their smiles, and drink in the love and experience joy. Then they smile back. Every time we smile our brain feels really happy as it releases the feel-good neurotransmitters - dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin - into our bloodstream. This causes our body to relax, lowers our heart rate, blood pressure, any pain in our bodies, and keeps us living longer too!

Smiles make us more attractive and lift our mood and the mood of those around us! When we see a smiling face, it activates the region of our brain that processes sensory rewards. This suggests that when a person’s face is smiling at us, we actually feel rewarded. **Smiling is infectious!** Have you noticed that when another person smiles at you, you smile back! In a Swedish study, people were told to frown back as a person smiled at them. Can you guess what happened? They mirrored the smile and emotions in the smiling person rather than following the researchers’ instructions!

We can’t always control what happens to us, but smiling and laughing can often change us internally and externally. Holy Spirit is teaching me it is all about my perspective. He asked me, “Are you seeing a situation through the world’s perspective, your eyes and what you prefer, or are you ready to ask Father to give you His eyes to see a person or situation? Ouch! Often, I can be very focused on what I want or need rather than seeing something through His loving eyes! He is unchanging! How does He see you or me? Our good Father is in our midst, ready to save, rejoices over us with gladness, quiets us with His love, and rejoices over us with singing! **Zeph. 3:17** No matter what the world or others throw at us, He is always loving,

smiling, and pursuing us! That is a good reason to put a smile on my face and joy in my heart! Smile in the mirror at yourself and let His love shine in your smiling face! Then brighten the world by being the one smiling wherever you go from checkout people, servers in restaurants, even people you pass on the streets! When you smile, the world will smile back! There was a song written long ago – “***Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative...***” Look for positive things to be thankful for each day, smile and let Him be your focus!

### The Joy of the Lord

During the Babylonian captivity, Jerusalem had been in ruins and its walls broken down. The small remnant left in Jerusalem were living in difficult conditions without joy and little strength! Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to help rebuild the wall. He shared how he had had favor with the king to come back. He said, “Let us rebuild the wall together!” The people were encouraged and they came together completing the wall in 52 days despite many obstacles and some people who tried to stop them. Nehemiah spoke the words, “**the joy of the Lord is our strength**” **Neh. 8:10** after the wall was completed.

The Hebrew word for *joy* means ***rejoicing, gladness or joy*** and the Hebrew word for *strength* means ***place or means of safety, protection, refuge of God or stronghold***. Nehemiah knew the Lord had helped complete the natural wall to protect them. As the people listened to the reading of God’s Word all day, he told them to rejoice too. We can receive the truth of His Word in our hearts causing our joy to increase and look to Him for protection too. Later as the people dedicated the rebuilt wall around Jerusalem, they appointed two thanksgiving choirs to stand in the house of God singing and rejoicing while sacrifices were made. “**God made them to rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard a far off!**” **Neh. 12:43** As I ponder what they did, I see a group of people whose lives were not easy or comfortable yet they rejoiced with such joy that others heard it from afar! Our living conditions are far better than theirs! May we practice having a merry heart, smiling, singing, and rejoicing for all that we have been blessed with until the joy of the Lord becomes a reality in our daily lives and affects others!

**“You don’t stop laughing when you grow old, you grow old when you stop laughing.”**

George Bernard Shaw





## **A Father's Blessing**

I bless you to be filled with the joy of knowing that you are greatly loved by your good Father who delights and sings over you. May your heart know that He is always with you to protect you and be your strength, no matter what is happening in your life or the world around you. I bless you to cultivate a merry heart, rejoicing and laughing even when things don't go the way you expect or prefer. May you see the smile on His face as He looks at you. May that bring a smile to you and your heart that grows as you walk on with Him. May your spirit, soul and body experience healing and good health as you laugh and rejoice daily! I bless you to make time to have fun, play and be childlike every day, knowing you are His child, able to trust that your good Father will care for you!

