

AUGUST 9, 2020

LESSON 10

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

THE HUMOR OF GOD (MATTHEW 7:3-5)

The Gospels help us see Jesus as a real person. He had friends whom he loved and enjoyed spending time with. While certainly he was focused on his preaching and ultimately dying on the cross, he was always a person with his own personality, which included humor.

For example, in the Sermon the Mount, Jesus' taught on judging others. He illustrated it by talking about someone having a big, humor-gous log in their eye while trying to remove a tiny speck in someone else's eye (Matt 7:3-5). Let me tell you—that's funny! By using this humorous illustration, Jesus' teaching on judging others instantly becomes memorable and easily understandable.

Why does the Bible use humor? Because every person innately understands humor (although not everyone has a *good* sense of humor). And just as with our other values and feelings, humor is a God-given characteristic that helps us understand God and our world.

What Goes Around, Comes Around (Gen 25-29)

In the Jacob story, there's a play on the concept of older/younger siblings. When Jacob stole his older brother's birthright through deception (Gen 25:29-34; 27:1-29; cf. Heb 12:16b), he had no idea how this would come back to haunt him. Later in the story, Jacob fell madly in love with Rachel, the beautiful younger sister of the unattractive older sister, Leah (Gen 29:18, 20). But in that culture (just like with birthrights), the older sibling was expected to get married first (cf. Gen 29:26). On his wedding night, Jacob thought he had married the younger sister, Rachel, who had worn a veil during the wedding and when they went into their tent for the evening. But when he awoke the next morning, he saw he had married Leah.

A Talking Donkey (Num 22:22-35)

Are you smarter than a donkey? Balaam wasn't! He mistreated his beast of burden when she didn't follow his directions. What he didn't know was, the donkey could see an angel of the Lord who was ready to kill Balaam. After her third beating, the donkey spoke: "What have I done to you?" (v. 28). Amazingly, Balaam answered her. "Because you have made me a fool!" No, Balaam, you made *yourself* into one.



Valiant Warrior—Hiding (Judg 6:11–27)

While hiding from the oppressive Midianites, Gideon was called a “valiant warrior” by the angel of the LORD (vv. 11–12). Gideon’s fear plays a prominent role in his story, as he requires God to give him numerous signs of confirmation. In the end, though, it is the Midianite army of 135,000 soldiers who were terrified of a measly 300 soldiers—who weren’t armed with swords, but lanterns and trumpets!

“If You Really Loved Me...” (Judg 13–16)

Judges contains numerous examples of humor and irony. Bigger than life, the judge Samson takes the cake. One time he used the jawbone of a donkey to kill a thousand Philistines (Judg 15:15–17). Samson teased Delilah mercilessly numerous times, as she tried to cajole the source of his strength from him. Eventually, the joke was on him, when he was so vexed by her constant nagging that he told his secret (Judg 16:15), was mistreated, and made a slave. But Samson got the last laugh: in his death, he killed more Philistines than he had in his life. He brought down the house—literally (Judg 16:30).



Hanged on His Own Gallows

The book of Esther contains several examples of dramatic irony, all of which are aimed at the story’s villain, Haman. His nemesis was the Jew, Mordecai. When the king wanted to honor Mordecai, he asked Haman what he thought should be done for “the man whom the king delights to honor?” (Esther 6:6). Haman thought the king was talking about him, and so he thought up a long list of accolades to shower on “the honored man.” Was he ever surprised (Esther 6:10–11) when he ended having to parade Mordecai around the city! The last example of dramatic irony is when Haman died on his own gallows, which had been built for Mordecai (Esther 5:14–15; 7:8–10).

“Stop, Rhoda! We’re Praying for Peter!” (Acts 12)

It was no laughing matter when James the apostle was killed by Herod Agrippa II, who then planned to do the same to Peter. But then, the narrative takes on a comical turn. An angel of the Lord came at night to rescue Peter, but had to walk the sleepy apostle step by step (vv. 7–9). “Wake up! Get dressed. Put on your sandals.” When he walks to the house where other Christians were praying for his release, Peter knocked on the gate. A servant girl knew it was Peter, but in her excitement, didn’t open the gate. She ran back to the praying Christians and told them. But they didn’t believe her!

From Murderer to Deity (Acts 28:3–6)

While gathering up sticks for a fire, Paul was bitten by a poisonous viper. At first, the superstitious islanders thought he had to be a murderer and was being punished by the Greek goddess, Justice. But when they saw no harm came to Paul, “they changed their minds and said that he was a god.”