



# **The Humor of Christ: A Bold Challenge to the Traditional Stereotype of a Somber, Gloomy Christ**

*Elton Trueblood*

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## **The Humor of Christ: A Bold Challenge to the Traditional Stereotype of a Somber, Gloomy Christ** Elton Trueblood

*The Humor of Christ* inspires Christians to redraw their pictures of Christ and to add a persistent biblical detail, the note of humor. Throughout the Gospels, Christ employed humor for the sake of truth and many of his teachings, when seen in this light, become brilliantly clear for the first time. Irony, satire, paradox, even laughter itself help clarify Christ's famous parables, His brief sayings, and important events in His life. In a valuable appendix 30 humorous Gospel passages are listed for further study.

## **The Humor of Christ: A Bold Challenge to the Traditional Stereotype of a Somber, Gloomy Christ Details**

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# **From Reader Review The Humor of Christ: A Bold Challenge to the Traditional Stereotype of a Somber, Gloomy Christ for online ebook**

## **Volkert says**

I read an autographed copy given to me by my parents. This book was like listening to someone explain a joke that you didn't get, not very fun, but it explores an aspect of Jesus' ministry that apparently was prominent, but we tend to ignore. It will make me view the gospels differently.

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## **Iris Odelle says**

I was really excited to read this book when I discovered it at our church library. Being a rather jokey person myself, I tend to see the humor in the Bible more than the average Joe, so I enjoyed finding someone who agreed with me and had done a lot of research. It reads something like a long essay, split into chapters, but was still very interesting and easy to read, when I wasn't distracted. What I found best about the book was that it made Jesus seem more like a real person, not just an idea floating around out there. He was real. He is real. And he's got a vibrant sense of humor.

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## **Brenda says**

It took me a while to get through this book because it's very scholarly, but I'm glad I read it. It's an analysis of Jesus' wit and humor in the Gospels. Like the author, I feel that this side of His personality (for lack of a better word) is seriously under-studied. The prevailing attitude is that every word Jesus said was completely serious and intense, and that just isn't the case! It's encouraging to be reminded that He laughed too.

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## **Paul J says**

Would you believe I have had this book on my shelf since 1978 (my college years) and had not read it? Well, I finally got to it and this thin book is packed with all kinds of wisdom about humor. Trueblood invites us to see how Jesus uses irony and other tools of humor to make a point. He also invites us to consider some of the harder sayings of Jesus and understand them as Jesus employing humor (often stating the absurd to make a point). Recommended to all students of Jesus and Scripture.

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## **Douglas Wilson says**

Good.

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## **Rich says**

awesome book!

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## **Michael says**

Great book. I read it a while ago during grad school. I subsequently gave my copy away, and I'd love to read it again. Trueblood challenges the picture of a "humor-less" Jesus, and he brings out the irony and humor in Christ's words and parables.

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## **Jacob O'connor says**

"I'm the way the truth and the life." Just kidding!

Several months ago a friend of mine talked me into reading the books Anne Rice wrote about Jesus's early life. One of the best things about those books was how it got me thinking. I've never considered that Jesus has a personality!

In *The Humor of Christ*, Elton Trueblood issues another challenge. Might Christ have had a sense of humor? Full disclosure - I don't usually read the Gospels that way. By default, I've always imagined Him as the severe, serious type. Maybe something like the God of the OT that others seem to think is so much different. It has been a good exercise considering that Jesus may have been being ironic, sarcastic, or playful.

There is a pitfall, however. It's the reason for my first sentence. If I say something tongue-in-cheek, then the exact opposite of my expressed words are meant. We should be very careful using this as an interpretive tool when reading the Bible.

On the other hand, we've overcome this before. Realizing something is an idiom that we once interpreted in a wooden, literal way.

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## **Mark Oppenlander says**

Here is another book I rescued from a stack of donations to the SPU Library that were on their way to be discarded or destroyed (and before anyone protests, this is usually done only because one or more copies of the donated book are already held in SPU's general collection). I grabbed this slim volume from the stack because it was free, because the title intrigued me and because I recognized the author, Elton Trueblood, as a well-known 20th century Quaker theologian.

Although I enjoyed the book, I did not find it particularly profound. Trueblood's stated goal is to get Christians moving away from the notion that the historical figure of Jesus was a somber, gloomy figure focused on carefully creating a new orthodoxy. He calls the humor of Christ a "neglected aspect" of his human incarnation. Perhaps this gloomy, serious Jesus was a significant obstacle in 1964 when this book was first published - and perhaps it still is a problem in some circles. But since those that I associate with do not

make this error, I found Trueblood's points easily won and not hard to defense; he is preaching to the choir.

Trueblood does walk through a number of examples of Jesus' use of humor, pointing out irony, satire and ridicule. This is all very credible and helpful, especially to those who have not perhaps considered in full how funny Jesus really was. The most helpful thing for me personally was Trueblood's alternate explanations for a couple of parables that have troubled translators and scholars for many years (e.g. the parable of the unjust steward). Trueblood shows that many of the theological problems with these parables are cleared up if we begin with the assumption that Jesus was joking - and he goes on to suggest why there may be textual and contextual evidence for such an explanation.

My biggest criticism of this book is that it is not very funny. That may sound strange when critiquing a piece of theological scholarship, but to my way of thinking, if you're going to write about God being a funny guy, perhaps you should consider lightening up a little yourself. A few wry asides or author's examples of humor in his own faith-walk might have added some emotional heft to his intellectual argument.

Nonetheless, this book is clear, lucid and somewhat interesting. It is not perhaps as ground-breaking as it once was nor as funny as it could (should?) have been.

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### **Nate Perrin says**

I have a professor who was mentored by Trueblood himself. I see a lot of Trueblood's thoughts lived on through this man. That being said, I think this is a good book - but it feels like at some points that it's digging for places that aren't totally there. There was also nothing that I would say is memorable from the book itself. Then again, I'm used to the idea that Jesus had a sense of humor because that was just a part of His humanity as well as His divinity.

However, this is a good book to anger legalists who love an angry Jesus who thinks just like they do so I'll be keeping a copy nearby. :-)

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### **Jacob says**

The Humor of Christ. by Elton. Trueblood (1964)

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### **Brandon H. says**

Although this is a fairly short book, it wasn't the easiest read. But like other reviewers have stated, I'm glad I finished it. The author sought to show Christ's humor which is often lost in Christendom these days. Overall, I think the author succeeded in his objective. There were a couple of places where I thought the author read humor into stories and the words of Christ where it wasn't present but at the same time, he did open my eyes to see Christ's humor in places I had missed. Jesus did use humor more than many today probably realize. I also appreciated the many insights the author offered about the nature of humor and its importance in life. 3 stars!

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## **Steve Bedford says**

Would be more aptly named "The Wit of Christ", or "Jesus had a wry sense of humor, maybe." The author had some good points and interesting alternative readings of some texts, but was stretching it in some places as well. Worth a read since it is so short, but not the best book ever.

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## **Sarah says**

Oddly, this book has the best description of Pharisees that I have ever read. I was impressed.

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## **Dean Summers says**

Elton Trueblood has tackled a difficult, neglected, but vital topic for understanding the Bible in general and Jesus in particular. Humor does not always survive intact from one culture to another. When you're pouring over a printed text translated from an ancient dialect, enshrined as Sacred Scripture, the chances of ever getting the punch line are slim indeed. Small wonder that so many people are left with the impression that the Bible is a dull, humorless book, and that Jesus is a dull, humorless man.

Trueblood knows a different Jesus—one who often had a wry smile and a twinkle in his eye, one who laughed out loud with full-hearted, infectious laughter, who got invited to parties, who was the life of the party, who joked with his friends and lampooned his adversaries, inviting us all to laugh at ourselves—at the way we take ourselves so seriously.

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