

LAUGHING  
ALL THE WAY

KAREN O'CONNOR



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Verses marked MSG are taken from THE MESSAGE, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Verses marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))

Verses marked AMPC are taken from the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by the Lockman Foundation.

Cover design and illustration by Dugan Design Group

Published in association with Books & Such Management, 52 Mission Circle, Suite 122, PMB 170, Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5370, [www.booksandsuch.com](http://www.booksandsuch.com).

Names and details have been changed to protect individuals' identity.

## **LAUGHING ALL THE WAY**

Copyright © 2018 by Karen O'Connor

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

[www.harvesthousepublishers.com](http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com)

ISBN 978-0-7369-7364-9 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-7365-6 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: O'Connor, Karen, author.

Title: Laughing all the way / Karen O'Connor.

Description: Eugene : Harvest House Publishers, 2018.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017061381 (print) | LCCN 2018013878 (ebook) | ISBN

9780736973656 (ebook) | ISBN 9780736973649 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Aging—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Older

people—Religious life. | Laughter—Religious aspects—Christianity.

Classification: LCC BV4580 (ebook) | LCC BV4580 .O366 2018 (print) | DDC

248.8/5—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017061381>

**All rights reserved.** No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

**Printed in the United States of America**

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 /VP-GL/ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*For June, my sister and best friend*

*RIP*

.....

*For Carol Sue, a silver-and-gold friend*



# Contents

Up for New Opportunities? ..... 9

## Part One

### *Making New Choices*

1. What's So Funny About Getting Old-er? ..... 13  
Making a Choice to Enjoy Aging

2. When You Feel like Making a U-Turn ..... 21  
Making a Choice to Move Forward

3. From Desperation to Inspiration—Heidi's Story ..... 27  
Making a Choice to Turn from Addictions

4. Fruitful Giving ..... 31  
Making a Choice to Share Ourselves

5. Comforting the Comfortless ..... 35  
Making a Choice to Serve in a New Way

6. Set the Table and Invite Some Friends ..... 39  
Making a Choice to Be Hospitable

7. Forgiveness, Love, and Respect ..... 45  
Making a Choice to Let Go

8. Invisible Gifts ..... 51  
Making a Choice to Find What Is Hidden

## Part Two

### *Accepting New Challenges*

9. Suddenly Single: Submitting to Grief ..... 57  
Accepting Loss with Dignity

10. Personality Puzzle . . . . .	65
Accepting Temperament Differences	
11. The Artist Within . . . . .	73
Accepting and Expressing Our Talents	
12. Giving Up or Giving In? . . . . .	77
Accepting Setbacks	
13. No One Can Steal Your Joy. . . . .	83
Accepting a Joyful Outlook	
14. You Have the Right to Be Wrong . . . . .	87
Accepting Vulnerability	
15. Blessings in Disguise . . . . .	91
Accepting Good from the Unexpected	
16. The Road to Gratitude . . . . .	95
Accepting God's Grace	

## Part Three

### *Taking New Chances*

17. Walls, Fences, or Welcome Mats? . . . . .	103
Taking a Chance with People	
18. It's Never Too Late for a Playdate . . . . .	109
Taking a Chance on Having Fun	
19. One Is Silver and the Other Gold . . . . .	113
Taking New Chances with Friends	
20. GRAND Parenting . . . . .	119
Taking New Chances as Parents and Grandparents	
21. Trippin' on Trekkin' . . . . .	125
Taking New Chances Through Travel	

22. Yes, You Can Say Yes! . . . . .	129
Taking New Chances to Go for It	
23. Hands Off Other People's Everything . . . . .	133
Taking a Chance to Set Healthy Boundaries	
24. Shhh! The Gift of Silence . . . . .	141
Taking the Chance to Speak Less	

## Part Four

### *Opening New Chapters*

25. Becoming Friends with God Again . . . . .	147
Opening a New Chapter with the Lord	
26. The Power of Breath . . . . .	155
Opening a New Chapter on Wellness	
27. Taking It Easy . . . . .	161
Opening a New Chapter on Slowing Down	
28. Simple Simplicity . . . . .	165
Opening a New Chapter to Less Clutter	
29. As Good as Your Word . . . . .	169
Opening a New Chapter on Honesty	
30. Ah! Sweet Sleep . . . . .	175
Opening a New Chapter on Rest	
31. Peace-Filled Living . . . . .	179
Opening a New Chapter on Contentment	
32. A Privilege Few Experience . . . . .	185
Opening a New Chapter to the Golden Years	





## Up for New Opportunities?

“The tragedy of life is not that it ends too soon, but that we wait so long to begin it,” said William Mather Lewis, an American teacher, university president, and government official. This quote gave me pause as I considered my life now that I’m heading down the home stretch. Do I give up and just watch TV or do I open the door and walk outside eager for what God might bring my way today? I want to open the door, but sometimes I’m afraid or worried or anxious about what might be out there. Now that I’m a widow and living alone, I realize how much I relied on my partnership with my husband. We made decisions together. We traveled together. We talked with one another. We figured things out side by side.

You may have similar concerns as you look ahead. So I’ve divided this book into four sections, each one focusing on some of the *new* opportunities that come our way as we step into the golden years, which at times may look and feel more like tarnished silver.

- *Making New Choices* will cover some of the ways we can become involved with new people and places, as well as new ways of thinking.
- *Accepting New Challenges* will highlight the inevitable experiences that are part of the aging process, such as illnesses, losses, and possible financial worries. We’ll look at how we can accept and work with them in positive ways—and even smile through them.

- *Taking New Chances* will prompt us to risk more and worry less, to do that thing we've always wanted to do—whether it's taking singing lessons, or running a marathon, or repairing a broken friendship.
- *Opening New Chapters* will suggest ways to rekindle your relationship with God, keys to living in the heartland of gratitude and joy regardless of the circumstances, and the markers to help you realize that growing old is truly a “privilege few people get to experience.”

Above all, God is with us. Proverbs 3:5-6 (MSG) says:

Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life! Honor God with everything you own; give him the first and the best. Your barns will burst, your wine vats will brim over. But don't, dear friend, resent God's discipline; don't sulk under his loving correction. It's the child he loves that God corrects; a father's delight is behind all this.

I hope you will carry this message from God as well as the practical examples in this book to others who are traveling with you and those who will soon join you on this journey to heaven—and most of all that you'll laugh—or at least smile—and trust all the way. I'm walking this road with you.

*Karen O'Connor*

Part One

# Making New Choices

*Choice:* An act of selecting or making a decision  
when faced with two or more possibilities:  
the choice between good and evil.

NEW OXFORD AMERICAN DICTIONARY



## Birds of a Feather

Birds of a feather flock together,  
And so will pigs and swine;  
Rats and mice will have their choice,  
And so will I have mine.

NURSERY RHYME

I laughed out loud when I stumbled on this old Mother Goose nursery rhyme while preparing a writing class for young students. It reminded me that I always have a *choice*. I'm not held captive to the opinions or choices of others, which is so important to remember—especially during our golden years. Let's look at making some choices, resisting temptation when it comes to personal desires, sharing ourselves with others, and dealing with past hurts.



# What's So Funny About Getting Old-er?

Making a Choice to Enjoy Aging

What's so humorous about aging? Some older folks might respond, "Not much." And then they launch into their list of aches and pains, valid as they might be. On the other hand, there is plenty to chuckle about—misplacing our glasses, or hearing aids, or cell phones, for example—because when we get right down to it, *life* can be funny at any age. We just need to be willing to look for the sweet surprises, little jokes, and unexpected oopsies that make us laugh out loud.

Martin Luther, father of the Reformation movement and a theologian, made no bones about the funny side of life. "If I'm not allowed to laugh in heaven, then I don't want to go there," he said. American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr went so far as to say, "Humor is, in fact, a prelude to faith, and laughter is the beginning of prayer." I love that one! "A prelude to faith" and "the beginning of prayer." What a beautiful perspective. With that thought in mind we need never be worried or embarrassed to smile at life and

even laugh about it. When the elders of Charles Spurgeon's church asked him to tone down his humor in the pulpit, the famous minister was quick to respond: "Gentlemen, if you only knew how much I held back!"

I'm thinking life would be pretty challenging if we didn't stop and let out a good belly laugh once in a while—even several times a day. Many great preachers and writers knew this and practiced it in their own lives despite the sadness and evil in the world around them.

### Oh, Lord! Here Comes Another Senior Moment

When I tumbled into my sixties, all of a sudden there they were—those dreaded senior moments I'd noticed in my parents and relatives when they became seniors. Lost keys, unpaid bills, missed medical appointments, and a pair of socks on my husband's workbench instead of in his dresser drawer. I could join in with others and hope they'd laugh with me—even though sometimes I was too embarrassed to admit my mishaps.

I decided to step out instead of hiding out—and write about them. So I wrote a book for people like me—the over-fifty crowd, hoping they would enjoy a good laugh and a sigh of relief that they were not alone. A few years after Harvest House published my book *Gettin' Old Ain't for Wimps*, I received a note from a loyal reader letting me know that my funny stories and Bible quotes were the focus of that year's women's Bible study in her church. What a surprise! Did she really want to pass off my book as a serious Scripture study?

"The ladies and I read one story a week and have a good laugh over our morning coffee and pastry," she said. Later they read the Bible verse included and talked about how it applies to their lives. "It's the best Bible study we've ever done."

What a joy to find out that a book I'd intended for entertainment and a brief spiritual moment became a source of spiritual nourishment for a group of senior women like me.

I was happy that others agreed that we all need a dose of laughter and joy on a daily basis. As seniors, we can choose to focus on the hurts and disappointments, or we can turn the lens of perspective and see them as opportunities to trust God, share encouraging words with others, and resolve problems while at the same time looking for the *new* lessons we can discover. God reminds us in John 10:10: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

### Oh, No—Not That!

"Guess what?" The expression on my husband's face as he stood in the doorway alerted me that something was wrong. "I washed my pants with my wallet still in the back pocket," he said, his face wrinkled with shame. He held up his soggy billfold and its contents, drops of water hitting the floor. How could he be so absentminded? But then we burst out laughing. Yep! This man was up to no good. *He pleaded guilty to laundering our money!*

Hmmm! A perfect anecdote for one of my books, I decided. After that, we agreed that Charles would supply the senior moments, I'd do the writing, and we'd share the income. Perfection.

### Life and Laughter

You don't have to be a stand-up comedian to entertain your friends and yourself and generate good belly laughs. When my sister died last year, I offered to deliver one of the eulogies for our family. I knew it would be a somber occasion, and I didn't want to add to the sadness. I tucked in a few funny experiences about our

relationship to bring smiles to those who had come to honor her life and memory.

“June and I shared many things—friendship, paper dolls, board games—and measles, mumps, chicken pox, and scarlet fever.” These were small details, but they caught people by surprise, and they roared with laughter. I added a few more humorous episodes and then closed with a beautiful quote from *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas á Kempis, an author my sister and I admired and respected.

One of the things I’ve learned as a writer of humor and inspiration is that blending the two makes each a little sweeter and certainly appeals to us because it sounds more human.

My friend Melissa supplied me with a few chuckles when she called to tell me she sprayed her hair with furniture polish by mistake. “It fell flat but had a nice sheen!” she said. Hooray for seniors! We can laugh together at the silly stuff we mistakenly do.

I’m not without a few of my own senior moments. I once thought I’d misplaced my cell phone only to discover I was using it right then to speak with my neighbor. *Oh my!*

## Movies and Mayhem

My son loves funny movies. So when he visits during the Christmas holidays, we all watch *What About Bob* with Bill Murray and *Elf* with Will Ferrell. It feels good to sit around munching snacks and giggling over the ridiculous banter and over-the-top humor.

A woman whose hair was growing in after chemo treatments said her husband helped her laugh about a situation that was definitely hard to face in public. “Now we can save a few bucks. No more weekly trips to the hairdresser,” he quipped when the moment was right.



## Humor in the Bible

The Bible refers to joy and laughter. Here are a few verses I like to turn to when I'm feeling pressure or anxiety—even over small things that crop up during the day:

- “Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy” (Psalm 126:2).
- “A happy heart makes the face cheerful” (Proverbs 15:13).
- “A cheerful heart is good medicine” (Proverbs 17:22).
- “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh” (Luke 6:21).

## A Happy Heart

Did you know that blood flow increases and blood vessels function better when you laugh, resulting in protection against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems? “Your sense of humor is one of the most powerful tools you have to make certain that your daily mood and emotional state support good health,” says Paul E. McGhee, PhD, a pioneer in humor research. American clergyman and activist Henry Ward Beecher once said, “Mirth is God’s best medicine. Everybody ought to bathe in it.”

Voltaire, a French philosopher and author, put humor and health into perspective during the seventeenth century: “The art of medicine consists of keeping the patient amused while nature heals the disease.” The late comedienne Phyllis Diller, at age 93, said, “Laughter fluffs up every cell in your body.” Hooray for fluffy cells as we grow older!

I attribute my good health and that of some of the healthiest

people I know to being able to enjoy a good laugh, especially at our own expense. Living under a cloud of worry pulls us down. Smiling in the sunshine of life keeps us going and doing and giving to others. I'm for that. How about you? We can be ambassadors of help and humor, and we'll enjoy the benefits in our own lives.

### Spiritual Health

Humor also helps us hold on to a positive, optimistic outlook during times of trouble. Even a small smile can turn things around at least momentarily, and give us a new perspective...maybe even a solution. Look to Jesus for joy. He delighted in little children, enjoyed walking and communing with his followers, and reminded Martha to take a tip from her sister, Mary, who chose relationship over duty (at least some of the time).

Looking at our lives in perspective can release our lighter side, help us connect with our inner child, and rely more on our God of love to help us release our senior moments with hearty chuckles. Let's choose to find the fun and humor in aging.

.....

#### Wit:

"I never made a mistake in my life. I thought I did once, but I was wrong." CHARLES M. SCHULZ

#### Wisdom:

*"We all stumble in many ways"* (James 3:2).

*Willpower:*

“I will count myself human and be okay with my senior moments. After all, I am a senior.”