

[ARM Prison Outreach International](#)

"Ministers' Minute" Volume 9 Number 2

SERIES: "AN ETERNAL EDUCATION FROM ECCLESIASTES"

or "Answers to Life's Toughest Questions"

SERMON # 8 - How Can I Find Happiness? (C)

Ecclesiastes 2; Matthew 5

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the second email message of 2010 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers, chaplains, and Christian workers around the world. This issue is the 98th "MM" sent. All are archived -- just [click here](#) to see links to all messages sent since January of 2002.

This month's message (Part three of Ecclesiastes 3) is the eighth and concluding installment of a series on Ecclesiastes. I apologize -- this SHOULD have been sent after the Ecc. 3 sermon that was labeled as "Part B" of "How Can I Find Happiness." It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach and lead.

May God bless your labors! -- **Rod Farthing, Development Director**

How Can I Find Happiness? (C) **Ecclesiastes 2; Matthew 5**

May I start today with 2 very pertinent quotes? The first is from Reggie McElroy:

"Just imagine. For every minute you're angry, you lose sixty seconds of happiness."

The second is by Ken Dye:

"Most of us miss out on life's big prizes. The Pulitzer. The Nobel. Oscars. Tonys. Emmys. But we are all eligible for life's small pleasures. A pat on the back. A kiss. A four-pound bass. A full moon. An empty parking space. A crackling fire. A great meal. A glorious sunset. Hot soup."

Simple things are the key to real joy. Let's look at the simple beatitudes of the Savior and see JOY! Matthew 5:7-9

Note: To easily retrieve points 1-4, click on this link:

<http://www.abarc.org/Resources/Ministers%20Minutes/Ministers%20Minute%20V8%20N8.htm>

5. Jesus says, "Want to be truly happy? Cultivate a forgiving heart. 5:7

One of the two great destroyers of happiness is bitterness, resentment. You cannot be resentful and happy at the same time. People will hurt you in life. Your response to that hurt is crucial. You can choose to forgive or be bitter. Can't carry a grudge and happiness. Bitterness only hurts self-for your own sake, learn to cultivate a forgiving heart!

Remember the little boy whose friend stole his Hershey Bar? The little guy's mother said he must forgive his friend. He didn't want to, but he tried, only to find the friend running in fear. When he told his mom, she said to run that much faster, so he did. Finally he tackled the candy thief and sat on top of him. 'I AM SUPPOSED TO FORGIVE YOU, JOHNNY, BUT IT WOULD BE A LOT EASIER IF YOU **WOULD WIPE THE CHOCOLATE OFF YOUR MOUTH!**

Seriously, though... if you will forgive, you will conquer bitterness, you will free your soul, and YOU WILL HASTEN YOUR JOURNEY TO TRUE JOY.

Another destroyer of happiness isguilt...

6. Jesus says, "Want to be truly happy? Maintain a clear conscience. 5:8 (pure in heart)

Guilt destroys happiness- fear of getting caught. Pure heart- Integrity- Transparent- not having to remember my lies. Jesus came to earth to give you forgiveness!

There are two antidotes to guilt: AVOID SIN, AND JESUS. I would recommend them both. Don't experiment with evil. Don't think you have to learn everything first hand. TAKE THE BIBLE'S WORD FOR WHAT IS SINFUL!

But once you have sinned -- And all of us will; all of us have -- turn to Jesus, the only answer to the sin problem. For just like Michael was cleansed of his sins by faith, repentance, and immersion into Christ, you, too, can have your sins washed away. And if they have been, you can keep guilt away from your life by daily seeking the Lord and his forgiveness. I Jn 1:8-9 "If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves. But He is faithful and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." To immersed believers, John said, "Talk to God. The Father will forgive our sins on the basis of the blood and resurrection of the Son."

Let Him wipe your slate clean in confession and baptism, and then keep short accounts with God by daily confession and repentance. And then let it go. Don't hold onto it, don't keep fighting it.

James Garfield was a preacher and the principal of the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute-- later known as Hiram College. They say he was ambidextrous and could simultaneously write Greek with one hand and Latin with the other. In 1880, he was elected president of the United States; but after only six months in office, he was shot in the back with a revolver. He never lost consciousness. At the hospital, the doctor probed the wound with his little finger to seek the bullet. He couldn't find it, so he tried a silver-tipped probe. Still he couldn't locate the bullet. They took Garfield back to Washington, D.C. Despite the summer heat, they tried to keep him comfortable. He was growing very weak. Teams of doctors tried to locate the bullet, probing the wound over and over. In desperation they asked Alexander Graham Bell, who was working on a little device called the telephone, to see if he could locate the metal inside the president's body. He came, he sought, and he too failed. The president hung on through July, through August, but in September he finally died -- not from the wound, but from infection. **The repeated probing, which the physicians thought would help the man, eventually killed him. So it is with people who dwell too long on their sin and refuse to release it to God.**

ARM SENT APPROXIMATELY 20 PRISON BAPTISTRIES IN 2009 THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN SPONSORED. WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO FIND SPONSORS, THAT AMOUNT OF APPROXIMATELY \$18,000 WILL GIVE US FUNDS TO BUILD MORE FOR OTHER FACILITIES THAT WILL SOON BE ASKING FOR BAPTISTRIES. ANY AMOUNT OF SUPPORT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!

7. Jesus says, "Want to be truly happy? Build peaceful, healthy relationships. 5:9 (peacemakers)

Conflict also destroys happiness. Lots of people build a great career, but lose the people who mean the most to them!

Clovis Chappell, a minister from a century back, used to tell the story of two paddleboats. They left Memphis about the same time, traveling down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As they traveled side by side, sailors from one vessel made a few remarks about the snail's pace of the other. Words were exchanged. Challenges were made. And the race began. Competition became vicious as the two boats roared through the Deep South. One boat began falling behind. Not enough fuel. There had been plenty of coal for the trip, but not enough for a race. As the boat dropped back, an enterprising young sailor took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the ovens. When the sailors saw that the supplies burned as well as the coal, they fueled their boat with the material they had been assigned to transport. They ended up winning the race, but burned their cargo.

God has entrusted cargo to us, too: children, spouses, friends. Our job is to do our part in seeing that this cargo reaches its destination. Yet when the program takes priority over people, people often suffer. How much cargo do we sacrifice in order to achieve the number one slot? How many people never reach the destination because of the aggressiveness of a competitive captain?

Life on the fast track leaves little time for friends, so we wind up wealthy and lonely! Take the time to build healthy relationships. If everything else is good in your life, but your relationships are bad, you won't be happy. In fact, without investing in your important relationships, you MIGHT NOT BE SUCCESSFUL OR HAPPY.

The evidence is convincing that the better our relationships are at home, the more effective we are in our careers. If we're having difficulty with a loved one, that difficulty will be translated into reduced performance on the job. In studying the millionaires in America (U.S. News and World Report), a picture of the "typical" millionaire is an individual who has worked eight to ten hours a day for thirty years and is still married to his or her high school or college sweetheart. A New York executive search firm, in a study of 1365 corporate vice presidents, discovered that 87% were still married to their one and only spouse and that 92% were raised in two-parent families. The evidence is overwhelming that the family is the strength and foundation of society. Strengthen your family ties and you'll enhance your opportunity to succeed. ... AND YOUR HAPPINESS!

SEE .. THE LORD KNOW'S BEST!! JESUS HAS REITERATED THE PSALMIST WHEN HE SAID IN Psalm 37:4

"Seek your happiness in the Lord and he will give you your heart's desire."

CONCLUSION:

I'LL BE HAPPY ONE DAY, WHEN.....

We convince ourselves that life will be better after we get married, have a baby, then another. Then we are frustrated that the kids aren't old enough and we'll be more content when they are.

After that, we're frustrated that we have teenagers to deal with. We will certainly be happy when they are out of that stage.

We tell ourselves that our life will be complete when our spouse gets his or her act together, when we get a nicer car, are able to go on a nice vacation, or when we retire.

The truth is, there's no better time to be happy than right now. If not now, when? Your life will always be filled with challenges. It's best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy anyway.

Happiness is the way. So, treasure every moment that you have and treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time with...and remember that time waits for no one.

So, stop waiting

--until your car or home is paid off

--until you get a new car or home

--until your kids leave the house

--until you go back to school

--until you lose ten pounds

--until you gain ten pounds

--until you finish school

--until you get a divorce

--until you get married

--until you have kids

--until you retire

--until summer

--until spring

--until winter

--until fall

--until you die

There is no better time than right now to be happy.

Happiness is a journey, not a destination. Walking with Christ is Happiness!

What are you waiting for that you think will finally make you happy? Graduation? Career? Relationship? Notoriety? Money? Better climate? Solomon had all that and more- He says "you're looking in all the wrong places."

You can be a Christian IN NAME and still be miserable by seeking happiness in Education, Pleasure, Achievement, Money and Success rather than following "Jesus' Highway to Happiness".

Are you dissatisfied with life? Good! Holy hunger! Get to know God. Cultivate a forgiving heart.

Trust God when life is disappointing. Maintain a clear conscience. Expect God to meet your needs. Build healthy relationships. Follow God's instructions. Live with an eternal perspective.

Only Jesus can fill the hunger in your heart. Happiness starts with putting God at the center of your life.

HAVE YOU? IF NOT, WHY NOT? ----- PRAYER

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Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

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In 2009, ARM donated almost 32,000 FREE Bible courses to prisoners -- 88 per day!