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[SERIES: "AN ETERNAL EDUCATION FROM ECCLESIASTES"](#)

or "Answers to Life's Toughest Questions"

PART 2 How Can I Happiness? (A) -- Ecclesiastes 2

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the seventh email message of 2009 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers, chaplains, and Christian workers around the world. This issue is the 91st "MM" sent. All are archived -- just [click here](#) to see links to all messages sent since January of 2002.

This month's message is the second of a series of a study in Ecclesiastes. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach, lead, and encourage.

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

How Can I Find Happiness? (A) -- Ecclesiastes 2

Once upon a time, In a land far away, A beautiful, independent, Self assured princess Happened upon a frog as she sat, Contemplating ecological issues On the shores of an unpolluted pond In a verdant meadow near her castle.

The frog hopped into the princess' lap and said: Elegant Lady, I was once a handsome prince Until an evil witch cast a spell upon me. One kiss from you, however, And I will turn back Into the dapper, young prince that I am And then, my sweet, we can marry And setup housekeeping in yon castle With my mother, Where you can prepare my meals, Clean my clothes, bear my children, And forever feel grateful and happy doing so.

That night, As the princess dined sumptuously On a repast of lightly sautéed frog legs Seasoned in An onion cream sauce, She chuckled to herself and thought:

"Kiss a frog to find Happiness? I don't think so!"

Our princess friend wouldn't kiss a frog to find happiness. But most of us would try anything to be happy!

This is: **"Answering Life's Toughest Questions" #2 "How can I be happy?"**

The search for happiness drives us all. "I left that job (or relationship), I just wasn't

happy." "You've gotta be happy with the decision" Happy birthday, New Year, Happy Home etc.

Solomon would agree:

Ecclesiastes 6:3 A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. (NIV)

Ecccl 2:1 I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless.

Solomon decided to find out where we can find happiness: And Solomon had the Brains (wisest man), Bucks (wealthiest man) and the free time as king to do the research on the subject.

Let's look at what Solomon found. In this message (A), we look at the "Dead Ends" and then we'll look at the "Highway to Happiness." The question to ask yourself as we go thru this is: "Which road are you following?"

DEAD END ROADS THAT DON'T LEAD TO HAPPINESS. These are all found in **Ecccl 1 & 2**

Solomon isn't saying these things are all wrong, but that they don't bring lasting happiness.

1. Education doesn't satisfy.

Ecccl 1:16-18 I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge." 17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. 18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief. (NIV)

Ever think, "If I just knew more, if I were just SMARTER ...I would understand life and be happier."? Education, learning surely have their place. And if they are rooted in the WISDOM OF GOD, they can be quite a blessing... but in and of itself, education does not equal happiness.

2. Pleasure doesn't satisfy. CONSIDER THE FORMS OF PLEASURE TRIED:

Ecccl 2:2 "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"

Laughter, Comedy- I believe in humor. I love it. God loves it, he made the ostrich with eyes bigger than its brain. My face and Giraffes have something in common both prove God has a sense of humor!!

But laughter brings only temporary relief and happiness.

Eccl 2:3 I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly-- my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. (NIV)

When I grew up, fiery sermons blasted alcohol and tobacco and carousing, etc. Perhaps a lot of that was too harsh. But the truth remains: "Alcohol doesn't drown your problems, it irrigates them!" Though the oldest mood drug in the world, it is strange how little happiness there is at Happy Hour.

Entertainers, Musicians, Concerts- Private showings for the king. Parties.

Eccl 2:8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers...

Sexual escapades. Eccl 2:8b "...and a harem as well-- the delights of the heart of man."

How about 1,000 sexual partners – so claimed Wilt Chamberlain, of NBA fame years ago. Magic Johnson: "I had all the women I could want."

Unrestrained sexual involvement marks many in our culture.... This lifestyle leaves you empty and unable to BOND which is one of the primary purposes of sex! Strengthening the marriage relationship.

HERE IS THE BIBLICAL TRUTH: Those who live for pleasure are destined to be bored. Pleasure promises more than it can deliver.

3. Achievement doesn't satisfy.

Eccl 2:4-6 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. 5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. Eccl 2:20 So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. 21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

Great public works campaign under Solomon. Lyndon Johnson tried to create "The Great Society." He had many accomplishments in politics yet his biographer said, as she spent the last days of his life down in Texas, he pleaded with her, "Please make something meaningful of my life." Some lose themselves in their work, their jobs, but Solomon wisely says: Satisfaction isn't found in workaholism.

4. Money doesn't satisfy.

Ecc1 2:7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. 8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well-- the delights of the heart of man. (NIV) How rich was Solomon? Consider this verse...

I King 10:21 All King Solomon's goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's days.

Solomon would make Bill Gates look like a middle class man. His house took 14 years to build! BIG! Everyday his household required 30 cattle and 100 sheep for food. Howard Hughes was asked "How much money is enough?" He replied, "Just a little more."

5. Success doesn't satisfy.

Ecc1 2:9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. 10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. 11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Solomon was at the pinnacle of success and found it unfulfilling. He was the undisputed leader of the most powerful country in the world.

Two sources of mid life crisis:

(1) Unfulfilled dreams that you realize you never will fulfill and being frustrated with being unable to live the dream. (2) Achieving your dreams, getting all you want and then realizing it didn't satisfy.

This was Solomon. He Got it all, Tried it all, Spent it all, Did it all and came up

empty.

In a book entitled "Quiet Desperation: the Truth About Successful Men in America" a psychologist surveyed successful men all across America and came to the conclusion that they are no happier than unsuccessful men.

Ecc1 2:17 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Solomon's conclusion- "All dead ends!" You don't have to make all your own mistakes, learn from Solomon's. Education, Pleasure, Achievement, Money, Success. All dead ends when they are the focus of our pursuit.

Well, our time is about gone and all we've done is bark up the wrong tree!

Let's end this thing with the good news of JOY UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY, LET'S END THIS MESSAGE WITH THE ANSWER TO REAL HAPPINESS! First this quote:

"If there is no sunshine in your religion, do not be surprised if nobody wants it."

That says TWO IMPORTANT THINGS: 1) REAL RELIGION HAS JOY, AND 2) REAL RELIGION IS THE SOLE SOURCE OF JOY. LET ME DEFINE REAL RELIGION: JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S SON, OUR SAVIOUR!

Next we'll study His Words in the Sermon on the Mount as He teaches how to find true joy and happiness. We just don't have time, today, but we will give Solomon's conclusion in Chap 12 and draw this to a time of invitation and challenge.

Ecc1 12:12 ...much study wearies the body. 13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

Note THREE important facts in Solomon's conclusion:

Don't study yourself into madness, accept the truth of God.

God, our Maker, is at the core of real joy, and His instructions will bring us joy and fulfillment, and...

Our accountability to Him is motivation to develop trust and obedience.

These are so important in finding joy and happiness. Let's read them again...

Now let me read you a homespun poem by one who has found true joy in the Lord... In this poem, depending on God is represented by the phrase, "Drinking from the saucer..." remember the cup, saucer....

Drinking from the Saucer

I've never made a fortune, And I'll never make one now.

But it really doesn't matter, Cause I'm happy anyhow.

As I go along my journey, I'm reaping better than I sowed.

I'm drinking from the saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed.

I don't have a lot of riches, And sometimes the goings rough.

But while I've friends to love, I think I'm rich enough.

I'll just thank God for blessings That His mercy has bestowed.

I'm drinking from the saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed.

If God gives me strength and courage, When the way grows steep and rough.

I'll not ask for other blessings, I'm already blessed enough.

May I never be too busy to help bear another's load.

Then I'll be drinking from the saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed.

Seek God, His Son Jesus Christ, and His kingdom first, and your joy and happiness will be found!! Prayer, invitation.

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

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In 2008, ARM donated almost 40,000 FREE Bible courses to prisoners!