

# [ARM Prison Outreach International](#)

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

or "[Answers to Life's Toughest Questions](#)"

**SERMON #3 - How Can I Find Happiness? (B)**

**Ecclesiastes 2; Matthew 5**

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Editor's Note: This "MM" is the eighth 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 92nd "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 third 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

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

**WHO SAID THIS ....** You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Words of a joy-filled, contented, secure human. Who? The Psalmist in Psalm 4:7-8

The first part of that passage says that all humans are looking for the good news, the joy. Vs 6 says: "Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?" Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD. 7. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. 8. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

**GOD WANTS US TO KNOW HIM AND THUS KNOW JOY. BUT SO FEW OF US ARE TRULY HAPPY, CONTENTED, FILLED WITH JOY.**

What are the obstructions TO JOY? The road blocks to human happiness? Consider these thoughts from Mikal Frasier, Christian Counselor.

**1. Fear is the most common deterrent to happiness.** What are some of the

fears that hinder happiness?

1. Fear of punishment
2. Fear of losing control
3. Fear of loss.
4. Fear of being unloved.
5. Fear of being alone.
6. Fear of misunderstanding.
7. Fear of rejection.
8. Fear of obliteration

### Other deterrents to our happiness

**2. Fretting over what we don't have.** Dr. David D. Burns, a psychiatrist, once had a client who said that she wanted a divorce after 50 years of marriage. When he asked her if she could identify the reason, she said, "Last week my husband gave me \$ 4 million in cash." Dr. Burns asked, "When he gave you the money, what were your thoughts?" She said, "If he really loved me, he would have give me \$8 million." She actually felt unloved and poor. As crazy as that sounds, people actually do feel that way. When a poor man named Naboth refused to sell his vineyard to the wealthy King Ahab, the king "lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. . . ." (1 Kings 21:4).

**3. Unresolved guilt.** David described his miserable state of mind in Psalms 38:1-8. He said "My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear." Guilt serves a necessary function, but people who have too little guilt can become sociopaths (people who are unable to distinguish right from wrong). People with too much guilt become depressed and develop a high level of anxiety because they feel guilty when they shouldn't. It has been estimated that approximately 5 % of the people need to alter the values to conform to their behavior, while approximately 95 per cent of the people need to alter the behavior to fit their values.

**4. Lack of or too much order.** Dr. Bob Rigdon says in his book, Happiness Explained, that "our lives are based on a concept of order." If we have too **little** order in our lives, circumstances become threatening. If we have too **much** order, we become bored. We differ as to how much order we need. We each need to find the balance between spontaneity and regimen.

So we've look at obstacles to happiness.... We looked last week at the dead ends to happiness: education, pleasure, riches, etc... **What, then what does bring happiness? The answer is from Jesus in the most famous sermon of all time, "The Sermon on the Mount".**

Now please note: Jesus Was No Sourpuss! How do you think the crowd reacted to Jesus' story about a man with a plank in his eye offering to pick a speck of dust out of another person's eye? Think anybody grinned when he said the religious teachers were blind leaders of blind men and that the whole lot of them would fall into a deep

hole? What of his word pictures that speak of wolves in sheep's clothing or grapes being gathered from thorn bushes?

Maybe we read Scripture with too much solemnity. We should be serious, but a sense of humor has its place! I think there is good evidence that says Jesus had a marvelous sense of humor. And I think his teaching was seasoned with tidbits like the ones just cited that made people laugh out loud.

Laughter isn't necessarily irreverent, you know. "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit" (Proverbs 15:13). "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22)

JESUS WAS NO GRUMPY OLD SOUR PUSS. IN FACT, JESUS IS THE HIGHWAY TO HAPPINESS. (Matthew 5:3-12) gives us **the secrets to happiness in two major categories:**

- 1) Relationship to God (vs. 1-5) and...
- 2) Relationship to others (vs. 6-8)

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## **ARM FAST FACT**

### **SERMON RESUMES JUST BELOW**

**ARM HAS SENT 22 PRISON BAPTISTRIES IN 2009 THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN SPONSORED. WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO FIND SPONSORS, THAT AMOUNT OF \$18,750 WILL GIVE US FUNDS TO BUILD MORE FOR OTHER FACILITIES THAT WILL SOON BE ASKING FOR BAPTISTRIES. ANY AMOUNT OF SUPPORT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!**

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Let's look briefly at Matthew 5. HANG ON TO YOUR SEATS, WE MUST HURRY! First half today, last half next Sunday. "The mind only absorbs what the seat can endure!"

Matt 5:1 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying: 3 Truly happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Truly happy are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Truly happy are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Truly happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Truly happy are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Truly happy are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Truly

happy are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

STEPS DERIVED:

**1. Jesus says, "Want to be truly happy? Get to know God."** 5:3 (Poor in spirit)  
Spiritually poor people know their need for God. "The God-shaped vacuum" in your heart. If anything other than God is at the center of your life, you will not be satisfied. You can't live on substitutes!

Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they find God." Our greatest need! Usually the trouble is not that we don't WANT TO KNOW GOD, we just keep so busy in trivial pursuits that we DON'T TAKE TIME TO GET INTO HIS WORD!

A survey conducted by the Barna Research Group reveals widespread ignorance of common Christian terms.

Researchers asked a sample group of 1,210 adults to define Great Commission, John 3:16, and gospel. In each case, only a small minority gave accurate answers. Even "born-again Christians" had trouble answering.

Only 9 percent of the respondents accurately defined Great Commission. About 75 percent of born-again Christians could not offer a definition.

Twenty-five percent of the respondents gave accurate or partially accurate descriptions of John 3:16, and half of the born-again Christians could not offer a definition.

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents correctly defined gospel, and 16 percent of born-again Christians could not offer a definition.

These terms "clearly do not convey the intended meaning to the masses," concluded George Barna, president of Barna Research Group. "The fact that so few of the insiders understand the meaning of these terms also suggests that the Christian church in this country would be wise to invest in training people about the basic principles and concepts of the Christian faith." (Moody, April, 1994)

Folks, if we don't know God's Word any better than that, is it really a surprise that **we don't know the Author???**

True Happiness comes from knowing God, and that is obviously accomplished BY READING AND LEARNING AND FOLLOWING WHAT HIS BOOK SAYS TO US!

**2. Jesus says, "Want to be truly happy? Trust God when life is**

## **disappointing." 5:4 (mourners shall be comforted)**

Life isn't all fun and games. Heartaches will come! If you have to be problem free to be happy, you are in trouble. We must learn to be happy in spite of circumstances; while in the problem, during the difficulty, in the trial, while you're sick.

What do you do when you're hurting? Let God handle the hurts.

Sign seen in a textile mill, "When your thread becomes tangled, call the foreman." A young woman was new on the job. Her thread became tangled and she thought, "I'll just straighten this out myself." She tried, but the situation only worsened. Finally she called the foreman. "I did the best I could," she said. "No you didn't. To do the best, you should have called me."

GOD IS NECESSARY EVERY MOMENT, WHETHER WE ADMIT IT OR NOT, HERE'S HOW ONE SAGE PUT IT: Man, despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication and many accomplishments, owes the fact of his existence to a six- inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains.

So let us learn that despite how prosperous or destitute we may be, WE ALL NEED GOD, ALL THE TIME, EVERY DAY, EVERY BREATH. And admitting that and living accordingly can give great joy, peace, and security!

### **3. Jesus says, "Want to be truly happy? Expect God to meet your needs." 5:5 (Meek shall inherit the earth)**

(J. B. Phillips paraphrase- "Happy are those who claim nothing for the whole world belongs to them.") **IMPORTANT ADVICE FROM THE LORD:** Don't expect your spouse to meet all of your needs. Or your boss, or anyone! Trust God, Relax and let Him take care of your needs. You have your part to do. DO IT! THEN REST IN HIS CARE! The whole world is His.

Ecclesiastes 2 – THE STUDY WE DID LAST WEEK -- shows the futility of trying to be happy without God and the first 11 verses use a personal pronoun 34 times! Self centered people are never happy!

### **4. Jesus said, "Want to be truly happy? Follow God's instructions." 5:6 (hunger and thirst for righteousness) How many unhappy people are operating under the false assumption that TO OBEY GOD DESTROYS HAPPINESS? The truth is just the opposite! OBEYING GOD LEADS TO TRUE JOY!**

1 Tim 6:17 "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God,

who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

God richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. God wants us to enjoy life and gave us an owner's manual so we would enjoy it. 1 John 5:3 SAYS THAT His commandments are not burdensome (GRIEVOUS) - but for our enjoyment.

Follow the Word and you benefit, ignore it and you suffer the consequences. The closer you follow the teachings of the Bible the happier you will be. Charles Colson nails this precept on the head as he speaks of America's most famous atheist....

Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who led the charge to remove prayer from public schools in 1963, was recently back in the news again. O'Hair disappeared four years ago and her whereabouts were unknown for some time. The common speculation, widely reported, was that she had been murdered. That proved to be true.

But when the IRS recently ordered an auction of O'Hair's remaining property to pay back taxes, a whole new side of the infamous atheist came to light. Among O'Hair's belongings were several diaries, and they give a glimpse of the inner life of the woman once known as the most hated person in America - an appellation, by the way, she wore proudly.

The diaries confirm that O'Hair was indeed a bitterly unhappy woman, a vicious racist, and an anti-Semite. She was consumed with ambition for wealth and power. In 1973, her New Year's wish list included a mink coat, a Cadillac, a cook, and a housekeeper. She also wrote, "In 1974 I will run for the governor of Texas, and in 1976, the president of the United States."

Around that time I debated O'Hair on David Frost's talk show. For some reason, the segment was never broadcast. At the end of the debate, I told her Christians were praying for her and wished her the best. "And I wish you failure," she snarled. I can testify, she was a nasty and bitter woman.

Yet a surprisingly different side of O'Hair's character emerges from the newly discovered diaries. A 1959 entry reveals an almost pathetic despair. "The whole idiotic hopelessness of human relations descends upon me. Tonight I cried and cried, but even then, feeling nothing." In 1977, she wrote, "I have failed in marriage, motherhood, and as a politician."

O'Hair clearly sensed that something was missing from her life. One poignant phrase appears again and again. In half a dozen places, O'Hair writes, "Somebody, somewhere, love me."

How telling that this hostile and abrasive person, who harbored nothing but hatred for God and His people, who believed human beings were merely the product of a cosmic accident, would nevertheless cry out to the great void for someone just to love her.

What a powerful example of the fundamental truth that we are made for a relationship of love with our Creator, and that we can never fully escape from our true identity and purpose. No matter how much we may deny it intellectually, our nature still cries out for the love we were made to share. To paraphrase the famous words of St. Augustine, even the most bitter atheist is restless until she finds her rest in God.

This is a remarkable story that we can use in defending our faith with family and friends. Madalyn Murray O'Hair sought to live her entire life in a manner consistent with atheism. And yet, in the secrecy of her diaries, she admitted it was impossible. If a philosophy is impossible to live out, that's a pretty good sign it is simply wrong.

Every philosophy or worldview, after all, purports to present a map of reality, a geography of the soul. But if the map won't show you how to get from point A to point B, or if the roads aren't connected, the map is not worth very much.

The inside story of O'Hair's diaries is that atheism is faulty because it cannot be lived out--not in the world, nor in the deepest recesses of the human heart. Not even by its best known proponent. But you don't have to be an atheist to be unhappy. Just not fully submitted to the Christ of Calvary and the empty tomb.... ARE YOU??

**Jesus is your Highway to happiness. Will you make Him the Lord of your life?**

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

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