

# The Search for Happiness

The Book of Ecclesiastes (in the Bible) gives King Solomon's experiences when trying to find happiness "under the sun." The phrase "under the sun" simply means that Solomon was trying to find happiness here on earth, under the sun, apart from God. We want to look at some of the things that Solomon tried, and found inadequate, in his pursuit of happiness.

## 1. Solomon Tried Luxury

Solomon first surmised that the material things of life would fill the vacuum in his soul. Thus he gave himself to the purchase of possessions, hoping to satisfy the hunger in his heart. He filled his coffers and made his barns bulge. His wealth was immense; his palace was magnificent; his household was huge. If he wanted to build something, he built it. If he wanted to do anything, he did it. Read Ecclesiastes 2:4-11. If any man could have found permanent pleasure in material things, King Solomon should have been that man.

Did all this material wealth make Solomon happy? Did it fill the aching emptiness of his heart? Listen to his own words in Ecclesiastes 2:11, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, . . . and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit." Happiness cannot be found in luxuries and material things.

## 2. Solomon Tried Learning

When King Solomon discovered that material prosperity does not give peace of mind, he turned to another pursuit. He gave himself to the acquiring of knowledge, hoping by this to stifle the monotony that haunted his earthly life. Read Ecclesiastes 1:17-18.

Solomon became a prolific student. A careful study of the book of Proverbs reveals the comprehensive reach of this man's mind. He knew the natural environment of the beast of the field; he understood the nature of the flight of the bird in the air; he knew the customs of the fish in the sea. Solomon burned the midnight oil. He drank deeply from the well of knowledge—but even this never brought peace and happiness. A formal academic education is useful and is required as a preparation for many jobs in life, but the training of the mind does not insure peace in the heart. And so in the search for happiness, we find that learning is not the answer.

## 3. Solomon Tried Liquor

After discovering that luxury and learning would not satisfy the deeper needs of the soul, Solomon turned to drinking. He thought perhaps that in wine, he could find the answer to the problems of life. Read Ecclesiastes 2:3 in the Bible. Being a man of wealth, Solomon ordered the best beverages that the times could produce—but he soon discovered (like many others since his day) that "Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby, is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

Liquor never brings permanent satisfaction. One who is under the influence of alcohol (for a short while) is transported out of the land of hard reality into the land of make-believe—and there for a while he can

laugh at his problems—but when the drug wears off, he is right back where he started. Drinking is not the way to try and solve life’s problems.

#### **4. Solomon Tried Lust**

Solomon found no solution to his monotony in luxury and liquor and learning, and so he turned to lust. He married 700 women and had 300 concubines (see 1 Kings 11:1-3). If anyone seems to be envious of Solomon and his 700 wives, keep in mind that this meant 700 birthdays to remember, and certainly lots of “in-law” problems. No wonder Solomon concludes in Ecclesiastes 7:26, “And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters.” And so we see that lust toward many strange women did not satisfy the emptiness of Solomon’s heart.

Some people seem to think that finding a new married partner will bring happiness in life, but in most cases the new marital arrangement is less than ideal. Others seek experiences with a variety of sexual partners—but the guilt, and the danger of contracting AIDS, and the displeasure such conduct brings to God can never lead to happiness.

#### **5. Solomon Turned to the Lord**

The message of the Bible is that apart from God life is full of weariness and disappointment. King Solomon was gifted with a keen intellect; he was versed in the affairs of human life; he was fed with every dainty this earth could produce. But still he was a stranger to the sweet peace which every human heart craves. There is nothing under the sun that can permanently satisfy the thirsty heart. Solomon found that life with all its experiences is but emptiness and a striving after the wind—if it is lived apart from God.

But Solomon did not let the matter rest with seeking happiness in luxury and learning and the other earthly pursuits. He turned to the Lord. He says, “I know that it will be well with those that fear God” (Ecclesiastes 8:12). It is vain to seek happiness under the sun. Instead, we should fear God, and remember our Creator and serve Him, because He is going to bring every work into judgment. We are told in the Bible that God loves each individual human being, and that He sent Jesus to die in our place so that we might be free from the penalty for sin, and have everlasting life (John 3:16). Jesus stands ready to come into our lives if we are willing to open the door of our hearts to Him (Revelation 3:20). Why not give your heart to Jesus today? He says that those who come to Him will not be cast out (John 6:37).

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#### **BIBLE HELPS**

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