

## TOPIC: LIVING IN A HOUSE OF MIRTH

According to A USA Today Survey:

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN SPENDS \$7,203 FOR FOOD ANNUALLY.

FOR CLOTHING: \$1,803.

**FOR Entertainment: \$2,913.**

Entire industries have sprung up to foster a growing tendency of people by fantasy and entertainment to remove themselves from the rigors of daily life – especially in the digital (computer) world.

The experience of being entertained or amused has the idea of something which will take our minds off serious things, and bring us fun and laughter.

**TEXT: Ec 7:1 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3 *Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.* 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.**

**AND THUS OUR TOPIC: LIVING IN A HOUSE OF MIRTH**

**OTHER TRANSLATIONS OF MIRTH:**

having a good time -NLT

pleasure -NIV

merrymaking -NET

**DEFINED AS:**

**Gaiety or jollity, especially when accompanied by laughter. (DICT.COM)**

**ARE WE LIVING IN A HOUSE OF MIRTH???** (I think most of us are!)

**A Church of God publication I was looking at says,** "Our society is obsessed with entertainment. Kids and adults alike seem attached to their MP3 players, PDAs, remote controls and other electronic devices.

"Today, we are overloaded with entertainment options. An American family might own any number of electronic "toys"—from HD-TVs, DVD players, cell phones and home theater systems to video game consoles, computers, PDAs and MP3 players. Many of these devices are portable (unlike the large console TVs and pinball machines from earlier times), so you can take them with you wherever you go, creating more possibilities for entertainment. According to the Consumer Electronics Association, the average U.S. household has 25 of these kinds of products.

"But our world's obsession with entertainment is not limited to consumer electronic

products. This desire to be amused can be seen in every facet of life. TV news channels and newspapers often forego coverage of serious “hard news” stories and devote most of their time and space to the personal lives of entertainers and sensationalistic crime stories. Mega-churches are popping up all over the country, promising “feel good” messages and electrifying musical performances. College professors have had to replace old-fashioned college lectures with humor-laden Power Point presentations.

“People want more entertainment, and they want everything that’s not entertainment to become entertainment,” If they have to do something that seems challenging or mundane, they want to make it fun.

"Entertainment becomes a problem, or an addiction, when it becomes too high of a priority. When one seeks to be entertained all the time, rather than in moderation, and electronic “toys” have taken over his or her life, there is a problem. If one cannot go anywhere without an MP3 player or PDA, and spends more time surfing the Internet and watching TV than interacting with one’s family, there is a problem. It may very well be getting in the way of his or her spiritual life. The apostle Paul warns against those who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:4).

#### **WHAT IS THE HARM OF LIVING IN A HOUSE OF MIRTH?**

**Pro. 7:2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.**

#### **IT KEEPS US FROM FACING REALITY**

**2 Timothy 4:3-5** says "3 For the time will come (and I think it's here) when they will not listen to the sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, will heap up for themselves teachers after their own lusts; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside to fables. 5 But you be sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry."

Otherwise harmless diversions... movies, books, television, music, and video games and other games and passtimes allow us to experience and create the illusion of any kind of life we want... to live in a fantasy-land! We don't have time to manage our REAL lives, because we are so absorbed in some sort of FANTASY world!

Sometimes we NEED to deal with REALITY, but when it gets to being a burden, too often we switch off reality by escaping to some fantasy. That sort of thing used to be for kids, but more and more those who are supposed to be ADULTS are doing it. The attitude seems to

be, Why deal with the troubles of life, when we can push a button, turn a knob, pop a pill, shoot up, pop a bottle or otherwise slip out of reality into our HOUSE OF MIRTH? We ought to deal with some problem, talk with someone, deal with some issue... but why do it when we can EXCAPE to FANTASY-LAND? Why face the issues of life head-on when we can escape to a world of ignorant bliss through make-believe?

*People tend to seek diversions to keep from thinking about things in life that, tho painful, need to be dalt with. Escapism is the opposite of mindfulness and alertness.*

*It seems our whole society today suffers from what psychologists call "the Peter Pan Syndrome" -- a failure to "grow up" and face life seriously. Could it be that Satan is tempting us to escape to a make-believe world where dreams come true and impossible things happen?*

*SO, is living in a fairy-tale world dangerous? --I think it is. So you wouldn't exactly expect me to place "Harry Potter" on my list of recommended reading.*

*These diversions place us in a fantasy-land, where All You Have To Do To Get To This Mystical Place Is Click Your Heels Together, Lay Your Finger By The Side Of Your Nose, And Repeat After Me. "Once Upon A Time In A Land Far Far Away . . ."*

#### **LIVING IN THE LAND OF MIRTH CAUSES A COMMUNICATION PROBLEM - CAUSES US TO BE INCONSIDERATE OF OTHER PEOPLE.**

**Escapism destroys relationships:** it robs you of quality time and communication with others. Families used to sit at home and talk. Now each individual lives in his or her own little world, staring at a lighted screen and clicking the buttons!

Why do we as a society prefer to bury our "Heads in the Sand" (like the perverbial ostrich) in the sea of entertainment and make-believe (or for some, into an alcohol or drug induced stupor), and ignore the realities of life? Husbands and wives don't talk to each other. Kids don't talk with their parents. Brothers and sisters are isolated from each other --because they are too absorbed in their game or diversion!

#### **LIVING IIN A HOUSE OF MIRTH DESTROYS THE POWER OF SOUL-SEARCHING... of connected, vigorous thinking**

##### **Escapism draws you away from important spiritual things to trivial things**

Living in the house of mirth allows us to numb ourselves to the seriousness of a reality that we do not like to think about... It allows us to avoid feelings of shame or emotional pain for things we may have said, done, or failed to do. By imagining ourselves as someone who doesn't have the constraints that we do, or who possesses abilities that we can't have, we can 'experience' that life without having to actually go there.

**Escapism corrupts and destroys the soul by warding off the REPENTANCE of sin**

2Cor 7:9 "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. 11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

IF OUR CONSCIENCE BEGINS TO BOTHER US, OF IF WE BEGIN TO FEEL BAD ABOUT SOMETHING WE HAVE DONE OR SAID, WHAT DO WE DO? --Turn up the music? Grab a novel and start reading? Turn on the TV? Start a new video game? --for some, it's "pop a pill" or "grab a bottle." BUT OUR TEXT SAYS, "**Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.**"

Ps 34:18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Ps 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Isa 66:2 (GOD SAYS:) ...to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

THE SCRIPTURES ENJOIN **GRAVITY AND SINCERITY**. THAT MEANS TO BE **SERIOUS AND LEVEL-HEADED**.

PAUL TO TITUS: Tit 2:6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. 7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, **gravity, sincerity**, 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

**J B Phillips translation:** "The young men, too, you should urge **to take life seriously**, letting your own life stand as a pattern of good living. In all your teaching show the strictest regard for truth, and show that you appreciate the seriousness of the matters you are dealing with. Your speech should be unaffected and logical, so that your opponent may feel ashamed at finding nothing in which to pick holes."

Love for entertainment, tales, and other fantasies, does not have an influence for good upon the mind that is dedicated to the service of God.

BY "LIVING IN THE HOUSE OF MIRTH," a person is failing to "take life seriously" and indulging in something that threatens to destroy his spirituality. It eclipses all the beauty and interest of the sacred pages and produces a false, unhealthy excitement, unfits the mind for

usefulness, and disqualifies it for any spiritual exercise. It hinders the soul from prayer and love of spiritual things.”

#### **LIVING IN THE HOUSE OF MIRTH HINDERS ONE FROM SERIOUS THOUGHT AND MEDITATION**

**1Tim 4:15** Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

**Ps 1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

**Ps 77:11** I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12 *I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.*

--And you can't do that while your mind is fixated on some "bubblegum for the brain"!

#### **LIVING IN THE HOUSE OF MIRTH PREVENTS US FROM HAVING TIME FOR GOD... FOR BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER AND WINNING OTHERS TO CHRIST**

THE APOSTLE PAUL SAYS, Eph 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, **16 Redeeming the time**, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...

**J B Phillips translation: Eph 5:15-21** Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don't be vague but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of God. Don't get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls. Express your joy in singing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making music in your hearts for the ears of God! Thank God at all times for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And "fit in with" each other, because of your common reverence for Christ.

#### **SO... REMEMBER OUR TEXT:**

**Ec 7:2** It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3 *Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.* 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

What does it mean that “sorrow is better than laughter”? Most people would much rather laugh than cry. The second half of the verse states *why* sorrow is better than laughter: “***By sadness of countenance the heart is made better.***” Sorrow can have a positive spiritual impact on the heart and soul of man. Through sorrow we can consider the seriousness of life, evaluate our situation, and make changes to improve our lives and our relationship with God.

Sorrow is better than laughter because it causes us to reflect on our lives and make personal improvements. Those who constantly seek comedy or fun to escape from problems may be working to avoid a serious look at areas in life that need to be addressed. It's good to be cheerful, but laughing through life can be a means to escape necessary responsibilities.

So sorrow can be better than laughter. The eternal benefits are greater. Sorrow, tho painful, leads to reflective thinking, wisdom, and changed actions that improve one's life and the lives of others.

ARE THERE SITUATIONS IN YOUR LIVE THAT NEED TO BE DEALT WITH? IF SO, IGNORING THEM WILL **NOT** MAKE THEM GO AWAY!