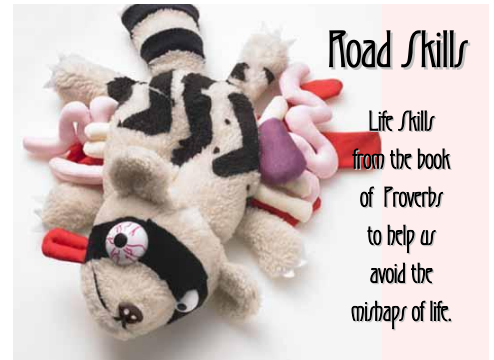


14-ROAD SKILLS: Happiness

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Should you look for the concept of thanksgiving in the book of Proverbs, this may be the closest you will come. *“All the days of the afflicted are bad, but a cheerful heart has a continual feast.”* (Proverbs 15:15)



1. The first part has to do with _____.

“...the days of the afflicted...” Affliction is another word for trouble, and trouble is something that visits us all. Some are chronically troubled, while others experience it on a come and go basis but we all have it.

2. The second part captures a _____ to affliction.

“All the days of the afflicted are bad.” There are 2 bookends to this phrase. The first is “all” and the second is “bad.” This person is aware they are afflicted and has decided, therefore, that every day they bear this affliction is a bad day. He lets a problem steal the joy out of life. He gives it a disproportionate share of his time and energy. He allows his burden to possess him and then he adds so many emotional layers to the burden that he suffocates under the weight.

3. The third part tells us that there is a better way to _____ to affliction.

“...but a cheerful heart has a continual feast.” Unlike the first person, this man has a cheerful heart. He approaches life with a positive attitude. Instead of finding excuses to be sad, he finds reasons to be glad. His life is like a continual feast – one lavish life-long party. Happiness and joy doesn’t come from being problem free – it comes by wisely managing the problems we have.

Solomon tells us that we can be _____ even when our circumstances are not.

So what does it take to develop this cheerful heart?

A. We develop a cheerful heart: by giving _____ for what we have. – 1 Thess. 5:18

We are commanded 69 different times in the Bible to “give thanks.” 1 Thess. 5:18 says, *“In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”* We are to give thanks in regards to everything- the good/bad; the blessings/burdens and the triumphs and the troubles. - Many have discovered that the surest way to develop a cheerful heart is to develop the habit of offering thanks - to deliberately focus on the good things that are true in one's life. Many have disciplined themselves to write out their blessings at the end of each day and then review the lists on a regular basis. It turns a poor attitude upside down.

B. We can develop a cheerful heart: by _____ what we have. – Eccl. 2:24-25

God, through the book of Ecclesiastes directs us to work at enjoying life Eccl. 2:24-25, *“There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?”* There is nothing better for a person than to eat and to drink – to enjoy the good things God gives to us. - And there is nothing better than for a man to tell himself that his labor is good. To look at what he has accomplished and appreciate it. Solomon tells us to take the time to really enjoy what life has brought to us. They are God's gifts to us – so we should enjoy them. – Eccl. 9:7-9 adds the idea that we should enjoy our relationships as well. There are hurts and disappointments that creep into every relationship. We are all human. But we can't let those things overshadow the joy and benefit we get from each other. Solomon says, *“Enjoy the people in your life. Focus on the reasons why you should enjoy them.”*

C. We can develop a cheerful heart: by _____ what we have. – Proverbs 11:25

We tend to think of giving in terms of sacrifice. Though that can be true, that certainly is not always the case. Prov.11:25 says, *“The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.”* The generous person will become a prosperous person. There is a benefit to us when we give to others. Jesus repeated the same idea in Luke 6:38, *“Give, and it shall be given to you.”* - There is an overwhelming huge body of research that indicates that the happiest people in the world are those who have the habit of giving to others. Subjectively, we tend to think we will be happier if we spend our resources on ourselves but when objectively tested, researchers have found that the people who give are the happiest.

CONCLUSION

We can be _____ even when our circumstances are not.

Happiness has nothing to do with our problems, or income, or kids, or marriage or health. A cheerful heart is a choice. And we can choose it ...

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Which attitude do you tend to have, the “Woe is me,” or the “Wow, look at me!”
2. There were three ways given to cultivate this kind of cheerful heart. Which one is hardest for you to do and why?
3. Don't forget to follow through on the commitments you made to enjoy your Thanksgiving and to give to others.