

Knowing God Series #12

“Channeling God’s Goodness”

Created to be good and do good



Review

I. The nature of God

II. The Attributes of God

A. God is infinitely GREAT in His ability / capacity

B. God is infinitely and perfectly PURE in His morality and judgments

C. God is infinitely GOOD in His relationships

An infinitely great and pure God would be terrifying if not for the fact that God is also good.

God interacts with His creatures out of His goodness.

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:6

God’s goodness is like a prism that breaks into a multitude of colors when his glory hits it.

His goodness manifests in His love, mercy, grace, longsuffering, forgiveness, faithfulness, kindness and gentleness. Just as God expects and enables His children to reflect many of His attributes of greatness and purity in a dark world, He expects and enables us to reflect His goodness in a dark selfish world.

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

The Concept

Goodness describes a propensity or inclination to act beneficially toward others apart from merit on their part or without ulterior motives on our part. Our benevolent action, like God’s, flow from a “good” nature or core and may manifest in specific ways such as grace, forgiveness or kindness. A heart transformed by God is a heart designed to be good and do good as God is good.

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Goodness is a product of a good heart.

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. Luke 6:45

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. Titus 2:11-14

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:29

What does that look like? What does it mean to be conformed to the image of His Son? We have previously understood that we are to be like Him in righteousness. We are also to be holy as He is holy. Certainly it would follow that we would be like Him in goodness. We share His

passion to express benevolence and compassion to others. Goodness is our present nature and our future destiny. So much so, that if goodness is absent, conversion is suspect.

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. 3 John 1:11

We live in a self-focused culture that cares only about self-interest. The numbers of passages that call for us to channel God's goodness to others are astounding. The New Testament especially issues a higher calling to love as Jesus loves. The behavior of God's kids can be the greatest tool to draw people to Jesus. It can also be the greatest hindrance to people considering Christianity. Paul lived an amazingly selfless life and called all followers of Jesus Christ to do the same. God uses a godly life lived by the followers of Jesus to impact a dark world.

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:13-16

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. Philippians 2:12-18

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. Ephesians 5:6-13

Our godly behavior also will bring conviction and shame. (1Pet 2:11-12; 3:16)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:34-35

God ordained the changed life to be the music to the lyrics of the good news. It is hard to focus on the message of a song when the music is too deafening, distracting or disgusting. Goodness is the most effective music to spread the gospel message. Do people glorify our Father in heaven when they observe our good works? Are there any good works (by God's definition) to observe?

The Conduct of Goodness

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. Mark 10:18

The reality is that no one is good without God's radical internal renovation.

Paul confirmed that...

ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." Romans 3:12

Yet the New Testament clearly indicates that God called us to reflect His goodness.

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Numerous New Testament passages contain suggestions as to what that good behavior looks like.

- Everything modeled by Jesus illustrates what is good.
- Anything God declares good or commands or says pleases Him qualify for the good deeds ordained that we should walk in.
- We also draw clues from what God reveals displeases Him.

Given all of the goodness that God freely extends to us, we should be a people zealous for good deeds. Paul urged the Romans on the basis of God's mercy to them to dedicate themselves to Him. We should be a people that compete with one another in seeking to honor and do good to others. I have gathered numerous passages on the subject and have pulled out a sampling of attitudes and actions that God considers good. I found this list to be a good exercise to sharpen my perspective on God's view of what is good.

- Fervent love that covers a multitude of sins
- Uncomplaining hospitality
- Serving others with our spiritual gift (1 Peter 4:8-10)
God gifts us for the common good of the body not ourselves (1 Cor 12:7)
- Living in harmony, sympathy, kindness, humility, giving blessing, resisting speaking evil, turning away from evil, seeking and pursuing peace (1 pet 3:8-12)
- Showing gentleness, purity, peace, reasonableness, mercy, steadfastness, without hypocrisy, bitter jealousy, selfish ambition and disorder. James 3:3-18
- Serious obedience, refusing to grumble, or dispute but committed to serving others. Phil 2:12
- Speaking words of praise and thanksgiving, doing good and sharing with others. Heb 13:15-16
- Considering how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds by encouragement. Heb 10:25-25
- Meeting pressing needs of the body. Tit 3:14
- Avoiding foolish controversies and strife Tit 3:8
- Malign no one, be peaceable, gentle, show every consideration to others, not being foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to lusts and evil pleasures, malicious, envious, hateful. Tit 1
- Being an example of good deeds, pure in doctrine, sound in speech Tit 2:6-8
- Be above reproach, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. Titus 1:7-9

- Pursuing righteousness, faith, love, peace while fleeing youthful lusts 2 Tim 2:21-22
- Not conceited or fixed on the uncertainty of riches, doing good, rich in good works, generous and ready to share, storing up the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- Doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but show the kind of humility that regards others as more important than themselves, look after the interests of others having an attitude of sacrificial service like Jesus did. Phil 2:2
- Rendering service as to the Lord, not pleasing people Eph 6:5-8
- Avoiding hurtful words that de-energize, speaking up building words that energize. Eph 4:29
- Being kind, tenderhearted, forgiving, compassionate, humble, longsuffering, gentle, forbearing, loving. Eph 4:32-5:1; Col 3:12-15
- Seeking the good of others 1 Cor 10:23
- Bearing the weakness of the those without strength
- Pleasing those around us for their good as Jesus sacrificed for our good. Rom 5:1-3
- Loving unhyprocritically by: (Romans 12:9-21)
 - Abhorring evil and clinging to good
 - Being devoted to one another
 - Giving preference and honor one another
 - Not lagging behind in diligence but fervent to serve the Lord by serving others
 - Rejoicing in hope
 - Persevering in tribulation
 - Being devoted to prayer
 - Contributing to the needs of the saints
 - Practicing hospitality (Love of strangers)
 - Blessing those who persecute you; bless and don't curse
 - Rejoicing with those who rejoice
 - Being of the same mind with one another (unity)
 - Associating with the lowly
 - Not being wise in your own estimation (proud)
 - Not paying back evil for evil
 - Respecting what is right
 - Being at peace with all men as much as possible
 - Never taking your own vengeance
 - Feeding your enemy
 - Not being overcome with evil but overcoming evil with GOOD
- Doing justice, love kindness, walk humbly before God Micah 6:8
- Dwelling in unity Psalm 133:1
- Trusting in the Lord and do good rather than fret about evil doers. Psalm 37:1-6

The bulk of the deeds of the flesh listed in Galatians have to do with relationship issues.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21

These references don't even include the numerous passages commanding us to not only do good but love one another as Jesus loved us. If those who claim to follow Jesus lived actually and consistently lived like this, I think there would be much greater interest in the God who enables such transcendent goodness. Just as God's goodness overlooks man's badness, we are called to do good to all people. Being good to the good is easy. Being good to the undeserving and hurtful is impossible without God's empowerment. Jesus died for those who were His enemies.

But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:27-36

There is no credit for selective goodness. This is where the true nature of godly goodness shines. So what resources are available to live according to the divinely preordained good works?

Cause of Goodness

It is our calling and destiny

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren... Romans 8:29

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1 John 3:2-3

Just as bad company corrupts good morals, good company encourages good morals. The more we hang out with Jesus, the more we will live like Him.

God equips us Heb 13:20

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Heb 13:20-21

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 2 Thess 2:16-17

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER." 2 Corinthians 9:8-9

It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:13

The spirit empowers us Gal 5:22

*But I say, walk (live) by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23*

Interaction with the scriptures equip and train us

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The prayers and encouragement of the body encourages us

and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Heb 10:24-25

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29

Practice increases discernment of what is good

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Hebrews 5:14

Saturation with the knowledge of His will enlightens and strengthens us with power

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk(live) in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. Colossians 1:9-12

Contemplation of the heavenly reward motivates us to keep on doing good

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. Galatians 6:9

There are a few additional considerations in regard to living a life of goodness.

Concerns to consider

Give attention to a pursuing a life of goodness

This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds Tit 3:8

Be ready to do good to all people Tit 3:1-7

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men Tit 3:1

While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. Galatians 6:10

Don't grow weary in doing good to others

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. 2 Thessalonians 3:13

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. Galatians 6:9

Doing good is not automatic but sought and learned

See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. 1 Thessalonians 5:15

Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful. Titus 3:14

Everyone will one day be evaluated according to their deeds.

Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

When Christ retooled our heart at conversion, He installed new longings for goodness. He installed new software designed to respond to people according to the original design. A kingdom of people zealous for good deeds was His original design. Adam turned us into a people zealous for self-promotion and self-protection. We still have remnants of the old self-focuses program that causes us to feel like doing good is wearisome and against our nature. (See Romans 7 were we don't always do the good we want)

Our new programing however finds joy and purpose in serving others. God designed His church to grow by each member ministering to the other. If you felt like you came up short compared to the Bible examples, after acknowledging your failure to effectively channel God's goodness,

I suggest revisiting the seven sources of encouragement to keep on doing good.

- Remember your calling to walk in God's goodness and reflect His goodness.
- Pray for God's equipping
- Invite the Holy Spirit to empower you – ask for His filling
- Increase you interaction with the Scriptures
- Look for encouragement from the body
- Practice doing good
- Pray to be saturated with a knowledge of God's will and strengthened with God's power
- Remember that in due season you will reap God's reward