

Lifelines

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Topic: *Doing what is Good!*

What is "Good?"

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If someone asked you to tell them what "good" is, what would you tell them? The question is not meant to be "good" on a sliding scale, or some person's relative, nor is it an ever-changing "sliding-'good' scale." If you ask children what is good, they might say: "Chocolate ice cream!" Ask a teenager and they might say "School vacations" are good. Or they might say: "Having my own car!"

In Matthew 19:16-17 (NIV) we read: "Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." Jesus then quoted some of the Ten Commandments.

From this passage of Scripture, and the teaching of Jesus, we are told that only God is good. Jesus said that "Only God is totally Good." All of us as humans have sinned, we have all fallen short of absolute goodness. Yet, God has made goodness available to any of us who will receive Jesus, the Gift of God, and the Righteousness of God.

We cannot impress God with our "goodness." We can only kneel before God, ask for the forgiveness of our sins, invite Jesus (who is God, and therefore is Good) to come and live His good life inside us, and to live His goodness through us. Jesus stated that only God is totally good. As we surrender our life to Christ, He comes to live inside us via the Holy Spirit, and gives us the desire and the capability to "do the good." Philippians 2:13 (NIV) states: "for it is God who works in you to will and to act, in order to fulfill His good purpose."

We still need to hone in on the original question: What is good? Is "good" a question of the quality of our goodness that makes something good? Or is it the "usefulness" of someone or something that makes them good? Is it the nature or character of the person which qualifies them as "good?" Is "good" a material quality that something or someone has or is? Or is it a character or spiritual quality which exudes goodness that then impacts others in a good way?

Does true "goodness" exist apart from the goodness of God? Is goodness a free-floating radical, or is it actually a manifestation of, and inseparable evidence of the presence of our Good God, whose nature and motives and behavior and actions are all good?

Is goodness something we do, or is it something we are? Or is it both? Jesus said that the good man out of his good heart pours forth good things. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees in Matthew 12:34-35 (NIV) saying: "You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him." So if our inner heart is evil, then evil comes out of us; if God and His goodness fills our inner being, then the good residing in us comes out of us.

I think that it is a little like electrical wiring and the source of your power. If the source of our output power or voltage is a 12 volt battery, then battery power levels flow out of us. If we are wired and empowered by 220 volts of electricity, powerful alternating current comes out of us. You can only

produce what is the source and capacity of your energy flowing out of you. Man's goodness is inadequate. It is sinful, with an occasional act of goodness. On the other hand, God's goodness is superlative, pure, and eternal. It is pure goodness, consistent goodness, and irresistible goodness.

When we receive Jesus, and are filled with God's Spirit and all the fruits produced by His Spirit, flow out of us. The byproducts of God's Spirit residing in us include (see Galatians 5:22-23 NIV): "... The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." The "good" life occurs when the life of God living in us, continually flows out of us through lots of good characteristics, attitudes, words, and actions.

What is good? God and His activities in and through us are good. Who is good? God is good, the ultimate Good, being good "all the time!"

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