



"O taste and see that the LORD is good, how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him." Psalm 34:8

"God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good." I'm sure many of you have heard or hear this statement frequently in your Sunday morning services. It is interesting. I have attended churches of several different denominations, and have heard this statement proclaimed from their pulpits and altars. There have been times in my life when it is easy to say these words. They just roll off the tongue without much thought. But there have also been times when I did not utter them so easily. In fact, there was a season when I just did not believe that God is good. Do we really live our lives everyday as though we believe that He is good ALL the time? If we truly believed that He is good every moment of every day, through the laughter and the tears, through sickness and health, through persecution and praise--would our daily choices and attitudes be different? In my case I can answer that question with a resounding yes.

And what about "being good?" How does this fit in with the Gospel of Grace? We know that we can't earn our salvation by our good deeds or choices (Ephesians 2:8). But, do we operate daily with a kind of behavioral Christianity, feeling like we have to earn God's favor? Do we live by the equation: faith + good works = justification? (If you aren't sure, just read all of Galatians. Paul makes it clear). How does God see His children? When He looks at us does He say, "now he/she is good!"

Believe it or not, we can teach our children truths about goodness. These are wonderful questions that we will explore this week.

PARENT OVERVIEW FOR THIS WEEK:

Within several days, I am trying to draw out verses and questions that can be used for any age of your children. So you will see throughout the week that I set aside a section "FOR LITTLE ONE'S or "FOR TEENAGERS". It isn't that teenagers can't hear what the little preschoolers hear. Many times I think they should hear the simple truths of the Gospel. But, they may appreciate an opportunity to dig deeper and ask tougher questions. I know that you, as parents, can easily discern what is appropriate for your kids. Just read through all the lesson each day and see where the Spirit leads you.

DAY ONE: What is Goodness?

Today we will look at the Biblical definition of good, and take a stroll through Genesis 1 together.

DAY TWO: God is Good

Is God really good ALL the time? Yes.

DAY THREE: Grace and Good Works

A little math lesson is included in today's activities. Do our good works count toward salvation? Do we earn salvation by good works? Nope.

DAY FOUR: Goodness Does Part I

You will need your computer on this day. We are going to explore what it means to defend the orphan by visiting several websites.

DAY FIVE: Goodness Does Part II

Today you will talk about the purpose of good works. What do they accomplish? Why should we pursue good works?

Fruit for the week: **Apple** (I just kept thinking about the old adage about a bad apple--and thought we'd use it to reference goodness instead). There are so many wonderful recipes for apples: applesauce, pie, cider, crisp...and in our hometown we are getting fresh apples from the orchard right now--so they are especially delicious!

DAY ONE: What is Goodness?

Verse of the Day: "And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." Gen. 1:31

- Begin with prayer
- Ask your kids, "What do you think goodness means?"
- "What does it mean when you hear people say, 'Be good!'"
- "What is the opposite of good?"
- For older kids, have them discuss what they hear at school vs. what they are learning at church about being good. Does 'being good' get us into heaven? (NO)
- Talk with older kids about how good works FOLLOW after our salvation. Good works don't earn us salvation.
- What are some things/people/places that you would describe as "good."

ACTIVITY: A look at the Creation Story: "And it was good..."

- Open your Bibles to Genesis 1.

- Read through the entire creation account.
- At each juncture, when God pronounces something good--say it altogether as a family.
- If members of your family enjoy drawing, have them draw an aspect of creation and talk about how it is good.
- Notice what God said when he created male and female---they were "very good!"
- In other words, God was saying, "What I have made, works! It is pleasant, beautiful, beneficial, agreeable." (This is literally how the Hebrew word *tov* translates.)
- Take some time to talk with your children about the fact that they are masterpieces of God's creation.
- Ask them to give examples from God's creation that are beautiful, pleasant, beneficial, and agreeable.
- Again, you could have each child draw something and then talk about it with the family.
- "When we make good choices, we are doing something beautiful, pleasant, right, and beneficial for someone else."

DAY TWO: God is Good

Verse of the Day: "Taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him." Psalm 34:8

Song: "God is so Good"; "God is good", "Lord you are good and your mercy endureth forever"

- Begin with prayer
- After your prayer say, "God is good" have your children say, "all the time". Next, you say "all the time," and your kids say back to you, "God is good."
- Remind your kids of the Biblical definition for good: "pleasant, agreeable, beautiful, beneficial." It also means "excellent, honorable, what is right."
- *How is God good? How do we see that He is good?*
- YOUNGER KIDS: How does God show us His goodness?
 - some answers might be--he gives us trees for oxygen
 - he gives us fruits and vegetables to eat
 - he gives us gravity so we don't float off of the planet
 - he gives us the sun to warm us and the moon at night so we can see
 - he provides rain to water the plants and give us the water we need to survive
 - he loves us, protects us, guides us.
- OLDER KIDS AND TEENS: With older kids and teens, this is a great opportunity to talk about some common statements that are made about God these days: "If God was really good, then why do bad things happen to good people?" "If God is good, then there is no hell." "A good God wouldn't let a hurricane destroy a city." It is SO IMPORTANT that you talk about these things with your older

children. Pull from your own journey about how God has worked good out of difficult situations (unemployment, loss of a loved one, miscarriages, cancer, a loved one with disabilities, etc.).

- **ACTIVITY:** Read through the following scriptures with your kids. If they can read, assign some of these to them. Talk about each of them and ask your kids how these verses describe God's goodness. If you want, you could write your findings on a poster board that you can hang up in your home during this week:
 - Psalm 25:8
 - Psalm 84:11
 - Psalm 86:5
 - Psalm 103:4-5
 - Psalm 107:1 & 9
 - Psalm 145:9
 - Nahum 1:7 (see which kid can find this first!)
- Finish with Psalm 119:68. "For you are good and do good." Because God's very character and nature is good, everything He does is good. He is beautiful, beneficial, excellent, honorable, better, and He does what is right.
- Take a moment as a family to praise God for His goodness.
- *****Lead your children in PRAYING one or more of these scriptures above. Turn the scripture into prayers of praise to God.***** (Modeling this for your children is priceless and so important).

DAY THREE: Grace and Good Works

Verse for the day: "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 LITTLE ONES: Talk with your preschoolers about actions and choices that are 'good'. Give examples from their everyday lives. "When you obey Daddy, that is a good choice." "When you share with your brother or sister, that is a good choice." Also talk with them about sinful (bad) choices. I bet they can come up with some! Ask them if they have made good choices. Then ask if they have made some sinful/bad choices. What were they?

Talk to them about how Jesus never made a bad choice. He always made good choices and obeyed God the Father. Jesus never sinned. But, He died on the cross because of all our sin. Give an example from your own life of someone who didn't disobey taking the punishment for someone else who did disobey. Let that truth sink in to your child's heart and mind for a bit. *Would you want to follow someone who did that for you? Would you want to copy or be like a person who did that for someone else?*

When we follow Jesus, we want to be like Him. Jesus did good works, and we want to show our love for Him (and His love in us as believers) by doing good works too.

FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN: Include some of the questions that were asked in the previous section. Read Psalm 53:3, Romans 3:23, and James 2:10. Talk about these verses.

- OPTION 1: On a sheet of paper write: SINFUL HUMANS on the left side and GOD on the far right side. Put a 0 under humans and a 100 under God. Explain to them that we can do all sorts of good things and make good choices, but they will never add up to 100. It is like we are adding $0 + 0$ every time and we get nowhere. Or you could give the image of: obeyed my parents +5. Disobeyed my parents -5 and end up right back at 0. All our good works are as filthy rags apart from Christ. (Is. 64:4)
- Now read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Jesus didn't sin--he lived a sinless life. When he died on the cross, God put all our sin on Him. That is how He became sin. Then He took our punishment. Now draw something to show that this one act scored a perfect 100. And because Jesus scored the perfect 100, nothing can ever be taken away from that. It was a one time thing and it was perfect. We must accept in faith that Jesus took our punishment and our place in death. We take on His goodness. When God sees us, because of Jesus' sacrifice, He sees us as if we didn't sin. This is called Justification. Without Christ, there is no way we are good enough to earn God's favor.
- OPTION 2: Use Romans 6:23 to talk about how the payment for sin is death. In order to be made right with God a very high price had to be paid. No amount of good works can ever add up to pay this high price. You could say that a good work only accounts for \$0.01. Could our good works ever add up to the price it costs? (you could use the number of a million to represent the price) When Jesus died on the cross he paid the ultimate price. His one act of death and shedding His blood willingly paid the million dollar price God requires. This way, the gift is free to us. Hallelujah!

BUT, when we come to God by grace through faith, we are then called to good works! Good works follow salvation. Or, they show that we are a believer in Christ.

- Ephesians 2: 8-10

FOR TEENS: Add to these previous thoughts a discussion of James 2:14-26. Is James disagreeing with Paul about faith vs. works? Ask your teens to find other scripture that supports the doctrine that our salvation isn't earned by works, but true salvation shows good works!

(Going back to Romans 3:23 and Psalm 53:3: Moms, if you want to give your teenage daughters a true visual understanding of how our righteous works apart from Christ are like "filthy rags"--just look up the literal translation of this. In Isaiah 64:6, he is actually giving the imagery of menstrual cloths here.)

The point of today's lesson is to teach your kids that good works DO NOT EARN SALVATION, but after we are saved, we are to show forth God's good works! This will prepare us for the following two days and will give us the right perspective. Hopefully we can avoid a Christianity that is based upon legalism

and behavior and focus upon God's Grace and that His love COMPELS us to good works. It is His work and transformation in our hearts and Spirit that give us the ability to do good that has eternal significance. As Jesus said, a tree is known by its fruit!

DAY FOUR: Goodness Does: Part 1: Defending the Orphan

Verse of the Day: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8

- Begin with prayer
- Based upon our scripture of the day, what does God define as "good"
 - Do justice: *How can we do justice in our world?*
 - Love Kindness: *What does it mean to LOVE kindness?*
 - Walk humbly with your God: *Talk about what it means to be humble, and to walk with God with a humble heart. What does that look like?*
- Isaiah 1:17 "Learn to do good; Seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."
 - *How is this verse similar to Micah 6:8?*
 - *What does it mean to reprove the ruthless?* (This may take some explaining on the part of the parents)
 - *How can we defend the orphan? Why is that important to God?*
 - *How can we plead for the widow? Why is that important to God's heart?*
- 1 Timothy 6:18 "Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share"
 - *What does it mean to be generous? How can we show generosity to our community? at school? at home?*
 - Be ready to share! (This is a great one to use with the little ones in your home--as sharing comes with difficulty for preschoolers).

ACTIVITY: Go to the website of Compassion International, Samaritan's Purse, or World Vision. Show your kids some pictures/videos of the orphans in the world. Go to a child sponsorship page and pray over one's child that is listed there.

- <http://www.compassion.com/>
- <http://www.samaritanspurse.org/>

***As a side note: I feel that it is so important that our children are exposed to ministries like Compassion International, World Vision, and Samaritans' Purse. If your kids don't know about the orphans and needy in our world, show them some of the videos and pictures from these websites. Pray

and see if God might lead to you sponsor a child through one of these organizations. It is one tangible way we can defend the orphan! With most ministries, you receive a picture and letters from the child you sponsor. Your children can write to the child and send a Christmas gift. From Compassion International, you can also receive a prayer calendar and every night at dinner, you can pray for different needs of children all over the world. It is a wonderful and simple way to share the love of Christ, and to participate in the good works that are close to the heart of God. Even if you feel you can't financially support a child, ask for a free monthly prayer calendar and pray for these children.**** <http://www.compassion.com/prayer.htm>

DAY FIVE: Goodness Does: Part 2: The Reason for Good Works

Verse for the Day: "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 5:16

- Begin with prayer
- Read the verse of the day together.
- *Why do we show good works? What is the purpose of good works?*
 - That they may SEE
 - That they may GLORIFY GOD
- 1 Peter 2:12 "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they **observe (see) them, glorify** God in the day of visitation."
 - Have your children find "see" and "glorify" again in this verse
 - *What does this verse say can happen to those who are mean to us if we continue to do good in front of them?*
 - God can use US to draw people to Himself. That is a huge and humbling privilege!
- Proverbs 22:1 "A *good* name is to be more desired than great wealth, favor is better than silver and gold."
 - *What is this saying?*
 - *How do we go about having a good name?*
 - When people see that we belong to Jesus, it is worth SO MUCH more than money, gold, or silver--any kind of wealth cannot compare.
- Galatians 6:9 "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not grow weary."
 - *What does this verse mean?*
 - To "lose heart" means "to give up, to become weary".

- *Do you ever feel tempted to give up on someone? (Parents, this may be a good juncture to talk about how you don't give up on your kids--and that training them in righteousness takes perseverance!)*
- *How can this verse help us?*
- Finish by making the point that we can't be good without God's help.
 - "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, THROUGH OUR KNOWLEDGE OF HIM" 2 Peter 1:3
 - "I can do all things through CHRIST who gives me strength." Phil 4:13
 - In order to do good, we must seek the LORD daily and humbly walk with Him (remember Micah 6:8?)
 - When we walk in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit will help us to do good works.
 - When we spend time in the word, goodness will result
 - Proverbs 16:20, "He who gives attention to the Word will find good"
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 "For all scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting, rebuking and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped for EVERY GOOD WORK.
 - Finish by talking as a family about how each member can go forth and do good works. For your kids who are believers, remind them that God has given them this purpose! They are created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Eph. 2:10). Parents, you should participate in this and talk about ways you can do good works at work, in the community and at home.
 - Goodness BEGINS and ENDS with GOD.

**GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME, AND HIS GOODNESS CAN SHINE THROUGH US
AND POINT OTHERS TO CHRIST.**

**Psa. 23:6 Surely goodness and loving-kindness will
follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in
the house of the LORD forever.**