



GROW.PRAY.STUDY

Weekly Study Guide



Summer Fruit: Goodness

September 2, 2018

Scriptures:

Matthew 19:16-22 (CEB)

A man approached [Jesus] and said, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?” Jesus said, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There’s only one who is good. If you want to enter eternal life, keep the commandments.” The man said, “Which ones?” Then Jesus said, “Don’t commit murder. Don’t commit adultery. Don’t steal. Don’t give false testimony. Honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as you love yourself.” The young man replied, “I’ve kept all these. What am I still missing?” Jesus said, “If you want to be complete, go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come follow me.” But when the young man heard this, he went away saddened, because he had many possessions.

Romans 12:9, 14, 17, 18, 21 (CEB)

⁹Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good.
¹⁴Bless people who harass you—bless and don’t curse them. ¹⁷Don’t pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good. ¹⁸If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people.
²¹Don’t be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.

Introduction to the Study

“Goodness” has fallen on bad times! It has a bad connotation—after all who wants to be “good?” We think of people who are “good” as being wimpish or weak. It’s an old-fashioned quality that’s out-of-date. We’d rather be chic, slick, popular, exciting, “with it,” or living on the edge. We like to think that what we do is “good,” but are our actions really good? Before we answer that, we need to understand what “goodness” really is.

We need a working definition of **goodness**, so let’s start with the Greek word for **goodness** from a theological perspective:

Agathos (Goodness) is used of things that are physical, such as a good tree or good ground. It is also used in a moral sense of persons. God is essentially, absolutely, and consummately good. It also means that “the good” is morally honorable and pleasing to God. Christians in their lifestyles are to prove this to the world. We are to be zealous of goodness and overcome evil with it.

This helpful, but how else can we define **goodness**? One possibility comes from James Hamilton, a 19th Century minister, who wrote:

*Adapted from a devotional by Robert Strand called *Nine Fruits of the Spirit: Goodness*

Goodness is love in action, love with its hand to the plow, love with the burden on its back, love following His footsteps who went about continually doing good.

This reminds us that the standard for goodness has been set by God and not humans. God is the measure of all things, including goodness: a harvest of the Spirit's work in our lives.

Daily Study Guides

MONDAY 8/28/17 *The Goodness of God*

Read Psalm 100:1-5

Like kindness, God's goodness is a major biblical theme that inspires us to think about what it means to be filled with God's goodness and to share that goodness with others.

- What do we know about God's character from Psalm 100? How do we know God is good? How do God's actions show goodness?
- How have you responded to God's goodness in your life? What do these verses say about our relationship with God? With others? How can we introduce goodness into our relationships?

Prayer: Loving God, help us to be thankful every day for the good-ness you share with us. Help us share it with others. Amen.

TUESDAY 8/29/17 *What Good Thing?*

Read Acts 10:37-38; Matthew 19:16-30

One of the most exciting descriptions of Jesus was made by the Apostle Peter: "He went around doing good" (Acts 10:38). From this, we imagine what Jesus' lifestyle must have been like: He touched lepers, gave sight to the blind, welcomed children, and healed with a touch. He didn't send someone else, he did it all himself. Goodness isn't passive; it's hands-on, up-close-and-personal.

- Consider the verses from Matthew: can we really do good things to earn eternal life? Is keeping the commandments enough?
- Why did Jesus focus on the young man's earthly possessions? Is it really harder for rich people to enter the kingdom of heaven? Why or why not? Is getting rid of all our earthly possessions still required to enter the kingdom of heaven? Does "goodness" really have anything to do with entering the kingdom of heaven?

Prayer: Good and gracious God, sometimes we are like the rich young man. We don't think we can survive if we part with some of the earthly possessions we have collected. Help us understand that our happiness and salvation aren't wrapped up in these "things," but through our relationship with you. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 8/30/17 *A Good King in Action*

Read 2 Chronicles 34:1-7, 14-33

Goodness may be best understood through the life actions of another person. One such person was an Old Testament king named Josiah, who became king when he was just 8 years old!

- Who was Josiah and how did he become king at such a young age? Verse 2 says all we really need to know about this king. What actions caused the writer to record such a compliment?
- What needed to be purged from his nation? What was an "Asherah pole?" What was significant about the "altars of Baal?" Look these up online...you might find them interesting!
- What would bring God's judgment down upon the Israelites? How was this judgment averted? What "covenant" needed to be renewed? Why is the example of Josiah an example of goodness in action? How is God's Word related to goodness in action?

Prayer: Gracious God, how is it that a young boy can know so much about goodness, and we who are adults have such a hard time grasping the concept? Help us learn from stories like Josiah's what it means to always show goodness. Amen.

THURSDAY 8/31/17 *The Struggle Between Good and Evil*

Read Romans 7:14-8:8; 12:9, 21

Being good and exhibiting goodness may be a battle ground. Just because you decide to add goodness to your lifestyle doesn't mean it will happen without a struggle. Fruit only grows when it is cultivated by the Spirit. It's a process, a daily commitment, a discipline, a daily application of biblical truth. Every day we should all work to be more good, realizing there will be ups and downs, good days and bad—good and evil are a constant struggle. Many of us can identify with the struggle expressed by Paul: "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out!" What a struggle! How is it possible for us to overcome evil?

- What can we understand about human nature from the passages in Romans? Where is the battleground between good and evil? Do you see yourself relating to Paul's struggle?
- What does Paul identify as the enemy to doing good? How do YOU handle the tension between good and evil? How does inner struggle affect your ability to live a life filled with goodness?
- How are we set free from this struggle? What are some of the evils in our society that need to be overcome by good? What are YOU doing to overcome evil in your life? In your relationships?

Prayer: Lord, you know the struggle between good and evil for us as your human children is real and difficult. Give us the strength to overcome evil with good. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

FRIDAY 9/1/17 *The "Good" Lifestyle* Read Matthew 5:1-48

Discipline is one of the most effective ways for our actions to be guided in a positive sense. If we learn something right the first time and continue to practice it, we can be counted on to do it right when the pressure is on, even when the odds may be against us. Daily discipline and perseverance is the pathway to maturing in good-ness of character. The Spirit is the active agent in this process. When we are fed by the Word and discipline ourselves, the Spirit will nurture us as we practice goodness. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us a roadmap for living a life of goodness.

- What does it mean to be "blessed?" What does it mean to be "salt" or "light?" How do they relate to goodness? Who receives glory when we let our light shine before others?
- How does goodness relate to our thinking the right kinds of thoughts? What steps are you willing to take to implement a life of goodness that is pleasing to God?

Prayer: Loving God, we needed to learn about goodness, so you sent Jesus to be our model and teacher. But we need to be reminded of the things he taught us to do. Encourage and remind us of the things we need to do to be good people. Amen.

SATURDAY 9/2/17 *In Summary*

Living the "good" life should be our highest goal. When we're at our best, we are most effective. This good life is not wimpish; it reflects our highest calling and is a very real possibility for us all!

You can live the good life: a life of goodness toward others. It's not what the world considers "the good life." It's a life of good-ness with God at the center. It's a lifestyle that recognizes God has placed within us the potential for goodness that can be lived every day. We cannot be at our best until we allow God's Spirit to work within us and through us so we can touch the world with goodness!

Prayer: Holy Lord, help us to be filled with your goodness. Help us fight against the evils of this world and spread goodness to everyone we meet. Help us to invite you every single day into our lives so we can touch the world with your goodness. Amen.