



# fruit

but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,  
**goodness**, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control





Goodness

"For God is good  
- or rather, of all  
goodness He is the  
Fountainhead."

Athanasius of Alexandria



# Created

When we wonder how we, individually, might reflect God's character, we tend to think of our kindest personality traits or our unique skills. But if we are created in the image of God, then we reflect his character before any of our actions could. Like a child who resembles her mother, the family resemblance was put in us from the beginning, and while our choices can enhance it they can't create it.

God created things, and called them good. Before their acts of worship or sacrifices, before any of their 'good' works were accomplished, he called them good. That has to be our starting point for how we think of our own goodness, and how we think of others'.

If we are good, it's because we look like the one who is Goodness. There is no room to boast, for it comes from outside of ourselves.

*God saw all that he had  
made, and it was very good.*

*GENESIS 1:31*

How does knowing that you were created good affect your inherent value?

If it isn't necessarily about our personality or talents, then what does it mean to be made in God's image?

Can you separate the idea of your 'goodness' from your actions?

If God is omnipotent and knows every future action and consequence, knows every person in their worst moment, how can he still call his creations good?

*"We unwittingly project onto God our own attitudes and feelings toward ourselves... But we cannot assume that He feels about us the way we feel about ourselves—unless we love ourselves compassionately, intensely, and freely."*

*Brennan Manning*



# Brightness

Goodness can be terrifying, like a light that is too bright. When we use our limited understanding to try and see the true, unrestrained character of God, we are looking into the sun. We can't even comprehend the fullness of it; it's beyond us. And because we can't fully understand it, we may not even recognize it.

Our limited definition of 'good' usually includes the absence of pain, hardship, or death. It has connotations of pleasance, painlessness, enjoyment, beneficence. It is whatever gives us the most happiness with the least amount of pain. And if we were to judge God's goodness based on our definition, most of us would say it isn't usually there. He withholds things we want, allows us to feel pain, and doesn't always protect us from terrible loss. Either God is not good, or we don't understand his goodness.

We already do things all the time that we don't enjoy, or even cause us pain, precisely because we think it is good. We eat healthy food



because it is better to be healthy than sick. We initiate difficult conversations because it is better to be honest and helpful than be comfortable. It's like training for a marathon. Pain can be bad, but it can also be good when it means you're getting stronger.

Just like the pain of physical exertion can lead to strength, God uses painful and difficult moments in our lives to lead us to a higher good. It doesn't mean those moments were secretly good all along, or that your feelings have been invalidated. Rather, they become reformed in the story God is telling through you.

*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but  
then face to face. Now I know in part;  
then I shall know fully, even as I have  
been fully known.*

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

Is it possible for 'goodness' to feel really bad?

How do you know God is good to you?

Is God good when he isn't good to you?

How does the holiness of God relate to his goodness?

If all the 'good' things in your life were taken away, would that change your understanding of God's character?

*"Some people talk as if meeting the gaze of absolute goodness would be fun. They need to think again. They are still only playing with religion. Goodness is either the great safety or the great danger—according to the way you react to it."*

*C.S. Lewis*



# Aligned

We all make assessments about what is right and what is wrong. It's an inner conscience, an almost inherent sense of morality.

We don't get to determine what goodness is. Goodness is defined not by earthly laws or human morality, but only by the character of God. It is when things are most aligned with who he is. Our concept of goodness is painfully temporal. We have to readjust our perspective to something more eternal.

Because of the fallen nature of the world, because of our freedom to choose sin and selfishness, we are not always in alignment. People and situations can be far from God, and therefore far from good. But God doesn't change, so that means his goodness doesn't either. It is not dependent on a positive outcome, a happy feeling, a narrowly-missed disaster. It can be as present in a celebration as it is in a disaster. When we expand our definition, we can recognize it in more places.

Some people have a hard time awarding something value if it isn't explicitly from God, however explicitly that could ever be to us, anyway. But if everything good is from God, that means everything, whether or not it is found in a church building

*Every good gift and every perfect gift  
is from above, coming down from the  
Father of lights, with whom there is no  
variation or shadow due to change.*

JAMES 1:17

Is the goodness of God evident in all his creation?

Can someone who isn't a Christian reflect the character of Christ?

Where does our idea of goodness come from?

Why is courage admired and cowardice despised, even for the sake of self-preservation?

Where is the divide between what is 'sacred' and what is 'secular'?

*"Wherever you turn your eyes the world can shine like transfiguration. You don't have to bring a thing to it except a little willingness to see."*

*Marilynne Robinson*



# Striving

Goodness comes from a pure love of God, from wanting to be like him and not from wanting to increase our own virtue.

When we are told that goodness is something we're meant to have, that we should be filled to bursting with it, it's easy to get overwhelmed. We have to confront our weaknesses and decide to act better, and it usually feels like gritting our teeth and trying to force positive vibes. Is that really goodness, though? Jesus rebuked the pharisees who spent their lives trying to check all the right boxes because even though their outward actions seemed 'good,' their inner lives were filled with pettiness and corruption.

You can be outwardly 'good,' you can be what the world calls 'good,' and still be painfully empty of God's goodness.

The true goodness of God is not something you can earn. But it is something that has already been given to you. It was given to you



when you were created in his image, and given again when the Holy Spirit took up residency in you. Like a child takes after a parent, you already have the family resemblance.

Knowing that goodness is a gift and not a prize isn't permission to stop trying at all. It isn't a free pass to pursue your selfish ambitions and neglect the work in which God calls us to participate. It is freedom to do the work without the pressure of completing it.

*Love must be sincere.  
Hate what is evil; cling  
to what is good.*

ROMANS 12:9

When we are trying so hard to be 'good,' or be a better Christian or person or friend, what are our true motivations?

Does it matter what our motivations are, if we're doing good work?

Where does the pressure to always be working to improve ourselves come from?

Where do you think God wants to work in your life?

What can you do to make sure you are not trying to earn your own goodness?

*"Trusting God's grace  
means trusting God's  
love for us rather than  
our love for God."*

*Peter Kreeft*

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