

The Obvious Christian: Characteristics That Make A Christian Stand Out.
Message 6 – The Goodness of an Obvious Christian, March 9, 2008
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I want to get started with a question. What qualities do you think are necessary for someone to be considered a good person? To me it is an excellent question because most people I know, if asked, would consider themselves to be good. In fact, most of us judge how good others are based on how good we perceive ourselves to be.

But deciding who is good and who is not may be more difficult than most people think. After having been addressed as “*Good Master*”, even Jesus said, “*Why callest thou me good?*” (Matthew 19:17)

A standard dictionary may not help much in clarifying the question either: the Random House College Dictionary provides **43** different categories or definitions!

The Bible however has much to say about the subject. There are over 750 references to the words - good, goodly, and goodness. **Perhaps most encouraging** is the fact that Christians filled with the Spirit are characterized by goodness. Galatians 5: 22 says...

Here, we discover that GOODNESS is an additional characteristic of those who stand out as **Obvious Christians** in our world.

The word “*good*” refers to excellence in character. In the Bible it is applied to who God is, what God does, **and** what He expects of His people.

In the response of Jesus to the young man who called Him, “*Good Master*”, Jesus provides the starting place for any discussion on goodness. Look at Matthew 19:17...

According to this verse, where must any discussion on goodness start? **With God!**

This is the **overwhelming** testimony of Scripture. I have several references I want to quickly bring to your attention:

Exodus 34:6 – the Lord God abundant in goodness

1 Chronicles 16:34 – give thanks to the Lord for He is good

Psalm 25:8 – good and upright is the Lord

Psalm 145:9 – the Lord is good to everyone

Jeremiah 33:11 – praise the Lord of hosts for the Lord is good

Lamentations 3:25 – the Lord is good

Nahum 1:7 – the Lord is good

All of these references teach us one essential truth: **God is good!** It means He is excellent in **all** He is. Goodness characterizes the very Person of God, and therefore it also characterizes the activity of God. He does good things because He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13) ***he can only be and do what He is!***

In the opening chapter of Genesis the word “good” is used several times. Let’s skip through the chapter and see how it is used...

Did you notice, ***everything God made was good!***

As part of God’s original creation, man was also made to be good, but lost his goodness (his condition of excellence) because of sin. Consequently, after the fall of man into sin, the word “good” **is not** used to describe man. Instead, the absence of goodness is emphasized.

Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3, and Romans 3:10-12, all teach us the same thing: ***there is none that doeth good, no not one!***

Regarding the goodness of man, the Scriptures teach ***there is no such thing!*** That’s hard to swallow, isn’t it?

However, despite our lack of goodness, the testimony of Scripture is that God has continued to share His goodness with mankind.

Psalm 107 is a Bible Exposition on the Goodness of God. Meditating on this

Psalm will teach us much about goodness. Open your Bible to Psalm 107 with me...

Why should people in general give thanks to God? Look just at verse 1. It is because He is good. The psalmist provides four illustrations of God's goodness. I want to point them out and show you what each of them has in common.

Illustration # 1, verses 4-9: the wilderness of loneliness

Illustration # 2, verses 10-16: the darkness of death

Illustration # 3, verses 17-22: the foolishness of sin

Illustration # 4, verses 23-32: the stormy sea of life

In all of these expressions of goodness by God –

Were the activities of man deserving of God's goodness? No, they were in rebellion against Him!

Without God's goodness, what would have happened? They would have perished!

With God's goodness, what happened? They were delivered!

What should our response to the goodness of God be? Verses 1, 2, 8, 15, 22, and 31 tell us to give thanks and tell others about His goodness.

Has God *ever* been good to you? If so, have you thanked Him, and have you told others?

What does learning about the goodness of God in this Psalm teach us about our response? (v.2) Let the redeemed of the Lord say so! We are expected to tell others of God's goodness to us.

Besides praise, the goodness of God toward man has another purpose. Look with me at Romans 2:4...

The goodness of God is intended to lead people to repentance.

On his first missionary journey, Paul used this intention of God's goodness in his witnessing methodology. Look at Acts 14: 15-17...

Paul used the goodness of God to witness to others. He said God's goodness had been manifested in the rain, the seasons, and their experiences of gladness. We could actually add so many other things to that list. Friends, family, life itself, are all manifestations of the goodness of God. And they are just as useful to us in witnessing to others as they were to the Apostle Paul.

Think for a moment how God used His goodness in drawing you to Himself? For me He used His creation, His Word, and comfort in a time of grief.

Once the goodness of God has brought us to repentance of sin by faith in Christ, we are repeatedly confronted in Scripture with an expectation.

I have a group of references I want to bring to your attention so we can see what they describe as the expectation.

Romans 12:21 – be not overcome with evil **but** overcome evil with good

2 Corinthians 9:8 – **abound** in every good work

Galatians 6:10 – as we have opportunity **let us do good** to all people

Ephesians 2:10 – says we are created in Christ Jesus **unto good works** and ordained that we should walk in them

Titus 3:8 – they that have believed should be **careful to maintain** good works

1 Peter 2:12 – others should glorify God **because of** our good works

3 John 1:11 – **follow** that which is good

According to each of these references, you and I are **expected** to perform good works.

That expectation is based upon our relationship with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

Acts 9:36-43 provides an example of one person known for good works. Let's look at the passage and see what effect this person had on people...

Others should be able to say of us that we are people full of good works. That would make us stand out in our world as **Obvious Christians**. Can they? Is that the testimony others have of us?

We know what God is, we know what He has done, and we know what is expected of us, *but how do we get it done?*

Allow me to conclude with the necessary steps:

1. Know for sure that you have been saved by faith in Christ. 2 Corinthians 13: 5 (examine)
2. Present yourself to God for His service. Romans 12: 1-2
3. Sanctify (or set apart) Christ in your heart. 1 Peter 3: 10-17
4. Spend quality time in God's Word. 2 Timothy 3: 16-17
5. Pray. Hebrews 13: 20-21 (Ask God to make you complete in every good work.)
6. Yield to the Holy Spirit and not to the lusts of your flesh. Galatians 5: 16-22

Taking these steps will enable us to stand out as **Obvious Christians** in our world; being characterized with God's goodness.