

Is God Really Good?

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Slide Notes

I have a really simple point to communicate today. But it is a crucial issue that I believe causes a lot of instability and confusion in the life of believers.

Is God Really Good?

On an intellectual level, most of us would agree that God is good. However, all of us have encountered situations and issues that have caused us to doubt God's goodness.

We Question God Goodness With...

- **Death of friend or loved one**
- **Sickness and disease**
- **Suffering**
- **Injustice**
- **Financial problems**
- **Relationship issues**
- **Unanswered prayer**
- **Many other situations**

God's Goodness has been Questioned from the Very Beginning

"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." — Genesis 3:4-5 (NLT)

Satan was claiming that God was withholding something good from Adam and Eve. He wanted to hold out the best for Himself. Since God was apparently not looking out for her best interest, Eve felt compelled to take over. The rest is history

Satan uses this same basic technique with people today. Why not? We still fall for it!

How can you fully follow god when you're not sure that He is really good?

That's the enemy's goal—to get us to doubt God's goodness, then we will quit following and serving God.

If God is Not Good...

- **Then what is?**
- **How can we ever even know what is good?**
 - **What we think or feel?**

- **What the world tells us?**
- **What Satan tells us?**
- **What we figure out with our own smarts?**
- **You've got to be kidding!**

What we think or feel changes moment by moment.

Getting our idea of good from the world is part of our problem.

I heard this story years ago. Taught me to not so quickly judge the value of events in my life.

“Long ago, there was a poor farmer who lived in China. He only had one horse to plow the fields to make a living. One day, the horse ran away. “Oh no!” cried the neighbors, “That is terrible!” The old farmer shrugged and said: “Good news, bad news – who knows”.

Several days later, the farmer’s horse returned to the farm with several wild horses following behind. The farmer and his son managed to capture the horses, all of them of great beauty. “Oh, how wonderful!” cried the neighbors. Once again, the farmer simply shrugged and said: “Good news, bad news – who knows”.

The next day, the farmer’s twenty-year-old-son managed to capture one of the wild horses, but while attempting to break the steed, was thrown and his leg badly broken. The neighbors rushed over, peering at the young man in bed, “Oh, this is awful news!” they cried. The farmer shrugged, “Good news, bad news, who knows?”

A few weeks later, the Chinese army came by, conscripting all the area’s young men for war raging in the south. They couldn’t take the young man with the broken leg...”

What is Good Anyway?

We are constantly judging whether things are good or bad, right or wrong, truth or lie. — Food, actions, people, ... we even judge God

I believe that God put that in us so we would not be deceived by false claims. Unfortunately, when Adam and Eve sinned, our internal knowledge of the standard of good got damaged.

As a result, we are constantly evaluating, but we don’t always come to the right conclusions.

This process of judging good and bad is so inherent in us, that we can begin to think that “good” is a standard that exists independently—even from God.

What Is the Standard of Good?

- **How is good identified?**

- **By definition, there cannot be a standard of good outside of God, or God is not God**
- **Therefore the true God must be the standard of good!**

We often define good as that which benefits us. However, something that benefits you may harm someone else. How can you call that good?

If there is something that the God of the Bible is subject to outside of Himself, then He is not truly God.

Unfortunately, we tend to imagine a God who does what we like. Then we determine whether or not God is good by how well He conforms to that image—an idol! This is a serious mistake.

God Defines Good

- **God is the standard AND source of all that is truly good**
- **Good is that which conforms to...**
 - His Nature
 - His Character
 - His Will
- **By default, all that is...**
 - Godly (like God) is good & right
 - Ungodly (not like God) is bad, wrong, & evil

God is Good!

Only God is Really Good

“Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. ...” — Matthew 19:17 (NLT)

It doesn't matter how good your mother was, God is the only one who is truly good.

Goodness is Evidence of God's Presence

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, — Galatians 5:22 (NLT)

for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth,
— Ephesians 5:9 (NKJV)

Evidence of God's presence and influence in a person's life

Fruit: results, produce, something that follows naturally from

God Wants Good for All

The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.
— Psalm 145:9 (NLT)

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. — 2 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

God has given us all a free will. He will not force anyone to accept forgiveness for sins. So He waits patiently, giving as much opportunity as possible for people to choose life. Unfortunately, not all will accept His offer.

Jesus Showed God's Goodness

... Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. — Acts 10:38 (NLT)

"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, — John 10:14 (NLT)

Jesus did good to undo the bad that the devil does.

It is not surprising that the devil does all kinds of bad stuff, then blames God for it.

What's amazing is that we fall for that lie so easily!

A good shepherd risks his own life to protect the sheep—not like a hired hand who is only interested in himself and his paycheck.

Ultimate Expression of Good

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. — Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. — John 15:12-13 (NLT)

Goodness puts the true well being of others before your own well being. That is a foreign concept in today's secular culture

We're To Be Good Like God

"Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. — Luke 6:35 (NLT)

God is good; therefore, we are to be good. Follow God's example.
It is easy to do good to those who are nice or who can benefit you.

Judging Good

So how can we determine what is really good?

Not Equipped to Judge Good

- **We are not really good (Mat 19:17)**
- **We do not accurately see reality**
- **We judge from a limited perspective**
 - **As events affect ourselves**
 - **As events affect those we know**
 - **As events affect those we know about**
 - **As events affect a narrow slice of time**

And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.
— James 4:3 (NLT)

Even though we constantly evaluate what is good, we are not equipped to do it well.
We are basically self-centered and judge good by how it affects us.

We Don't Have All the Facts

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. — 1 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)

This is an important attitude to maintain in a believer's life.

The Larger Story

From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that ... he would suffer many terrible things ... He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead. But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!" Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's." — Matthew 16:21-23 (NLT)

Crucifixion of Jesus was a bad thing, but it served a much greater good. Peter could not see the big story. We make the same mistake!

Why Is It Important...

...to be convinced that God is good?

Required For Knowing God

- **Cannot hope to know God or His will if do not know and believe God's claim that He is good.**

And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. — Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)

Cuts off Enemy's Ability

- **Disables many of the enemy's lies and deceptions when you have a rock solid commitment to the goodness of God.**

Being convinced of God's goodness cuts off the enemy's ability to deceive. I may not understand why this happened, but I know for sure that God is good. I will not entertain the devil's lies and doubts. Imagine what may have happened if Eve had been fully convinced of God's goodness when the devil tempted her.

Source of Stability & Direction

The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him. — Nahum 1:7 (NLT)

- **When we doubt God's goodness, we feel justified in deciding for ourselves what is right and wrong.**

What Can We Do?

Establish Your Heart

- **Know**
 - God's ways and word
- **Believe**
 - Choose to believe God's truth
- **Faith**
 - For we walk by faith, not by sight.
— 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV)
- **Trust**
 - That God is good as He claims to be
- **Be filled with God's Spirit**

- Experience God's goodness personally

Understand Your Limitations

- **Acknowledge that you do not have all the facts**
- **Recognize that your perception of reality is limited and distorted**
... The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." — 1 Samuel 16:7 (NLT)

For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. — Isaiah 55:9 (NLT)

It is foolish to make decisions when you don't have enough information.

Only God has a totally accurate view of reality. We need to hear God's perspective.

We must interpret events of this world in the context of God's goodness rather than interpret God's goodness in the context of events around us!

Even Bad Can Accomplish Good

- **Betrayal of Joseph**

You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. — Genesis 50:20 (NLT)

Sold into slavery by brothers

Lies got him fired and put in prison

Yet God developed his character and used him to provide for the nation of Israel

- **The Cross of Jesus**

He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross. — Colossians 2:14-15 (NLT)

Maybe a flat tire delays you enough to avoid a traffic accident.

I've had to work to learn to quit complaining about problems and to begin cultivating a thankful heart.

Embrace Character Growth

...when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. — James 1:2-4 (NLT)

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. — Romans 8:28 (NLT)

There are things that we will think are not good, but they can produce a greater good when given to God. God is not saying that the bad is good, but that He can turn things around to accomplish good when a person's life is submitted to Him.

See the Larger Story

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. — 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NLT)

The context of the larger story includes

Eternity

God's Kingdom

People

All of creation

This Is Not Our Home

All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ... But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. — Hebrews 11:13-16 (NLT)

Part of the larger story.

Overcome Evil with Good

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. ... Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads." Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. — Romans 12:17-21 (NLT)

God Is Really Good!

Have I proved that God is good? That was not my goal!

God has thoroughly proven and demonstrated His own goodness.

There will always be things we don't understand. We live in a broken world with other broken people. Our bad choices made from our own free will impact us and others with bad things.

But God is working a great good in the midst of all this brokenness. And He is worthy of our trust.

So choose to trust His goodness—even when you don't understand.

It is critical that you establish in your heart that God is good like He says. Then judge all you see and hear in the context of God's goodness. Otherwise, your Christian walk will never become stable.

It's time to settle the issue once and for all.