

GOD OF THE PARADOXES

Devotional #7



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Foundational Scriptures:

Galatians 5:22-23 NLT

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Ephesians 5:17-21 NLT

¹⁷ Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. ¹⁸ Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. ²⁰ And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

2 Peter 3:18 NLT

¹⁸ Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen.

Matthew 7:15-20 NLT

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions. ¹⁴ And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight. ¹⁵ And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him— ¹⁶ speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction. ¹⁷ You already know these things, dear friends. So be on guard; then, you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. ¹⁸ Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen.

Helpful Hints to manage this devotional:

- Set aside 1 hour each day for time with God and his word.
- **Suggestion:** 30 minutes, possibly in the morning, 30 minutes in the evening.
- Read and write daily at your pace so that by the weekend, you have completed the week's devotional. The design is that you don't have to find a starting point to study; just do it. Get an accountability partner to read and study the devotional.

"A tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love."-Saint Basil

We return to the fruit of the Spirit, as our emphasis here is on growing, maturing, and producing.

Relevant question: How do you know you're growing, maturing, and producing?

When you understand that God is a God of Paradoxes!

Jonathan McReynolds song: God is Good
May your struggles keep you near the cross
May your troubles show that you need God
And may your battles end the way they should
May your bad days prove that God is good
May your whole life prove that God is good

Paradox defined:

A statement or proposition that, despite sound (or sound) reasoning from acceptable premises, leads to a conclusion that seems senseless, logically unacceptable, or self-contradictory.

While **kindness** and **goodness** are close, they are not the same.

Dr. R. Timothy Jones writes in "*Vital Signs*" that kindness is righteousness in attitude and goodness is righteousness in actions, that kindness reflects the heart and goodness might reflect the hand.

Mark 10:18 NLT

¹⁸ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good.

Psalms 100:5 NLT

⁵ For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Goodness is God's nature, not ours!

We are called to do two things:

1. Be good
2. Do good

Matthew 5:16 NLT

¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

"Some people are better by nature than others are by practice."-Dr. Ralph Douglas West

Called B.E. Good

2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Instead of trying to be the G.O.A.T....try just being good! You can miss being great, but being good is obtainable.

A mother told her son to be good." He said I will for 50 cents!" His mother replied," Why don't you be good or nothing like most people?"

Matthew 5:13 NLT

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

BEING good takes CHARACTER.

Character is everything!

Convictions govern conduct, and character keeps one from any conduct.

Some things you don't D.O., no matter who else does it.

Relevant question: What are **YOUR** convictions? What do you believe? Why?

Write here: _____

The mall has written " codes of conduct"; other places also do.

What are yours?

Character is not who you are, S.A.Y. You are! Character is **WHO** you are in the dark, with no clothes on.

People don't act out of character; they act like they are.

Friends don't change on you; they get tired of acting.

Christian character is not guided by what is legal, ethical, or moral but by what is **SPIRITUAL**.....and I'm not talking about" spooky spiritual."

So many people are trying to mix spirituality with horror, as in horoscopes!

1. Legal is instituted by the law
2. Social standards create ethics.
3. An individual's convictions form the moral.
4. The Word of God establishes the spiritual.

Sow a thought, reap an act;
Sow an act, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny.

"You are the only person who can assassinate your character."
Called the D.O. Good

I Peter 4:10 NLT

¹⁰ God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

Ministry is the commitment to serve "OTHERS," and every believer is called to that ministry.

Relevant question: Who are you serving besides the pastor(if so)?

Leaders, etc, in the church?

What's your "WHY? WHY now?"

Explain here: _____

3 Keys to Effective Ministry

1. Ability

"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it." -Lou Holtz

2. Availability

The church belongs to Jesus Christ, but the ministry belongs to us. One's ability is only possible with their availability. Showing up is a significant 1st step!

3. Accountability

An excuse is easy to find and even easier to create. It has been said that we can dodge responsibilities, but we cannot dodge the consequences of doing so.

Motive is how we are blessed or cursed. Do good because it's right to do!

We serve God by serving others and not just the ones we like.

Philippians 2:1-4 ESV

¹Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? ²Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

You're a hireling if you always have to get something for everything you do, even if you're not serving. As soon as the higher bid comes, you're on to the next. Seasons don't come and go as fast as some people change jobs or commitments.

John Wesley's Rule

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as you can.

"In the end, the good will triumph." -Euripides

Devotional Discussion Questions.....

1. What is the correlation between kindness and goodness?
2. How do we give glory to God?
3. What does it mean to be the salt of the earth?
4. Is there a difference between one's character and one's reputation?
5. **Read I Peter 4:10.** What is your gift? How are you using your gift to serve others?

Monday

Read Psalm 100

"Love is not only something you feel; it's something you do."

David Wilkerson

How can you praise God for His goodness?

Tuesday

Read Psalm 51:10

Romans 12:21

"Love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is done well." Vincent Van Gogh

Ask God to touch your heart and make it better.

Wednesday

Read Psalm 27:13

I Thessalonians 5:18 NLT

¹⁸ Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

"You can't lead the people if you don't love the people. You can't save the people if you don't serve the people."- Cornel West

Thank someone for an act of goodness that they showed toward you.

Thursday

Read Psalm 119:105 and Psalm 133

Matthew 5:13-16

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

Leo Tolstoy

How can you be a better Christian?

Friday

Read Proverbs 22:9

Matthew 7:21

"How far that little candle throws his beams!

So shines a good deed in a weary world."

William Shakespeare

Do something for someone not related to you.