

Easter Weekend - 2016

Problems with the “Good people go to heaven” theory:

1. It’s hard to know how good you have to be?

“I grew up believing and was still convinced into adulthood that a person’s goodness is what pleased God most. By the time I was in early adulthood, I already had so many acts of unrighteousness credited to my account that I thought I’d have to live to be one hundred without a single mistake to tip the scale toward God’s approval.”

-Beth Moore

2. Who decides what’s really ‘good’?
3. The Bible doesn’t teach it.

- What about the New Testament? (Romans 3:10; 3:23; 6:23; Titus 3:5)

“Because of his kindness, you have been saved through trusting Christ. And even trusting is not of yourselves; it too is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good we have done, so none of us can take any credit for it.” Ephesians 2:8-9 (TLB)

- What about the Old Testament?
- What does Jesus teach?

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (NIV)

The “Good people go” theory leaves us with 2 ugly issues:

1. You’ve got to work impossibly hard for your salvation.
2. You’ve got to worry constantly about your salvation.

Good people don’t go to heaven – Forgiven people go to heaven!

“If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9 (NIV)

Leadership Tip!

Do you have potential leaders in your life group?
Consider discussing with them about attending life group leadership training.
Or, schedule to have the training at one of your life group meetings.

3:16 - EASTER**STARTER QUESTIONS:**

How does somebody get to heaven?

What does being GOOD mean to you?

Will there be BAD people in heaven?

MAIN IDEA:

Easter celebrates Jesus' resurrection from the dead, which proves his claims to be God's son who came to die as a substitute for our sin so we can know God personally.

Unfortunately, too many people believe that there is a good God in a good heaven and the way to get into that good heaven is by doing good things and avoiding bad things.

The LIE: You get to heaven by being good.

Why do you think so many people feel this way?

How do you know how good you have to be to qualify for heaven?

Key Scripture:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” *John 3:16 (NIV)*

By far this is the most popular verse in the bible. As Pastor Hank demonstrated, it shows up in some interesting places other than in scripture. It is probably the most memorized verse in history but there is a bigger piece to the story.

This verse is in the midst of a conversation that Jesus was having with Nicodemus, a Pharisee. Let's take a look at John 3:1-21.

HAVE SOMEONE READ JOHN 3:1-21

So we see that Jesus spoke these words to a religious guy who was headed for hell but thought he would wind up in heaven because of how good he was.

What are some things that stick out to you in these verses?

How does reading this change your view of the impact of John 3:16?

Hank referenced a quote from Beth Moore that has a terrific perspective of using good works to get to heaven:

“I grew up believing and was still convinced into adulthood that a person’s goodness is what pleased God most. By the time I was in early adulthood, I already had so many acts of unrighteousness credited to my account that I thought I’d have to live to be one hundred without a single mistake to tip the scale toward God’s approval.” -Beth Moore

Let’s look at two verses in Ephesians that pretty much clears up that good works won’t bring you salvation.

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So the true way to heaven is by having a personal relationship with Christ. Good works should be part of our spiritual walk, but they are not to accumulate points like a video game.

Where do good deeds fit into our Christian life?

Does our salvation mean that we can be bad and get away with it? Why not?

FINAL THOUGHTS:

How does this lesson affect your approach to good deeds?

When we put all of our faith in Jesus Christ for our salvation, we don’t have to work hard any more for salvation, or worry about where you’re going to spend eternity.

One of the best examples of good works not equaling a trip to heaven is the thief that died next to Jesus on the cross. In his dying breath, he asked for forgiveness and I am certain he is in heaven today.

Don’t be mixed up, we are still challenged with the great commission to take the message of Salvation to everyone. This should be where we focus our good works. If you have taken Coastal 401, this ties into how we should be sharing our faith.

Is there someone in your life that needs to know good deeds don't mean salvation?

Take the first step by being genuine in your faith and helping them to understand that salvation in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the only way to guarantee heaven.

How can we as a group pray for you?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE:

Romans 3:10

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

Romans 10:9

Titus 3:5

FAMILY FOCUS

It can be common for children who are raised in our churches to profess Christ at a young age and then become wrapped up in living a good life for Jesus. Slowly their salvation becomes dependent on their good works and they forget the power of the true gospel message. This lesson from 2 Peter will remind children that their good works must be based upon their faith first. Faith in Christ is the foundation for everything a Christian does.

Materials Needed: a glass jar, a sharpie marker, six ping pong balls, one bag of rice

Another option would be use colored bouncy balls instead of ping pong balls. You could send one home with each kid and challenge them to live out that virtue during the week and report back.

"I am going to begin with one very important question. What needs to happen in a person's life for them to be saved from their sins and spend their eternal life with God in heaven?" Take answers from the children.

"A person must believe and put their trust in Jesus Christ dying on the cross on their behalf. They must believe that Jesus' death saved them from their sins by taking the punishment of God's wrath for them. They must put their faith in Jesus."

"Faith is the beginning of everything in the Christian life."

Open your Bibles to the book of 2 Peter. We are going to read together from chapter one verses five through eight. Read the passage aloud.

"In verse five Peter begins by telling us to supplement our faith. That means our faith in Jesus comes first. Everything we do comes after our faith in Jesus." Place the glass jar on a table where all the children can see it. "This glass jar will be representing our faith in Jesus today."

“After Peter stated that our faith comes first. He made a list of good things for us to do and be after we have put our faith in Jesus’ work on the cross.” “What is the first good thing in the list?” Virtue.

“What is virtue?” Take answers from the children. “Virtue is living a life that is good. Doing the right thing and making good choices.”

Choose one child to come up and pick a ping pong ball. Write the word virtue on the ball with the sharpie marker. Have the child drop the ping pong ball into the glass jar.

“What is the second thing on the list after virtue?” Knowledge. “What is knowledge?” Take answers from the children.

“Knowledge is to know about something, which in this case would be to know about God and the Bible.”

Choose one child to come up and pick a ping pong ball. Write the word knowledge on the ball with the sharpie marker. Have the child drop the ping pong ball into the glass jar. “After we put our faith in Jesus it is good to have virtue and knowledge, but our faith must come first to hold the virtue and knowledge together in our life.”

“What comes after knowledge in the list?” Self-control. “What is self-control?” Take answers from the children. “Self-control is having control of your actions, feelings, and words.”

Choose one child to come up and pick a ping pong ball. Write the word self-control on the ping pong ball with the sharpie marker. Have the child drop the ping pong ball into the glass jar. “God wants us to have a life full of virtue, knowledge, and self-control, but first we must put our faith in Him. Without faith in the work of the cross, our good works in our life will fall apart just like these ping pong balls would all roll away without this glass jar to hold them together.”

“What is next on Peter’s list?” Steadfastness. “What is steadfastness?” Take answers from the children. “Steadfastness is keeping a set direction. Moving in the right direction at all times and not giving up.”

Choose one child to come up and pick a ping pong ball. Write the word steadfastness on the ping pong ball with the sharpie marker. Have the child drop the ping pong ball into the glass jar. “In order to be steadfast in our life we must first have faith in Jesus’ work on the cross. It is hard to keep your life moving in the right direction if you do not know the right direction in which it should go. Having faith in Jesus helps you to know the right direction.”

“What is next on Peter’s list?” Godliness. “What is godliness?” Take answers from the children. “Godliness is living in the way God would want you to live.”

Choose one child to come up and pick a ping pong ball. Write the word godliness on the ping pong ball with the sharpie marker. Have the child drop the ping pong ball into the glass jar. “We cannot know how to live in the way God wants us to unless we first put our faith in Him. Faith comes before all other good things we do in our life.”

“What is next on Peter’s list?” Brotherly Affection. “What is brotherly affection?” Take answers from the children. “Brotherly affection is caring about the well-being of the people around you.”

Choose one child to come up and pick a ping pong ball. Write the word brotherly affection on the ping pong ball with the sharpie marker. Have the child drop the ping pong ball into the glass jar.

“Understanding how much God cared for us to send Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins will help us to then care for others. Remembering Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross will help us to make sacrifices in caring for others. Our faith in Jesus must come first before our brotherly affection.”

“What is the last good thing in Peter’s list?” Love. “Love is special because love should be a part of every good thing we do in our life. We should grow in knowledge because we love God. We should have self-control over our words and actions because we love others. We should be steadfast out of our love for God and others.” “Turn to 1 Corinthians 16:14.” Read this verse aloud. “All that we do should be done in love.”

Choose a child to come up and take the bag of rice. The child will pour the rice into the glass jar covering the ping pong balls. “This rice represents love in your life. It covers all of the good deeds you do in your life. Yet even love is held together by your faith in Jesus’ dying on the cross of your behalf.”

Read aloud 2 Peter 1:5-8 one more time. “Why does God want us to live out this list of good things in our life?” Take answers from the children. “We live out these good things as a demonstration of our faith in Christ. These good things are fruit in our Christian life. They show that we have life within us that wants to live for God.”

“What comes first before we can live any of these good things? What is the foundation? What holds all of these good things together?”

“Our faith in Jesus Christ dying on the cross on our behalf to save us from our sins by taking the punishment of God’s wrath for us.” “The Christian life begins with faith and then has love poured all over it!”