

There is a term out there that I have always loathed: do-gooder. It's often used as an insult, its technical definition being "A well-intentioned but naïve and often ineffectual social or political reformer." What a terrible thing to say about someone. It's a dismissive, marginalizing, and condescending way to characterize a person with a deep passion and unwavering devotion to do good in this world and have a lasting impact. It's why these characters are always great for movies; they keep going and keep going and, by the end of the movie, they've made a difference.

I want to redeem that word this morning because **Christians are called to be do-gooders**. Our witness goes beyond our words. The actions of our lives are a reflection of what we believe and the product of how we've been changed by Jesus. In Galatians 5, Paul gives this young church the Royal Law of Love that summarizes all we're called to do: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And one of the primary ways we live that out is by doing good to others.

But we can get tired doing good. Life beats us up, we get in our own way, and we question if it matters... **does doing good do any good?** Let's answer that question this morning by looking at the purpose of it, talking about what might prevent us from doing so, and seeing how **doing good may be the simplest, but most impactful, way we engage this culture together**.

[Galatians 6:9-10] ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

As we engage culture, Paul says one of the primary ways to do that is to do good. This is not a one-time action. It's a posture and lifestyle. Our default should be to do good. But what is "good"? **Good is doing something for someone else that is in their best interest.** It may be a material gift, physical assistance, act of service, or spiritual and emotional encouragement. **When we do good, we leave someone's life better than how we found it.** That's the purpose of being a do-gooder, but that's also generic, so let's expand that purpose.

We do good because good is better than bad.

Profound! I know. Why start there? There's a sentiment often expressed that we easily dismiss because it's kind of sentimental. "I just want to make the world a better place." But guess what?!?! That's a biblical idea.

[Matthew 5:44-45] ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

This is Jesus' love your enemies passage, and I want you to focus on the second part. If you are a believer, you have received the grace that saves us (salvific) grace, and the grace that refines us (sanctifying). That grace is reserved for believers. But there is another grace God pours out on all people: common grace. When you do good, you are a conduit of God's common grace.

I was at lunch with an old friend and church member a couple weeks ago. We went to Norma's...also known as my second home. And, after we gave our order, my friend asked our waitress how we could pray for her. She had a lot! And she was genuinely touched and

encouraged by his gesture. Was it a life-altering moment? No. Did she trust in Christ right then and there? No. But it was a sliver of goodness in what is clearly a difficult time for her, and **it may have just been the best part of her day.**

Imagine how different the world would be if every Christian decided to give everyone we encounter a sliver of goodness, if we were responsible for lots of people's best part of their day. Think about the difference Christians can make in Afghanistan and Haiti right now if they each do just a sliver of good, and sliver gets stacked upon sliver upon sliver. We talk about engaging culture and need to be strategic. But what if our first instinct was to just do more good in this world of bad? **Our goodness simply makes the world "gooder", and that's a good thing.**

We do good because good was done to us.

If you are the follower of Jesus, you are the recipient of the eternal and glorious good Jesus did through his life, death, and resurrection. And if we really let that hit our hearts and respond to that goodness, we'll be moved to do good someone else.

[Titus 2:11-14] ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

The good Jesus did was to give himself to the point of death on a cross and rise three days later to buy us back from sin and death. Whoever accepts that good for themselves by putting their faith in him is not only saved to eternal life, but is set apart today to respond to his good works by zealously doing good works ourselves. **Jesus did good to you so you could do good to others.** It's not a have to, it's a get to, because of what's been done for us. How do you feel when you really take to heart what Jesus did for you?

The concept of "Pay it forward" was first coined in 1916 by Lily Hardy Hammond's book *In the Garden of Delight*. The concept is that you pass on to someone else a good that has been done for you. When we recognize the infinite good Jesus did to us by laying his life down for his friends, we will joyfully pay it forward by doing good to others.

We do good because good declares the Gospel.

I don't know if you will have 100 opportunities to **share** the Gospel this week, but I am sure you'll have 100 opportunities to **show** the Gospel this week. We present the Gospel in both words and works. Our works demonstrate the words we've believed and show the life change that occurs when you begin to follow Jesus. When we do good, it often leads to an opportunity to share the good news.

I remember one of our serve days from a few years back and one of the beneficiaries of those projects looked at me kind of funny and said, "Why are you doing this for me?" It's the question we all want. I said, "Because I love Jesus because he loved me and we want to show you the love he has for you by doing this for you." **The Gospel went from some spiritual idea to tangible**

action through a changed life. Your goodness can be what God uses to draw those far from him, hostile to him, or indifferent to him. **We don't do good simply as a means to get to the Gospel. We do good and the Gospel can't help but be seen and felt.**

So, who does this good go to? Everyone, because God loves all people. We start with the household of God, the church. As in a home, family needs are met first, then those of neighbors. Now you may say "Wait, I thought we were talking about engaging culture. This is to the church first?" Yes. But it's not an either/or. The more good we do to one another the more good will pour over into the culture. And the more good we do to one another, the more the culture sees that good and is drawn to it. Think of Acts 2. Believers were certainly sharing the Gospel, but the culture was just as captivated by this new community sharing everything with each other.

I want to celebrate the good this church has been doing just this year: great stories from Life Groups, 25 Fellowship families' needs taken care of, 48 teachers at Fellowship encouraged, 486 people impacted through blood drives, 1,400 first responders given meals and cards of encouragement, over 1,000 families blessed through food drives, 46 coats for refugee kids, 500 people fed through our supported ministry partners, and 650 children blessed through Operation Christmas Child. And that's not an exhaustive list. The good you did improved someone's life and showed them the goodness of God.

Easy enough? Not really. Verse 9 encourages us to not grow weary of doing good because Paul knows a lot can get in the way. **Are you satisfied with the amount of good you are doing these days?** If not, I want to go through some ideas as to why that may be happening and encourage us all to do a prayerful self-diagnostic.

Persecution: If you are paying the price for doing good in the name of Jesus, you may grow weary. Remember a couple of weeks ago in 1 Peter that our perseverance in that is part of our testimony and could lead to an opportunity to talk about the hope we have in Christ.

Exhaustion: When I'm wiped out, I can still see opportunities to do good, but I don't have the energy or motivation to do it. We are overcommitted and overextended, and the result is no margin to do good. What do you need to cut out?

Resentment: A lack of forgiveness will eat us up from the inside out, and you will have no interest in doing good for someone you are hostile towards. Contemplate what you have been forgiven and let God lead you to forgiving someone else.

Spiritual malnourishment: The fruits of the Spirit are? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness... **If you want the power and grace of God manifested in your life, you have to spend time at the source.** Our distance from people oftentimes is a result of our distance from God. Prayer is to the spiritual life what breathing is to the physical life, and we don't live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Unrepentant sin: When we are running in the opposite direction of God our hearts will grow hard, our lives will be about ourselves, and the only goodness we're interested in is what's good

for us. God has no condemnation for you. Confess your sins and be restored. God wants to use you.

Selfish motivation: The praise of man is an idol I have had in my life and it will eat you up if you do good to get glory. Run to the cross and remember you are fully accepted and approved by God.

Keeping score: Growing up, my brothers and I struggled to remember the day of the week, but we never forgot when we cleaned out the dishwasher when it was someone else's turn. Time to pay up! We can wait to do good until someone does good to us. Thankfully Jesus didn't think that way. Go first because God went first with you.

Legalism: When we think we have to do good in order to earn God's favor, we'll fall on our face after a while. But flip back to chapter 5. For freedom's sake Christ has set you free. Jesus kept the Law for us and we have freedom to live a godly life not to earn anything but to joyfully pass on what has been given to us.

Hopelessness: Does doing good really do any good? Does it really matter? It's so easy to look at the world right now and think "What a total mess. What difference could I make?" Maybe you've been doing good, have nothing to show for it, and are ready to give up trying. It seems Paul anticipates this one specifically. There is a promise we must hold fast to. V9 "...for in due season we will reap..." You've heard me say multiple times, God is the one in charge of results. **We do good and leave it up to God to do good with it.**

William Carey was an English pastor and led the Serampore mission to India. He loved on those people for seven years and had nothing to show for it. Finally, on December 28, 1800, he baptized Krishna Pal in the Ganges River. It was the beginning of a great movement of the Gospel there, but it only happened because Carey did not grow weary in doing good.

Some of you have been praying for your kids for years, loving your unresponsive neighbors regularly, working with integrity while co-workers seem to get ahead by not, and you're struggling to see what you have to show for it. Here's the promise of God: Your goodness will bear fruit. It may be a little. It may be a lot. It may be long after your gone. Or it may be in eternity. God is asking you to be faithful by doing good and letting him take care of the rest. Don't stop now. Something may be about to bloom.

Become a goodness opportunist. Paul says, "as we have opportunity, do good." In other words, have your antennae up, and act when you see it. An opportunity is a need we see and understand and one we can meet. You can't solve world hunger, but you can feed a family in need.

Martha and I were walking one evening a few weeks ago and a lady in our neighborhood was dragging a table to the street. It was an opportunity to do good. So, I ran over there, said "You need some help?", grabbed the table and quickly lifted it and, in that moment, three things happened: First, the table was absurdly heavy and my back said, "What are you doing, bro?" Second, I looked at the lady with abundant admiration because the table probably weighed as

much as she did. And, third, I did a sliver of good. It didn't change her life, but goodness occurred in the moment, and who knows what God will do with it.

Opportunities to do good are everywhere, in your life group, for your neighbors, with your coworkers. I've never met someone who earnestly looked for opportunities to do good and couldn't find them. Open your eyes and respond when God shows you.

Come home. I've had this Sunday, this passage, this moment, on my radar for some time so that I could say that to you. We have been in a tough season that pushed us to gather digitally, distanced, and masked, and it has come at a great cost. So, when it looked like the pandemic was waning, I was ready to call you all back to the church. It's not, but I'm still going to do so when it's time for you. **We belong to one another and God has given us to each other to do good to one another.** We are the household of God and we need you and you need us. I love the way we have responded with our digital ministry, but thinking that is an adequate substitute for being present with your faith family is false. As I heard Tony Evans recently say, "I don't have to go to church to be a Christian. That's absolutely right. Salvation is by grace through faith alone. But you also don't have to go home to be married, but stay away long enough and your relationship will be affected."

It's time for all of us to come home, to gather as one, to lift our collective voices up to God in worship and do good to one another in community. **And as we engage this culture, one of the greatest goods we can do is invite others into our family.** It's not about getting our attendance numbers up. It's because there are things that can only happen when we are face-to-face. As we do good to one another, that goodness will pour out into the culture, and who knows what God will do with it. **When we do good, we express the heart of God, manifest the love of God, and extend the invitation of God to everyone we encounter.** Doing good is good.

We close this morning with a talk with someone who has done a lot of good and will continue to do a lot of good for our church and community. For the last seventeen years, Mike Heinz has led in our Student Ministry. Personally, he has ministered to all three of my boys and Martha and I will thank him for all eternity. He has impacted so many families in our church, loved our neighbors to the east, and has a legacy of goodness at Fellowship Dallas. That's why I'm sad to announce that Mike is stepping out of that role. He will be missed. But it's also why I'm thrilled to announce that Mike will be stepping into the role of Care Pastor for Fellowship.