Fruit of the Spirit

Lesson 6: GOODNESS

INTRODUCTION

In Luke 8:4-8 Jesus tells the parable about the sower distributing seed over four kinds of soil. He compares the seed's growth on the path, on rocky ground, in weed-infested soil, and in "good" soil. The good soil, Jesus says, produced a crop of up to one hundred times what the farmer sowed—a bumper crop.

God, of course, is good (Mark 10:18). And since the Spirit of God has moved into our hearts along with faith in Jesus, he has brought his goodness into our lives. Let's search the Scriptures for evidence of God's bumper crop of goodness and then discover how his goodness will show itself in our lives.

STUDYING GOD'S WORD: God's Goodness

1.) As we read select verses of Psalm 118, let's list the characteristics of God's goodness.

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

5 In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free.
6 The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?
7 The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.

13 I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

15 Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous:
"The LORD's right hand has done mighty things!
16 The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"

17 I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.
18 The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;
23 the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.
24 This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

28 You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.
29 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

2.) Based on Psalm 118, identify some ways that grateful believers will respond to God's goodness.

3.) Comment on this statement: I know God is a good God, but I don't expect him to be good to me because I don't deserve his goodness.

LIVING GOD'S GOODNESS

The Spirit's goodness empowers and motivates us to demonstrate God's goodness in our lives. "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

But living out his goodness is a struggle. For example, Paul describes the struggle between his old Adam and new man, "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:18,19). The New Testament frequently notes that the opposite of good is evil. If we are to understand how the Spirit's goodness will exhibit itself in our lives, it's helpful to understand what the mirror image of goodness is as well.

1.) Where does evil come from and how does evil demonstrate itself?

> **Mark 7:21-23** "For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, [22] greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. [23] All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

2.) Romans 12:21 tells us to use good to defeat evil in our lives: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Comment on how the following passages urge us to live out that principle.

- **Romans 12:9** Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.
- **Galatians 6:9-10** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. [10] Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.
- **Ephesians 4:28-29** He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. [29] Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:15** Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.
- **3 John 11** Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.

HIS WORD & MY LIFE

1.) Evaluate: A person who does what he agreed to do for another is a just person. A person who does more than he agreed to do is a good person.

2.) Someone has observed that goodness is easier to recognize than to define. In the book of Acts, we are introduced to two good people: Barnabas (4:32-37; 11:22-24) and Dorcas (9:36-39). What was it about them that people recognized as good?

> **Acts 4:32-37** All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. [33] With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. [34] There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales [35] and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. [36] Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), [37] sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.
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> **Acts 11:22-24** News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. [23] When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. [24] He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

> **Acts 9:36-39** In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. [37] About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. [38] Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" [39] Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

3.) Evaluate: There are so many needs in this world that I find it hard to determine where to start. So I've adopted this as my guideline: Does this person deserve my good works?

SUMMARY

> *The Spirit planted us in the soil of his goodness when he brought us to faith in Jesus. We now experience a bumper crop of his presence in our lives. We yearn to reflect his goodness in everything we do and with everyone we meet.*

PRAYER