

A New Hope – Goodness 7

This week, we are going to explore the aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit known as Goodness. Any encounter with the goodness of God, will be amazingly overwhelming. ***Do you know that every day you will be overwhelmed?***

- The question is... what will you be overwhelmed by? We can be overwhelmed by our circumstances, or shame or guilt, or powerlessness and so on... **Or** we can be overwhelmed by the goodness of God.

The good news is we get to choose. The Good News about goodness, it is always present. But what we have to learn... is how to respond to goodness.

When Moses asked to see the **glory of God** in Exodus 33, God answered him in verse 19 saying, “*I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you*” and that goodness was so overwhelming, Moses human body would not be able to survive it. So God put Moses in cleft of a rock and covered him when He passed.

Then as Moses spend time with God, the glory/goodness of God was so amazing it made Moses face glow. Everybody saw it, so Moses had to wear a veil! The goodness of God was so powerful. it was beyond human capacity to look at. **Of course,** until we become a new creation in Jesus Christ, that was designed for the fullness of God. **Now we can live in the presence of God's goodness.**

- For a believer, our lives are all about living in the fullness of God's glory and goodness. **God's goodness is God's promise that brings us victory in life!**

No matter what happens to us, even the ugliest things life or anything Satan throws at us, God uses it for good. ***Our only requirement – the condition of that promise - is we love God and live in his purpose - that's Romans 8:28.***

What's your purpose? Your reason for living - Baptism! It's not just to exist or live, your primary purpose on Earth is to be an accurate reflection of the true nature of God. Remember, you were made in the image of God.

- **Remember the 23rd Psalm?** In Psalm 23:6 it says, “*Surely* (The word surely means absolutely) *surely goodness and mercy will follow me all of the days of my life!*” **That means the goodness of God follows you, no... it tracks you down all of the days of your life!** It pursues you!
- The goodness of God is not just present when you behave well or perform well... and it doesn't leave you on the days you mess up. It is with you all of the days of your life. You have to come to terms with that relentless goodness – the Goodness of God just won't leave you alone.

You don't have to talk the Lord out of the goodness he wants to give you, you only receive and practice it!

Definitions are important! The biblical definition of **GOODNESS**, to look out for someone's welfare, acting with honor, and blessing others by encouraging them.

- **That's exactly what God wants to do for you.** The goodness of God is in your life so you bless others and build the Kingdom of God.
- The Biblical definition of God's Goodness also means *moral quality* **or integrity**. ***What we will do next is talk about how to practice God's Goodness, live integrity!***

INTEGRITY IS **DECIDING** TO BLEND MY **HEART'S** VALUES
INTO MY **DAILY** ACTIONS.

The key word is "**deciding**"; integrity is something you **decide** to do. Since goodness is a characteristic of God, and one characteristic of fruit of the Spirit, we're going to talk about how we can practice Goodness or integrity in our lives. Let's go back to **1 Chronicles 29:10-18**, King David prayed to God for the people who willingly gave for the building of the great Temple.

According to today's scripture integrity is one of the things that pleases' God. In verse 17, we hear "*I know, my God, that You test the heart and are pleased with integrity.*" ***Integrity is important to God,*** and down deep - it's important to us too! We want integrity between our heart's values and our actions. **Whether we know it or not, we often struggle or are frustrated because our heart's values do not always work into our daily actions.**

Let me explain... a recent Gallup poll reported, "**The #1 problem Americans face is inconsistent values.**" We say "I don't want to be materialistic", but we spend a lot of money. We say "It's important for me to spend a lot of time with my kids", but we're often times too busy to spend a lot of time with them. We say, "Intimate conversations with my spouse are important", but then we go weeks not having those kinds of conversations."

We often struggle and get frustrated because we aren't blending our hearts values or what we believe - into our daily actions! That's because the Goodness of God's is relentlessly pursuing us and working on us!

How do we practice the Goodness of God? We look at the attitudes we can incorporate into our lives, and trust God to provide the power to live it!

All to help us discover God's solutions and victory. And when you and I have integrity in our lives, integrity or God's goodness provides us with 3 benefits:

1. **Protection -- less fear.** Psalm 25 explains, "May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in You."
2. **Security -- greater confidence.** Proverbs 10 says, "The man of integrity walks securely."
3. **Guidance -- better decisions.** Integrity provides internal guidance system so we make better decisions. Proverbs 11, "The integrity of the upright guides them."

When we put protection, security and guidance together - God will transform us into a person who has the self-assurance and confidence that enables and strengthens relationships.

Now how do you and I practice Goodness or integrity?

1. First is to: **SPEAK HONESTLY**

George Burns once said, “The most important thing about acting, is honesty. If you can fake that, you've got it made.” **But** you can't fake honesty to people you're closest to. They know if you're honest, and without honesty, trust almost evaporates to nothing. The Apostle Paul **explains** in Ephesians that we are to “*Speak the truth in a spirit of love*”. But often have we seen someone speak truth as if it were a club? They don't tell the truth - they hit you with it over the head. They don't speak truth with love.

Now let's be honest, how many of us struggle with TRUTH? One survey reported that 91% of Americans lie in some manner. Think about it, “How often do we just not tell the truth?” ***We may not think of it as a lack of integrity in our lives, because it is a fear of what may happen if we do tell the truth.***

With friends - they may not like me anymore. With family, if I say the real truth - it'll end up in another fight. So what do we do? We just keep quiet and live with it. ***We think***, “For me, not talking isn't about integrity, it's about survival.”

But when we keep the peace by not being honest - what we actually do, *is lie*. We say “Everything's OK – but it's not.” Without truth, our relationships slowly breakdown; but since most people don't like conflict, they let a relationship break down to avoid conflict. But a situation seldom improves until someone has the courage to tell the truth. We need to ask God for strength to tell the truth because truth with LOVE is a crucial part of integrity.

2. A 2nd way to blend integrity is to: **CONFESS REGULARLY**

Confess regularly, this means to admit when I'm wrong. James 5:16 “*Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other.*” We need to understand that God is the one who forgives us; but to incorporate goodness and integrity into our lives, we need to talk to those whom we have wronged about what had happened.

Part of forgiveness is **restitution**. If I sin against someone; I need to not only ask God for forgiveness, I need to go to the one I offended and if possible ask for forgiveness and seek reconciliation. Matthew 5:23-24, “*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*”

If you and I could begin to get a hold of this principle, understand it and admit it when we're wrong. If we could let the principle of forgiveness begin to work in our relationships, it would open a floodgate of fresh joy in our lives and our relationships. But this thing of unforgiveness and not confessing is a barrier that's keeping many of our relationships from working.

But don't forget where the strength to do this comes from. Not by your own good character. It's only found in God's forgiveness of us. I John 1:9, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*” If you want to be forgiving, you must be forgiven and it's only in Jesus Christ that you find the forgiveness that we need. That's our strength.

3. The 3rd way to blend integrity is to: **LIVE CONSISTENTLY**

The opposite of consistency is hypocrisy. You may hide hypocrisy at work or church, but you can't hide it at home where people know you. *Ever noticed how easy it is to pretend?* We act one way in public and another in private!

We need to pray, "Lord, help me with your strength to have consistency in my life."

My point; Consistency is important and vital in three areas:

- **Public versus your private image.** Jesus said in Matthew 6:1 "*Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*" Jesus isn't saying we should never do anything where people can see it; rather we shouldn't do it so others admire us. Our actions should be the same in private as when we're in public.
- **Discipline.** Families need consistency in discipline. Eph. 6:4 talks about fathers bringing up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. I don't know anyone who hasn't struggled with being consistent in discipline in their family! But our families and our relationships need consistency in discipline. So a key area in developing goodness and integrity; is to develop consistency and discipline in your life.
- **Consistency between my words and my actions.** I hope you've never said, "Do as I say, not as I do." None of us are perfect and I hope that we're all striving for perfection. But we need to remember, "Words are not what's important, our actions are what changes people's lives." 1 Samuel 16:7, "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Whether we know it or not, our lifestyle is contagious. If your lifestyle that's filled with hypocrisy and inconsistency, those who you're closest to will see it and they'll eventually run from you like the plague, because we all hate hypocrisy. So we need consistency between our words and actions.

4. The 4th way to blend integrity into your life: **COMMIT OPENLY**

This means that you make up your mind in advance. There are times in life when you shouldn't wait to make up your mind. Like on your wedding day and the pastor says, "Do you take this man/woman to be your lawfully wedded husband/wife?" That's not the time to say, "Give me a minute to think on that."

In the same way, you need to make up your mind in advance about integrity, decide in advance who you are to be. I like how the Living bible explains how God publicly proclaims bold promises in Isaiah 45:19, "*I do not whisper obscurities in some dark corner so that no one will know what I mean.*"

I'd like all to make this our testimony to God: "I will be careful to lead a blameless life." Ps. 101:2. Living with Goodness and integrity begins with voicing a commitment.