



FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

GOODNESS

Family Study Guides

FRUIT OF GOD'S SPIRIT
"Goodness"
Family Study Guide

Objectives:

- Define goodness according to God's standards; compare and contrast God's goodness with "knowledge of good and evil".
- Learn more about the virtue of goodness and why it is important to express the godly trait of goodness to one's neighbor.
- Describe how Christ lived a life of "goodness."
- Study Biblical examples of godly goodness.
- Explain how to practice goodness when others may not be doing the same.

In this series of Family Study Guides, we have been showing the need for God's Holy Spirit in order to live a truly godly life. The need for God's power working with us is possibly best demonstrated by the fruit of "goodness."

The word 'goodness' comes from the word 'good.' 'Good' in Scripture means primarily what God is, then what He does, creates, commands and gives, and finally what He wills in the lives of His creation.

Definition: Goodness is the strength to actively do the godly things and stand against evil. It is acting in the excellent, fitting or morally right way.

We see that true, godly goodness is not something that we can do by ourselves.

Mark 10:17-18 (A man asked) *"...Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? So Jesus said to him, Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."*

Was Jesus saying that He was not good? We know that Jesus was good, had good thoughts, and did good things. So what is Jesus saying? Jesus was saying that even He was not good of Himself, but since He was the Son of God, He was "at one" with the Father, and the Holy Spirit enabled Him to be and do good.

Acts 10:38 *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

- ✓ **What about us? Can we be good and do truly good things?** Yes we can, but not of ourselves. We need the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How does this happen?

John 17:20-23 *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

We need help from our Father and older Brother (Jesus Christ) to do good the way God wants.

- ✓ **What kind of attitude/relationship do we need with Them?**

SUGGESTION:

Discuss with your family how to become one with God through response to Jesus' sacrifice.

[You may also want to tie in the Day of Atonement with how mankind will become at one with God. A suggested reference: Sermon "[At One with God](#)" Dan Dowd]

We too can have true goodness, if we become one with God.

Philippians 2:13 (ERV) *Yes, it is God who is working in you. He helps you want to do what pleases him, and he gives you the power to do it.*

Certainly, people do good things for others, and we should recognize and appreciate those who do. Adam and Eve took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (**Genesis 2**) which recognizes that man is capable of doing a certain amount of good as well as evil.

⇒ **As a family, make a list or discuss things that are good.**

While we can have good thoughts and do good things, the Bible shows that the way of eternal life can only come through God's righteousness and goodness.

GODLY GOODNESS DEFINED

Matthew 19:16-17 *Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."*

Jesus makes it clear that God defines goodness by His laws and ways.

QUESTION:

✓ **Was Jesus saying that we can earn our salvation by keeping the Ten Commandments?**

[Answer: No. We all sin so we need the sacrifice of Jesus to make us right with God. Having the opportunity to be in God's family is a very precious gift, not something we can earn. God is showing us His "family rules" here, but He knows we need help from Him and from Jesus Christ to obey Him.]

Matthew 19:20-22 *The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

QUESTIONS:

- ✓ **If the young man had sold everything and given it to the poor (certainly a good deed!), would this have been perfect goodness? Would that have earned his salvation?**
- ✓ **What was Jesus saying then? Was it the man's action or attitude that was of primary importance? What does God's goodness involve?**

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

- ✓ **When your parent or grandparent says, "follow me," or "watch me," or "stay close to me," why do they do that? What is your job? What are they usually doing for you when you follow them?**

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS:

- ✓ **If we believe in Jesus Christ as our savior, are we free to worship Him, serve Him, and show love in the way we choose? Why or why not?**
(Answer: Read **1 John 2:3-6**. We are told to “walk just as [Jesus Christ] walked”. We must not define goodness and love for ourselves because it “seems right” to us or just pick the good things that are easy to do. Read **John 4:23-24**. God’s Spirit and truth are the way we must worship.)
- ✓ **Is God’s goodness something people achieve at a certain point, like when someone makes a list of things to do for the day and checks them all off? What is a better way to think of how we practice God’s goodness? Come up with a family analogy or description.**

Jesus’ answer is not as much about giving away possessions as it is an attitude and willingness to “follow Me,” that is, to do whatever it takes live God’s way of life. He further clarified:

Matthew 19:23-26 (NLT) *Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I’ll say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!” The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked. Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”*

To further illustrate what God’s goodness involves, notice Jesus’ statements from the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:43-48 (NCV) *You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemies.’ But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you. If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on good people and on evil people, and he sends rain to those who do right and to those who do wrong. If you love only the people who love you, you will get no reward. Even the tax collectors do that. And if you are nice only to your friends, you are no better than other people. Even those who don’t know God are nice to their friends. So you must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

To be like the Father and the Son, to be one with them, we need to take goodness to a higher level than the goodness of the world. That is only possible by help from God’s spirit.

John 4:24 (GNTD) *God is Spirit, and only by the power of his Spirit can people worship him as he really is.”*

Notice Paul’s admonition:

Romans 12:20-21 (ESV) *To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head [MSG -Your generosity will surprise him with goodness].” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

FAMILY DISCUSSION:

Think about how difficult it is to treat people well who have treated us badly.

Think about someone you don’t like, who did or said something to hurt you. Do you say good things about them, or bad things? Does thinking about them make you angry? Do you think about doing nice things for them, or would you like to see them suffer a bit for hurting you? Have you prayed about them? Have you prayed for them, and in what manner? Not so easy, huh?

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

- **When a sibling breaks something you have, what is a way you can show goodness to them?**

- When someone at school isn't nice to you or another person, what are some ways you can help show goodness to them?

Let's Review Some Biblical Examples of Godly Goodness:

1. God sets the example

When you want to tell if you are good, don't compare yourself to your neighbor, compare yourself to God. God is the author and standard of goodness.

In general, the world has rejected God. Even ancient Israel rejected God though constant disobedience to Him. Yet, God "loves his enemies" and is going to treat them well and will ultimately include them in His plan of salvation.

Psalm 86:5 *For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.*

- ✓ **What does it look like when God is good to us? Can you think of a recent time when God has been good to you?**
- ✓ **What all does God's goodness include here? What is His attitude towards us?**
- ✓ **God is ready to forgive. Think of a time when you have needed God to be ready to forgive you. What kind of example is that for us?**
- ✓ **FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:** **How do you feel when your parents forgive you for when you do something you weren't supposed to?**

Titus 3:3-7 *For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

- ✓ **Is our attitude towards those who have not yet submitted themselves to God one of condemning them? Or do we pray for them? Or even do good to them?**

2. Jesus Christ

There are many examples of Jesus practicing what He preached. We will review a couple:

1. Jesus knew that his disciples were weak, and would deny him in his time of need. In spite of that, Jesus prayed for them.

Luke 22:31-34 *And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."*

- ✓ **If you knew that someone close to you was going to treat you badly or ignore you, what would you think about them?**
- ✓ **SCENARIO:** Often times we have a family member, classmate or neighbor who we can't exactly ignore or just not be around even though they may treat us or someone else badly. Think about ways you can do good to that person anyway.

- ✓ Satan wants us to deny Christ, too. If we live by the standard of God's goodness, and that is different than the world's standard, how can we treat that as an opportunity instead of a problem to be feared?
2. When people laughed at, spit on, beat Him and crucified Him—what was His response?
Luke 23:34 *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

Our human tendency is to think the worst about someone when they do wrong or hurt us. We often tend to judge their motives, and end up reinforcing our animosity towards them. Being good as God is good is hard. It takes God's spirit to think like Him.

3. Moses was good to those who treated him badly

When the Israelites had sinned against God, Moses was willing to sacrifice himself so the people could live.

Exodus 32:30-32 *Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."*

- ✓ **Are we only willing to do good to those who treat us well, or do we view all people as potential children of God's Kingdom?**

4. The Apostle Paul

Even after Paul became an Apostle, people in the church did not always treat him well. Notice his attitude and actions towards his friends, and those who tried to harm him.

Philippians 1:12-18 (GNT) *I want you to know, my friends, that the things that have happened to me have really helped the progress of the gospel. As a result, the whole palace guard and all the others here know that I am in prison because I am a servant of Christ. And my being in prison has given most of the believers more confidence in the Lord, so that they grow bolder all the time to preach the message fearlessly. Of course some of them preach Christ because they are jealous and quarrelsome, but others from genuine good will. These do so from love, because they know that God has given me the work of defending the gospel. The others do not proclaim Christ sincerely, but from a spirit of selfish ambition; they think that they will make more trouble for me while I am in prison. It does not matter! I am happy about it—just so Christ is preached in every way possible, whether from wrong or right motives. And I will continue to be happy...*

- ✓ **What effect did Paul's goodness have on the guards and others who observed him?**
 We too can have a positive effect on those around us when we keep God's commandments and follow His way—even if they do not know God's way yet.
- ✓ **What effect did Paul's positive actions have on the membership?**
 When God's goodness is our way of life—it has a positive and motivating effect on other members of the Church too.
- ✓ **What was Paul's attitude towards those who treated him badly?**
 This becomes one of the most difficult ways to practice godly goodness! That is why it is a fruit of God's spirit! We need Christ in us to do these good works.

5. Stephen's good works and attitude

Stephen was an amazing man in the early Church who practiced godly goodness.

As a family read Acts 6:1-7:

- ✓ How did people respond to Stephen's goodness in the congregation?
- ✓ How and why was he chosen to be a deacon in the church?

Read Acts 6:8-15 and Acts 7:54-60 and then discuss these questions:

- ✓ What enabled Stephen to do the things he was doing?
- ✓ What was people's reaction to Stephen's goodness in declaring God's word?
- ✓ How did Stephen respond to these people?
- ✓ Do you think Stephen may have been thinking of Jesus' statements in **Matthew 5:43-48**?

God used Stephen, who didn't seem to have a really important job in the Church, just waiting on tables. But God's Spirit enabled him to become one of the most courageous men of all times. Rather than fearing death, Stephen considered it more important to tell others the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Stephen displayed a godly goodness throughout this trial. We remember him as a Christian martyr filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:8-11 (NET) ... *you were at one time darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

Additional Family Discussions or Activities

- ✓ What can you start doing to reflect the godly quality of goodness to others? (Perhaps take the opportunity to help a new student at school? Could you stand up for and befriend a classmate that everyone has teased?)
- ✓ In what way can you be pleasing to God, your parents, or your friends? Will others see you as a good person with these characteristics? Will God see you in a favorable way?
- ✓ Do you always do the right thing? (i.e. be nice, obey your parents, be happy, share your things, etc). True goodness comes from God and His help through the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Everyone sins and we should treat all people as potential children in God's family—but should we be careful about who and whether we should hang around with them or be best friends? These scriptural principles can help us determine:
 - **Romans 12:20** *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*
 - **3 John 1:11 (AMP)** *Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but [imitate] what is good. The one who practices good [exhibiting godly character, moral courage and personal integrity] is of God;*

- **Galatians 6:1 (HCSB)** *Brothers, if someone else is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching for yourselves so you also won't be tempted.*
- ✓ Talk about those situations as a family where it may not be a good idea to have a relationship or friendship with someone. If you can't have a close relationship or friendship, how can you still do good?
- ✓ Read the account of Jesus interacting with a woman taken in adultery (**John 8:2-12**). What can you learn from this example? (Answer: They wanted to have her killed because she was sinning. Jesus was good, kind and merciful to her. He did not approve of her wrong actions, but corrected her by telling her to go and sin no more.)
- ✓ **Read Mark 2:13-17** Jesus would occasionally eat with sinners—but he was in the process of helping them understand more about God's way of life and the Kingdom of God. When is this a good idea for us and when is it not?
- ✓ Paul Relates to the People of Athens: **Acts 17:16-34**. The Bible says Paul's "spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols." How did he handle the situation? What can we learn from his example? When something wrong is taking place in our environment, how can we handle the situation wisely?
- ✓ Read **Matthew 6:1-4**. How can we tell when we are doing good to follow God's way instead of doing good to appear good to others?
- ✓ Read **John 6:44**. How can we uphold God's standard of goodness without offending others and trying to force that way onto them when they may not understand? If not all are being called now but are still potential members of God's family, how does that frame our perspective?
- ✓ Talk about people you know who are a positive example of goodness. What do they do that you can learn from?
- ✓ **Discuss the challenges of the following.** How can you learn to:
 - Do good when you know you should but you'd rather do your own thing?
 - Do good when it makes you the outcast or different than others?
 - Do good when it causes you harm, such as losing friends or losing a job?
 - Do good when no one is there to see? Maybe it's not a big deal?
 - Do good to those who are not good to us?
- ✓ **FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:** Come up with a list of ways you can show goodness within the family and at school. Write these down and talk about one example each day for the next two weeks on how one of the examples was implemented throughout the week. This could include, sharing a special toy, helping out extra at home or in class, not getting upset when someone else got something you wanted, thinking good thoughts about someone who was mean to you, not complaining when you don't get exactly what you wanted.

Additional resources that you can use in your family studies:

- **Sermon:** Fruit of the Spirit, Part 4, Goodness—Gary Petty
<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/fruits-of-the-spirit-part-4-goodness>

- **Teen Bible Study Guides:** Social Issues. What does God think about current social issues? Issues such as homosexuality, abortion, pornography and suicide are addressed from a biblical perspective with questions for discussion. <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/teen-bible-study-guides/teen-bible-study-volume-7-social-issues>
 - Create some statements as a family to navigate these difficult interactions (**Proverbs 26:5**). How can you stand for God’s goodness while demonstrating love toward your neighbor? When might these discussions actually be a trap into an unproductive argument? How can we navigate through these situations with wisdom?

- **Compass Check Winter 2018** includes articles such as:
The Appearance of Evil: What does it mean for me?
Should We Be Friends with Homosexuals?
<https://www.ucg.org/members/compass-check/compass-check-winter-2018>

Possible Classroom Activities

1. Goodness Lesson Application:

This activity will prepare the students to think about characteristics that are pleasing to God.

- Give an index card and pencil to each child. Ask them to write down at least four things about themselves that make them likeable. When everyone has at least four things, collect all the cards. Then read them one by one to the class and have the kids try to guess who it is. After everyone has guessed, let the owner of the card speak up. How many did each child guess correctly?
 - Have each child give an example of goodness that they observed during the week.
2. If you are using a visual building the **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT tree**, devote some time for the children to cut, color and attach the fruit goodness on their tree.
3. **Goodness Hall of Fame.** Sometimes we need encouragement to do the right thing. As a group, create a “Goodness Hall of Fame.” On a long line of butcher paper, place your favorite biblical examples of goodness shown in the Bible. What challenges did this individual or group face? How did they show goodness in spite of these challenges? How did God help them? Display for the congregation. This could always be a discussion versus an artistic display.
4. Review **Christ’s examples** relating to goodness. What can we learn from His examples:
- What does Christ say about goodness in the Sermon on the Mount? (Matthew 5:6, 13-16, 7:21-23)
 - Christ throwing the money changers out of the Temple (Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; John 2:13-17)
 - Christ and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:2-16)
 - The widow giving her mite (Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2-3)
 - The Parable of the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)
 - Jesus coming to Zacchaeus’ House (Luke 19:1-10)
5. **YOUNG CHILDREN ACTIVITY:** Goodness is something that comes from God and can be seen by others by our actions. How can you tell the difference between true goodness and things that just appear to be good? Bring in two sets of brownies or cookies that you baked. One set will be the normal recipe, while the second set will be made with salt rather than sugar, have the kids taste both sets and discuss the difference. Both cookies/brownies look good on the outside, but only one tastes good. It is the same with the fruit of goodness, when we practice goodness, it “tastes” good to others and improves relationships.
6. **The “Goodness” Game.** Copy and cut apart the Cards for the Goodness Game.
- Discuss: we learn to be good examples by practicing goodness. Sometimes others may laugh at us or get angry with us for doing the right thing. Sometimes doing the right thing isn’t popular. When we do what is right we follow Christ’s example of goodness and displaying the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
 - Let’s play a “goodness” game. Can you tell which action is a good example? I am going to call on someone to pick a card. I will read the card. If you think the answer to the situation is a good one, give a “thumbs up.” If it is not a good example, give a “thumbs down.”
 - Play the game. (See the sample “goodness” game cards on page 10.)
 - After the game, discuss that when we make the right choices and practice goodness, like Christ did, we make everyone happy—ourselves, our parents, Jesus and God.

Cards for the "Goodness" Game

1. Your friend's little brother just fell off of his tricycle. Should you:
a. Laugh at him? (Thumbs down.)
b. Help him and ask if he is hurt? (Thumbs up.)

2. A friend makes fun of you because you celebrate the Sabbath. Should you:
a. Smile and say "everyone is different and that's OK"? (Thumbs up.)
b. Stick out your tongue at them? (Thumbs down.)

3. Your sister borrowed your favorite shirt and got mud on it. She says she is sorry and will wash it for you. Is she showing goodness? (Thumbs up.)

4. Your friends at school begin to tease a classmate about their clothes. Should you:
a. Say, "Yeah, your shoes are funny looking too!" (Thumbs down.)
b. Tell your friends that they should not make fun of others. (Thumbs up.)

5. You aren't allowed to cross the street alone. Your friends make fun of you when you say you can't come with them. Should you:
a. Go with them so they won't laugh at you. (Thumbs down.)
b. Say, "You can laugh at me, but I'm staying here." (Thumbs up.)

6. Dad wants to work on his car today. He sees that a very old neighbor lady needs help mowing her lawn. He smiles and waves to her and says, "Lawn mowing sure is hard, isn't it?"
a. Is he showing goodness? (Thumbs down—he should offer to help.)

7. Mom makes you clean up your room before you can go out and play. Is she showing goodness? (Thumbs up—she is following God's command to teach her children God's way and take care of what He has given you.)

8. Your brother is playing with your favorite toy without asking you. Should you:
a. Say, "I'm glad that you're being careful with my favorite toy. Can I play with you?" (Thumbs up.)
b. Yell at him and say, "Give me my toy, now!" (Thumbs down.)