

- Are these people “good”, or “bad”?

- Are you a good person?

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10. 1 is terribly bad. 10 is really, really, really good!

...

How do we decide if someone is good or bad? What makes them a good or bad person?

We could say “A good person does good things”

And we could say “A bad person does bad things”

But can't bad people do good things sometimes?

And can't good people do bad things sometimes?

How do we decide if something is right or wrong, or good or bad?

- **What does the world say is “good”?**

There are a few different ways people think about this question. One example is

- **“Consequences”.**

We can ask, “What is the consequence of my actions?”

If what I do has GOOD consequences, then I've done a good thing. And perhaps that makes me a good person?

For example, if I drive an electric car, and it reduces carbon emissions, then I've done something with good consequences. So I've done something good.

If I'm rich, and I give to the poor, it has good consequences, so it must be a good thing to do.

If I steal, it has bad consequences. It takes something away from another person who has earned it. So it's bad. And maybe that makes me a bad person? But what if I need to steal some bread for my family to survive? That would have **good** consequences. So it's a GOOD thing to do, right? I'm a good person if I steal bread for my family...?

But even if we can work out what's good and bad from the consequences, what does it matter? What's the **incentive** for people to do good? We can't MAKE rich people give to the poor. WE can't MAKE people drive ecofriendly cars. We can't MAKE people stop stealing. Why should they?

Is being good about **doing** good things that have good **consequences**?

- **What does God say is “good”?**

**So what does God say in the Bible about people and “good”?**

- In 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul tells Timothy “Command them to do good”
- Psalm 34:14 – “Turn from evil and do good”
- Hebrews 13:16 “do not forget to do good and to share with others...”

**But what does the Bible say about God and “good”?**

- 1 Chronicles 16:34 - “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.”
- Psalm 28:5 “Good and upright is the Lord”
- In Mark 10:18 Jesus says – “No one is good - except God alone.”

I wonder if you noticed the difference?

- People are called to **do** good.
- God **is** good.

We DO good things. But does that make us good?

God, on the other hand, IS good.

One is about actions, and the other is about character.

We can DO good, but God IS good.

I can DO a drawing. But I couldn't call myself an artist.

I can DO some cooking, but I couldn't call myself a chef.

I can DO some good, but I couldn't call myself a “good” person. Or can I?

**Can I call myself “good”?**

Let me turn to our reading from 1 John 1:3 –

*3... our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

God invites us to “fellowship” with him. He invites us to live in his presence. In his **good** presence. To be with his goodness.

- **III** – When I was younger, I used to go with my friends to a place called “Wonderland”. It was a theme park, but it doesn't exist anymore. ☺

We used to go most school holidays. And it was an awesome place. Rollercoasters and water slides and dodgem cars and the pirate ship that spun all the way around, and all these really cool rides. It was awesome. Fun. It was better than being at home which was usually a bit boring during the holidays.

But you can't really describe it as "good" in the sense of what we're talking about today.

And I think perhaps that this is the mistake when we think about "good" things. We think they are fun and enjoyable and exciting and interesting and entertaining. But that's not good. That's a theme park! And God isn't a theme park!

Living in his good presence isn't about having a good time and things being nice and easy and enjoyable.

God offers for us to live in fellowship with him. Not to be entertained, but to live in the presence of "goodness".

So what is God's goodness? What does it mean to live in fellowship with God?

Our first reading today, Psalm 34, talks about what God's goodness is like, and it tells us 3 things about his goodness:

- He provides for his creation – (10) *Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing*
- He judges the wicked – (16) *The face of the Lord is against those who do evil*
- He protects his people – (22) *No one will be condemned who takes refuge in him*

We are invited to (8) *"Taste and see that the Lord **is** good."*

To live in God's presence, in his goodness, means to be looked after. To be cared for. NOT that life will be easy, or always enjoyable, but to know that we live in the presence of a God who looks after us in the most important sense of the word.

### • Can I BE "good?"

So what does God expect from us? To live in his goodness, how are we expected to respond? Are we supposed to be "good"? **Can** we be "good"?

Jesus calls us to follow God's commands, which He summarizes pretty well for us in Matthew 22:38 –

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...  
Love your neighbor as yourself.*

Love God. Love your neighbor.

These are "good" commands. A "good" way to live. "Good" things to do.

But does following God's commands, and doing good things, make us good people?

**NO, it doesn't!**

Colossians 3:3 says this:

- **3***For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

When we put our trust in Jesus, we die to our old self, we put it aside, and we take up a new life – a life that is hidden in Christ. What does that mean? It means when God looks at us, instead of seeing the good and bad things we've done, our old life, what he

sees is ... Jesus. We are clothed with Christ. We are “hidden” in him. Our life is wrapped up inside his. And so we are, in God’s eyes ... “good”.  
Why did God do this for us? Is he rewarding us for our good works?

Titus 3:4-5 says this: (CEV)

- *4God our Saviour showed us how good and kind he is. 5He saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good things we have done.*

God **didn’t** save us because we did lots of good things. It’s not a consequence of our good works. He saved us because he loves us, and wants to show us mercy. Our good works are simply a **response** to God’s mercy. Our good works on their own cannot save us, because our OWN good is always ruined by sin.

**III** – Imagine a glass of water. 90% of it is pure water. And 10% of it is poison. Is it OK to drink? It’s 90% good. Only 10% bad. What if it was only 5% poison? Or 1%? Would you drink it? Is it still “good”?

You see, that’s the life we had before we shared fellowship with God. We stood as people who had done good things, but had also done bad things. But because of his mercy, God wrapped us up in Christ and we have been made “good” in his sight.

Anyone can do good things. And we can all do bad or evil things. In fact, all of us do. But can we be a **good** person? Yes we can. If our life is hidden in Jesus, if we are wrapped up in him.

Do I **do** good things? Yes. But not to get saved. I do good things because he has already saved me. And because he has saved me, I want my life to reflect God’s love and mercy to other people in the world.

The world may define good and bad in terms of things like consequences. Something is good if it has good consequences. Bad if it has bad consequences. The problem with that is that it’s all subjective. What you see as good, I might not see as good. It all depends on your perspective. Everyone’s definition of good can be different.

God’s definition of good is Jesus. It’s all about him. He is the only definition of good, and he doesn’t change. And although we can DO good, we can only BE good if we hide our life in Christ – if we trust in him and put our life in his hands.

Let’s pray.