

Sometimes perception is everything. Let me restate that: sometimes it's not what is real that matters, its perception. If you think something or if it appears a certain way and you believe that's true, it will color everything. What we think people "think of us" determines how we respond to them.

God feels certain ways about you but some of you are inwardly convinced He's down on you. Some of you have pictures in your mind and when the word God comes to your mind, this picture or this picture or this picture comes up that is absolutely inaccurate, it is a perception. Not only does our perception of others affect us but notice that how we think about God determines how we respond to God and conversely how we think God thinks about us, determines how we respond to God. How eager are you to pray when in your heart of hearts you think He's kind of down on you? You never measure up, "Yeah you did it again, how many times am I going to have to forgive you and pick you up over this?"

How we think about God determines how we respond to God therefore it is critical that we think right thoughts about God. It is imperative that we truly know who He is and what He is like.

What we are going to look at for the next three weeks are a few more of the attributes of God. What are attributes? Attributes: A quality or characteristic of someone.

The importance of our study:

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people have ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like." – A.W. Tozer

We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our personal mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church.

Our goal today is to discover the goodness of God. What is it about God that makes Him good and what does that mean? To do this we are going to go back to the scriptures. Not as much as last week but still it would be helpful if you have your Bibles and a pen or pencil. We will start this search for God's goodness in the Old Testament book of Exodus with part of Moses' story.

1. God revealed His goodness to Moses

Often I find in defining God's goodness or anything else, it's often good to go where the first place that you find it pop up in Scripture; and the goodness of God pops up in Exodus chapter 33. You know the whole story of Moses and the children of Israel and God is doing this miraculous work and the word goodness shows up.

¹⁸ Moses responded, “Then show me your glorious presence.”¹⁹ The LORD replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose. Exodus 33:19 NLT

Moses' Request: “Show me Your glorious presence” Exodus 33:18

It is interesting in Psalm 103:7 says “He made known His acts to the children of Israel; His ways to Moses.” A lot of people have seen great acts of God and yet like the children of Israel, when pressure and stress and hard times come, they abandon Him. But see Moses wasn’t satisfied with “God what can you give me? God how can you take care of me? God I want to see the next big miracle.” Moses said “I want to see your ways. God, I want to know your heart. I want to be connected to You; I want to see You as You are.” Moses was praying an outrageous prayer because he had a deep hunger to see this God that had made a leader out of him and lead him into the desert with about a million people.

He had no idea what he was asking and God says to him, “Moses, no one can see Me and live. If you would get a glimpse of Me as I really am, you would be toast immediately.” But Moses is one of those people, whose called a friend of God and God says “Here’s what I’ll do; I’m going to put you in the rock and My presence is going to pass by and I’ll put My hand over you and I will let you gaze quickly at My back.”

God's Promise: “I will make all My goodness pass before you.” Exodus 33:19

Moses prays, “Show me your glory,” and God’s promise is that “All My goodness will pass before you.” Of all the words He could choose, one word to summarize to say “What am I really like?” He says “All My goodness will pass before you.” The Hebrew word for goodness here has multiple forms and here it’s used as the idea, as extensive sense of good, agreeableness, pleasantness, desirability, that which is beautiful, that which is fair. It’s the idea of beauty, glory, joyfulness, prosperity, all that is good, all that is pleasant, all that is the most desirable.

God's Answer: Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶ And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.” Exodus 34:5-7 NKJV

Within the attributes of God’s moral perfections there is one in particular to which the term ‘goodness’ points – the quality which God specially singled out from the whole when proclaiming ‘all His goodness’ to Moses, He spoke of Himself as “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.

J.I. Packer says this:

"This is the quality of generosity. Generosity means a disposition to give to others in a way which has no mercenary motive and is not limited by what the recipients deserve, but consistently goes beyond it. Generosity expresses the simple wish that others should have what they need to make them happy. Generosity is, so to speak, the focal point of God's moral perfection; it is the quality which determines how all God's other excellences are to be displayed." J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

"Generosity expresses the simple wish that others should have what they need to make them happy." That's how you think of God isn't it? Or is it? Down deep in your heart you just think every day He looks over your bed and you're still asleep and He's thinking in His eternal heart, "I wonder what would make you happy?" Is that how you think of Him? Or do you think of Him as one more thing I need to do; if I don't read my Bible this morning, I tell you what He may not bless me today. I didn't have a very good prayer time; I bet He's kind of down on me. My finances are really out of order and I don't know what I'm going to do. Compared to God I'm just a failure. – God is generous; generosity so to speak is the focal point of His moral perfection, it's the quality that determines how all His other excellences' are to be displayed. In other words, He's infinite in His goodness; He's eternal in His goodness. His goodness is always measured in His holiness. His goodness is poured out through His justice and always what is fair and what is right.

You are the object of His affection. God is good not because you are good, God is good because intrinsically in the Godhood, in the tri unity of God there is something in God that He wants to be kind, He wants to bless, He wants to care, He wants – as Tozer will say later, "He finds holy pleasure in the happiness of His children." Have you ever thought of God thinking of you that way? There's a passage in Zephaniah 3:17 where it talks about God and His heart, "*He is the Lord your God. He is mighty to save. He will quiet you with His love and He will sing over you with rejoicing.*" If that would ever move from your head and my head down into our heart and down into our emotions where we could grasp God though exalted in majesty and power is eager to be friends with us; He's not hard to please, He's not down on you.

"The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people." A.W. Tozer

He's tender hearted and quick of sympathy; is that how you think of God? Tender hearted, when you hurt He hurts; quick of sympathy, when you're wounded He rushes there and He's open and available and He hurts with you and longs for your happiness and understands your pain. He's quick of sympathy, tender hearted and has unfailing attitude toward all moral beings, saved or unsaved as open, frank and friendly by His nature. Not by your behavior, by His nature He's inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people. I read that and the picture in my mind of God and the picture of the Biblical view of God that He takes

holy pleasure in the happiness of His people were a million miles apart. We need to be praying and renewing our minds and asking God very specifically, “I want to see you with 20/20 vision; I want to see you as you really are. If I could but believe that you are open and frank, quick of sympathy. If I could believe that kindness flows from your heart, that it’s not a performance game. If I could but believe that God you are God because it is intrinsic in who you are; if I could but believe that you are good, that you are for me, that you’re not down on me, that every moment of every day regardless of my performance, my Father longs to bless me. He longs to draw me near, He longs to have intimate relationship, He longs to do good for me, He longs to show mercy, He’s really quick to forgive,” it will completely transform how we relate to God.

His goodness is an ocean that has no shore.

A Mountain that has no summit.

A Road that has no end.

Not meager, but much.

Not skimpy but sufficient.

Not little, but limitless.

Not barely, but bountiful.

Not feeble, but full.

2. How Does God Reveal His Goodness to Us?

We are really going to move through these quickly but the sermon notes are all online in their entirety and you can read them and study on your own.

1. Through His Nature (personality)

I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor and your wonderful miracles.⁶ Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue. I will proclaim your greatness.⁷ Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness; they will sing with joy about your righteousness. Psalm 145:7-9

Okay here's one that you need to take and do a personal study on if you are hungry to see and know who God really is? I suggested last week that you should read some chapters out of Job and frankly I'm afraid to ask how many did it because in my heart of hearts I'm not sure where many of you are in relationship to God or your hunger to know Him. Get into Psalm 145 and you will learn a lot about God.

One of the greatest evidences of believing that He's good is that you become generous and you become generous with your time and your emotions and your heart and your money and your life and your gifts and you get generous because what you know is that He's lavishing it upon you. God finds holy pleasure in you. So what we do, because we have a false view of God, we hold tightly to things and tightly to people and we try to control, we try to manipulate, we try and find out what the little formula is. God says “You just don't see me for who I am” so much of what

He wants to give us we miss. Nature says “He is good to all,” and then notice as you go down through the Psalm 145:15, *“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all His ways and He’s loving toward all that He’s made.”* Doesn’t that include you?

Skip down to Psalm 145:21, *“My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord, let every creature praise His holy name for ever and ever. He’s good to the just; He’s good to the unjust. He’s good to all.”* I mean Paul’s logic in how God works is – *“He rains on the wicked, He rains on the good.”* Jesus, when he tells us to love our enemies, he says “We’ll never be more like the Father than when we treat people in a way in which they don’t deserve.” So love your enemies and bless those who persecute you. Why? It flows out of the goodness of God and He’s given us a stage – He wants us to stop and park the car and get off the cell phone and quit worrying about checking all the e-mails and social media. Maybe you should just sit and watch the rain for a few minutes. Take time and lean back and look at a sunset and literally smell some roses. Give yourself permission to be instead of do, do, go, go, perform, perform, convince, convince, manipulate, manipulate.

He says “All around you I’ve put providential circumstances. For some of you I have the traffic back up so you can have extended time with me in the cities where you travel.” Instead all you get is high blood pressure and ulcers and you *[Honking and Beeping]* and you get there 32 seconds earlier because you swerved your way through traffic. (or you ran through every yellow light)

You see part of beginning to appreciate God’s goodness is begin to open our eyes and realize all around us is the testimony; He is good to all but we’re not looking. Some of us never get our heads above our computer screen. Some of us never get our eyes above our to-do list. Many of us have been conditioned to think that the accomplishment of things and putting the check marks down on our to do lists; and we measure everything by the number of zeros that go at the end of our portfolio, or the number of letters we can get to go behind our name, or the positions of the people that report to us or the kind of car that we drive, and we live these chaotic lives devoid of seeing and acknowledging the goodness of God.

2. Through His Deliverance

Psalm 107

You are going to have to study this one completely on your own and I hope you will because you will see God’s goodness in these ways:

- Redeeming the helpless from their enemies
- Rescuing us from the “shadow of death”
- Healing our diseases
- Protection from the storms that threaten to sink our lives

We can also see His goodness through Jesus, God’s Son. This is kind of a no brainer but how much do we miss when we don’t really know the Savior of the world?

3. Through His Son, Jesus

As Jesus was starting out on His way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to Him, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Why do you call Me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good. Mark 10:18 NLT

- Undeserved goodness: *But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.* Romans 5:8 NLT
- The promise of future goodness: *Since He did not spare even His own Son but gave Him up for us all, won’t He also give us everything else?* Romans 8:32 NLT
- The source of all goodness: *Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.¹⁸ He chose to give birth to us by giving us His true word. And we, out of all creation, became His prized possession.* James: 1:7-18 NLT

Here's how I want to end this. I want us to look at our response to God's goodness.

3. How Are We to Respond to God's Goodness?

There are three distinct steps and behaviors that will help us respond to the goodness of God.

1. Repent of our unbelief and ingratitude.

Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? Romans 2:4 (NIV)

If you for some reason have been thinking less than good thoughts about God you will need to repent or be sorry for that attitude and return to see the goodness of God. It is God's kindness and goodness toward us that leads us to feel our need to repent but it is up to you to humble yourself and do it.

2. Rest in His goodness when encountering adversity.

There are some of us in this room that need this desperately. Adversity comes in all shapes and sizes. It invades our lives from both friends and foes. It can't be tamed or controlled so most often we have to find ways to endure it and get through it.

¹⁹How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You, which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, before the sons of men! ²⁰You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man; You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues. Psalm 31:19-20 (NASB)

We are to REST in His goodness.

3. Risk stepping out in faith like never before!

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. Psalm 84:11 (NASB)

One of God's faithful missionaries, Allen Gardiner, experienced many physical difficulties and hardships throughout his service to the Savior. Despite his troubles, he said, "While God gives me strength, failure will not daunt me." In 1851, at the age of 57, he died of disease and starvation while serving on Picton Island at the southern tip of South America. When his body was found, his diary lay nearby. It bore the record of hunger, thirst, wounds, and loneliness. The last entry in his little book showed the struggle of his shaking hand as he tried to write legibly. It read, "I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God."

Haddon Robinson says it best, "With Him the calf is always the fatted calf; the robe is always the best robe; the joy is always unspeakable; and the peace passes understanding. There is no grudging in God's goodness. He does not measure His goodness by drops like a druggist filling a prescription. It comes upon in floods. If only we recognize the lavish abundance of His gifts, what a difference it would make in our lives!"

Today we remember that God is good. He never changes. He is not fickle nor is He moody. Today even in your stress, distress, burdens or blessings, God is a good God full of goodness and mercy.

Our circumstances are not an accurate reflection of God's goodness. Whether life is good or bad, God's goodness, rooted in His character, is the same. — Helen Grace Lescheid