

Goodness

*He's making a list
And checking it twice;
Gonna find out who's naughty and nice
Santa Claus is coming to town
He sees you when you're sleeping
He knows when you're awake
He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness sake!*

Santa Claus is Coming to Town
J. Fred Coots and Haven Gillespie

Is that the best motivation we can come up with for being good, to get presents at Christmas? The Bible has a lot to say about goodness and kindness, both ours and God's. In fact, the Bible tells us that it is God's own goodness and kindness that allows us to be truly good and kind ourselves. Let's study God's word and learn more about all the riches God offers us through his kindness and goodness, and how we can deliver it to others as we serve our God.

Monday – Kindness and Goodness

"Kindness is in our power, even when fondness is not." Samuel Johnson, 18th c. British author

1. Please read Galatians 5:22-23. How are kindness and goodness similar? How do they differ?
2. What does Jesus' comment in Luke 18:18-19 tell you about the ultimate nature of goodness?
3. In Romans 2:4, what type of response does true kindness bring out?

Making it Personal: Pray for God to use you to bring his goodness and his kindness to others.

Tuesday – Sowing Kindness, Sowing Goodness

"I shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Henry Drummond, 19th c. Scottish evangelist

1. Please read Galatians 6:7-10. How can you deliver (sow) kindness? Goodness?
2. When are you most likely to "become weary of doing good"? In light of 1 Chronicles 29:10-14, 1 Peter 4:10-11 and 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, how can you avoid this weariness?
3. How did the disciples view themselves in Matthew 19:27-30? What did Jesus promise those who persevered?

Making it Personal: Do you ever find yourself tiring of your efforts to be good and act in kindness? Stop making them *your* efforts and pray for God to work through you by his strength instead.

Wednesday – It Takes All Kinds

"He had the uneasy manner of a man who is not among his own kind, and who has not seen enough of the world to feel that all people are in some sense his own kind." Willa Cather, 19th-20th c. American writer

1. Please read Luke 6:27-36. What three categories of people does Jesus mention in verses 27, 30 and 32?
2. How do you typically respond when someone treats you poorly? How should you respond (v. 36)?

Text Insight: A cloak not only protected a person from the elements, but also doubled as a blanket at night. If someone took your cloak and your tunic as well, you would have a very cold night indeed.

3. What type of ill treatment do you find in Proverbs 25:18-22? How are you supposed to respond? Do you think the burning coals are a type of punishment, or symbolic of shame? Why?

Digging Deeper (optional): Read Romans 12:17-22. Who are we to trust to carry out any justice for the times we have been mistreated? What is our responsibility in the meantime?

Thursday – Clearing the Way for Kindness and Goodness

"It is easy for men to talk one thing and think another." Publilius Syrus, 1st c. BC Syrian writer

1. Please read Luke 6:37-42. Who is the teacher we should be like (v. 40)?
2. When have you seen hypocrisy interfere with the ability to show kindness or be good?
3. In Matthew 23:23-24, how did the Pharisees' hypocrisy interfere with their goodness and kindness?

Digging Deeper (optional): Read Matthew 23:1-39. Why did Jesus repeatedly call the teachers and Pharisees blind? What does he offer at the end (v. 37-39)?

Friday – Overflow of the Heart

"If you haven't got any charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble." Bob Hope, 20th c. American actor

1. Please read Luke 6:43-46 in conjunction with Galatians 5:22-23. Why are we able to bear good fruit?
2. Now read Luke 6:47-49. What does Jesus promise those who act on his words? Those who don't?
3. Compare verses 45-46 with James 1:22-25. How can you store up good things in your heart?

Making it Personal: Pray for God to help you make it a practice to regularly look carefully into his word, the Bible, and put what you read into practice.

For the Weekend: Read Micah 6:6-8. How is our responsibility to be good and act kindly summarized? Why do you think God would rather we not offer him pricey gifts, but instead act justly, mercifully and humbly?