

"The God You're Looking For..."

study
guide
2

Mark 10:13-18

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good - except God alone.

What is Jesus getting at with his mysterious answer to the man's question?

...is good.



In this study we encounter God's...

⇒ *goodness*

When the New English Bible was printed, Lord Platt wrote a letter to the London Times and said: "Perhaps, now that it is written in language all can understand, the Old Testament will be seen for what it is, an obscene chronicle of man's cruelty to man, and of man's selfishness, backed up by his appeal to his god; a horror story if there ever was one. It is to be hoped that it will at last be revealed as totally inappropriate to the ethical instruction of school-children."

The goodness of God has been questioned by many people in the face of human suffering. The line of reasoning goes something like this: "If God exists, and He is good and all-powerful, then why is there evil and suffering? Why doesn't He just use His power to eradicate all evil? It seems that either He isn't all-powerful, or maybe He isn't really good after all."

This nagging question is not just experienced by doubting agnostics or hard-core atheists. Very often sincere believers wonder about God's goodness, especially when hard times come and don't go quickly, when prayers seem to go unanswered, when loved ones die, or when they become victims of crime or abuse. In short, when there doesn't seem to be much good anywhere.

- What do we mean when we say that God is good?
- If we're fallen people, how do we even know what's good and bad?
- How much good can we expect to experience in a world system influenced by evil?

A working definition - "good"

1. Being positive or desirable in nature
2. Serving the desired purpose or end; suitable
3. Not spoiled or ruined; In excellent condition
4. Superior to the average
5. Of high quality
6. Worthy of respect; honorable
7. Beneficial to health

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company

The Hebrew word for “good” is “tob”, which means:
*pleasant,
delightful
delicious, pure,
cheerful, glad,
joyful*

 **Genesis 1:31**

*“God saw all that he had made, and it was very **good**.”*

When God looked at his creation and made this pronouncement, what do you think he meant? What was it good for, and for whom?

 **Psalm 34:8**

*“Taste and see that the LORD is **good**; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”*

What is the psalmist saying about a relationship with God? Does this mean that anyone who takes refuge in God will be spared from all of life’s problems?

 **Jeremiah 29:11**

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

What is the pain-filled context of this statement? Was God instrumental in the exile to Babylon? Was that a “good” thing? What are His intentions for Israel, and are they “good”?

 **Romans 3:10-12**



*“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does **good**, not even one.”*

Does this passage teach that people never do anything at all that is good?
If not, then what is Paul saying?
If people are so bad, how do we even recognize good when we see it?

Summary -

What have you observed about God’s character from this study?
What questions do you still have?

For Further Study:

-  “The Goodness of God,” by John Wenham, IVP
-  “Where Is God When It Hurts?” and “Disappointment with God,” by Philip Yancey, Zondervan