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**Is the Character of Goodness working in you?** Here is how you can find out. Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Goodness from God's most precious Word by examining the passages below. Now ask yourself:

1. How do I exhibit Goodness in my daily life?
2. What can I do to develop a better attitude of Goodness?
3. What blocks goodness from working and being exhibited in me?
4. How can I make Goodness function better, stronger and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

**Goodness** is the engagement of love that shows the application of Christ, His righteousness, and Truth. This models it to others in the action of love, making Christ and us attractive and inviting. This is God at work in our faith, so we are synergized with His power and then engage it to others. This is the fruit that makes people, liked by and even lovable to others. This displays integrity, honesty, and compassion to others, and allows us to do the right thing. It is doing the right thing, even when it does not feel like we should, as Joseph did. He was betrayed and sold as a slave, yet, he chose to make his situation into something good, and to help and treat others better than he needed to. Why are we to be good? Because God is good to us.

(Psalm 86:5; 145:4-13)! Goodness is the model for people to repent and accept Christ (Amos 5:15; Proverbs 25:22; Matthew 19:16; Romans 12:17; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 1 Peter 3:11; 2 Peter 1:3-8)

**Badness** is the opposite, being callousness, mercilessness and unscrupulousness! When we fight against each other, especially in the church, you have to see it as how hurtful and even pathetic it is in God's eyes!

Goodness is the fruit with which virtue and the rest of the characters combine to produce endearment. It is the character that makes people likeable, even lovable to others. It is what is attractive and alluring, what catches the attention and respect of others. It is virtue in action; it is being a role model and putting into practice excellence in all that we do, both to God and others. It is the display case of righteousness, how we are to be. Goodness enables us to be liked and enjoyed, even if an enemy comes against us. It is the taste of what is to come, the flavor of how we are to be. It is our expression of worship and gratitude to Christ played out in our lives, so we can enjoy Him, He can enjoy us, and so that life can be more enjoyable for all. It is the energizer to help us develop and form good, quality relationships that are committed and impacting. Just think through how much better your relationships and future relationships would be with such characters flowing through you (Psalm 34:8; 119:103; Prov. 25:22)!

Goodness synergistically combines with kindness, producing what God calls *righteousness* throughout Scripture. This is what and how God has called us to be to one another. It comes when we are in a state of right being; this can only come about from a right relationship with God, which, in turn, only comes by accepting what Christ has done for us and applying it to our life by faith.

This goodness will be the quality to create an atmosphere of happiness, contentment, cooperation, and the closest we can get to living in real unity. It has the best potential of being a utopia on earth while we await the new kingdom. Perhaps it seems to be just pipe dreams and

potential theory; nevertheless, it is real, and in our grasp if only we surrender our pride and sin and really live by what Christ has called us to.

This fruit of goodness is the cabinet that holds righteousness in plain view. It is the display case that shows the rest of the godly characters and Fruit of the Spirit. It helps make them real, seen, and used. It moves theory into action and theology into practical care and love. Goodness displays integrity, honesty, and compassion to others and allows us to do the right thing even when we do not feel like doing so. To see how this character is used in the field of life, just take a look at the life of Joseph (Genesis 37-50).

Goodness is the representation for people to see how life can be, and how it should be. It lifts up our Lord and points to our depravity. It is a template for seeing our need for redemption and satisfaction, our need for salvation and growth in our Lord. It can help motivate a person to repent and accept Christ. Goodness transmutes itself into relationships, showing us how we are to treat one another, especially the one we love, our spouse! It does not augment or replace the Holy Spirit, but works with Him and His mission!

This fruit is how we are to be at church! Yet, how many of us have ever ventured into a church that was filled with callousness, where we were ignored or even mistreated? As a pastor, I have a tough battle to make sure my flock behaves so that Christ would be pleased. I can try my best to set an example and I can teach, but I cannot make them behave! Real, authentic Christian love only comes from real, authentic Christian formation. If someone is not growing in the Lord, they are not willing or able to treat others with love and respect. Care, compassion, and love will be moot, and the church will be an annoying club of stubborn pride, devoid of harmony and brotherly love.

When we fight against one another in the church, especially in our personal relationships, we are, in fact, acting directly opposite to what God calls us to. No relationship will be healthy, and there will be no contentment or happiness in such an environment. We will end up imparting hurt, strife, dysfunction and misery to all those around us while the misery boomerangs directly back upon us. We will be creating an ever so escalating circle of dysfunction and chaos, while outside of our circle of strife is Jesus with the call and how we can be better. We ignore Him, and therefore sink deeper into despair and dysfunction. We could have had it better; we just chose not to, rather letting our circumstances rule our life. It is so sad that so many people thrive in such situations, a testament to our fallen, sinful nature.

We need to be aware of our natural, sinful nature that all of us have and all of us perpetuate. This sin contains these rotten tendencies that Paul describes in verses 16-21, in action. We see lust, adultery, fornication, lewdness, and revelry to name a few. You may think, *I do not have those*; but, look further and deeper to quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, envy, pride, and such. The results of these rotten fruits will cause chaos and strife to any relationship, and preclude God's working in us. Extreme division will be wedged into any relationship, preventing your receiving any good or pleasing work, as well as any blessings. It will prevent God from using you to the fullest extent possible, especially in helping others. They are the "anti-goodness and anti-kindnesses," which cause cruelty and destroy what God has for us. Goodness cannot exist in an atmosphere of strife. You will not be a real, functioning Christian with these works. You have to be willing to counteract these rotten works by committing to the good fruit, keeping your goals and focus upon Christ and His Word, so you can develop them.

## Reflection

The Fruit of Goodness is like a display case of trophies of the Christian life or like the product demonstrators getting someone to see what their merchandise can do. For us to work effectively as a display for our Lord, we must be within the boundaries of culture and call of God must be exercised, not our feelings or our pride or our hurt. The bottom line is to be considerate in all that we do to whomever is in our life. This is how we show love as if those in the world and even to our brothers and sisters who are Christians have forgotten what Christ and the Fruit of the Spirit are all about. We must use this passage as a template, a Christian living checkup on how we are to treat others and see if we are healthy in Christ and in showing the work that He did in us (John 17:20-23; Rom. 12:9-21; 2 Cor. 5:20; James 4).

- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Gen. 39; Luke 10:30-37; Acts 7:60; 9:36; Luke 23:34; Gal. 6:10; II Thess. 1:11)
- Here is are negative examples from Scripture (Gen. 4:8; Duet. 25:17-19; Joshua 7; Luke 9:54)

## Further Questions

1. How would you define Goodness?
2. What are the things that cause you to be bad or ruthless?
3. How does ruthlessness counteract Goodness?
4. How can you make Eph. 5:8-9 work in you, even through times of waiting and confusion, even when people are rude and evil to you?
5. When have you been filled with Goodness the most?
6. In what situation did you fail to have Goodness in which you should have?
7. What issue is in your life that would improve with more Goodness?
8. Think through the steps you need to take to put Goodness into action in a specific instance. Such as learning to be good to people who are rude to you or not letting your circumstances get in the way of the way you treat others?

*"It is that particular Wise and good God, who is the author and owner of our system, that I propose for the object of my praise and adoration. He is not above caring for us, being pleased with our praise and offended when we slight Him or neglect his Glory ... I love Him therefore for his goodness, and I adore Him for his wisdom. Let me then not fail to praise my God continually, for it is His due, and it is all I can return for His many favors and great goodness to me." Benjamin Franklin*

Remember; the fruits and character cost dearly, they are not cheap by and from the One who bought them for us, for our betterment and for His glory. We must not take for granted what Cost Him so much!