

God.”

My presumptuous statement got their attention.

“You make me feel like God,” I said, “because everything that I intend for your good you use against me. I don’t want to be angry or harsh. But if that’s what it takes for you to learn, that’s what I’ll be.”

My students weren’t the first to exploit goodness for selfish purposes. The Bible has many stories, songs, and prayers about God’s similar experiences with His people. The psalm written by Asaph (Psalm 78) and the prayer of confession recorded by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 9) both affirm that goodness starts with God’s care and provision, but it is interrupted repeatedly by human failure and unfaithfulness.

Lest we judge the Israelites too harshly, however, the human condition didn’t improve even after Jesus personally demonstrated the way to live. To Christians living in Rome, the apostle Paul wrote: “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).

Sometimes we conclude that God’s goodness to us in such things as wealth and opportunity is proof of our own goodness. But that’s a dangerous and wrong assumption. As the apostle said, God’s goodness ought to lead us to repentance—not to pride. —

REFLECTION

- *What good things am I taking for granted?*
Does the goodness of God and others make me grateful or greedy? Humble or arrogant? Kind or ruthless? Patient or impatient? Responsible or irresponsible? Obedient or disobedient? Generous or selfish? Loving or self-centered?
- *How does this understanding of human nature help me to understand my children and help me to be a better dad this Fathers’ Day?*

Goodness begins and ends with God.



Central Mountains Baptist Church

FATHERS' DAY, 2021

Exploiting Goodness

Before I taught my first university class, a seasoned teacher gave me this advice: “Make students think you’re as mean as a snarling dog for the first month. That way they’ll appreciate it more when you finally smile.”

Instead of following his suggestion, I told my English students that I wanted to make class enjoyable. I wanted them to love language and writing as much as I did. To accomplish that, I thought I had to make class fun.

But fun for them turned into work for me.

They mistook kindness for weakness, mercy for leniency, and patience for permissiveness. They became disrespectful, disobedient, and delinquent. I became angry, frustrated, and short-tempered.

One day after a failed attempt to get them to be quiet, I blurted, “You make me feel like





Our Home

The Issue of Authority



We answer two questions regarding the issue of authority:

1. What does authority look like?

Psalms 103:19 — 19 The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.

Exodus 34:6-7 — 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."

John 1:14 — 14 ... we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Exodus 3:14 — 14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." ...'

Psalms 90:2 — 2 ... from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Numbers 23:19 — 19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

1 John 1:9 — 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

James 1:17 — 17 ...the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

1 John 1:5 — 5 ... God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.



2. What is meant by authority?

Romans 13:1-2 — 1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Romans 13:4 — 4 ... if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; ...

Acts 4:19-20 — 19 ... "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Hebrews 13:17 — 17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, ...

Acts 17:11 — 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 — 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

Matthew 7:15-19 — 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. ... 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ... 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ...

Malachi 2:15 — 15 ... He seeks godly offspring. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

Genesis 18:19 — 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 — 4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 — 18 "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. 20 And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious;' 21 Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; ...

Proverbs 1:8 — 8 My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother;

Proverbs 15:20 — 20 A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish man despises his mother.

Proverbs 13:24 — 24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Proverbs 22:15 — 15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

Luke 2:51-52 — 51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Ephesians 6:4 — 4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 — 11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, 12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Isaiah 41:10 — 10 Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

2 Chronicles 7:14 — 14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

John 15:3-5 — 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

