

LIFE CHURCH OF NEW JERSEY

22 Laurence Parkway, Old Bridge, NJ

FIVE-DAY DEVOTIONAL

FRUIT SALAD SERIES — WEEK 6

Goodness Gracious

The Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness

Galatians 5:22-23

Pastor Andrew Chung-Ying

DAY 1 The Goodness That Leads You Home

READ

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Romans 2:4, KJV)

REFLECT

Before you ever did one good thing for God, His goodness was already at work on you. It wasn't your cleaned-up life that made Him love you — it was His goodness that led you toward repentance in the first place. Goodness isn't a reward for people who already have it together. It's the very thing God uses to draw people who don't.

DIGGING DEEPER

The Greek word behind “goodness” in Galatians 5:22 is *agathōsynē* (Strong's G19) — a word that, according to Greek scholar William Barclay, doesn't even appear in secular Greek writing. It had to be created for the New Testament, because the ancient world had no category for goodness with the character of God behind it. This is not a borrowed virtue. It's a uniquely Christian one.

Our English word “goodness” comes from the Old English *gōd*, and it's a loose, all-purpose word — good weather, a good meal, a good deal. *Agathōsynē* will not settle for that. It only has one true source: God Himself. Left on our own, we can produce the English kind of goodness. The real thing has to be grown in us by His Spirit — which is exactly why we are nothing without Him.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- *Where do I see God's goodness in my own story — quietly working on me before I ever noticed?*
- *Have I mistaken God's patience with me for permission to stay comfortable, instead of letting it lead me to repentance?*

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Write down one moment when you can now see God's goodness was leading you somewhere, even though it didn't feel like it at the time. Thank Him for it before you move on with your day.

PRAY

Father, thank You for the goodness that pursued me long before I understood what it was. Let it keep leading me deeper into repentance today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 2 Goodness That Runs After You

READ

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. (Psalm 23:6, KJV)

REFLECT

David doesn't picture goodness as something waiting patiently for him up ahead. He pictures it following — chasing, pursuing, refusing to let go of him, every single day of his life. Whatever wilderness you've walked through, if you're still standing today, that is goodness that has been running after you the whole way, whether you ever noticed it or not.

DIGGING DEEPER

Language historians note that the everyday phrase “goodness gracious” began centuries ago as a polite, softened way of naming two attributes of God — His goodness and His grace — without using His name carelessly. The reverence eventually wore off the phrase, but the truth underneath it never left: goodness and grace really do belong together, chasing us down side by side, exactly as Psalm 23:6 describes.

For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end... And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive. (Jeremiah 29:10-12, 14, KJV)

God said this to His people while they were still captives in Babylon — while everything around them looked like abandonment. His goodness wasn't defined by how their situation looked, to them or to anyone watching. It rarely is. His thoughts toward you are thoughts of peace, not evil, even when your own circumstances tell you a different story.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- *Is there a season I assumed God had lost track of me, that I can now see was goodness quietly running behind me the whole time?*
- *Do I actually believe goodness and mercy are following me today, or am I living like I have to chase blessing down myself?*

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Name one specific way God's goodness has “caught up” to you recently. Speak it out loud as a testimony today, even if only to yourself.

PRAY *Lord, thank You that Your goodness and mercy are not standing still — they are following me, all the days of my life. Help me to notice them catching up to me today. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 3 Rebuilt for Good Works

READ

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10, KJV)

REFLECT

You were not saved by good works, but you were absolutely saved for them. Goodness isn't something you have to manufacture from nothing — it's the shape God built into you the moment He recreated you in Christ. A lamp doesn't struggle to shine; it simply functions the way it was built to function. The same is true of you.

DIGGING DEEPER

Agathōsynē is often confused with last week's fruit, chrēstotēs (kindness), but they are not the same. Kindness is uniformly gentle. Goodness includes gentleness but is also willing to be firm — capable of correction and even rebuke when love requires it. David Guzik's Enduring Word commentary calls it virtue with the strength to act, not just the desire to be nice.

Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. (Acts 11:23-24, KJV)

Luke doesn't describe Barnabas as clever or wealthy — just “a good man.” And notice what's attached to it: full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people were added to the Lord because of it. Goodness isn't a footnote to a Spirit-filled life. It's one of its clearest fruits, and it's magnetic.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- *Where in my life have I been treating goodness like an obligation instead of the shape God rebuilt me into?*
- *Is there a good work God has “before ordained” for me that I've been putting off?*

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Identify one good work you've been meaning to do — a call, a gift, a repaired relationship — and do it before this week ends.

PRAY

Father, thank You for remaking me for good works, not just forgiving me for bad ones. Show me the good works You already ordained for me, and give me the courage to walk in them. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 4 God's Hands and Feet

READ

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25:40, KJV)

REFLECT

Jesus didn't measure the sheep and the goats by their theology exams. He measured them by whether goodness had hands and feet — whether it fed someone, clothed someone, showed up for someone the world had written off. Goodness that never leaves your heart isn't finished growing yet. Fruit is meant to be picked and given away.

DIGGING DEEPER

Goodness with a spine sometimes looks like a casserole on a doorstep, and sometimes it looks like a hard conversation — a loving correction, or refusing to enable something destructive in someone you love. That's not a contradiction of goodness; it's goodness doing what soft kindness alone cannot always do. Barclay noted this is exactly the kind of goodness Jesus displayed when He overturned tables in the temple — not gentle in that moment, but unmistakably good.

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; And that which he hath given will he pay him again. Chasten thy son while there is hope, And let not thy soul spare for his crying. (Proverbs 19:17-18, KJV)

Solomon puts generosity and firm discipline side by side as two faces of the same virtue. Pity on the poor is a loan made directly to the LORD Himself. But real goodness will also let someone cry rather than let them keep going down a road that ends in death. Dorcas (Acts 9:36) is a picture of the first face — a disciple whose whole reputation was that she was “full of good works and almsdeeds,” leaving behind garments other people were still wearing after she was gone.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- *Where has my goodness stayed comfortably in my heart instead of becoming hands and feet for someone else?*
- *Is there a hard, loving conversation I've been avoiding because it feels less “kind” than staying silent?*

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Do one tangible act of goodness today for someone who cannot repay you — and if God is nudging you toward a hard but loving conversation, ask Him for the courage to have it this week.

PRAY

Jesus, You are the goodness of God with hands and feet. Move through my hands and feet today. Give me courage for the goodness that costs something. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 5 Goodness Gracious, for Real This Time

READ

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23, KJV)

REFLECT

You've probably said "goodness gracious" more times than you can count — a phrase whose two words once quietly pointed to God's goodness and God's grace, long before it became a reflex. This week, let it stop being just a saying. Let it become a confession: God's goodness really has been chasing you down, and His grace really has been covering the distance every time you fell short. Both of them, running together, all the days of your life.

DIGGING DEEPER

Six fruits in, a pattern is emerging: love gave us the root, joy and peace gave us the settledness, longsuffering gave us patience with people, kindness gave us gentleness with people, and now goodness gives that gentleness a spine — patient, warm, but willing to do what's right even when it costs something. Next week we turn toward pistis, faith, because sustaining goodness over the long haul takes real trust in the God who is producing it in you.

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. (Genesis 50:19-20, KJV)

Joseph's brothers meant it for evil. God meant it unto good. And Nathan the prophet, standing in front of the most powerful man in the nation, simply said, "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7) — loving David enough to risk his anger rather than let a comfortable silence stand in place of the truth. That is goodness with a backbone: it refuses to let someone else's evil, or someone else's silence, have the final word.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

- *Looking back over this week, where did God's goodness catch up to me the most?*
- *Where did I actually put goodness into action this week — even in something small or costly?*

TAKE IT WITH YOU

The next time you catch yourself saying "goodness gracious," pause and let it be a real, quiet prayer of thanks instead of a reflex.

PRAY

Father, thank You for growing this fruit in me this week. Let goodness and mercy keep following me all the days of my life, until I dwell in Your house forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Six Fruits in Review

Take a few quiet minutes to look back — not just over this week, but over the whole series so far.

- *Agapē (love), charā (joy), and eirēnē (peace) turned my heart toward God. Which of these three still needs the most tending in me?*
- *Makrothymia (longsuffering) and chrēstotēs (kindness) turned my heart toward others. Have I actually grown more patient and gentle with people, or just more aware that I should?*
- *Agathōsynē (goodness) is adding a spine to that gentleness. Where do I need goodness with backbone — not just niceness, but real integrity in action?*
- *Which day's scripture challenged me the most this week, and why?*
- *What is one way I sensed the Holy Spirit producing goodness in me, rather than me forcing it?*

A Closing Word

Fruit is grown, not manufactured. If goodness has felt more like striving than growing this week, go back to Day 1 and remember: His goodness led you here in the first place, and it isn't finished yet. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life — and you will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.