

God Is Good All the Time

By Dave DeWitt

Developing a Definition of Good

Rather than go to a dictionary for a definition of “good” (mine gives 9 different definitions), we shall go to the Bible. The very common (Old Testament) Hebrew word for *good* [טוֹב (*tob* or *tov*)] generally translates as something *pleasant* or *beneficial*, like giving *prosperity*.

The Greek New Testament has two basic words for *good* (plus some combination words). Ἀγαθός (*agathos*) implies an absolute standard which is “proper,” “expected,” or “satisfactory.” Καλός (*kalos*) is “pertaining to providing some special or superior benefit.” These sound like they assume some standard and that there is a benefit to keeping that standard (quotes from the “Louw and Nida Lexicon”). So I offer this as a definition:

Good is a value which pertains to actions, characteristics, or concepts which are ultimately beneficial. Or simply,

Good is that which is ultimately beneficial.

Therefore,

God’s good character, manifested in His thoughts and actions, is ultimately beneficial, for Himself and anyone who participates in those thoughts and actions.

God Is Good All the Time, Logically

We can put it simply, in a logical statement:

Premise #1. God is good (Psalm 100:5; Mark 10:18).

Premise #2. God does not change (James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8).

Conclusion: Therefore, God is good all the time.

God Is Good All the Time, Practically

Good is a reality that God has created into the universe, so that when things are done that way, they will provide an ultimate benefit. For example, I could use my reading glasses to stir my coffee. It would work, at least to some extent, for a while. But it would not be good (ultimately beneficial) for my reading glasses, or me, because that’s not what my glasses were made for. But there is something they were made for—reading. If I use them for that, it will be good (ultimately beneficial) for them and me. To do good things is to do things the way they were designed to be done. It is good (ultimately beneficial) for me to live as God created me to live.

Good Is an Attribute of God

- **Psalm 16:2**, *I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord; I have no **good** besides You.”*
- **Mark 10:18**, *And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me **good**? No one is good except God alone.”*

Goodness is not some separate standard apart from God, which God is able to keep. Otherwise, the author of that separate standard would be God. No. God Himself **is** the standard. But “good” actually is something, and because God does not change, good does not change. The applications of good change with the different ages and with different individuals (as with keeping special days and food regulations—Romans 14:1-8). But the good itself, the attribute of God which these applications come from, remains the same. This is why, when we read the Bible, the character of God never changes. The God who spoke to Noah, Abraham, and Moses is the exactly the same God who spoke through Christ and the apostles. The same God, who sent Israel into captivity because they were not good, will judge the world by the same standard of good, at the Second Coming of Christ.

Good Is Absolute Not Relative

“Good” can be a noun or an adjective. When we say something is “good,” as a noun, we are assuming an absolute standard. Any secondary standard, which is both good and less than absolute, would have to be pointing to another standard, which is absolute. Suppose we use good as a noun, such as, “This is for your own **good**,” or “This charity is working for the **good** of mankind,” or “My party is pursuing the **good** of the country.” We are then assuming there is an absolute beneficial standard for you to be, for mankind to work toward, or my country to pursue.

When we say something is good as an adjective, we are also assuming it points to some absolute standard. If I say, “This is good car,” or “He’s a good teacher,” I am assuming an absolute standard which is, in some limited way or to some extent, revealed in “this car” or “his teaching.” Of course, we can use the adjective personally, saying, “**I** think this is a good car,” or “**I** think he is a good teacher.” In that case, we are not assuming an absolute standard. But we don’t always do that. We often use the word “good” understanding we are making a comparison to a standard, somewhere out there, which doesn’t change. I would be more inclined to put the label “good car” on a shiny new Mercedes than a rusty old Ford. When I do that, I assume there is something actually more beneficial about a new Mercedes than a rusty old Ford.

Good Is a Standard that Judges Evil

Progressives and pantheists understand “good” as “that which is morally right,” which, in turn, is, “a mysterious balance of good and evil” (Oxford American Dictionary illustration of “good” as a noun). For the pantheists, everything has two sides, the ying and the yang, or something. That concept is displayed with the idea of tolerance in everything the world produces, from films and novels to public education and the news media. But it doesn’t fit reality. When spouses tell their husbands or wives, or parents tell their children, some truth and some lies, it does not make for better families. When news networks, schools, churches, and political parties “balance” truth with lies, it is only a “fake” path of deception, not excellence. Adultery does not help marriage. Slander does not help fellowship. Hate does not help love. Excellence is never achieved by “a mysterious balance of good and evil.” Rather—an excellent marriage judges adultery as wrong, excellent fellowship judges slander as wrong, excellent love judges hate as wrong. Moral excellence is critical of evil, it does not balance good and evil. Therefore, since God is the standard of good, excellence is only achieved when God judges evil. In other words, it is ultimately beneficial for God to judge evil (Ezekiel 18:25).

Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is not right.” Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right (Ezekiel 18:25).

Good Is the Same Everywhere

Good is the same in every culture and in every situation, regardless of what people do or believe (Proverbs 14:12). Good is ultimately beneficial, and evil is ultimately detrimental, everywhere (Proverbs 13:15). Good is just the same in a Muslim culture as in a Christian culture. Good is just the same in a drug gang as in a Bible-believing church. It’s just that some cultures have more of it and some have less of it. Just because there are less good people, and more evil is being done in some cultures, does not mean what is ultimately beneficial has changed. It’s just that the evil cultures are not reaping the ultimate benefit of goodness. We don’t have to find good in everything.

If your loved ones are murdered by terrorists or raped by a gang, where is the good in that? There isn’t any. They are just evil. Nonetheless good, the ultimate benefit, is the same, even if it is absent.

Good Cannot Be Created or Improved, It Can Only Be Imitated

It is good (ultimately beneficial) to be healthy, loving, happy, peaceful, just, kind, knowledgeable, and wise. Good is not only good absolutely and universally, it is good ultimately. Whatever is good cannot be improved. Anything less than good is in need of improvement. You can be less than good, but you cannot be more than good.

For example, clean is good, dirty is bad, absolutely and universally. But clean is also good ultimately. I take a shower to get clean because dirty is bad. But I cannot improve on clean. I have often wondered why I can't get cleaner than clean so I can wait longer before taking another shower. But, no, I can only get clean, and then I get dirty again, so I have to get clean again. Clean is good, but it can only be duplicated, not improved upon. It is impossible to create something better than anything that is good. Good is a ceiling. I can continually get (more) bad, but the best I can do is maintain good. When our progressives try to create something morally better than good, it always ends up worse. If I try to get beyond removing the dirt from my skin, I just damage my skin.

Technological improvements can often be used to help us better approach what is good, but they cannot improve on good. A technologically improved shower can help me get cleaner faster, but it cannot improve on clean. Better food helps me be healthy, but I can't improve on healthy. Better surveillance equipment helps police bring criminals to justice, but it does not improve on justice. The social media might be used to help us express, or find, love, but it cannot improve on love. So, God is good, not only means His goodness is an absolute standard everywhere, it also means it can only be modeled, practiced, or approached but not improved.

The Goodness of God Is Connected to the Pleasure of God

God, who is good, devised a plan, which is good, according to His own pleasure, which is good.

- **Isaiah 46:10**, *And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.*”
- **Philippians 2:13**, *for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

Even the suffering of Jesus was planned from ancient times as part of the good pleasure of God. But Jesus did not end in suffering. His end is the ultimately beneficial prosperity of the fullness of God dwelling in Him.

- **Isaiah 53:10**, *But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering...*

[And that is good, ultimately beneficial, because]

- **Colossians 1:19**, *For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.*

The Goodness of God Is Connected to the Sovereignty of God

If by sovereignty we mean God is the ultimate cause of everything or that everything is in His plan, then tsunamis, floods, diseases, and disasters, which have killed millions and caused untold suffering over the centuries, must also be included in the goodness of God. Otherwise, we must conclude either God is not sovereign or He is not good all the time. There are some who define the sovereignty of God as only what God chooses to control, the rest He “allows.” But that does not solve the problem because many of the things God said He did also caused diseases and disasters (Job 2:3; Jeremiah 32:42). Also, if God only chooses to control some things, why doesn't He choose to control, disease and disasters? Given the sovereignty of God, either God is not good all the time, or those things must be good.

Since Justice Is Good, God's Judgment Against Injustice Is Good

The earth was created without diseases, disasters, and death. Mankind and the animals ate fruits and vegetables, and the garden did not grow weeds. The earth was under a water canopy that provided a mild climate without severe weather. But when Adam and Eve sinned, the command of God was violated, and justice, in order to remain good, required judgment. So God cursed the earth and everything on it. Work was hard, birth was painful, and everything died. But people still lived about 900 years in a mild climate. Then people became so corrupt that *every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Genesis 6:5). Again, they violated the holy character of God, so that His justice, in order to remain good, required judgment. The Flood that followed not only destroyed all but 8 people and the selected animals, but it caused severe weather (Genesis 8:22) and lowered life expectancy from 900 years to 80 years (Psalm 90:10). Since justice is good, we live in a world of suffering, severe weather, and death.

God Is Not Obligated to Tell Us What He Is Doing

Never get the idea God owes us an explanation or that we can figure out what He is doing (unless He has specifically told us in His Word). The only thing we know that God is doing in our (believers') lives is conforming us to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). But God is not obligated to explain Himself to His creation. Job wanted to know why he was suffering, and God gave him a science exam. Never telling Job why he was suffering, God said, "*Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?*" (Job 40:8). In the parable of the landowner, who represents God, Jesus concludes with him saying, "*Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*" (Matthew 20:15 – KJV).

The Goodness of God Looks to the Future

Good is not always immediately beneficial, but it's always ultimately beneficial. Paul said,

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for **good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28).

He did not say all things are immediately beneficial, but that all things work together to bring about what is ultimately beneficial.

When Joseph's brothers appealed to him for kindness after their father Jacob died, Joseph told them,

*"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for **good** in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive"* (Genesis 50:20).

Joseph suffered slavery and prison for years because *God meant it for good*. The slavery and prison were not in themselves beneficial, but they worked together for what was ultimately beneficial.

- **Psalms 119:71**, *It is **good** for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.*
- **Lamentations 3:25**, *The LORD is **good** to those who wait for Him.*
- **Hebrews 9:11**, *Christ appeared as a high priest of the **good** things to come.*
- **Hebrews 10:1**, *the Law...has only a shadow of the **good** things to come.*
- **Philippians 1:6**, *He who began a **good** work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Conclusion: Yes, God Is Good, All the Time

God is good: logically, practically, absolutely, and universally. God has an attribute of goodness which when imitated, is ultimately beneficial, all the time.

*I am the **good** shepherd* (John 10:14).