



# Family Values

## Virtue Realities

### Goodness

*Bruce Strade, Chief Officer of Organizational Delight, Lutheran Community Services NW*

“Goodness is next to godliness,” may be a more apt saying than the reference to “cleanliness” in the popular cliché. As a matter of fact, goodness is a quality of God. On Mount Sinai, the Lord says to Moses, *“I will make all my goodness pass before you.”* (Ex.33:19) The Lord then passes by and a voice proclaims: *“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, . . . (Ex. 34:6), all of which are reflections of God’s goodness.*

A key component of goodness is the element of justice. Isaiah strongly urges his readers to *“learn to do good.”* He then describes what this involves – *“seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.”* Seen from this perspective, goodness is an antidote to hate and bigotry. It is the opposite of evil or wickedness. It promotes equality and respect. It defends and gives voice to the poor and the powerless, the less fortunate in society.

Goodness for the writer of 2 Peter is something that supplements faith. In 2 Peter 1:5&6, we read: *“. . . you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love.”* The writer is outlining a process for strengthening faith. Goodness tops the list.

Finally, goodness is also considered a blessing or outgrowth of our relationship with God. In Psalm 23, the psalmist says with confidence and certainty, *“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.”* (v.6) For the Christian secure in his or her faith, God is a constant source of comfort, no matter what problems confront us, including a *“walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”* Yet we remain secure in the conviction that

God’s goodness and mercy will always be there. Because that is true, we in turn are in position to spread the goodness around.

The following are ways of practicing goodness:

1. **Pray daily** -- *“O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good.”*
2. **Appreciate your own goodness.** Recognize that you are a child of God, created in God’s image and through Christ are connected to God’s goodness.
3. **Look for the goodness in others.** Know that all people are created by God and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Treat others as God’s children.
4. **Seek justice.** Stand up for the less fortunate. Speak out against discrimination and harassment. Remember that silence is seen as consent.
5. **Explore opportunities for goodness.** At the dinner table discuss ways to show goodness or call a special family meeting for this purpose.
6. **Be a force for goodness.** Rather than ranting and raving against evil, become a resource for goodness. Let God’s goodness flow through you.

Daily affirmation: *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!”*

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