

**SERIES: LIVING THE GOOD LIFE**  
**PART 1: IS GOD TRULY GOOD ALL THE TIME?**

Good morning, CVCHURCH. Welcome home. If you are our guest this morning (afternoon) we welcome you home. We treat everyone here like you are our family, because you are. Here at CVCHURCH we are a multicultural and intergenerational church that wants to impact our culture with the love and goodness of Jesus Christ. You are welcome here, and you can come as you are.

Today, we begin a new series that I am calling LIVING THE GOOD LIFE. We are going to look at one of the most famous chapters in the entire Bible: Psalm 23. More people know this Psalm than any other chapter in the Bible, because it's all about the goodness of God. Specifically, it gives us nine ways God wants to be good in your life. Here is the question that we will ask through this entire series: Is God good all the time in your life? What about the times when you're in pain? Is God good when you're in pain? What about the times you're in conflict? Is God good to you when you're in conflict? What about the times when you're depressed? When you're stressed out? When you're worried? When you're under attack? Is God truly good all the time? What I want to know is how do I experience God's goodness when I can't feel it? Let's begin this series today by reading out loud together Psalm 100:5 (LB) **"FOR THE LORD IS ALWAYS GOOD. He is always loving and kind, and His faithfulness goes on and on to each succeeding generation."** In this introductory teaching I want to highlight what we'll be looking at when I get back for the next 10 weeks. Today, I want to do 2 things. First to show you why focusing on God's goodness is so important to your life, and what happens when you forget that God is good, and how it causes you all kinds of problems. Did you know that the lack of focusing on God's goodness is the major cause of stress and anxiety in your life? I want to highlight for you this morning (afternoon) four major negative consequences that happen when you forget to put into practice just how good God is. The second thing I want to do with you is to give you an overview of how God wants you to experience His goodness in 9 key areas in your life. Then when I get back starting August the 6<sup>th</sup> we will look at all 9 of these important truths and how you

begin to practice experiencing the goodness of God in your life every moment. This is so much like our loving God. He tells you what He wants to do in your life, then He asks you to partner with Him by how you think, feel and act. This is called faith. There are certain things in your life only God can do, and there are certain actions and thoughts you must think and take action on to see God's goodness, faithfulness and purpose and plans fulfilled in your life. We will look at these 9 truths in depth. I am asking all of our Small Group Leaders to please make sure that you follow with me in your small groups what I teach every week in this series. If you have to stop what you're doing, I ask that you do that. Unity in our CVCHURCH family is really important. Psalm 133:1 says, **"How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in harmony!"** All of us know how disagreement, anger, division, suspicion, gossip, slander, and distrust can destroy marriages, families, relationships, and friendships in the local church. The Bible says that harmony and unity are important because it makes the church a positive example to our culture, and it helps bring others to Jesus. It helps us cooperate as a family of believers as God meant us to, and it gives us a foretaste of heaven. Harmony and unity also renew and revitalize the ongoing work and ministry of our CV family, because there is less tension to sap our energy. This is why we worship like we do here at CVCHURCH. Worship opens you up to the goodness of God in your life. Psalm 34:8-9 says, **"Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in Him! 9 Fear the Lord, you His godly people, for those who fear Him will have all they need."** This is why I encourage each one of you to be sure to be on time for our worship together. The words, taste and see, don't mean check out God's credentials. Instead, it is a warm invitation to come and sing, praise, surrender, and raise your hearts and hands to God as you abandon your fear, stress and frustrations and trade them for God's presence when we gather together and as you worship on your own. Consistent worship on your part helps you to stay in touch with who God is, and it allows His presence to be more palpable in your daily life. Look at Pt 1 with me.

### **I. The results that happen when I forget God's goodness:**

I don't have time to get into it today, but you will either intentionally recall and practice God's goodness on a moment by moment basis, or you will forget. If

you're not active in remembering, you will be active in forgetting, and there are real consequences when I don't intentionally recall and rehearse through worship, praise and prayer that God is good and tell Him all the ways that His goodness is being demonstrated in my life.

### **A. I claim credit for the things that God did for me**

This is dangerous, friends. When I start claiming credit for the things that God did in me, through me, to me, for me, by me, and with me, I am heading down a path that is going to cause a lot of depression, stress, anger and quick judgment from God. In Luke chapter 12:13-21, Jesus tells the parable about the rich fool. He was incredibly wealthy. He was a billionaire in today's parlance. One day, as he was considering all of his wealth, he decided instead of investing in other people and giving to reduce poverty he decided to build himself more barns and to hoard his wealth for himself. He refused to give God any credit at all for his good life. Jesus says God says to that rich man, "You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for." It is a somber warning. If I were to ask you what is the worst sin you commit? I wonder what would be on your top 10 list. Do you know what the number one worst sin is? **Prideful ingratitude.** Not being grateful to God for His goodness. The Bible says it was pride and ingratitude that got Satan kicked out of heaven. The Bible says that ingratitude is actually one of the roots of atheism - that when I'm ungrateful, I start excusing myself and dismissing and maybe even denying God. The Bible says it like this in Romans 1:20-21 **"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities--His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. 21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship Him as God or even give Him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused."** Did you know that God says one of the leading signs of the last days before Jesus comes for His church is this cancer in our culture of prideful ingratitude? Look at 2 Timothy 3:1-5 **"Timothy, you should know that in the last days there will be very difficult times. 2 For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful.**

**They will consider nothing sacred. 3 They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. 4 They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride and love pleasure rather than God. 5 They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!”** This is the first thing that happens when I deny and forget God’s goodness to me, and I start claiming credit for things and achievements and accomplishments that I didn’t do. God did it through me, and He gave you and me the abilities to do it. Gratitude is seen in a deep discipline of worship and praise every day. **1 Corinthians 4:7 says, “What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn’t given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as through you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?”**

## **B. I stop asking for God’s help**

This is a big problem, because when you forget how eager God is to help you, how good God is, you start depending on yourself, and you stop asking God for things in prayer. God wants to help you. God is waiting to help you. Over 20 times in the New Testament God tells us to ask Him. Matthew 7:7 says, **“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.”** The Bible says you don’t have because you haven’t asked, and when you develop the habit of not asking and consulting Him about how to relate to your spouse, children, finances, career, health, and finances, you just begin to think that you’re responsible for all the good things that are in your life. This will lead to a downward spiral. When you forget to thank God for His goodness, unfailing love and faithfulness it first shows up in your prayer life. If you pray at all your prayers become tepid, weak and useless. You don’t get specific about what you need. You stop praying for God’s Kingdom rule and reign to take precedent in your life. You’re not saying, “I am in over my head. I need You to help me get out of debt. I need money for my house payment, car payment,” or whatever it is you need. “I am in this conflict with this person or people, and I need Your help, or I am going to mess it all up.” This is what happens when you forget the goodness of God. There is a very well known teaching for parents with children called the

circle of security. It teaches parents how children will either learn to trust you or not trust you. For some of us men we think that infants up to three year olds are not learning much. Nothing could be further from the truth. Men and women, your child is learning from the cues you give them from the moment of conception until they're born, and then their learning curve is very sharp for the first three years of their lives. Quickly, here is how a child learns to trust their parents. **First, the child recognizes they have an unmet need.** My diaper is wet or dirty. I am hungry. I'm at the bottom of the stairs and I need help getting up. **Step two is where the child expresses that need, usually by crying or yelling, because they don't have word yet, but they let you know.** They have a need, and, step two, they express a need. **Step three is the parent meets that need.** They pull you out of the crib, they change your diaper, and they feed you. They soothe you and do whatever you need because your need is not being met. The parent meets the need because they love you, and they want you to be comforted. **Step four the child learns to the degree and the quality of how the need it met is how they can trust you.** Every time you expressed a need and the parents met your need you learned to trust them. There is much that I can say here, and I don't have the time, but this process is the exact same way God teaches you to trust Him. You have an unmet need and you identify it and then you express it to Him through prayer. You do it again, and again and again. If you're not expressing your needs to God, you're not growing in your trust of Him. That's the only way you learn. I have a certain level of trust in God because of His faithfulness to answer my prayers and meet my needs. Hebrews 4:16 says, **"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."** What is God's motivation to meet your needs? Psalm 89:16 says, **"Answer my prayers, O Lord, for Your unfailing love is wonderful. Take care of me, for Your mercy is so plentiful."**

### **C. I quit trusting God in difficult times**

You can see a trend that happens in your life. When you claim the credit for what God is doing and has done in your life, and then you stop asking God for His help, you will develop the habit of not trusting God in difficult times. When you are unaware of God's goodness, faithfulness and unfailing love in your life

you will automatically try to tackle and fix all of the things in your life with your own strength, ingenuity, stamina, and talents. This leads to disappointment, despair and depression. It also leads to leaning on yourself. When you're aware of God's goodness you will automatically talk to God about everything in your life. You go to God first. "Father, I need Your help here. In my marriage, with my kids. With my relationships. My boyfriend--my girlfriend. With my schooling. I need Your help discovering my purpose and what are my next steps to be. I need a job. God, help me with my career choice." When you are practicing God's goodness in life, you turn to Him as your first choice, not your last resort. Psalm 16:1-2 says, **"Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to You for refuge. 2 I said to the Lord, 'You are my Master! Every good thing I have comes from You.'"** Here is an example of how you can practice the goodness of God in your life daily. **I confess daily, "Jesus Christ, You are my Master. Every good thing I have comes from You--every good thing."** In Romans 5:3-5a Paul writes, **"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment."** In other words, dear friends, I can get angry at God and others, and I can blame them and talk bad about them, or I can put my trust in God and His goodness and faithfulness, knowing that He is committed to developing the strength of my character, and strong character strengthens my hope of eternal salvation. Paul says it is precisely this hope in God's goodness, faithfulness and love that leads to joy, happiness and trust and will not lead me down the path of disappointment.

#### **D. I become pessimistic about the future**

When you either forget how good God really is, or you choose to believe that he is not good to you, your only other option is that you will become pessimistic about the future. You lose hope, because hope is based on the goodness of God. David tells us in Psalm 27:13-14 the connection between hope and the goodness of God. **"Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness while I am here in the land of the living. 14 Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord."** This is really important,

loved ones. We are always in a hurry. We want God to bless our plans instead of discovering what God is blessing and engage our lives in that. God's delays do not mean He is denying our request. He is saying, "I am working behind the scenes where you cannot see. I want you to learn to trust in My goodness and faithfulness."

## II. Hope is: Anticipating God's goodness

### *Psalm 23*

Hope is anticipating God's goodness. The only reason you can have hope is because your God is a good God. If God is not a good God, there is no radical, rational, logical reason for hope, because we're up a creek without a paddle. The foundation of all hope is the goodness of God. If God is not a good God, you don't have any hope for your future. Jeremiah 29:11 says **“For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’”** What I want to do is go through these 9 points rather quickly, because I want to use these as an introduction to our next 9 weeks together when I get back from vacation starting August 6<sup>th</sup>. We will go verse by verse through Psalm 23, which is one of the most famous of all the passages in the Bible. This is a profound passage about God's goodness and how He desires to meet your most important needs and desires as your loving Savior and Shepherd, if you will but let Him. If you have your Bible, or you can use the Bible below your seat or in front of you to follow. I have the verse for you in your notes and on the screen. Psalm 23 lists nine different benefits of God's goodness to you, and we're going to cover them in detail starting August 6<sup>th</sup>, so please write these down in your notes.

### **Because God is good:**

#### **A. He will meet my needs when I'm worried**

Please read this verse with me out loud, **“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.”** Psalm 23:1. Because God is a good God, He will meet all my needs when I'm worried. The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I will lack nothing. Nada, zip, zero. I get to choose to believe this is His character to me and trust in

His goodness. No one can do this for me or for you. You must choose to believe what the Bible says about God's goodness to you. God's goodness provides the **SUSTENANCE** you need.

### **B. He will teach me to relax when I am stressed out**

How many of us need to learn this and put this truth about God's character and goodness into practice every minute of every day? Psalm 23:2 says, "**He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams.**" This is a metaphor for peace and tranquility. He makes me lie down. Can you identify some times in your life where God in His goodness has made you lie down? Have you ever burned out because you pushed too hard? I have. Jesus wants to teach you how to relax on a regular basis so you can deal with the daily stresses in your life. That is the secret to going the long haul and finishing your life well. Loved friends, I am determined to do that with my life. God provides **BALANCE** for our lives.

### **C. He will renew my strength when I'm empty**

If the truth be told, some of you are out of gas. You've been running on fumes for miles. You desperately need this series. Psalm 23:3a says, "**He renews my soul (strength).**" God's goodness provides sustenance to meet my needs when I'm worried. He teaches me balance by teaching me how to relax. He wants to teach me **resilience** by restoring and renewing my soul and strength by filling me when I'm empty.

### **D. He will guide me when I am confused**

Psalm 23:3b says, "**He guides me along right paths bringing honor to His name.**" Nothing can cause stress like indecision. God says He will give you **guidance** if you ask Him. He's not playing games with you. Psalm 119:35 says, "**Make me walk along the path of Your commands, for that is where my happiness is found.**" God's truth, the Bible, His commands not only give you guidance, but God says this is where you find your sweet spot where you will be



consistently happy when your life is lived according to truth. Psalm 86:11 says, **“Teach me Your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to Your truth.”**

#### **E. He will walk with me in fearful and dangerous days**

Psalm 23:4a says, **“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me.”** Because God is with me, He will walk with me and not leave me alone. You’re going to go through some dark days ahead. You’re going to go through some fearful times ahead, but He’s promised He is going to be with you. Hear me, dear friends--if God’s with you and for you, it doesn’t matter who’s against you. His presence with you is what gives you **confidence**.

#### **F. He will protect me when I fell insecure**

Psalm 23:4b says, **“Your rod and Your staff protect and comfort me.”** The shepherd had a rod that was used to protect the sheep from wolves, coyotes and anything that would try to kill the sheep. The staff was used to guide and lead the sheep. Like sheep, we need protection and guidance, especially when you’re fearful and insecure. I will go deeper into how Jesus does this for you in the following weeks. God’s goodness gives me **assurance**.

#### **G. He will publicly show His favor on my life!**

When you surrender your life to Jesus, He gives you His favor. Favor is another term for God’s goodness, and it’s also another term for God’s grace. Whether you know it or not, you have God’s favor. One of the issues I have already mentioned is that when you forget or don’t acknowledge God’s favor, you will take credit for the good things that God has given to you. I will go into this in detail. In 2017: The Year of Hope, God wants to show you His favor as never before as you humble yourself before Him and make His Kingdom purposes your #1 desire. Psalm 23:5 says, **“You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil (influence). My cup overflows with blessings (abundance).”**

## H. He will be good to me no matter what happens

Other people may not be good to you in the future, but God will. You can count on that--the consistency of His kindness and generosity to you. This is called God's **benevolence** to you. God is good to me no matter what happens. Please read out loud with me, Psalm 23:6a: **"Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life."** I love this picture of the goodness, kindness, mercy, and unfailing love of God that pursues me no matter where I go or what happens to me.

## I. He will have me spend eternity with Him

Psalm 23:6b says, **"And I will live in the house of the Lord forever."** **Inheritance.** This speaks of the privilege of living in eternity with God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit where all of these benefits of God will be experienced by every one of us who has surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ and to His purposes and plans for our lives. I look forward to unpacking these 9 exciting truths about God's goodness with you from August 6<sup>th</sup> to October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Let's pray together. "Father God, You are so good. We could never deserve Your goodness. We would not be alive or take our next breath, or our heart would not have its next beat if it weren't for You, our good God. Forgive us, Father, for our ungratefulness, for our prideful self-centeredness. Forgive us for thinking that we did it all ourselves. Nothing would happen in our lives without Your kindness, goodness and love." You might want to pray something like this with me, "God, I ask You to forgive me for forgetting and neglecting Your goodness to me. I don't think about it. God, when I don't think about how good You are, I start claiming credit for the things that You did for me, through me, and in me and to flow Your purposes through me. I'm sorry, I'm nothing without You. God, so much of the time, I forget Your goodness, and I just stop asking You for help. I'm not learning to trust You, because I'm not asking You to meet my needs. You told me to come boldly in prayer to You, the good and gracious God, and expect You to answer out of Your goodness. I want to start asking for Your blessing and answers to my needs every day of my life. Lord, because I

forget Your goodness, I often stop trusting You in difficult times. Help me to remember that in everything, You're working for good, even the bad stuff, because You have a good plan for my life. I don't want to be pessimistic about my future. Like David, I would despair if I didn't know the goodness of God. Help me to wait for You. Help me to be strong, to take courage in my heart, and to wait for You to answer the needs in my life. Lord, I want this life that is outlined in Psalm 23, a life of sustenance, a life of balance, the strength of resilience, your guidance, and the confidence that comes from knowing Your presence is always with me. The assurance that conquers my insecurity. I want the influence and abundance that comes from Your favor and to live out of Your benevolence to me and the inheritance of living with You forever. I know that You've made this available not because of my goodness, but because of Your goodness and Your grace. Jesus Christ, thank You for paying for all of these things with Your life. That as much as I know how, I ask You to be my Good Shepherd. Your Word says that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep, and You did that for me. I don't understand everything, but I'm asking You to make Yourself real to me, and I want to learn to love You and follow You and trust You. I confess You're a good God. I pray this humbly in Your name."