

N U R T U R E
F A I T H
with
Dr. W. Douglas Hood, Jr.

April 23, 2017

What Is Good

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:21 (Common English Bible)

“Hang on to what is good.”

MEDITATE:

Attempts to define “what is good” are often found to be inadequate. Goodness is difficult to describe but it is wonderfully easy to recognize. We know goodness when we see it and it is a thrilling experience. There is an attractiveness about it that captures both the mind and the heart and goodness proves to be a powerful quality in shaping the disposition of those who observe it. Goodness is a mighty impulse whose radiance gives beauty to the soul.

Perhaps more difficult than defining goodness is articulating how goodness is achieved or produced. Some have argued that goodness is born and that effort to generate goodness is therefore futile, but is an observable fact that character can be changed. In view of the fact that goodness has the capacity to positively impact the environment of all human interaction some attempt, however feeble, is called for. Though there is no perfect formula that produces completely the results we desire, scripture does provide help.

The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3:17 that we are to become imitators of Paul and to watch those who live as he does – to use those of good and godly behavior as models. Here, Paul suggest that a prime condition for generating goodness is simple observation that instructs and infects the heart toward participation in its beauty. David Downie says as much in his book, *Paris, Paris: Journey Into The City of Light*: “A day spent loitering here teaches you more about Paris and its inhabitants than many a scholarly tome.”¹ This is well demonstrated in the experience of the apostles. In spite of conspicuous limitations and weaknesses, each became good men chiefly as a result of their acquaintance with Christ – their decision to simply spend time with Jesus and learning through observation.

Goodness is also produced by the disciplined application of those principals taught by Jesus for a holy life. Regular prayer, reading and application of God’s Word to one’s life and participation in God’s work in the world produce productive soil for the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes in his first letter to Timothy, “Train yourself for a holy life!” (1 Timothy 4:7b). The regular discipline of “training” for the holy life breaks down the barriers, which hinder the organic development of goodness. Behind anything that is really well done is a long period of self-discipline and mastery, which shapes and defines the character or skill that is desired. Goodness can be produced in any life. What is required is that we place ourselves in regular contact with those who model goodness and then so discipline our spirits that we profit by the experience.

¹David Downie, *Paris, Paris: Journey Into The City of Light* (New York: Broadway Books, 2011), 18.

APPLY:

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you?

2. What insight can you apply to your life this week?

3. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayer to pray?

PRAY:

Heavenly Father, I long to be a bold and confident witness to my faith. Strengthen me and direct me so that it may be so. Amen.