

Word Notes Sunday 7/10/2012 Tony Hodge
God is Good!

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Psalms 43:1-9

David exhorts us to “Taste and see that The Lord is good”. Many people have negative statements/ideas about God largely because they don't know who he is, they have not experienced God. Do people 'taste' us to see what God is like?

The Bible tells us over and over that God is good, that what he does is good and that what He created is good (eg: Ps 19:68, Ex 34:5-7, Genesis 1 especially v 31). Even after man's rebellion and the fall, Psalm 33 declares that “the earth is full of the goodness of The Lord.” God's goodness is there whether we recognise it or not – Jesus is famously misquoted from Matt 5:45 when he tells us that both the sun and the rain (needed for life) have no favourites. Jesus shows directly and actively the goodness of God – the rich young ruler was challenged to recognise this (Mk 10:17,8) but failed the test.

God is good then! What's more as part of his creation we are good too and created to do good things like our Father (Eph 2:10) and God has given us all creation to enjoy! (1 Tim 3:4)

Why don't people want to know God?

Some have preconceived ideas: if God is good then everything should be great that is to say: “as I want them all the time”, and if it isn't then God can't be good. Here are a few of the reasons people give for not bothering to give God a try:

1. **“God is a killjoy”**, there just to make life tough - why can't I just “do it my way” - why the rules? Is He being a killjoy or a good Father? God doesn't discipline out of cruelty but out of love (Heb 12:9-11).
2. **“What about all the bad stuff in the Bible”** - there's a lot of death and killing! People went wrong remember! God says of Himself that He is “slow to anger and swift to bless” nine times in the Old Testament - eight of those times He's also abundant in love!
3. **“Religion is the cause of all wars.”** 'Religion' might be but not faith, people start wars! Do those who boycott religion because it starts war also boycott politics, oil, or money? What about all the good things Christians have done – the NHS, abolition of slavery, penal reform, and end to child labour - all started by people of deep Christian faith.
4. **“Why does God allow suffering?”** We can't trivialise suffering, not individual, community or global, yet the root of suffering is not at God's instigation - human freedom led to rebellion and the fall. Here are the beginnings of a few answers:
 - a. Suffering was not a part of God's good creation, nor will it feature in the new heaven and new earth. In between it happens as a result of free will and rebellion – both for individuals and also in the global sense of the fallen world. Yet if free will causes so much trouble-why bother with it? God didn't have to make us this way; we could be made to love him without choice. But we aren't made that way – and who would want pre-programmed children, friends or lovers?
 - b. God works through suffering - Even Jesus learned obedience through suffering and God worked out His purposes for the good of all through it (Heb 5:8, Rom 8:28).
 - c. God compensates for our suffering (Job, Joseph exiled to Egypt) for those in Christ God's glory will be revealed in us! (Rom 8:18).
 - d. God is with us in suffering - He is not aloof, He cares that we are in pain. Jesus suffered real and deep anguish of the soul (Lk 22:39-44) yet through his suffering we are saved, set free and welcomed into God's family.

How can we help people taste and see? Speak about God's goodness, they need an example. Remember how good God is - He doesn't change. Whether we are happy or sad Ps 100:5 reminds us God's love “endures forever”.

Application & Witness (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

To encourage each other and declare God's goodness ask each person to name one thing about God that speaks of His goodness and how they have experienced this in their lives (to help memories you might check out the names of God at <http://www.smilegodlovesyou.org/names.html>).

It's all very well to say "God is good all the time" but most if not all have known times when that has been put to the test. How did these experiences help us answer the difficult questions from others? What support did you receive from God's word?

David invites all to "Taste and see that the LORD is good" – Tony used the example of us being like food tasters demonstrating that God is good through our lives, does that work for you?

When people give a "standard" answer to not believing in God, or that He or religion is not good, how do you respond? Did the summary points on Sunday help? How might we tackle those difficult questions – remembering that the up-front question or statement might mask a personal issue.

Prayer

Pray together or in pairs about anything that may have arisen, or for God's goodness to be truly evident in ourselves as a witness to Him.