

God is Good

Introduction

We say, 'God is good', and probably believe it – but how do we understand it? What do we think that phrase actually means?

For some people, 'God is good' is roughly the same as saying 'God is holy'. God is good, but I am not: I am foolish and weak and prone to sin. God is good, and can't accept anything that would spoil His goodness, so I can't approach Him in my current miserable state. One day, I hope, I will be fully redeemed, made whole and new, and will be able to get near Him.

But God has chosen to reveal Himself in and through Jesus. And this picture of God just does not fit with the Jesus we meet in the Gospels. In the Gospels, we meet a Jesus Who is good, so good that He welcomes the sick and the sinners. His chosen Twelve let Him down time and time again, Peter contradicts Him and denies Him, James and John want to call down fire from Heaven. These are not good, faithful people: they are weak, sinful and error-prone, and still they are not rejected or punished: Jesus loves them and accepts them as they are.

Even after His resurrection, Jesus makes a special effort to give Thomas the evidence he is seeking. There is a gentle rebuke, but no actual criticism: He knows we are weak, and provides what we need. Yes, we are sinful creatures, but Jesus died so that we can come near to God just as we are: our sins will not get in the way – they have been removed, forgiven, crossed out, paid for and covered over.

Some people say: yes, that was the Jesus we meet in the Gospels, but one day He will return, not as the slain lamb but as the roaring lion. I say: He always was a lion, we just didn't see it. The Jesus Who will return is the same Jesus Who lived and died for us. His role may be different, but His character will be unchanged. The Jesus Who invited all who are heavy laden to come to Him so he could give them rest, that is the Jesus Who is coming back for us, to draw Him finally and fully to Himself.

God is good, so good that He wants the very best for us, and is willing to do absolutely anything He can do to make that possible. Yes, He hates sin – He hates it because sin damages and diminishes and distracts us. He doesn't want anything to get in the way of us living the best, fullest, most joyful and fulfilled lives possible, so of course He hates sin.

God loves us. God is love. He is not looking for excuses to punish us, He is looking for opportunities to bless us. Why do we not feel more blessed? I don't know; children often don't understand their parents. Why did they let us go to school and face all kind of difficulties and challenges, instead of remaining safe with them? But maybe the challenges are a blessing; maybe they knew then, and maybe He knows now – better than us – what we need. Maybe He is, really, very good.

Next steps

This was written by Paul Hazelden as a contribution to the *Strong Foundations* exploration. You are welcome to use it and distribute it how you like, but feedback would be appreciated.

- Is it helpful?
- Would you change anything?
- Would you like to talk about how we can learn from each other about how best to follow Jesus where we are?

You can contact me through the web form at mad-bristol or join the conversation on the *Strong Foundations* site.

- Web form: <http://mad-bristol.org.uk/contact/>
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