

# Nine Secrets of Healthy Relationships

## *Goodness – Part Seven*

**Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)** <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup>Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

**Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)** <sup>22</sup> But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

- Relationships are the soil in our garden of life, and what grows in them is OUR CHOICE. It's both amusing and amazing that psychologists can identify so many universal principles of relationships, while remaining unable to give us any real power to deal with our difficulties. Look at the book titles: John Gray's, "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus," Bill & Pam Farrel's, "Men are like Waffles, Women are like Spaghetti," and one I would like to write, "Men are like Clams, Women are like Crowbars."
  - What they are all saying is basically that "opposites ATTRACT" but then "opposites ATTACK" – in every kind of relationship! But what they are NOT telling us is that, humanly speaking, we are helpless to keep our relationships truly healthy. Without the power of God in our lives, our relationships eventually disintegrate into a power struggle.
  - It's like one young man who e-mailed me this week. He basically said, "I've tried to enforce my preferences in my marriage, but I found that it just didn't work. Can you tell me how to get it to work?" 😊 He had only been married for a few months, so he still had hope! I didn't have the heart to tell him that I lost that battle 18 years ago!
  - I should have shared with him this beautiful old poem by Ogden Nash that I ran across this week: To keep your marriage brimming, With love in the loving cup, When you're wrong, admit it, And when you're right, shut up. 😊
  - The Holy Ghost (God's Spirit in us) is PRIMARILY given to get us saved and keep us saved. Don't let anyone tell you that you can get saved or keep saved without the Holy Ghost.
    - Without the Holy Ghost we will not be in the rapture of the church when Jesus returns (Romans 8:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
- Without the Spirit of Christ we are "none of His" – we do not belong to the family of God (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 12:3, 2 Timothy 2:19).
  - The Bible teaches that we cannot even call Jesus the Lord of our lives except by the power of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:3).
  - However, a wonderful SECONDARY benefit is that when we have His Spirit in us, God helps us live in our everyday relationships by producing in us "THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT." And one important part of that fruit is "goodness."
  - Instinctively, human beings know that it is right to be "GOOD," but they have argued for thousands of years about exactly what constitutes "goodness." Around the time the New Testament was written, the ancient Greek philosophers proposed several ideas about goodness – each one disagreeing with all the rest! And by the way, each idea still has a large following in our world today ...
    - One philosophy said that **good is the experience of pleasure and the eradication of pain**. So, if my pleasure is good, then anything that causes me displeasure is bad. So if my marriage is causing tension or unhappiness, I owe it to myself to get out. If drinking helps me forget life's problems, I owe it to myself to hit the clubs. Never mind what I am doing to my family or my body.
    - Another philosophy said that **good is the acquisition of knowledge and the eradication of ignorance**. This theory assumes first that our educators will always be right, and second that if we are taught what is good, we will automatically do it. But, as our modern lack of values and sophistication of criminals will attest, education alone is not the answer.
    - Still another philosophy said that **good is the greatest benefit for the greatest number**. In fact, this is the principle upon which our idea of democracy is built. It recognizes that there are always advantages and disadvantages in every situation, so it comes down on the side of "the MOST benefit." But this obviously isn't so good for the minority, and besides, who can accurately judge the most benefit? We all know that the majority isn't always right! (i.e. Winston Churchill's decision to allow Coventry to be bombed rather than alert the enemy, by evacuating the city, to the fact that their codes had been broken; thus maintaining access to the enemy's plans and hopefully saving many more lives, but literally sacrificing the people of Coventry in the process!)

- A final philosophy said that **good is having goods!** Most people in our country still define good in materialistic terms, despite the fact that all the evidence suggests that material goods nearly always fail to satisfy and actually often become a curse.
- Each of these philosophies shares one common error – **the idea that man on his own can choose what is good for him!**
- Psychology textbooks and self-help books often give the impression that people are BORN good (and can thus choose good), and blame our bad experiences for our bad behavior. Obviously, these people have been too busy writing books to have children, because any two-year-old can teach you the basic lesson that we can be bad even when our environment is good!
- The Bible teaches that people are NOT born good, but with a sinful nature. Even without a bad childhood or harmful experiences, we are naturally inclined toward rebellion, disobedience and selfishness.
- **Psalm 51:5** Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- The Bible also teaches us that, regardless of our personal hurts or painful life experiences, each person ultimately CHOOSES their behavior, and bears the consequences!
- **Romans 6:16 (NLT)** Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval.
- Finally, the Bible teaches us that we have no POWER in ourselves to choose the right behavior, even if we want to!
- **Romans 7:18-19 (NLT)** <sup>18</sup> I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. <sup>19</sup> When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.
- **SO, IF MAN IS NOT BORN GOOD, AND HE IS HELD RESPONSIBLE TO CHOOSE TO BE GOOD, AND HE HAS NO POWER TO BE GOOD, BUT YET HE MUST BE GOOD TO GET TO HEAVEN, WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO HIS DILEMMA?** (Glad you asked!)
- The old Anglo-Saxon word for “good” was the same as the word “God,” because **GOD IS GOOD!** The Scriptures overflow with references to the goodness of God. The Psalmist declared, “The Lord is good to all” (Psalm 145:9). When God was on the earth in the person of Jesus, the Bible says simply that He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38).
- **Mark 10:17-18** <sup>17</sup>And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? <sup>18</sup>And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.
- Jesus is not denying His divinity here; in fact, He's proving it! He's basically saying, “Do you understand what you just said, because only God is good! If I'm good, then ... I'm God!”
- IT TAKES GOD IN US FOR US TO BE ABLE TO ACT GOOD! **We don't “get good to get God,” we “get God to get good!”** The only solution to our sin problem is the power of the Holy Ghost, producing the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives!
- The Greek word for “goodness” is the word “agathosune.” It is a rare word that combines BEING good and DOING good. It means goodness that originates in our heart but manifests itself in our actions. It literally means, “to be godlike.”
- Our most accurate modern word for “goodness” would be the word “wholeness” or “**INTEGRITY.**” Integrity comes from the same root as the word “integrate” and that's what it means – **a decision to integrate my heart's values into my daily actions.** I thus become a “whole” person, not double-minded or two-faced.
- **Proverbs 28:6** Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.
- **1 Chronicles 29:17a (NLT)** I know, my God, that you examine our hearts and rejoice when you find integrity there.
- Integrity is very important to God, but it's important to us and to our relationships as well. **We struggle with low self-worth when there is a gap between our heart's values and our daily actions.** George Gallup did a poll that found the number one problem North Americans face is “incongruent values.”

Another survey found that 91% of North Americans lie! We tell lies, but we also LIVE LIES!

- The opposite of consistency is HYPOCRISY, or “faking it!” And the more you try to fake it, the more frustrated you will become! FAKED GOODNESS will set you up for a fall and destroy your most cherished relationships – and it will not save you!
- **Matthew 6:1 (NLT)** Take care! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired, because then you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven.
- Jesus isn't saying not to do anything where people can see it, because He did a lot of good deeds publicly. Instead, He's talking about our MOTIVATION. Why are we doing it? If it's only to be admired, then it's WRONG!
- **1 Samuel 16:7b (NLT)** People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at a person's thoughts and intentions.
- **Our public image must match our private reality, or we do not have “integrity” – WE ARE NOT GOOD!**
- **Our words must match our actions, or we do not have “integrity” – WE ARE NOT GOOD!** Your words aren't contagious, but your lifestyle is. That's why many times, those closest to you don't want to be close to you – because of your hypocrisy and inconsistency!
- INTEGRITY means you must make up your mind IN ADVANCE! (like the groom at the altar who is asked, “Do you ...?”)
- **Paul gives us two practical principles for being good ...**
- **Romans 12:9 (CEV)** Be sincere in your love for others. Hate everything that is evil and hold tight to everything that is good.
- **Romans 12:21 (NKJV)** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
- He's saying, HOLD TIGHT TO YOUR INTEGRITY! He's admonishing, OVERCOME EVIL WITH INTEGRITY! The only way you can beat the devil is to be the same in private as you are in public. The devil is not afraid of your WORDS if you don't have a WITNESS! He's not afraid of your PRAISE if you don't PRAY! **Let the Holy Ghost grow “GOODNESS” in you!**