



God is Good

Summary and Goal

False Narrative: God wants to ruin my life.

True Narrative: God wants to rescue or resurrect my life.

Bottom Line: Jesus not only explains suffering, Jesus experienced suffering.

Main Passages

Genesis 1:26-31; Romans 8:28

Session Outline

1. The Goodness of God (Gen. 1:26-31)
2. Working for Our Good (Rom. 8:28)
3. Our Good Works (Rom. 8:28)

Theological Theme

God is spirit. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, justice, holiness, and truth.

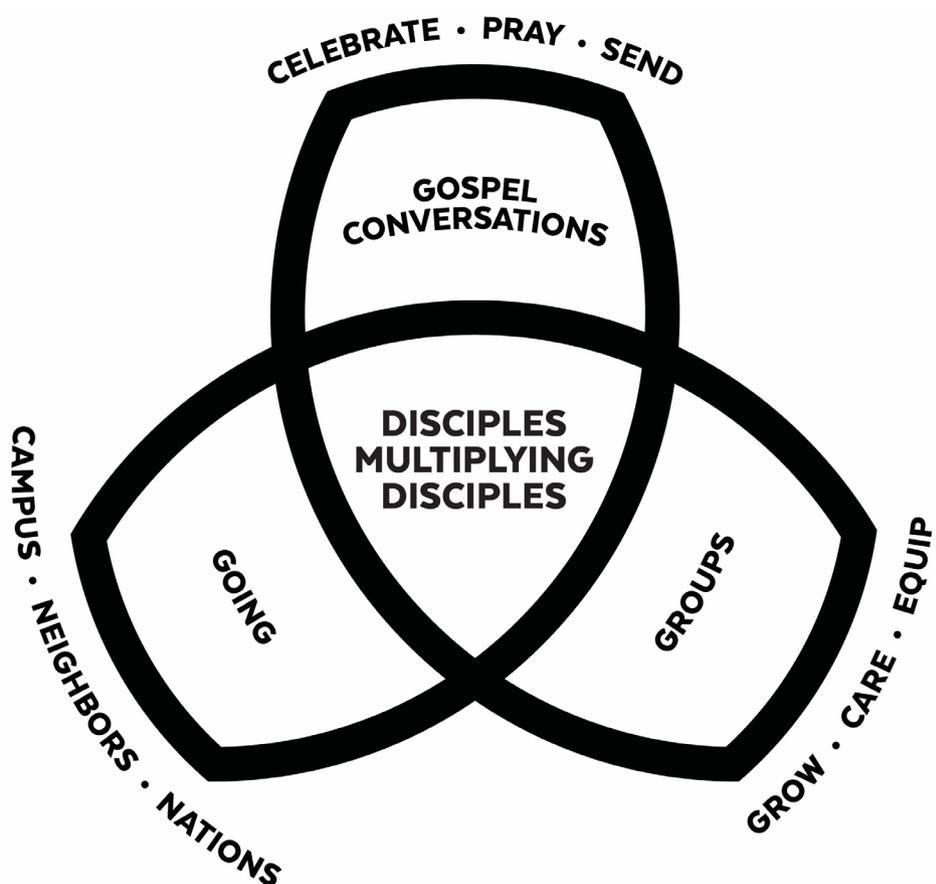
Christ Connection

The goodness of God is fully displayed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is true not only because Jesus is God, but because Jesus' mission on earth was the climax of God the Father's good intentions toward wretched sinners.

Missional Application

Christians live to fulfill the mission of their Creator and Redeemer. This mission is intimately tied to both His character and His work in this world.

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Next Step

Share with your spouse, friend, or group how you are being changed by Jesus. A foundational principle of groups is to care for each other.



Session Plan

God is Good

Introduction

- ❓ Have you ever been in a situation where something that was supposed to be for your good appeared to be or felt like the opposite?
- ❓ How do you typically respond in situations where your hopes or expectations are not met?

The world today often portrays God as a stern judge whose only objective is to heap guilt upon people and make their lives difficult. The reality is that God is a stern judge to those who have not trusted in Christ. But for the redeemed of the Lord, God is a tender and gracious Father who works all things to their good. God does good to His children because He Himself is good.

1. The Goodness of God (Gen. 1:26-31)

The Book of Genesis is foundational to our understanding of the rest of the Scriptures. What we believe about these first chapters sets the trajectory for how we will interpret the rest of the Bible and how we will understand the world around us. We must remember that the Scriptures are divinely inspired (in a way no other book is), inerrant (without error), and completely sufficient (containing all we need to know for salvation and walking with God).

- ❓ How does our understanding of the creation account shape our belief about God and everything else?
- ❓ What do we learn about God's character from this account of creation?
- ❓ Application: In what ways have you seen the goodness of God in your life?

2. Working for Our Good (Rom. 8:28)

Now we come to a key distinction in our understanding of God's goodness. The Bible claims that God is good. Therefore, we believe and know that God is good. We accept this description as fact. Where we can err in our conception of God is to adopt the faulty notion that what is good and what is not good is a determination that we make by the light of our own wisdom and understanding of the world. This is a grave mistake. The Book of Proverbs warns us: "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death" (14:12). Thankfully, we aren't left to our own devices to try to make sense of this world. We have the Scriptures as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.

- ❓ How can we discern what is good or not in the world?
- ❓ How are we able to reconcile God's goodness to His people with the difficulties we face in life?
- ❓ Application: How have you seen God working in your life in unexpected ways for good?

3. Our Good Works (Rom. 8:28)

The goodness of God in Christ toward sinners transforms them. They become new creations (see 2 Cor. 5:17); their heart of stone is removed, and they are given a heart of flesh (see Ezek. 36:26); they were made alive with Christ where before they were dead in their sins and trespasses (see Eph. 2:1-10). The Scriptures are clear that the result of Christ's good work on behalf of sinners should be forgiven sinners doing good works for the glory of God.

- ❓ How are Christian's lives changed by the goodness of God revealed in Jesus?
- ❓ God is good and has saved us for good works in Christ. How can we know the good works God has called us to do?
- ❓ Application: How do your good works evidence your true and living faith?

Conclusion

- ❓ How has God revealed more of His goodness to you through today's study?
- ❓ How have you experienced God's goodness in the midst of a particularly difficult season?
- ❓ How might you share about the goodness of God by pointing to His nearness to you in the midst of life's difficulties? Who is He calling you to share this with?



Expanded Session Content

God is Good

Introduction

- ❓ Have you ever been in a situation where something that was supposed to be for your good appeared to be or felt like the opposite?
- ❓ How do you typically respond in situations where your hopes or expectations are not met?

Imagine a scenario where a child has a large splinter in his or her foot. The child knows that his parents love him and do not desire to do him any harm. The child also knows very well that there is a large splinter in his foot and it has to be removed. If it stays it will only continue to cause pain and could eventually lead to an infection and a more serious situation. But it's difficult for a child to think rationally about those facts when the kitchen light is glinting off the sharp needle that is descending upon his foot.

Let's think about two ways of seeing this situation. First, we recognize that this scene taken completely out of context is distressing. Here we have a grown adult subduing a smaller, weaker child. The adult is sticking the child with a sharp object while holding him down by force. The child is trying to get free and protesting. He's crying. There is no doubt that the child is upset, worried, and afraid. One might draw the conclusion that there is some sort of physical abuse going on.

Now, let's consider the fuller context. The adult and child know each other. In fact, the adult is the small boy's mother. She daydreamed of having this son long before she was even married. She rejoiced when she first learned that she was pregnant. She spent nine months preparing for his arrival. She says that the day he was born was the happiest day of her life. Now, she has to get this splinter out so that it doesn't get infected. And, although the child can't understand this, the pain that she is causing him at that moment is an expression of her love and care for him.

The difference between these two perspectives makes all the difference in the world in terms of our understanding of what is happening in that

situation. Similarly, the way Christians understand who God is and His relationship with them is critical if they are to walk through the world with the joy and peace that their heavenly Father intends for them.

Session Summary

The world today often portrays God as a stern judge whose only objective is to heap guilt upon people and make their lives difficult. The reality is that God is a stern judge to those who have not trusted in Christ. But for the redeemed of the Lord, God is a tender and gracious Father who works all things to their good. God does good to His children because He Himself is good.

1. The Goodness of God (Gen. 1:26-31)

The Book of Genesis is foundational to our understanding of the rest of the Scriptures. What we believe about these first chapters sets the trajectory for how we will interpret the rest of the Bible and how we will understand the world around us. We must remember that the Scriptures are divinely inspired (in a way no other book is), inerrant (without error), and completely sufficient (containing all we need to know for salvation and walking with God).

Furthermore, until the past few hundred years, the vast majority of Christians have taken the first three chapters of Genesis literally. In other words, Christians (and Jews for that matter) have believed that God created the world in six literal days, that Adam and Eve were literal people, and that they actually gave in to the temptation of Satan in the Garden of Eden. In fact, Jesus Himself believed the Genesis account and had no notion whatsoever of the idea that God created the world and all living things through any other means. (See Mark 10:6.)

 How does our understanding of the creation account shape our belief about God and everything else?

When we abandon a literal view of Genesis, then we lower our view of the Scriptures to the wisdom of man. When we claim that Genesis 1 refers to millions of years of an evolutionary process, then we are saying Christ Himself got it wrong. Thus, it is better for Christians to firmly but humbly cling to the veracity of the Scriptures, even if human wisdom contradicts this view. Christians affirm with Charles Spurgeon that, “The work of creation is God’s making all things of nothing, by the Word of his power, in six normal consecutive days, and all very good.”¹

 What do we learn about God’s character from this account of creation?

God’s Good Provision

The repeated use of Hebrew *kol*, “all, every, entire,” in vv. 29–30 shows that the point is to emphasize God’s abundant and generous provision for all his creatures, rather than to specify what they were or were not supposed to eat.

God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His goodness. The creation of the world was all very good because the Creator who brought it about is good. Goodness is a part of God's very essence and we look to Him as the standard of goodness. The Bible testifies that God is good, and then the Bible illustrates His goodness by relating what God does in this world.

 Application: In what ways have you seen the goodness of God in your life?

2. Working for Our Good (Rom. 8:28)

Now we come to a key distinction in our understanding of God's goodness. The Bible claims that God is good. Therefore, we believe and know that God is good. We accept this description as fact. Where we can err in our conception of God is to adopt the faulty notion that what is good and what is not good is a determination that we make by the light of our own wisdom and understanding of the world. This is a grave mistake. The Book of Proverbs warns us: "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death" (14:12). Thankfully, we aren't left to our own devices to try to make sense of this world. We have the Scriptures as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.

 How can we discern what is good or not in the world?

God is good and does good to His children. This is different than the common misconception which claims that if God is good, then He will do what His children want Him to do. Jesus' teaching about prayer is helpful to us in our study of the goodness of God. Jesus said, "Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him" (Matt. 7:9-11).

Notice that Jesus didn't say God would give people whatever they ask for. Rather, He made it clear that God only gives good gifts. This is happy news for Christians because it means God doesn't leave them to their own devices, to be the arbiters of their own needs. This is good news because people are limited in their knowledge and wisdom. They are often deceived by their own sinfulness. Even Christians sometimes petition God in prayer with wrong motives. (See Jas. 4:3.)

Those who are in Christ trust God to do good in their lives, even if it is through something they don't want.



How are we able to reconcile God's goodness to His people with the difficulties we face in life?

We must be careful not to go beyond what has been given to us by God. We can't know the mind of God fully. There is much about this world and what happens in it that is a mystery to us. Of course, God sees all things from beginning to end, but we—His finite creatures—see dimly. The Scriptures do make some things plain to us. We do know it is God's purpose that His children be conformed to the image of Christ. Look at what Paul said in Romans 8:29: "For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."

This means God intends for Christians to become more like Christ in every way throughout their lives. Therefore, if God afflicts His children with something painful or difficult but that affliction results in their being conformed to the image of Christ, then they may rightly call it good. It's not that the thing itself is good, but that it has been wielded in the hand of God for their good.



Application: How have you seen God working in your life in unexpected ways for good?

3. Our Good Works (Rom. 8:28)

It is critical that we have a proper understanding of the goodness of God. God is powerful, holy, and sovereign. All the universe is under His authority. There isn't a single molecule outside of His view and control. Not a single note is heard without His oversight. No photon of light misses God's intended mark.

Undergirding and permeating that incomprehensible power and sovereignty is goodness. Those who are in Christ serve a God whose goodness is deeper than they can fathom. God's incomprehensible goodness is seen most clearly in His mercy and grace toward sinners in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul went on to say in Romans 8:32: "He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything?"

Those who have understood the gospel and responded with faith and repentance are now children of God. They have been adopted into the family of God. Christ is their Savior, and they know Christ Himself continues to intercede for them and their sin debt has been canceled.



How are Christian's lives changed by the goodness of God revealed in Jesus?

The goodness of God in Christ toward sinners transforms them. They become new creations (see 2 Cor. 5:17); their heart of stone is removed, and they are given a heart of flesh (see Ezek. 36:26); they were made alive with Christ where before they were dead in their sins and trespasses (see Eph. 2:1-10). The Scriptures are clear that the result of Christ's good work on behalf of sinners should be forgiven sinners doing good works for the glory of God.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-10: "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do." The good works Christians do are done in faith and thanksgiving. Christians produce these good works because they are compelled by the joy in them as a result of God's goodness toward them. Christians do not do good works to somehow attain salvation. They do good works because of the work of salvation God has done in them and because they know He will be faithful to complete it at the day of Christ Jesus. (See Phil. 1:6.)



God is good and has saved us for good works in Christ. How can we know the good works God has called us to do?

The good works that Christians do are those that are prescribed for them in the Scriptures. Works that are not rooted in the direction and principles of the Scriptures are inventions of man and may have a pretense of good, but are not truly good. When Christians carry out good works in obedience to God's commandments, then they show the fruit and evidence of a true and living faith.

When Christians faithfully carry out good works, the Lord blesses them and makes them a blessing to others. Through good works Christians:

- express their gratitude to God. (See 1 Thess. 5:18.)
- strengthen their assurance. (See Matt. 7:21.)
- build up other Christians. (See 1 Thess. 5:11.)
- adorn their profession of the gospel. (See Titus 2:10.)
- glorify God. (See 1 Cor. 10:31.)

Finally, Christians must remember that their ability to do good works does not arise at all from within themselves but entirely from Christ who dwells in them.



Application: How do your good works evidence your true and living faith?

Conclusion

God is good and does good to His people. His goodness is truly good and is not subject to the definitions and perceptions of man. The ultimate expression of God's goodness toward His people is in the fact that God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son as an atoning sacrifice for sin. God's goodness pervades even those circumstances that are painful or difficult in Christians lives, as God uses them for their further growth in faith and holiness. Finally, those who have experienced the goodness of God in Christ produce good work out of a thankful and joyful heart.

- ❓ How has God revealed more of His goodness to you through today's study?
- ❓ How have you experienced God's goodness in the midst of a particularly difficult season?
- ❓ How might you share about the goodness of God by pointing to His nearness to you in the midst of life's difficulties? Who is He calling you to share this with?

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer, thanking God that He is good and always does good. Ask Him to help you cling to His goodness and to seek to do good based on the goodness He has revealed to you in the work of Jesus.

Additional Resources

- *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer
- *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer
- *None Like Him* by Jen Wilkin

For Next Week

Session Title

- God is Love

Main Passages

- Ephesians 2:1-8

Session Outline

1. Sin and Death (Eph. 2:1-3)
2. Mercy and Love (Eph. 2:4-7)
3. Grace and Faith (Eph. 2:8)

Memorize

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

- Romans 8:28

Daily Readings

- Monday - Genesis 1:26-31
- Tuesday - Psalm 34:8
- Wednesday - Psalm 145:9
- Thursday - 1 Timothy 4:4
- Friday - James 1:17
- Saturday - Romans 8:28

Historical Context of Genesis

Purpose

Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis we understand where we came from, how we got in the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God's original purpose for humanity.

Author

Since pre-Christian times authorship of the Torah, the five books that include the book of Genesis, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential Israelite leader from the second millennium BC with an aristocratic Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is technically anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah's author (Jos 8:35; 23:6; 1Kg 2:3; 8:9; 2Kg 14:6; 23:25; 2Ch 23:18; 25:4; 30:16; 34:14; 35:12; Ezr 3:2; 6:18; Neh 8:1; 9:14; Dn 9:11, 13; Mal 4:4; Mk 12:19, 26; Lk 2:22; 20:28; 24:44; Jn 1:17, 45; 7:19; Ac 13:39; 15:21; 28:23; Rm 10:5; 1Co 9:9; Heb 10:28). At the same time, evidence in Genesis suggests that minor editorial changes dating to ancient times have been inserted into the text. Examples include the mention of "Dan" (14:14), a city that was not named until the days of the judges (Jdg 18:29), and the use of a phrase that assumed the existence of Israelite kings (Gn 36:31).

Setting

The Torah (a Hebrew term for "law" or "instruction") was seen as one unit until at least the second century BC. Sometime prior to the birth of Christ, the Torah was divided into five separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch (literally, five vessels). Genesis, the first book of the Torah, provides both the universal history of humankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. The first section (chaps. 1–11) is a general history commonly called the "primeval history," showing how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chaps. 12–50) is a more specific history commonly referred to as the "patriarchal history," focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God's plan to bless and redeem humanity through Abraham's descendants. The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

Special Features

The book of Genesis is the great book of beginnings in the Bible. True to the meanings of its Hebrew and Greek names (Hb bere'shith, "In Beginning" [based on 1:1]; Gk Geneseos, "Of Birth" [based on 2:4]), Genesis permits us to view the beginning of a multitude of realities that shape our daily existence: the creation of the universe and the planet earth; the origins of plant and animal life; and the origins of human beings, marriage, families, nations, industry, artistic expression, religious ritual, prophecy, sin, law, crime, conflict, punishment, and death.

Extended Commentary

Genesis 1:26-31

1:26. God’s use of plural pronouns (us ... our ... our) to refer to himself has raised many questions (3:22; 11:7; Is 6:8). At least five different suggestions have been put forward to explain them: they may be references to (1) the Trinity; (2) God and his angels; (3) God and creation; (4) God’s majesty as expressed by a literary device known as the “plural of majesty”; or (5) a polytheistic view of God. Since the Bible teaches elsewhere that there is only one God (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29; 1Co 8:4), the fifth option is not tenable.

The two Hebrew words translated as image and likeness are often understood as having the same meaning. But some interpreters suggest that “image” refers to the ability to reason, with “likeness” referring to the spiritual dimension. What exactly is the “image” of God? Since the Bible teaches that God is Spirit (Jn 4:24), many commentators believe it refers to the non-material aspects of a person—our moral sensibilities, intellectual abilities, will, and emotions. Based on God’s commands in Gn 1:28, others have suggested that it consists of the role humans are to play on earth—their rulership over the planet and its resources, and secondarily the physical, mental, and spiritual abilities that enable them to fulfill that role. The NT teaches that Christians will someday bear the image of Christ (1Co 15:49; 1Jn 3:2).

1:27. The creation of humanity is the crowning event of chap. 1, as shown by the fact that created is repeated three times. The verb created (Hb *bara*) is the same one used in 1:1, referring to a kind of creative activity that only God can do. The term man (Hb *’adam*) is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to humanity in general, not just males (7:21); all people, both male and female, are created in the image of God (cp. Jms 3:9). It should not be concluded that God is both male and female. Christians are generally agreed that God does not have a literal physical body. He is in no way limited by space but is everywhere fully present (Ps 139:7–10; Ac 17:28). Therefore, he cannot be said to be literally either male or female, or both. People are the only beings that are created in the image of God (Gn 9:3–6). The Bible never lumps people into the category of animals. Instead, it separates the creation of people from all other beings and attributes the most privileged roles in creation to humans alone.

1:28. In this the longest of the five blessings found in the account of creation, God gave humanity five different commands. Implicit in the first three commands is God’s blessing on the institutions of marriage and the family. The final two commands, to subdue the earth and rule the animal kingdom, express God’s blessing on the use of the planet’s renewable and non-renewable natural resources. Of course, only the wise use of these resources permits people to fulfill God’s command to fill the earth. A similar command to the survivors of the flood is shorter, having only the first three verbs in it (9:1).

1:29–30. The repeated use of Hebrew *kol*, “all, every, entire,” in vv. 29–30 shows that the point is to emphasize God’s abundant and generous provision for all his creatures, rather than to specify what they were or were not supposed to eat. While seed and fruit are listed here,

Kenneth Mathews explains, “God’s dietary standards for mankind specifically include meat in the postdiluvian world” (Gn 9:3).

1:31 This is the seventh, final, and most elaborate use of the word good in the account of the seven days of creation in that it adds very to good.²

Romans 8:28

8:28. Who are those who love God? Paul defines them as those who are called according to his purpose. The “called” are all Christians (vv. 29–30). The promise of this verse is that God orders everything for believers so that all of life’s experiences work together for our ultimate good. Not everything is good in and of itself, but God uses everything for our good (vv. 35–37). Jesus taught us that God’s sovereign care for and guidance of creation covers even the death of a sparrow and the hairs of our head (Lk 12:6–7, 22–34).³

References

1. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Catechism: With Scriptural Proofs* (n.p.: Merchant Books, 2018).
2. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
3. Ibid.

Author Bio

Charles Spurgeon (Spurgeon's Catechism: With Scriptural Proofs)

A prolific author and pastor, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) remains a respected and influential source of inspiration and study. His classic collection of devotions for morning and evening remain a beloved treasure of wisdom and teaching for Christians.

A.W. Tozer (The Knowledge of the Holy)

Although he never received any formal theological training, A.W. Tozer was the author of over forty books on Christian faith and spirituality, and was editor of *Alliance Life*, the denominational publication of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, in whose churches he ministered and preached. He died in 1963.

J.I. Packer (Knowing God)

J. I. Packer is Board of Governors Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He serves as contributing editor to *Christianity Today*, and his many books include *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* and *Praying*.

Jen Wilkin (None Like Him)

Jen Wilkin is a Bible teacher from Dallas, Texas. As an advocate for biblical literacy, she has organized and led studies for women in home, church, and parachurch contexts and authored multiple books, including the best seller *Women of the Word*. You can find her at JenWilkin.net.