

Life Group Weekly Study

James 1:17-18

Is God's Goodness for Real?



Let's Get Started

Coca-Cola's 'It's the Real Thing' campaign was a way of consolidating the vast array of changes being made to the brand as it entered the 1970s. Coke's then brand manager, Ira C. Herbert, heralded it as a new direction that "responds to research which shows that young people seek the real, the original and the natural as an escape from phoniness."

A world crisis like COVID-19 makes many people begin to wonder about God. Is He real? Just how real is He? If He is all-powerful—just how all-powerful is He?

- In general, what do you think makes people question the existence of God, and what do you think their criteria is for weighing this all-important question?
- Was there ever a time in your life when you questioned the existence of God? If so, what made you transition from "there is no God" to "there is a very real God?"

Christians in the first century seemed excited to be disciples of Jesus, enthusiastic, and even optimistic—even though their lives were in constant danger of persecution because they were outspoken, evangelistic Christians. To what extent would you say this is an accurate depiction of Christians today?

- Very accurate
- Somewhat accurate
- Not very accurate

Why did you answer the way you did?

Psalm 145:9 says, *"The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made."*

If you had the opportunity to have a conversation with someone who asked you the following question, how would you respond? "How can you say God is good when there is so much good He could do in this world that He doesn't do?"

Let's Go Deeper

What do the following scriptures say about God's goodness?

Nahum 1:7:

Colossians 1:17:

Deuteronomy 7:9:

Romans 9:15-16:

In **Mark 10:17-31**, Jesus interacts with a rich young ruler. The man said to Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Then Jesus starts his response with, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." Why do you think Jesus leads out with this response as he begins to answer the young man's question?

God's Goodness in Creation

You may have heard the story about the group of scientists who challenged God to a contest of who can make the better human being. God says, "I'm in! You go first." So the scientists leave their lab and come back with a bucket of dirt, some test-tubes and the latest research journals on synthetic biology. Then God says, "Not so fast, boys. You have to create your own dirt!"

One aspect of the goodness of God is that He created all things and declared that they were "good."

Look up the following verses from **Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, and 25**. What is the common denominator in these verses? "...God said it was __ __ __ __."

Now look up **Genesis 1:31**. What is the difference in how God described his creation on the sixth day? "God said it was __ __ __ __ good."

Why do you think God expanded the description of His creation to say it was "very good" and not just "good?"

Firstfruits

Look up **James 1:18** and **Romans 8:23**.

What is the common denominator in these two passages? _____.

What is a "firstfruit?"

What do you think motivated God to give us His good, good gift of becoming a firstfruit?

Let's Live It Out Together

Ok, now for some "extra credit" thinking. Begin by reading **I Corinthians 15:20-23**. *"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the **firstfruits**, then at his coming those who belong to Christ."*

Note that Paul calls Jesus the "firstfruits" of those who have been resurrected from the dead. Next, have different people in the group read the following **four** scripture passages:

2 Kings 13:21

Luke 7:11-17

John 11:40-44

Luke 8:49-56

What is the common theme or common denominator you see in all these passages?

Discussion question: In light of so many people who were raised from death to life before the resurrection of Jesus, how could Paul legitimately speak of Christ as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep?"

Enjoy the fellowship of the "firstfruits" and pray for one another. People who get prayed for just do better!