

# **Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry**

## **Lesson #4: "God's Attributes: Holiness and Goodness"**

### **teacher's guide**

(all **green** text is for the teacher)

#### **Preparation:**

1. Review the scripture references in the lesson and related passages in your Bible; read through the teacher's version of the lesson; make notes / changes as desired.
2. Pick up the following from the Jail Ministry Table:
  - attendance/prayer request sheets
  - enough copies of lesson handout for the inmates in your pod (Remember, **don't** staple the pages.)
  - correspondence courses to give out to inmates who desire one
3. Other optional materials to bring:
  - White board marker and eraser
  - Sharpened pencils for inmates to use (be sure to collect all of them before they leave the room)

#### **Before and as students arrive:**

1. Welcome students and distribute student handouts
2. Make sure that any inmates who don't have a Bible know that they can fill out an inmate request form to get one that is provided to the jail by the church.
3. Pass the attendance roster / prayer request sheets around.
4. Always extend a greeting of encouragement and hope as inmates are arriving.
5. Open the class / lesson with a prayer.

#### **Focus points for this Lesson:**

(main points to emphasize through the lesson and to summarize in conclusion; write on board if available)

- **God is holy and calls us to strive toward holiness**
- **God is only good and capable of producing only that which is good.**

## Lesson #4: "God's Attributes: Holiness and Goodness"

### "God's Holiness"

<sup>14</sup>Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. **Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)**

<sup>5</sup> "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." **Exodus 3:5 (NIV)**

<sup>33</sup> Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. **Exodus 26:33 (NIV)**

<sup>69</sup> ". . . and we know you are the Holy One of God." **John 6:69 (New Living Translation)**

The preceding passages are just a few of the hundreds found throughout the Old and New Testaments, containing the word **holy** (or one of its forms such as holiness, holier, holiest). As we read these passages, do we understand the meaning of *holy* / *holiness* well enough to change the way we understand God?

**How do we define "holy" or "holiness"?** (allow for responses and discussion)

The dictionary defines holy as *sacred, revered, spiritually pure, sinless, set apart for religious purposes, deserving special respect or reverence*. As applied to God, it is the defining quality that sets Him apart from everyone and everything else, His quality of awesome mystery, His pure and sinless nature. Moses described God's holiness in a rhetorical question in Exodus 15:11, "Who else among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is glorious in holiness like you-- so awesome in splendor, performing such wonders? "God's holiness refers to both His majesty and His moral purity. God himself is an entirely different category in which He is the only member." (p. 106)<sup>1</sup>

**How Does God Reveal His Holiness?**

There are numerous ways in which God reveals His holiness to us: (p. 107-115)<sup>1</sup>

1. through people in the Bible such as Moses, David, and Isaiah. In each case, the person was struck with indescribable awe. He also has revealed to us the consequences that come when people violate His holiness as in the case of Uzzah, who touched the Ark of the Covenant. (2 Samuel 6:3-8)
2. in special places, in particular, heaven.
3. through the Law. The first four of the ten commandments deal specifically with His holiness. His instructions and commands for us reveal His holiness.

4. through the prophets whose job it was to reveal truths from God to the people.
5. through His wrath and judgment against that which is not holy (or made holy through Jesus), or that which would seek harm to what He has created and loves. "When people see us live in a way that is not consistent with God's Word, that is serious business to God. His Son's reputation is at stake. Disrespecting God's holiness leads to wrath and judgment." (p. 114)<sup>1</sup>
6. through His Son. Jesus was God in the flesh. He was completely holy except during the time on the cross when He became sin, which explains why He was separated from God at that time.
7. through His Church – Christians individually and collectively.

**How can we, sinful human beings, live holy lives?** (allow for responses and discussion)

<sup>14</sup>Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. <sup>15</sup>But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God--who chose you to be his children--is holy. <sup>16</sup>For he himself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy." **1 Peter 1:14-16 (New Living Translation)**

Holiness is not about following a set of rules. It is about how passionately our hearts beat for Jesus, how well we reflect His purity and His holiness. The early Christians were called, "holy ones" or "saints", because their lives were obviously set apart, uniquely different, pure, and righteous as compared to the people of the world. They reflected the holiness of Christ. They lived in the world, yet they were not partakers in worldly things. This is how our lives ought to be, also.

Once we understand that God is holy and that we are sinful creatures but our desire is to be holy in His sight, we can be covered by Jesus' holiness simply by accepting the free gift that He offers us in salvation. (Acts 2:38) Once we become Christians, Christ's blood continuously washes away our sins keeping us holy in God's eyes even though we are still imperfect. (1 John 1:7) Those of us who have been redeemed and sanctified through Christ will one day meet God face to face, and our holiness will become permanent as we live with Him for eternity.

**How should we respond to God's holiness?**

- It takes commitment which requires effort

**Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)**

<sup>14</sup>Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

- By a change in the way we think – we must be taught and then we must change the way we think.

### **Ephesians 4:17-24 (New Living Translation)**

<sup>17</sup>With the Lord's authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. <sup>18</sup>Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. <sup>19</sup>They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed.

<sup>20</sup>But that isn't what you were taught when you learned about Christ. <sup>21</sup>Since you have heard all about him and have learned the truth that is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup>throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. <sup>23</sup>Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. <sup>24</sup>You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness--righteous, holy, and true.

- It's a command we must obey – in all areas of our lives, not just the ones we choose.

### **1 Peter 1:14-16 (New Living Translation)**

<sup>14</sup>Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. <sup>15</sup>But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God--who chose you to be his children--is holy. <sup>16</sup>For he himself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy."

- By setting our own selves apart from the world – not to be haughty or holier-than-thou, but to stand out as light in the darkness of the world, to be righteous in the midst of evil.

### **2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup>Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

### **Conclusion**

Revelation 4:8 (NIV)

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Whatever we see or know about God is magnified when we look through the lens of holiness. (p. 105)<sup>1</sup> When we finally get the high view of God that we should have, we stop comparing ourselves to others because we understand how much we fail to measure up to Him. Instead of trying to figure out how close we can get to sin without actually sinning, we begin trying to figure out how we can get as close to holiness – to God - as possible. (p. 108)<sup>1</sup> An upward, accurate view of God, high and holy, leads to an inward, accurate view of ourselves, sinful and in desperate need of God's forgiveness. This realization in turn leads to an outward view of our lives being about God's agenda instead of ours. Finally, our lives start being about

doing God's will in meeting the needs of others instead of being about us in our own little worlds. (p. 109)<sup>1</sup> Our deepest desire and effort is moving us continuously upward toward the goal of meeting God's desire for us of becoming holy like Him so that we are properly "attired" to spend eternity in His presence.

God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, gave His everything for us because He created us, He loves us, and He desires our presence with Him for all of eternity. How will you respond to such great love?

## **"God's Goodness"**

**Who comes to your mind when you think of someone who is truly "good"? What is it about this person that qualifies them as being good?** (allow for responses and discussion)

**What do we mean by "goodness"?** (allow for responses and discussion)

According to the dictionary, *goodness* can be defined as *the state or quality of being good / moral; excellent or admirable; worthy of respect; honorable; disposed to the well-being of others.*

Our topic is *God's goodness*. **Is goodness in general different from "God's goodness"?** (allow for responses and discussion)

Theologian A. W. Tozer, describes God's goodness this way:

The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes total pleasure in the happiness of His people. (p. 58)

Depending upon what our previous religious experiences were or what we may have been taught about God, some people may have a hard time accepting or grasping the concept that God is completely and only good. If, however, God is the essence of goodness, He is only capable of producing that which is good.

**How can we know for sure that God is good and only capable of producing that which is good?**

God reveals His goodness to us in several ways. One way He shows His goodness is through **natural blessings** bestowed upon all people. It is impossible to even count all of these blessings.

**Matthew 5:45 (New American Standard Bible)**

<sup>45</sup> . . . for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

### **Psalm 145:7-9 (New International Version)**

<sup>7</sup> They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

<sup>9</sup> The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

### **Psalm 145:15-17 (New International Version)**

<sup>15</sup> The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.

<sup>16</sup> You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

<sup>17</sup> The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.

God reveals His goodness in **deliverance**. In Psalm 107 we learn of four specific deliverances that are a result of God's goodness:

- He rescues the helpless from his enemies
- He rescues us from the "gates of death"
- He heals our diseases
- He protects us from the "storms of life".

As we learned when we studied God's sovereignty, He does not choose to heal every disease or protect from every storm, but whatever He does allow is for our ultimate good.

The most significant way in which God has revealed His goodness to us in the form of **His Son**.

### **Colossians 1: 15, 19 (New International Version)**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

<sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Jesus reveals God's goodness in at least three ways. (p. 67)

1. "the underserved goodness that He give to us." God's goodness is unmerited, not the result of any good we do, but the result of the good that God is and does. Jesus died in our place.

#### **Romans 5:8 (New International Version)**

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2. the sacrifice of Jesus as a promise of future benefits

#### **Romans 8:32 (New International Version)**

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

3. Jesus' unique role as Creator and Mediator between God the Father and His Creation.

#### **James 1:17-18 (New International Version)**

<sup>17</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. <sup>18</sup> He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

God gave us His very best in Jesus Christ, and it is through Him that we receive God's specific promised goodness found in our relationship with Jesus.

### **2 Corinthians 1:20 (Contemporary English Version)**

<sup>20</sup>Christ says "Yes" to all of God's promises. That's why we have Christ to say "Amen" for us to the glory of God.

In order to fully understand and appreciate God's goodness, we must begin and end with His Son! (p. 68)

## **Conclusion**

**When we understand God's goodness, how should we respond to it? (allow for responses and discussion)**

"God wants us to know that He has been good, kind, cordial, loving, and generous with us for one specific purpose – to lead us to **repentance**. We are to see God's goodness and have a change of mind that leads to a change of direction that leads to a changed life." (p. 69)

### **Romans 2:4 (New Living Translation)**

<sup>4</sup>Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?

Our response in the form of repentance comes as a result of both faith and gratitude. When we understand and appreciate all that God has done for us, we cannot help but show our gratitude. This gratitude results in our unabashed worship of Him in every aspect of our lives. Together, our faith and our gratitude produce repentance.

Life is hard. We live in a fallen world where bad things happen, even to good people. If we trust in God's goodness, however, we can find **rest and peace** in Him from this world's suffering. He will give us refuge.

### **Psalms 31:19-20 (New Living Translation)**

<sup>19</sup>Your goodness is so great! You have stored up great blessings for those who honor you. You have done so much for those who come to you for protection, blessing them before the watching world. <sup>20</sup>You hide them in the shelter of your presence, safe from those who conspire against them. You shelter them in your presence, far from accusing tongues.

When our faith in God's goodness has developed, then our trust increases to where we are willing to **risk** stepping out and living by faith. We no longer feel the need to control our own lives, but rather the need to put the control in God's hands because we know He loves us deeply and will take care of us and provide good things for us.

***"Ultimately, God isn't good because He does good things for us. And God isn't good because of something in us. God is good because of something in Him. He can be nothing else. Both God and his choices remain good, even when they may not feel or look particularly good to us. His intrinsic eternal nature, in all of his attributes, is good. In His wisdom and sovereignty, He decides the perfect times to respond to your cries of distress, to deliver you, and to display his greatness. God doesn't have to respond at all, nor every time, nor even in the same way every time. He acts because He is merciful and because He is good. He longs for you to get to know Him and trust Him in a way that causes you to turn to him."* (p. 65)**

## **Closing the lesson / class:**

Close the lesson with a prayer. If time permits, take prayer requests.

Offer **correspondence course packets** to those who desire them.

Let inmates know that **if they desire to be baptized**, they should fill out an inmate request form on which they should indicate that they wish to be baptized by someone from Snellville Church of Christ. Invite them if there is time to stay and talk with you about this after the others leave.

Collect the attendance / prayer request sheets. Collect pencils if any were passed out.

After dismissing, talk/pray with individual inmates as needed and as time permits.

## **References:**

<sup>1</sup> Ingram, Chip. ***God as He Longs for You to See Him***, Chapters 4 & 6.  
Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

All scripture references are from <http://www.biblegateway.com/>

Definitions are from <http://dictionary.reference.com>