

## Week 4

### The Goodness of God's Promises

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“The Lord will fight for you. You need only be still.”  
**Exodus 14:14**

The goodness of God is seen not only in how he keeps his word, but in what he promises in the first place. God only guarantees those things which will help us grow. Even Biblical assurances of what could be considered Earthly blessings - like health, prosperity, or victory - are tied to spiritual well-being. They require a decision on our part to pursue a right relationship with God. Jesus promises rest to the weary and heavy-laden (Matthew 11:28). But he doesn't just walk up and relieve us of our burdens. He asks us to come to him, learn from him, and to willingly take the yoke with him.

As Christians we believe that God never gives us more than we can handle, neither of challenges, nor blessings. And in his wisdom, he doesn't pour out all those blessings at once, but only what we need to continue growing stronger in him. At times that may feel like God isn't working in our lives at all. But as 2 Peter 3:9 tells us, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

We are not prone to patience. We want relief instantly! We need answers today! We demand justice now! Hurry and worry are two of our greatest enemies because they keep us from living in the promises of God. In our anxious impatience, we often look to second-rate options that always fail to provide what we truly need. Sin has given us a very short-term memory about God's faithfulness. We are too often like the Israelites in the desert. They had been rescued by the miraculous power of the Lord. But instead of living in the wonderful nearness of their God, they were lost in the immediacy of their problems. Pinned between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea, all they could do was moan and complain. Moses had to remind them to be still and have faith that God would give them a way out yet again.

How can we fight hurry and worry? Rest and remember. Instead of spending time surfing the cynical sea of social media, or soaking in the relentlessly negative news cycle, just take a break. Be still. Go to the Word. Take time to reflect. Flip through an old photo album. Notice a sunset. Recall the many ways that God keeps his promises. The evidence is overwhelming! These moments help us to build the strong bones of our faith. We see the blessings of God's providence, the wisdom of God's plans, and the dependability of God's presence. All this can help us deal with the anxiety of both present and future challenges.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, *“All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.”*

*This is the last segment of our Harvest of Goodness theme. Many thanks to those who have shared their words with us. We close with two wonderfully honest reflections from Andy Lund and Elizabeth Kendall. Their thoughts fit perfectly with this week's theme of taking time to be God and reflect on his goodness.*

### **Comfort in Christ**

Reflection from Andy Lund

I like to listen and watch music videos. Even though sometimes I don't know exactly what the videos are about, there are comforting words. The life of Jesus can't be overcome. I also watch a lot of Christian movies. I enjoy my time spent with God, Jesus, and the Holy spirit by praying and reading Billy and Will Graham books *Day by Day* and *Redeemed*. About a week ago I started reading the book *It's Worth It*, by Meredith Andrews. I find it comforting.

### **Don't Drift – Seek Your Anchor**

Reflection from Elizabeth Kendall

God is good. He is right, just, loving, caring, amazing, all-knowing, powerful, and He is God. We've been told this since day one. When the birds sing, the sun is warm, the world is more vibrant, and life is good, it's easy to see. When you're feeling good in your new shoes, getting showered with compliments for your hard work, or dancing along with your favorite song, of course God is good. But about when your prayers aren't answered, the stress is so much that you're growing grey hair, or the sky is crying along with you? God suddenly doesn't seem so wonderful.

Personally, I find it incredibly easy to say that God is good and just and righteous and so on. However, I find myself struggling to always *treat* him that way. Just a year ago I found myself walking away from God because of his "obvious unresponsiveness" to my situation. Looking back, it seems silly to turn away from an all-powerful God just because I thought he decided to keep me at arm's length. But in the moment, it's painful. It felt like he stopped caring about me when I needed him most. It's amazing just how easy it is to drift away as if nothing happened. It's so much harder to get back. My mother explained it best saying that it's like we're in a canoe, always drifting away from the Father Ship. We need to constantly be paddling towards God to just stay stationary. Now, that's hard enough, but what about when he doesn't answer prayers or closes doors? Or when coworkers or peers tear you down because of your religion? Or when even fellow Christians tell you that the fundamentals of Christianity aren't true? It makes you subconsciously question whether God is really good. Next thing you know, you're stranded in the middle of the ocean, wondering where North is.

In a Coronavirus-ridden world, it's hard to stay motivated to remain close to God without discipleship or anywhere near as much contact with the people who would normally build you up. Trust me, I know so many students whose mental health has plummeted, who have lost motivation, and who have stopped going to church. I get it! It's hard to stay connected **and** safe. So what should we do to keep building our faith? I've found a way to do so in three steps: **ONE: Set a goal.** Examine where you want to be and how to get there, no matter how far-fetched you may think it is. Rome wasn't built in a day, but John 15:7 says, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

**TWO: Plan it out.** Great. Now you have a destination. But how to get there? **START SMALL!** I cannot say that loudly enough. Try something small and slowly implement it into your schedule. Sort out when, how long, where, and what you'll do if there are any hiccups to your plan. Your plan should be realistic and specific so that you'll actually do it thoroughly.

**THREE: Make it happen.** You have your goal. You have your plan. Now start. You shouldn't just be able to say "good enough" when you finish. You want to be able to check it off your list without any hesitation that you completed it.

Luckily, those three steps work with any goal. I've recently used them myself. I was inspired by the Dream Big retreat I went to which was based on Bob Goff's videos and devotional. Since starting I've been able to reach a goal of diving into the word every day and reconnecting with God (Ro. 10:17). I had tried to do a devotional every day before, but I often cut corners or skipped. It has taken a lot of time to actually make it happen. Thanks to those three steps, I've been able to begin building a relationship back up with God.

When you're closer to God, it's easier to ignore your insecurities or others tearing you down. It's easier to stay positive when you have Jesus in your heart and God in your life. When you're continuously getting to know your savior better, you won't doubt if God is good. He wants you to seek him and stay close (Heb. 11:6). Keep paddling towards God and persevere. Hebrews 6:19 says "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." God is good; he doesn't move. We do.

### The Goodness of God

I love You Lord  
Oh Your mercy never fails me  
All my days  
I've been held in Your hands  
From the moment that I wake up  
Until I lay my head  
I will sing of the goodness of God

All my life You have been faithful  
All my life You have been so so good  
With every breath that I am able  
I will sing of the goodness of God

I love Your voice  
You have led me through the fire  
In darkest night  
You are close like no other

I've known You as a father  
I've known You as a friend  
I have lived in the goodness of God

Your goodness is running after  
It's running after me  
Your goodness is running after  
It's running after me  
With my life laid down  
I'm surrendered now  
I give You everything  
Your goodness is running after  
It's running after me

"The Goodness of God"  
Ben Fielding | Brian Johnson | Ed Cash |  
Jason Ingram | Jenn Johnson  
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