

**Life on the Vine**  
**Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community**

Lesson Six: **Goodness**

***Introduction***

1. Self-Help titles:
2. Is it our tendency to believe that we have it within ourselves to improve ourselves—as exemplified by the popularity of Self-Help books? Discuss

***Lesson Plan***

1. Define the word “goodness” or “good”.
2. “Good” is relative to purpose.
3. God alone is the standard of goodness, see Psalm 136.1 and Mark 10.18.
4. We as humans struggle with goodness. Paul’s description in Romans 7.18-20 needs no interpretation because we can all recognize its truth.
5. Do we, as humans, have a capacity for goodness? Romans 12.2 and 2 Peter 1.3-8.
6. Good can be defined only in relationship to God.
7. How does our culture make goodness difficult?
8. What values have you seen change in our lifetimes—things that were once good that are now bad or things that were once bad and are now called good?
  - How did these changes take place?
  - Are we allowing our culture to define good rather than asking God to define good?
9. Does our culture encourage us not to be “too good”? Do we fear being labeled a “goody-two-shoes” or a “radical”?
10. Kenneson also points out that cultures of the past were more involved in moral formation and that they employed the stories of great people to exemplify goodness.
  - Do you think media such as film and TV has replaced these stories of goodness?
  - Why are film and TV poor teachers of goodness?
  - Do you think they play on our interest in evil?

11. How might we be in danger of turning Christianity into a kind of self-help?
  - Do you think this emphasis on improving ourselves has led us away from an awareness of our basic sinful nature and our utter dependence on God?
  - Do we talk about sin as much in church as we used too? Why or why not?
  - Do you think our emphasis on positive lessons betrays our desire to think of ourselves of basically good in and of ourselves?
  
12. Is Paul's warning to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4.1-4 relevant to us and our culture?

***Obstacles to a life of Goodness***

1. Democratizing goodness
2. Sitting in the dark
3. Helping ourselves

***Cultivating Goodness***

1. Learning to name our sin
2. Attending to God's voice
3. Imitating the saints