

Four Gifts Devotional

By Sharon Stults

Week Two-Five Days of Goodness

Day One

Verses: “Every good tree bears good fruit,” Matthew 7:17 NIV. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control...” Galatians 5:22 ESV.

To Think About

My son in law chopped down an ugly dwarf crabapple tree from our yard. I did a happy dance when we yanked out the stump. I never liked that tree. It was ugly. Second, it dropped apples so bitter even birds would not eat them. Third, all summer long it poked out new tree shoots all over the garden, that needed to be cut back. I put up with this ugly mess for two summers after we moved to this house. This summer the tree turned mean.

One day, I grabbed my garden shears to cut off some shoots. I grabbed the first one and felt sharp pains in my fingers. Surprised, I pulled off my garden glove. Blood ran down my fingers. I looked in the glove to see if there was a bee or some thorns. Nope. I looked at the tree shoot. It was covered with large, thin thorns. I crawled around and looked at all the shoots. They were all thorny. For two years the shoots only had little green leaves on them. Now they had thorns.

I think the tree got angry that I kept chopping off its little tree babies. The tree decided to get even. Well, not in my yard, sister bear. There is a Japanese Maple in that spot now.

Jesus said that good trees produce good fruit. He liked to teach kingdom ideas using common things on earth. We are the trees Jesus is talking about. We know this because of what Paul says in Galatians 5. Paul says that the Holy Spirit wants to work inside of us, God’s trees, so that we grow good fruit. Our fruit should be tasty. People should feel better after they are around us.

Ugly words and actions are like bitter apples and thorns. They make the people around them feel yucky and hurt. God’s trees should produce love lemons, joy jackfruits and peace and patience peaches. Our branches should hang heavy with kindness kiwis, goodness and gentleness grapes, faithfulness figs and self-control strawberries. What are some ways your fruit could be sweet?

Prayer: Lord, please forgive me for all the times my words and actions are sharp like thorns or bitter like crabapples. Holy Spirit cause my tree to produce sweet, tasty fruit so that lost people near me will know about Jesus’ goodness and love.

***Just for fun:** Here’s some links to buy or make your own Fruit of the Spirit ornaments.*

[Fruit of the Spirit Ornament Set](#)

[DIY Fruit of the Spirit Ornaments](#)

Week Two-Day Two- Goodness

Verse: “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father,” Matthew 5:14-16 ESV.

To Think About

One day, I forgot to mute my phone when I went to church. Our pastor asked us to sign in on Facebook. I tried to do that but touched the wrong button. The church was quiet, and the lights were dim. Suddenly, a Facebook video started to play on my phone. I choked. It was so loud and bright. I couldn’t remember how to turn off the sound. I could only think of one thing to do to make it stop. I sat on my phone.

Sometimes we sit on the light of Christ inside us just like I did with my phone. How do we do that? We disobey God’s commands to do good things for people. We see that people need things and we do nothing. We say, “Someone else will take care of that.” Christians should not turn away from the needs of others. Jesus never did. He wants his followers to act like him. He told us that we shine like lights when we are kind to people. That makes the light of Christ shine from us onto others. When our lights shine, people praise God.

What are some good things we can do? If you ask God, he will give you lots of ideas. He can see people everywhere who need help. He will tell you about them if you ask him. Here are some he shared with me.

- Be a friend to someone who is new in your school or neighborhood.
- Send a card to an older person who lives all alone. Let them know you prayed for them.
- Give extra clothes, toys, and house stuff to a mission store instead of selling them at a garage sale.
- Write a letter to a lonely soldier or missionary serving overseas. Christmas can be sad for them.
- Help your family members with jobs that are messy or hard. Goodness starts in your home.
- Bake some cookies or make a supper for someone who is sick or just home from the hospital.

How can you be good to someone today? It might be someone in your house. It might be a missionary on the other side of the world. Be light and goodness every day to someone.

Prayer: Jesus forgive me for the times I’ve looked away from someone with a need. Forgive me for hiding my light. Will you please show me the people you want me to help each day?

Just for fun: *This is a link to a webpage with a ton of great ideas for serving people.*

[42 Service Project Ideas Tested in the Real World.](#)

Week Two- Day Three- Goodness

Verse: “Depend on the Lord. Trust him, and he will take care of you. Then your goodness will shine like the sun. Your fairness will shine like the noonday sun,” Psalm 37:5-6 ICB.

To Think About

Many years ago, a tornado came near my home. Warning sirens screamed in my city. TV weathermen told everyone to get in our basements. My daughter, Jennifer, was playing in the backyard with a friend. I yelled for them to come inside and we all ran down to our basement with our two big dogs. I had never been that close to a tornado before. The winds sounded like a freight train, just like in the movies. I felt so scared. So did the dogs. They panting hard and tried to sit on my lap. I panted a little bit myself

Jennifer and her friend laughed and played with their dolls at the other end of the room. I asked them, “Are you girls okay? Are you scared?”

My sweet girl looked at me and smiled. She said, “God will take care of us Mommy, won’t he?” Right then, the bright light of Jesus shone through a child.

She trusted God.

She felt peace.

She reminded me that I could trust him too.

There will be times in our lives when we might feel scared. How will we act and talk? When we choose to trust in God, we can feel peace when bad things happen. Everybody feels scared sometimes. That is when Christians can shine with our goodness. We can be kind and peaceful when others might be scared and snarky. Even when we feel afraid, we can still trust God.

We can remember things that are true about him.

- He loves his children and promises to take care of us. (Isaiah 54:10, Zephaniah 3:17)
- He will never leave us alone. (Joshua 1:9, Isaiah 41:10)
- He sends angels to protect us. (Psalm 91:11-12)

When we think about these things, God will help us be brave. When bad things happen and we are still good to people, we are lights. Lost people will see our light of goodness and peace. They will want to know how we do that. We can tell them about Jesus.

Prayer: God thank you for always staying with me. Help me to be good to people, even when I’m scared.

***Just for fun:** To remind us of what is true about God, how about hanging up some Bible verses in your house? Here are two links to buy some verse art or make your own.*

[DIY Scripture Wall Hanging](#)

[Scripture Verse Art](#)

Week Two- Day Four-Goodness

Verse: *“Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good,” Romans 12:21.*

To Think About

Do you ever get grumpy when you are sad or angry? Lots of Christians do. Sometimes we do and say unkind things when we feel grumpy. A long time ago, there was a sad, grumpy lady in our church. She did not care for my husband, Ken, being her pastor. She didn’t care for it at all.

She did not like his sermons.

She did not like his ideas about how to share Jesus with lost people.

She did not like most things he did and said.

This sad lady wrote letters to Ken and told him about all the things she did not like. Sad people do sad things.

One day, this lady became sick and went to the hospital. She needed someone to visit her and pray with her. Ken knew she did not want him to be her pastor. He also knew that God planted him in this lady’s church. If he did not take God’s goodness to her, evil would conquer his heart.

Ken visited the sick lady and prayed with her. He brought the goodness of God to her hospital room. The hurt he felt about all her angry words did not conquer his heart. He forgave her. Jesus conquered his heart with goodness. Ken shared that goodness with a lady who needed it.

When Jesus walked on earth, some people were angry with him a lot.

They said mean things to him.

They beat him up.

They hung him on a cross.

Jesus never let evil conquer his heart. He could have called in angels to go after people who hurt him. He didn’t do that. He asked God to forgive them. He will help you do the same thing. We cannot stop people from being nasty to us. What we can do is conquer nasty with goodness.

Prayer: Jesus, please conquer my heart with goodness. When people are mean to me, help me to give back goodness to them. And even when people stay mean, help me be kind.

Just for fun: Watch one of the movies named *“A Christmas Carol,”* by Charles Dickens, with your family. My favorite is the one with Muppets! Notice how Bob Cratchit shares goodness over and over with mean Mr. Scrooge. You can rent these movies online or at Redbox.

Week Two- Day Five- Goodness

Verses: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers,” Galatians 6:10. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another,” John 13:35.

To Think About

Did you know that people who don't know Jesus watch Christians? They do. They know something is different about us. They are not sure what it is. So, they watch us. What do they see? How do you treat your kingdom family members?

In your school?

In your church?

In your home?

Jesus wanted lost people to know who we are by how we love each another. Yikes. I wonder who they think we are when we ignore each other? Or when we are snarky to each other?

God wants us to be champions at love all year round. Here are some ideas to show love he shared with my husband and me. Some of them are ways that people have been good to us.

- Offer to babysit for free for one of your pastors.
- Bring fresh flowers or snacks to a pastor or church worker.
- Make and take a baked good to one of your older church members who can't bake anymore.
- Facetime (or call) a sad friend and pray with them. This means so much.
- Invite single parents and their children to do something fun with your family.
- Visit one of your shut-in church members either in person or on Zoom.

There are lost people all around watching how the family of God treats one another. What do they see?

Prayer- God, help me to find ways to show goodness to my kingdom family. Show me how I can help someone who needs help. Let lost people see the love we have and ask us about Jesus.

Just for fun: Here are some links with ideas on how to show goodness to your kingdom family.

[Gifts for Shut-Ins](#) [Gifts for pastors](#) [Ideas for loving others](#)