

SO GOOD!

Good God | Discussion Notes

We're starting a new series looking at the goodness of God. In particular, we want to ask the question: do we really understand just how good God is? To do this we're going to look at some of the fundamentals of faith.

- Do you think we grasp just how good God is? If so, shouldn't it have more of a visible impact on our behaviour, worldview and how we share faith with others? If not, why not? What do you think stops us from really understanding God's goodness?

Read Luke 15:1-3 & 11-32. We're going to come back and read this again in smaller sections, but it's helpful to hear the story in full.

- This is one of the most famous stories in the Bible and one that many of us would've heard a lot of times before. Part of the challenge of remembering God's goodness is that we can get used to hearing about it, just as we get used to hearing this story. How can we approach the Bible in a way that helps us see God's character in a fresh way?

Read verses 15:11-12

- What does this part of the passage tell us about the father's (and therefore God's) character?

Read verses 13-16

- Philip explained that those listening to the story may have had a reaction here of "good, the son got the punishment he deserved." This is a **karma** view of God and the universe; that we eventually all get what we deserve. How can we slip into this view of God?
- Why do you think so many religions and worldviews hold a karma view of the world? What are some of the problems with having this view?

Read verses 17-19

So many of us hold the son's view of God: that He is full of **mercy** and so He 'won't give us what we deserve' - we should be punished but we might be able to get back as a hired servant.

- How do we see ourselves as 'hired servants'; only experiencing the mercy of God without His full closeness? What in our faith or life reinforces this view?

Read verses 20-24

- What strikes you about this unbelievably compassionate welcome?
- The Father gives the son a robe, sandals and a ring and kills the fattened calf for him. The son gets what he doesn't deserve. This shows us the true character of God - he is full of **grace**. Have you ever had a 'grace encounter' with God like the son had with the father?

Read verses 25-32

- Here the older son has a 'truth encounter' with the father when he tells the son the truth that 'everything I have is yours'. What do you think a truth encounter looks like for you? Have you ever had one?
- What do you need right now, a truth encounter, a grace encounter or a bit of both? Share with either the whole group or break into smaller groups and then pray for an experience of either God's grace or God's truth for each person.