

## GOD CALLED HIM GOOD

By Ron Stough

The Scripture reserves the word “good” for a select few characters described in its pages, but one of those men was Barnabas. Acts 11:24 describes Barnabas as “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” Although the term “good” is often tossed around lightly today, God’s description of a man as “good” is a rare compliment indeed.

Let’s look at some of the possible reasons behind the goodness of Barnabas:

The first mention of Barnabas shows him to be a working Christian. (Acts 4:36-37.) He sold his land and brought the money to the apostles to help with the needs of those who were converted in Jerusalem. Barnabas counted his possessions as God’s, and was not hesitant to give what he had to the cause of Christ.

Another fine quality in Barnabas was his faith. He was “full of faith,” both in God, and in his fellowman. It was Barnabas who convinced the

doubting and frightened Christians in Jerusalem to accept the man, Saul, who had been their persecutor, as their new brother in Christ. (Acts 9:27.)

Barnabas was also missionary-minded. He was not content to help his friends at home only. He was anxious to tell others of the Savior, and he and Paul traveled great distances telling the Good News.

Barnabas was truly a remarkable individual because it seems he put the cause of Christ far ahead of his own desires. For this attitude, God called him good.

How would the Lord describe your life?

Why not be a Barnabas!

— Duncan, OK

“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that

you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For ‘He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.’ (1 Peter 3:8-12.)

## “NONE LIKE HIM”

By Joe Slater

Some people just naturally stand out from the rest. Of three individuals the Bible says there was “none like him.”

When Israel clamored for a king so they could be like the nations around them, God reluctantly gave them Saul, the son of Kish. The prophet Samuel anointed Saul and asked Israel, “Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?” (1 Samuel 10:1, 24.) What was so special about Saul? “When he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.” (1 Samuel 10:23.)

Unfortunately, his fine physique didn’t make Saul a good king. He started out well but came to a disastrous end.

Hezekiah, unlike Saul, was renowned not for his good looks, but his godliness. “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was

none like him among the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.” (2 Kings 18:5.) Hezekiah had inherited a kingdom mired down in the idolatry and immorality of his father, Ahaz. Despite his youth and regardless of the difficulty, Hezekiah instituted sweeping reforms to bring Judah closer to God.

Even better than Hezekiah was the patriarch Job. God Himself said of him, “There is none like him on the earth.” (Job 1:8a.) What made him so exceptional? The Lord said he was “a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil.” (Job 1:8b.) Job’s conduct was such that no one could successfully find fault with him. (His friends tried, but failed miserably!) Job’s reverence for God led him to shun wickedness.

Christians ought to stand out from the world.

We may not have marvelous physiques, nor should that be our

concern. Let us trust in the Lord like Hezekiah! Let us strive to be blameless and upright, reverencing God and shunning evil! May God say of us, “There is none like them!”

— Justin,

“For he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.” (1 Peter 3:10,11.)

# Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

By Danny Tunnell

“Thou shalt not murder.” (Exodus 20:13.) God hates the shedding of innocent blood (Proverbs 6:17), as Pharaoh did in Exodus 1:22, having the Hebrew boys that were born cast into a river, or as Herod did in Matthew 2:16, killing the children two years and younger.

How did our society get to the point of having killed 62 million innocent babies since 1973?

God makes each person unique. There was only one Jesus Christ, only one Abraham Lincoln, only one Alexander Campbell, only one N.B. Hardeman, and only one Jonas Salk. We may have already aborted the person who would have found the cure for cancer!

How did we get to the place today where 60 percent of Americans believe that widespread abortion is OK? Unfortunately, we now have 48 years of legal precedent in the United States supporting abortion.

For those born from 1973 on, widespread and legalized abortion is all they’ve ever known.

Many have been taught that a pre-born child is simply a fetus, an embryo, or a “glob of tissue.” Few have been taught that God forms children in their mother’s womb. (Psalm 139:13.) What started as one cell becomes trillions, and once fully grown, the baby is delivered and brought into the world a living, breathing child.

It’s interesting that even though our laws support abortion, in the high-profile case of inmate Scott Peterson, he is actually on death row for murdering two people: his pregnant wife and the baby in her womb.

If murdering a human being is wrong the abortion is wrong.

A good doctor may need to deliver a baby early to save the mother’s life. But the doctor’s goal is to wait long enough for the baby to have a reasonable chance for survival. The hope is to save the mother’s life and the child’s also. The intent is not to kill, but to preserve life. On the other hand, the intent of abortion is always to kill the child.

For those who may have had an abortion or have supported an abortion in any way, and now know it is sinful and wrong, and feel guilty, you are who Jesus came to redeem! God’s mercy is bigger than our sins. Those that confess and forsake their sins will have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13.) “God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8.) All of us have messed up. Only the guilty need mercy, and that includes all of us. (Romans 3:23,24.)

It is the devil, not God, who makes things appear hopeless. With God’s mercy and forgiveness there is no reason to despair or to become despondent over past mistakes. We are able to do all things through Christ who strengthens us. (Philippians 4:13.)

— Miami, OK

## “TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?”

By Cecil Burch

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’” (John 6:66-68.)

Some of the saddest times in the life of Christ were when His disciples, even after he had performed miracles and fed and taught them, rejected Him. Their excuses for not believing in Him were many. Before they walked away on this occasion, the complaint was made, “This is a hard saying, who can understand it?” (John 6:60.)

Today, it is heart-breaking when we see those who, for whatever reason, leave the fellowship of the church and align themselves with unbelievers. They choose to follow their own opinions and feelings. Jesus described a group of people who were very religious and very dedicated, but religiously wrong, by saying, “You make the commandments of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, ‘These people draw her to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” (Matthew 15:6-9.)

Jesus made it very clear that He comes even before family. He said, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate (love less) his father and his mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26.)

Some people who desire to be popular allow their lives to be controlled by the majority. Jesus said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14.)

Every child of God should consider Peter’s wise response: “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

— Amarillo, TX

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven, given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12.) “For no other foundation can anyone lay that that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11.) “When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:4.)

**EVERYONE HAS VALUE!**

By Joe Dale Wilson

We live in a world that needs the Golden Rule applied every day and in every action. Jesus instructed us, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." (Matthew 7:12.) How we want to be treated by others should be reflected in the way we treat those with whom we have contact. Our world is full of people who take advantage of the weak. We have bullying in schools, jail houses and even in the work place. When this happens people feel they are better than others. Paul told the Philippians that we are to count others better than ourselves. (Philippians 2:3.)

In God's sight none of us are better than any other person. God knows the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:30) and knows what we need before we ask. (Matthew 6:8.) Why? Because He cares! Every person, regardless of gender, nationality, height, weight, complexion, economic status, warts and freckles are precious to God. He knows more about us than we know about ourselves.

God demonstrated how much He regards us by giving Jesus to die on the cross. (John 3:16.) Jesus said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." (John 12:24.) He was speaking of His own death. He was able to bring others to God because He gave Himself up. The very first thing that Jesus tells those who would be Christians is to "deny" self. (Matthew 16:24.) When this happens a person can realize the value of others and be of service to them. Jesus tells us the second command is to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matthew 22:39.) We cannot have a selfish bone in our bodies when we love others as we love ourselves. John tells us, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16.) Loving others is only demonstrated in a person's life when he becomes more like Christ in realizing the preciousness of others. Jesus was that grain of wheat that gave up everything for us. When we become wheat and give up our selfishness for others we can have a tremendous effect on our world, producing 30, 40, or 100 times what we originally had. (Matthew 13:8,23.) We will increase the value that is in the world, school, work place, and home. Unselfish people bring out the best value in others.

In Matthew 18:1-4 Jesus' disciples wanted to know who was the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus humbled them by putting a little child in the center of the discussion. He let them know that unless they became like little children they would not even be in the kingdom, let alone be the greatest. Little children see the value of others and they really do not think they are greater than their peers. Little ones in our congregations serve as examples of what God wants in our lives. They have no thoughts of personal greatness. We must humble ourselves to be like little children to see the significance of those around us.

Every person is valuable to God! Every person should be valuable to ME!

— Vernon, TX

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

**PUTTING THE DEVIL TO FLIGHT**

By Dalton Key

Have you ever been tempted?

If you are human, you have. In fact, life in the flesh is a continuing series of trials and temptations. It is our response to life's temptations which determines our happiness here as well as our eternal home beyond the grave.

None of us lives above temptation. The Bible is clear: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." (James 1:14.)

Even our Lord was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15.) At the beginning of his earthly ministry, Jesus was "tempted for forty days by the devil." (Luke 4:2.) He did not yield, yet when the devil ceased the temptations, "he departed from Him" not forever, but "until an opportune time." (Luke 4:13.) Like us, our Lord's temptations were ongoing and pervasive.

Seeing God's own dear Son face Satan's manifold temptations should prepare us to face the clear and certain fact that we, too, will be tempted. And these temptations will continue so long as this life of flesh continues. The young are tempted (2 Timothy 2:22), but so are those older, as was the case with Moses and David.

But this is not the end of the story. There is more. There is good news. Observe: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." (1 John 5:4.) "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4.)

Christ taught us to pray, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13.) And don't forget that James encourages us to pray "in faith, with no doubt." (James 1:6.)

Never forget that God has promised, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7.) As was the case with Christ, he will not leave forever, but he will leave!

A firm and unwavering, "NO!" goes a long way in putting the devil to flight.

Temptation is real and Satan appears relentless, but as God's children we have all the help we need. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13.)

MEN, make plans now to be a part of this year's Old Paths Men's Retreat, September 16-18, on the site of Flint Hills Christian Camp, just a few miles north of Sedan, Kansas!

**TIME LOST IS FOREVER LOST**

By Dalton Key

Yes, time lost is forever lost, and enough wasted time amounts to a wasted life. In the words of Samuel Smiles, "Lost wealth may be replaced by industry, lost knowledge by study, lost health by temperance, but lost time is gone forever." Or as A.W. Tozer once observed, "When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection."

From her deathbed, Elizabeth I, Queen of England sighed, "All my possessions for a moment of time." As will be true for all of us, the Her Majesty was finally forced to admit the obvious.

From the perspective of flesh, life is time and time is life, or as Benjamin Franklin once said, "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of."

What is life in the flesh but so

much time? Is not life composed, comprised of increments of time?

What really counts is not the number of hours we put in, but rather what we put into those hours! Many a slothful soul has worked twice as long to do one-half the work a more diligent worker will accomplish in short order.

That said, our concern should not be with the wasted hours and neglected opportunities of the past; we should rather focus our attention upon the here and now, upon what we should be doing and could be doing today.

Scripture places a hefty premium on the present. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2.) "But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness

of sin." (Hebrews 3:13.) "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time." (Colossians 4:5.)

We must resolve to begin living each day to the fullest, as our days of flesh are by no means unlimited. "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12.) We must do all we can, with all we have, for as long as we are able.

"Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days." (Ephesians 5:15,16, Phillips.)

**CENTERED**

By Charles Goodnight

Centered? Do what? Centered in what? Centered on what? What are we focused on? Where is our heart? Really? Our kids, when they were young, were diagnosed with ADHD. They had a difficult time focusing on anything. My, was that a challenge! Church, when we come together as a family to worship, what do we focus on?

What are our hearts and minds centered on?

The question applies to every day and every moment of our lives.

May our God help us to remember that Jesus Christ MUST be the center of our faith. The storms will come. The trials will face us. Clinging close to Jesus, we will be safe, protected, shielded from the storms of life. But even so, we will still be challenged, stretched, wrung out.

By staying focused on Jesus, we will be anchored in Him, secure and unshaken. Race car drivers are trained to focus their attention on where they want to go (as opposed to where they don't want to go). The premise is

simple: They are traveling so fast that if something catches their attention, and they look at it, they'll hit it! So they learn to tune out the peripheral and focus on the road ahead.

Friend, focusing on Jesus will always keep us moving in the right direction. With little or no attention to the peripheral, I press on ahead - my attention on Jesus. If not, I can't follow where He is going - I'm less in tune with Him.

May our heartbeat be in tune with His heartbeat.

Let's just keep it simple, and let's keep CENTERED. It's the greatest of challenges.

— Texas City, TX

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward

call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind . . ." (Philippians 4:12-15a.) "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2.)

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