

Walking as Jesus Walked:

Doing Good

ACTS 10:38; TITUS 2-3

Introduction and Goal:

The aim of this sermon is to consider how we might engage in doing good in the various spheres of our life.

Outline:

The Model of Doing Good is JESUS HIMSELF

Consider Peter's response in Acts 10:34-48 and his reference to Jesus "doing good":

³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

While there are limitations to how much we can emulate Jesus, there is much to be gained. Consider just briefly how Jesus is a model of doing good:

Examples:

- Words...
- Thoughts...
- Actions...
- Priorities...
- Time...

Even the most basic overview of Jesus' life illustrates ways that he is a model of doing good. Certainly that involved powerful displays of healing and spiritual power, but it also involved everyday actions, words, and priorities—who he talked with, how he talked with them, when he would be with people, when he would be alone, etc.

Another way to think about this is to think about the slogan "What Would Jesus Do"? WWJD? We've all heard of this. But, honestly, that hasn't helped me much. What would Jesus do? Something perfect. Something unorthodox. Something perfectly fitting to the situation.

So, I was encouraged recently by an alternative question suggested by Dallas Willard. He suggested that one way of living life as a Christian is to ask yourself,

"What would Jesus do if he were me?"

How would Jesus work at my job if he were me? He would probably work very hard and without complaining. He would be productive without being a slave to his work.

How would Jesus live as a husband or dad if he were me? He would speak words of love and affirmation. He would know what's going on. He would be interested. But he wouldn't be enmeshed. He would maintain God as the center of priority and he would not allow secondary priorities to interfere.

You see how "What would Jesus do if he were me?" might be a little helpful.

The Motivation for Doing Good is GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION

When I say that the motivation for doing good is gospel transformation, what I mean is that the outward fruit of doing good is evidence of an inward spiritual life that God gives to those who come to him in faith.

We're walking down a very dangerous path because one of the greatest mistakes that people make, and one of the greatest false religions in the world is good works—earning favor with God and people through our performance.

Ask 10 people on the street if they're a good person and 9 will say "yes" without hesitation. Ask them if God should allow them into heaven just as they are and 9 will say "yes", they are more good than they are bad.

And we know that that's an absolute lie. There is none who does good. All have sinned. Every sin deserves God's anger and curse in the present life and in the life to come. Apart from the grace of God in Jesus Christ we are utterly without hope, rightly condemned, and destined to eternal punishment.

But God is good and he does good continually, and he has demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. And what do you think that this kind of God intends for the people he has saved?

He intends for them to be zealous for good works.

We read of this in Titus 2:11-15:

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. ¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

The grace of God has appeared in Jesus bringing salvation to all kinds of people and it trains us to renounce some things—to deny or say "no"—and to do other things.

We renounce ungodliness. We say "no" the things that are unlike God. We say "no" to the things that are unlike Jesus. Like Cornelius, we fear God—we respect God. And the respect of God motivates certain actions like prayer and generosity.

We renounce worldly passions. We deny the drive—the temptation—to satisfy our desires in sinful ways. We renounce sexual immorality, we renounce dishonesty, we renounce laziness, we renounce anger, abuse, slander, bitterness.

And we become zealots—people who are burning and eager to do good works.

What kind of good works? You might ask. Let's keep reading in Titus 3:1-8:

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. ³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

⁸ The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

The Christian motivation for good works is Gospel Transformation. Good works are the outworking of the inward reality of being saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. It’s the natural outflow of spiritual life. God is good and does good continually, so his grace trains us to be good and to do good continually.

Maybe you’re asking, “How?” or “What?” “What am I to do?” “How can I be doing good?” If you’re asking that question, then I would encourage you to go back and read this passage in Titus. Or go back and read through the life of Jesus in the gospels. As you go back and read these narratives, ask the Lord, “What would you have me to do?”

Like Paul said above, “Are you READY?” Are you READY for every good work? Are you available? Do you have time in your schedule? Are you looking for opportunities? Do you have some extra cash in your wallet to give to a person in need? Are you looking for ways inside the church or outside in the community to do good?

Prayerfully ask the Lord, be ready to respond in faith, and he will guide you.

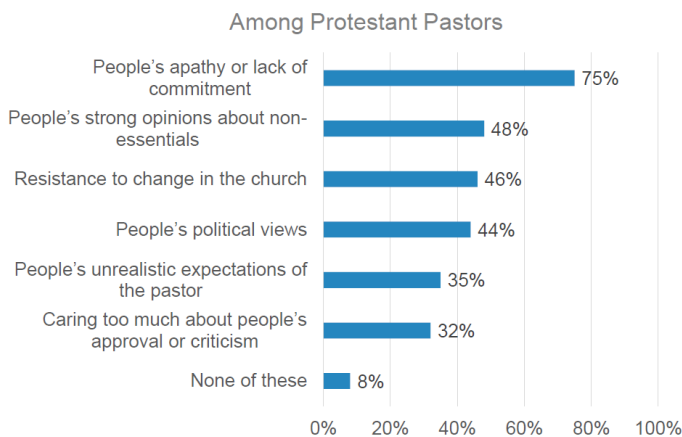
Another way to think through this is to think about the different spheres of your life—work, family, community, and church. How might Jesus live his life in your workplace if he were you? Your family? Your community—neighbors, acquaintances. How might Jesus live his life in these spheres if he were you—with your personality, with your abilities, with your unique quirks?

An Admonition for Doing Good: “People Dynamics”

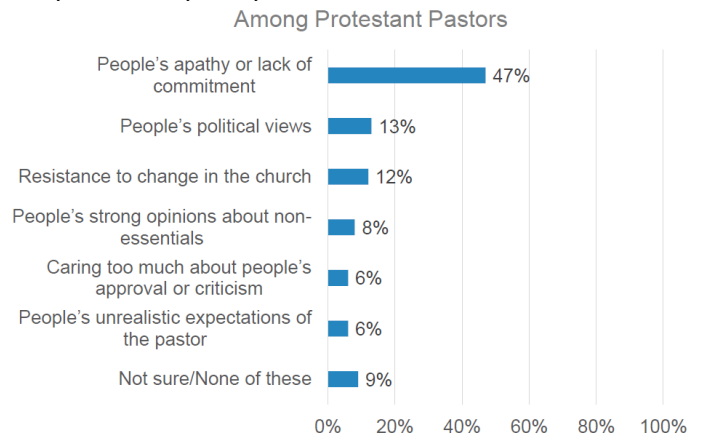
Just last week I came across the results from a survey by Lifeway research. Lifeway is the media and publishing organization for the Southern Baptist denomination, and one of the things they do is to conduct research.

They surveyed 1,000 American Protestant pastors, and they asked the questions:

Which of the following people dynamics do you find challenging in your ministry as a pastor?



Among the people dynamics that you just selected, which one do you as pastor find most challenging in your ministry today?



Now, I’m not showing you this to make anyone feel guilty. I’m just sharing the information, and I’m honest enough to admit that whatever is statistically significant among a random survey of 1,000 churches is probably true at E-Free.

In other words, whether I THINK it's true, my mathematical training tells me that this is PROBABLY true for us. We are probably struggling with apathy and lack of commitment. We are probably facing the challenge of people who haven't re-engaged into the church as much as they could have or should have.

What would be signs of this?

Attending online out of convenience. One of the challenges of livestreaming our services is that we don't know who's online. And we don't know why they're online. If you're sick, traveling, maybe checking us out for the first time, then sure—join us online. That's what it's there for. But if you're home, and healthy, and a regular part of this church body, then you have an obligation before God to be here in person. That's just the way it is. The church by definition is a gathering of people.

Decreased giving. We haven't communicated this publicly, but our giving has been behind most of this fiscal year, which ends next month. I won't say by how much, but giving is quite a bit behind normal.

Fewer people serving. Do you know that it takes 24 people to do what we do on a Sunday? That's a minimum number. 24. It takes 24 people to greet you, say hi at our welcome table, make coffee, lead us in singing, and teach our children. 24 people.

If those 24 people served every single week, then we'd be set. We wouldn't have much to worry about. But, is it fair to ask people to serve EVERY SINGLE SUNDAY? What if they're sick? What if they need to visit family? What if they just need a break?

So, let's say we want people to serve once per month. That's all. Once a month. That means we have 96 slots to fill. Almost 100 people are needed each month to share the load and serve once per month—and that's just on Sunday morning. That's not to mention Men's and Women's ministry, Youth ministry, Service ministry.

Our Children's Ministry is bearing one of the largest loads right now with the fewest amount of people. It just is. If we are going to continue offering a Children's Ministry, then we need more teachers to share that load. It's just the way it is.

There are a lot of good reasons that we take a break, and that we step back to rest. We all have seasons when we need to rest and replenish and refocus. And if you're in one of those seasons, then that's okay.

But if you're not in that season, then I would encourage you to think about your commitment to this church—to think about how God is calling you to be zealous for good works. Can you give 2 hours a month or a week? Do you see opportunities to serve that you haven't pursued? One of the best ways to discover your gifts is to just jump in and serve. So, go for it!

New Testament Calls to Persevere

- Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58)
- And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:9-10)
- As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. (2 Thess. 3:13)
- And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb. 10:24-25)

“The cultivation of oneself, one’s family, one’s workplace and community—especially the community of believers—thus becomes the center of focus for the apprentice’s joint life with his or her teacher. It is with this entire context in view that we most richly and accurately speak of “learning from him how to lead my life as he would lead my life if he were I.” (Dallas Willard, Divine Conspiracy, 285)

Benediction:

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. (2 Thess. 2:16-17)