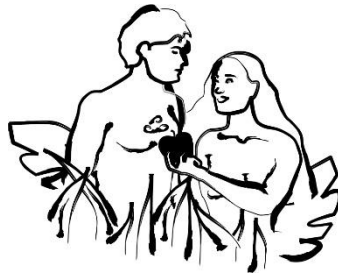


## “Be Good”

I’m going to do something we’re not supposed to do—add to a Bible story. But I’m not asking you to believe that what I’m adding is Scripture; I’m just doing it to fill in some blanks and make a point. So ...

The LORD God put Adam in the Garden of Eden to be the gardener and caretaker. And the LORD God said to Adam, *“You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”*

Pretty soon the LORD God made Eve from one of Adam’s rib bones, so that Adam would have a helper and partner. Adam was pretty pleased about that.



Adam wanted to make sure Eve steered clear of the forbidden tree, so he told Eve, “God says we can’t eat the fruit of that beautiful tree over there; we don’t dare even touch it, or we’ll die.”

Old Sneaky the Snake was hanging around. He heard what Adam said, and he thought, “Now’s my chance.” So he said to Eve, “Did God say, ‘*You shall not eat from any tree in the garden*’?”

Eve said, “Yeah, this tree here, God said we can’t eat its fruit, we can’t even touch it, or we’ll die.”

“Nah, that ain’t true,” said the snake. “You won’t die; you’ll just be as smart as God, knowing good and evil, and God doesn’t want that.” He took one of the fruits and touched Eve’s bare toes with it and said, “See there? God lied. You didn’t die. Nothing happened.”

So Eve ate some of the fruit, and she gave some to Adam, and Adam ate it. And bless their hearts, they had done wrong and they now knew it, but when God confronted them, they tried to pass on

the blame. Adam told God, “It’s not my fault; that woman you gave me, she got me to do it.” And Eve said, “It’s not my fault; I didn’t mean to do it, but that old serpent, he tricked me.”

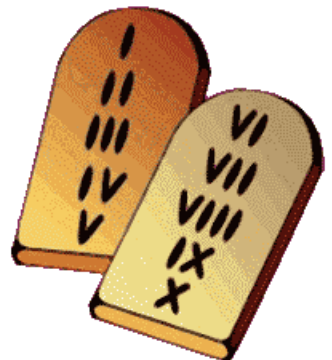
And so sin came into the world, in the form of rebellion not only against God’s legitimate authority, but against all of the blessed life that He had intended them to have. God had said, “Be good,” and told them what He meant by it, and they found a way not to be good.

“Be good.” It’s said often, sometimes in a very offhand manner, and other times as a serious admonition. Parents want their kids to be good. Teachers want their pupils to be good. Military officers want the people under them to be good, though they may mean different things by it. Many inmates try to be good, hoping to shorten their sentences by good behavior.

I want us to look at what it means to “be good” as a child of God, as a believer in Jesus Christ.

You might think that “Be good” means avoid big sins like murder, theft, kidnapping, molesting kids, and so on. And that’s true, but it goes far beyond that. “Be good” means “Don’t sin.” Don’t do the big sins, and don’t do the little ones either. “Be good” means live your life doing all of the right things God wants you to do, and not doing the wrong things He doesn’t want you to do.

Why should we be good? Simply because God wants us to. He has given us laws to tell us how to behave, and the example of His perfect, sinless Son. “It’s God’s will” should be enough of an answer to make us try very hard to do it—but of course there is more to it than that.



Here are some reasons that we ought always to be good and not sin:

- To please God.
- To be happier. Sometimes we can fool ourselves into thinking that sinning and “getting away with it” can make us happy, but it simply is not true in the long run.
- To be healthier. Living with unresolved guilt (or anger or worry) can ruin your health.
- To stay out of trouble.
- To be a good example for others.

You will notice that I did NOT list “To get to heaven.” No amount of being good is enough to qualify for heaven—but that qualification has been arranged already by Jesus’ death on the cross. However, I might have listed “To earn heavenly rewards,” because the Apostle Paul wrote about that.

So you see, there are plenty of reasons to try to “be good” and not sin. I can only think of one reason not to be good, and that’s to please myself rather than God. That’s pure selfishness, and rebellion against His lordship over my life.

How good do we have to be? Many people defend themselves by saying they have never committed the big sins, and they are not as bad as other people who are “real sinners.” I firmly believe the Bible teaches that being good in small ways is as important as in big ways. Here are some of the small ways that I’m thinking of—things that many people do not bother to do:

- Being polite—for example, saying “please” and “thank you” when appropriate.
- Being considerate and respectful of other people’s space, time, and property.
- Being careful, forgiving, and non-competitive while driving.
- Helping and giving to needy people.
- Disposing of trash properly—helping keep the roads clean, rather than littering.
- Being honest, even when you could profit by being dishonest, as when a clerk gives you too much change.
- Never telling a lie.
- Not excusing yourself or trying to shift the blame when you mess up.
- Being respectful of God and His Word, even when society and our friends choose to do otherwise.

In fact, Paul’s list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) is a pretty good summary of the qualities involved in being good. And that also explains where the “good” comes from—the Holy Spirit of God.

One more thing about being good—it’s a “today” thing. We may have messed up in the past, but that’s the past. Its only usefulness to us now is to help us not mess up in a similar way again. As for the future—well, the future is important, but if we take care of this day, each and every day, we will find that the future will come out okay.

I’ll close with these words of Jesus from Matt. 7:

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ... Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

Here’s the bottom line: be good. Let the past be past; just be good today. Try to live without sinning. Not because you have to; not even because God wants you to; but just because it’s good; it’s the best possible way to live.

You can’t do it without God’s help, so ask Him to help you every day. And when you mess up (you will), confess it, on your knees, and ask for more help. God cares, and with His help you can do the impossible!

Give it a try. I’m right beside you, also giving it a try. Let’s pray for each other.

May many blessings be yours, from God our Father and from our Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. Be good.

*Brother Roland*

## Fifty Life Lessons

Some of these are just for fun, and some aren't even particularly "Christian," but there is wisdom here, too.

1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.
3. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.
4. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
5. Pay off your credit cards every month.
6. You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.
7. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
8. It's OK to get angry with God. He can take it.
9. Save for retirement starting with your first paycheck.
10. When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.
11. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.
12. It's OK to let your children see you cry.
13. Don't compare your life to others'. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
14. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.
15. Everything can change in the blink of an eye. But don't worry; God never blinks.
16. Life is too short for long pity parties. Get busy living, or get busy dying.
17. You can get through anything if you stay put in today.
18. A writer writes. If you want to be a writer, write.
19. It's never too late to have a happy childhood. But the second one is up to you and no one else.
20. When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.
21. Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.
22. Over-prepare, then go with the flow.
23. Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.
24. The most important sex organ is the brain.
- 25.. No one is in charge of your happiness except you.
26. Frame every so-called disaster with these words: "In five years, will this matter?"
27. Always choose life.
28. Forgive everyone everything.
29. What other people think of you is none of your business.
30. Time heals almost everything. Give time time.
31. However good or bad a situation is, it will change.
32. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends will. Stay in touch.
33. Believe in miracles.
34. God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do.
35. Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.
36. Growing old beats the alternative -- dying young.
37. Your children get only one childhood. Make it memorable.
38. Read the Psalms. They cover every human emotion.
39. Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere.
40. If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.
41. Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now..
42. Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful.
43. All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.
44. Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.
45. The best is yet to come.
46. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
47. Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.
48. If you don't ask, you don't get.
49. Yield.
50. Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.

**Feel free to ask:** Send me your Bible questions. Maybe I will have an answer that will help you or someone else to understand God's Word a bit better. Also let me know if your address changes. Here's mine:

**Brother Roland, P O Box 14, Fayetteville, PA 17222**

## Being Good

I gathered up a lot of words that describe people who are good in various ways. Every one of these words is a trait that it is good to have. See if you agree. Enjoy the puzzle.

### Puzzle:

K W V A S C I B Q N W U Y D R E E Q D C B L Y X X P R V T E  
Z G F V L X E Y G B G C F B J N K M B N O T R L E Z K N D B  
G L U L B N Z G N G V I W F K A V I L K W X A Z H K E P Q P  
I G W K I L P F R I E N D L Y I F A L H H B R T S L G I X Z  
T O A U W D X F B S E I Y O F T P F M T N B E F L T E A M Z  
Y Q N C N E B H L L U F V A M S C I U K S L S E K G N X E B  
W E Z Y V D S B B A Q O I S C I V P W W B I C G D N E M T C  
G Y G M I Y R A D Z H R L W P R R L P I C X R O K L R V Q Q  
H N I S Q V D Q C S R C S U U H Z W S Z E Y O H Z U O J Z W  
X N W C N N U E S I G O L G P C T N R E P G E X C D U I M Y  
W K W Z E S S E L N L M G E Y U O D A R W S L K V D S C R Z  
L S Q P Z G L Z I F S F E S A P R Y O E I Z B T U H C U V A  
G J E C V E H V T F F O T Z S N V C X C W X A O D F K W G A  
N D I E M Y I F R B N R Z E E K M B S N V B E C A R I N G T  
I A I A L G K O U I B T R A H C O I Z I B I E O M L I F S C  
K L L A R B M R S M G I U F Q N U D N S B B R I K V X E H V  
N B E O H Q A J T A L N V Z W E E I B D T N G T O I N A L T  
I P F S E S F R W H D G N I K A M E C A E P A L U O N Z B A  
H S F S L U D I O E W D L J I W S Z X I R D O T H O S D I D  
T Z N P P A E N R N Q E Q E O Y H B M W V N R W N H U U E J  
T V A J F F V S T A O C L F Q F B O F C V V M W B D E S U U  
H Y D A U O T D H V F H X L Y U I P R I N C I P L E D S C L  
G Z M A L A Z Z Y S J T Z B B U X Z B E A H F U N L T A E O  
I B G B N X M Q P O T G Y W W E U T V L E U F N W N A H C G  
R U K D K I N D H E A R T E D G H C Z I C R P D C L P R A R  
O Z I E J J Z R M G F F A G M Y U A L W E C U L E T K K O P  
M N I U F O B A N O U R C I I O T H V E T I C F J H K U H M  
G C O U R T E O U S N Y H P G M E G H E A P M I A C H G H X  
W P R H R S G C V C F I F R M H M C Y U D N P X H B W I L B  
Y I E G E B J U I K Z S A J D P T H C P H G H L H S K C T R

### Words

AGREEABLE  
BLAMELESS  
CARING  
CHEERFUL  
CHRISTIAN  
CHRISTLIKE  
CLEAN  
CLEAN-MINDED  
COMFORTING  
COURTEOUS  
DEPENDABLE  
EXCELLENT

FAIR  
FORGIVING  
FRIENDLY  
GENEROUS  
GENUINE  
HELPFUL  
HONEST  
HONORABLE  
JUST  
KIND  
KINDHEARTED  
LOVING

MORAL  
PEACE-MAKING  
PRINCIPLED  
RESPONSIBLE  
RIGHT-THINKING  
SCRUPULOUS  
SINCERE  
STRAIGHT  
TRUSTWORTHY  
UNDERSTANDING  
VIRTUOUS  
WELL BEHAVED