

Logic: What is Good? What does Good Mean?

1. Among all English words, "good" is one word that is impossible to define. Why? How do you determine what is good?
2. Examine Genesis 1. What is it about Creation that God calls good? Why the moral value?
3. Contrast this to what Jesus says about people: And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19; Matt 19:17). Does this contradict the goodness of God's creation of man?
4. Socrates' Euthyphro Dilemma: Is an act good because God commands it? Or does God command an act because it's good?
5. Does God restore the moral goodness of Creation? If so, how?

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Teacher Notes

This is a guideline on how this lesson may be taught. Adapt it to how you see fit for your student's attention span. Philosophical discussions aren't for everyone; however, the more personal the discussion, the more interest people will have for it.

1. Among all English words, "good" is one word that is impossible to define. Why? How do you determine what is good?

Here is one method to explore this question - Most people are interested in sports and associate themselves with the local college. In Bellevue WA, there is a rivalry between the UW Huskies and WSU Cougars. Using the team association as the standard by which good is determined introduces the problem of relative standards (i.e. only the good go to...). By introducing a third college like Oregon Ducks into the deliberations highlights the problem and brings forth the question: who is right? The question causes the student to examine the standard used to determine what is good.

2. Examine Genesis 1. What is it about Creation that God calls good? Why the moral value?

This question is intended to help the student see the biblical text in a different light. Morality isn't just limited to human beings.

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Gen 1:31, NASB)

What was God referring to when He said His Creation was "very good." Was He talking about beauty, perfection, etc???

3. Contrast this to what Jesus says about people: And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19; Matt 19:17). Does this contradict the goodness of God's creation of man?

The normal response to "spiritual" / theological questions is to answer subjectively. This is the habit we seek to break. Encourage the students to consult the Bible to help them realize that they can find the answer there and in so doing deepen their understanding of God.

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';

Cursed is the ground because of you;

In toil you will eat of it

All the days of your life.

"Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;

And you will eat the plants of the field;

By the sweat of your face

You will eat bread,

Till you return to the ground,

Because from it you were taken;

For you are dust,

And to dust you shall return." (Gen 3:17-19, NASB)

A good method is to use an online concordance for a word like "corrupt" and a student will learn more to formulate an answer to the question.

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. (Gen 6:11-12, NASB)

With good observation, the student may see that God's original Creation was morally good and pure. But after the Fall, God's "very good Creation" became corrupt, morally evil, and introduced death. This places a focus on the meaning of sin for a later study.

4. Socrates' Euthyphro Dilemma: Is an act good because God commands it? Or does God command an act because it's good?

This question is to cause the student to think how an absolute moral standard is related to God.

Is an act good because God commands it?

Why is it good? Is it just because God whimsically said so?

Does God command an act because it's good?

Is there a moral standard that is separate and higher than God? How is God good?

Answer: Morality is based on God's character and nature. The moral standard is neither above God nor merely willed by Him. With morality grounded in His holy and immutable character, the moral standard is fixed, absolute, and timeless. God is the standard of goodness (I AM WHO I AM – Ex 3:14-15).

5. Does God restore the moral goodness of Creation? If so, how?

Ask the student: If the Original Sin corrupted the image of God, how does God restore His created image?

The intent here is to realize that God's plan is fully revealed in the Bible: from Creation, the introduction of evil / sin, to total resolution and complete restoration of Creation. But without comprehensive Bible knowledge, this may be difficult to fully answer. Here the teacher will likely need to provide the biblical answer and here is an example of a sequence of thoughts:

a) Then **Moses said, "Now show me your glory."** **And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you,** and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." (Ex 33:18-20, NIV)

b) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: **'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.** Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the Lord your God.'" (Lev 19:1-4, NKJV)

c) but **God shows his love for us** in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Rom 5:8-11, ESV)

d) He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** (2 Cor 5:21, NASB)

e) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore **glorify God in your body and in your spirit,** which are God's. (1 Cor 6:19-20, NKJV)

f) As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: **"Be holy, because I am holy."** (1 Pet 1:14-16, NIV)

g) So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. **Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.** (1 Cor 15:42-49, ESV)

With Satan, Death, and Hell destroyed (Rev 20:10-14), God restores Man with a new glorified spiritual body clothed in white (Rev 19:7-8; 20:11-15), a new heaven and earth are created along with a new Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-4).

There is a certain beauty and elegance to God's word and His complete plan for His Creation, which is the task before the teacher to illustrate and inspire the student to love and appreciate.