



WINTER 2019-20  
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**LEADER GUIDE INCLUDED**



**AIN'T HE ALRIGHT!**

A Bible study on the goodness of God.



**UNTO THE LEAST OF THESE**

A Bible study on compassion.



**CALLING ALL SAINTS!**

A Bible study on Christian conduct.



## HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

You won't find it on a map, but a highway to heaven does exist. "The Roman Road" is explained in the Book of Romans in the Bible, and it tells how to go to heaven.

The road begins at Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." God is the source for our journey to heaven. He gives power for salvation to all who believe.

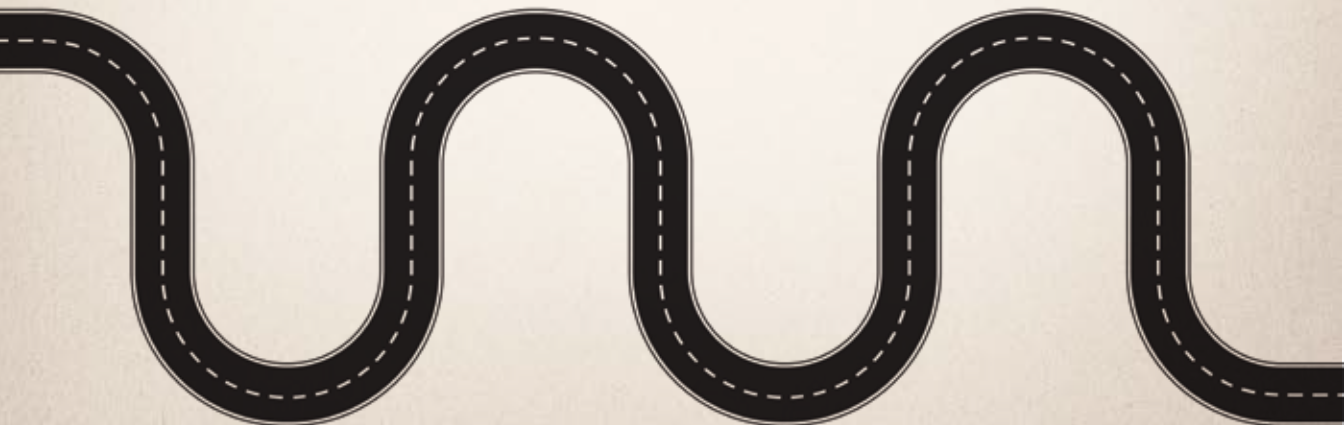
We need God's power because we have a problem with sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "Sin" means missing the mark or missing God's intended destination for us. None of us can reach that destination on his or her own because everyone is a sinner.

When we work, we earn money. Sin earns wages as well—wages of death. Because God loves all sinners, He has provided another route: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The highway to heaven is found in Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." We need to confess our sin and ask God for forgiveness. To confess Jesus as Lord involves agreeing with God about your sin and your need for salvation. You must repent of your sin, turning away from the direction in life in which you are going. To "believe in your heart" is to place your faith in Jesus, trusting that He died on the cross to pay for your sins. "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

If you would like to have salvation in Jesus Christ, sincerely pray a prayer like this one: "Dear God, I confess to You my sin and need for salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Amen."

Share your faith in Jesus with a Christian friend or pastor. Becoming a Christian is your first step on the lifelong road of spiritual growth and service God desires for you. Follow Christ in believer's baptism by immersion and join a local church.







## Staying Fit ... Spiritually

We talk a lot about the importance of staying physically fit, but what about the health of your spirit? Connect, Grow, Serve, Go is a call to evaluate your present spiritual condition and discover ways to improve your spiritual health. Packed into each biblical concept—Connect, Grow, Serve, Go—is a simple way you can move forward, not remain stagnant. Best of all, these tools will stand the test of time—no “fad” diets here. They will help you become spiritually healthy, and stay that way.



WITH AN OPEN HEART  
*MARK 12:29-31*



IN BODY, MIND, & SPIRIT  
*ROMANS 12:2*



WITH WILLING HANDS  
*1 PETER 4:10-11*



WITH READY FEET  
*MATTHEW 28:19-20*

**Connect** urges you to worship, pray, fellowship, and relate to others in positive relationships at work, at home, and in other settings. Spiritual fitness results when you connect with God, with others, and with your church family.





**Grow** refers to learning and understanding more about God and His expectations of His people, which comes through Bible study. You grow by applying that knowledge to your everyday living.

**Serve** describes the work you do inside your church. Your church is full of ministry and service opportunities. You serve by using your spiritual gifts, skills, and passions to glorify God. All of us must work together for the church to function as God intended.

**Go** moves you outside the church and into the community and the world. Evangelism and missions are ways to go into your community and the world in the name of Jesus Christ. It might be uncomfortable at first, but you will experience firsthand the difference Christ can make through you.

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Connect, Grow, Serve, Go must impact YOU, the individual, before it can permeate your circle of friends, your Bible study group, and then the church as a whole. But balance is the key! We must be actively participating in all four areas if we want to be spiritually healthy. All Go and no Connect with God or other believers results in powerless activity and wears you out. A steady diet of Grow without the action of Serve or Go leads to unhealthy spiritual obesity and laziness. We need a balanced spiritual diet to remain fit and able to serve God in the ways He has gifted us.

The *YOU* lessons will help you Connect , Grow , Serve , and Go . Look for these icons throughout this issue. They will help you check and maintain your spiritual health.

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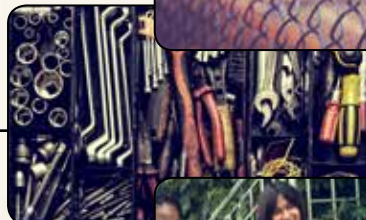
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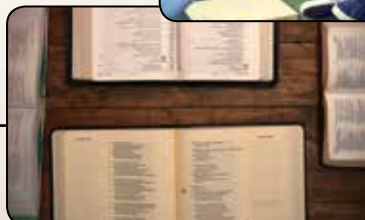
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# A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR...



I've traveled in forty U.S. states, the District of Columbia and two U.S. territories, and I have lived in four states. From my travels, here is one thing I've learned. I like living in states that have all four seasons. I find something special in them all. I love the new life of the spring, the heat of the summer, the colors of the fall, and the clean white snow of the winter. Winter is also at times a symbol for being late in life and for hard times.

Our studies in this Winter 2019-20 quarter will give you the clear, clean Word of God that you need to meet the challenges of these days. His Word goes with you through life, whether you're just starting out on life's adventures or wanting to reach old age with delight instead of regret. This quarter will discuss the Attributes of God, which remind us of how awesome God really is; Compassion, which is our task to care as God really cares; and Calling, which is our challenge to live out God's purpose for us in a dark and desperate world.

Speaking of seasons, I hope you will join me this summer at Black Church Leadership and Family Conference! There is something for the entire family, and God never fails to move in some amazing ways at this event. There will be powerful preaching, transformative teaching, wonderful worship, and fantastic fun. Make your plans now to be a part of it on July 20-24, 2020.

Thanks for joining me in this season of study. Grab your Bible and allow God to speak through YOU!

Be Blessed!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark". The signature is stylized with a large loop at the end.

**Dr. Mark A. Croston, Sr.**

YOU General Editor

National Director of Black Church Partnerships

[www.lifeway.com/BlackChurchLife](http://www.lifeway.com/BlackChurchLife)







# AIN'T HE ALRIGHT!

by Mark Croston, D.Min.

I cannot count the number of times I have heard a preacher closing a sermon and in the excitement of the moment yell to the standing congregation, “Ain’t He alright!” This sounds like a question, but it’s really a declaration, a powerful affirmation. The preacher isn’t waiting for—nor wanting—your yes or no vote. Rather, he’s simply encouraging you to acknowledge the loving and caring God, regardless of your circumstances.

## **In Good Times, “Ain’t He alright!”**

I’m sure many would consider this a no-brainer. We would say, “When times are good, everyone knows that God is good.” But I would say that we too often forget about God in the good days. We attribute the good times to our skill, intellect, connections or even good luck. We think we’re just in the right place at the right time. The statement, however, ought to remind us of James’ words: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (Jas. 1:17).

God sends the sunshine. He gives us air to breathe and food to eat. The old saints would say, “He is a heart fixer and a mind regulator. He woke us up this morning, touched us with His finger of love and caused our golden moments to roll on just a little while longer.” Yes, when times are good, “Ain’t He alright!” encourages us to appreciate those good times and to be thankful for God’s goodness to us.

## **In Bad Times, “Ain’t He alright!”**

Now here’s the problem. Things are not always all right.

Sickness and suffering. Crisis and calamity. Racism and rejection. Heartbreak and hunger. These are often not far away. “Ain’t He alright!” is easy to embrace when times are good. But the comfort of the true believer is that we can still have this confidence in God even on the worst of days.

One of my favorite passages can be found in Nahum 1:1-7. These verses reveal a side of God and a description of times we don’t really want to see. The prophet uses words and phrases like avenging, furious, and burning





anger. God says He will not leave the guilty unpunished. He makes rivers run dry and flowers wither. Mountains quake, hills melt, rocks shatter.

Yet, when I read these verses, I remember what it's like to be in the middle of really bad times. But I'm also reminded that in the middle of these bad time, Nahum cries out, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in a day of distress; he cares for those who take refuge in him" (Nah. 1:7).

Nahum's proclamation echoes the words of the psalmist: "Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me (Ps. 23:4).

### **At All Times, "Ain't He alright!"**

Ultimately, this phrase is a celebration of the fact that our all-knowing, all-powerful, all-purposeful, sovereign God is fulfilling his plan and is in control. In every Romans 8:28 crisis moment, we know that He is working good for those who love God. And we live with an Ecclesiastes 3:15 confidence that He has made everything appropriate in its time. And we enjoy a 1 Thessalonians 5:18 celebration, where we give thanks in everything because we know that God's will for us is in Christ Jesus.

No matter what we face, He is there. Ain't He alright!

Want to go deeper? Check out the study, *The Power of God's Names*. In it, Dr. Tony Evans digs deeper into eleven of God's names which define eleven of His confidence-giving attributes.

**Mark Croston** serves as national director, Black Church and Western Partnerships for LifeWay and the general editor for the YOU! curriculum.



# Unit 1

## Ain't He Alright!



## A Bible Study on the Attributes of God

In the Black Hills of South Dakota, a masterpiece has been in the making for more than seven decades. It started in 1947 when Korczak Ziolkowski was hired to create an immense statue of Crazy Horse out of a South Dakota mountain. He worked on the job until his death in 1982. Now, he is buried near the worksite, and his family has continued the project with no announced completion date.

Sculptors remove excess material to provide an accurate image of their subject. But God didn't need a sculptor to reveal Himself to the world. We learn about who God is and what He does through His Word. That's what the five lessons of this unit are all about.

In this unit, you'll examine five key questions about God's nature and character:

- Are you living the "good life"?
- How much does God really know about me?
- Where is God in times of struggle and trouble?
- Why did Jesus come into the world?
- How does God's power fit into my everyday life?

By learning more about what God is like, we can better understand how He wants us to live out our faith each day. After all, we are still the best reflection of His nature to the world around us.

We are His masterpieces in the making.



# Good God

Background Passage: Psalm 25

Lesson Passages: Psalm 25:4-5,7-10,12-13

**THE QUESTION: ARE YOU LIVING THE “GOOD LIFE”?**  
**THE POINT: TO UNDERSTAND GOD IS TO UNDERSTAND GOOD.**

## LESSON PASSAGES

### PSALM 25:4-5,7-10,12-13

<sup>4</sup> Make your **a ways** known to me, LORD; teach me your paths. <sup>5</sup> Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; I wait for you all day long.

.....

<sup>7</sup> Do not **\* remember** the sins of my youth or my acts of rebellion; in keeping with your faithful love, remember me because of your goodness, LORD. <sup>8</sup> The LORD is **b good** and upright; therefore he shows sinners the way. <sup>9</sup> He leads the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. <sup>10</sup> All the LORD’s ways show faithful love and truth to those who keep his **c covenant** and decrees.

.....

<sup>12</sup> Who is this person who fears the LORD? He will show him the way he should **\* choose**. <sup>13</sup> He will live a good life, and his descendants will **d inherit the land**.

## KEY WORDS

**a Ways:** God’s plan and purposes. He reveals them to those who seek Him.

**b Good:** Proper, beautiful, complete. The word used to describe God here is the same word He used to describe creation throughout Genesis 1.

**c Covenant:** In the Old Testament, the law of Moses was God’s covenant with His people. Obeying the law led to blessings for the people. Jesus created a new covenant of blessing and salvation through His death and resurrection.

**d Inherit the land:** For the ancient Israelites, Canaan was the promised land. For contemporary believers, “the land” represents a blessed life focused on God.

For more information about key words (\*), visit the glossary on pages 160–161.

## MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!



# Good God

Psalm 25:4-5,7-10,12-13

Are you living  
the “good life”?



## UNIT 1 LESSON 1

She had been born into slavery but escaped. But she is best known for serving as a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad. Her given name was Araminta Ross. History knows her as Harriet Tubman. On the Railroad, Tubman led dozens—maybe hundreds—of slaves north. And she proudly said that she “never lost a passenger.” God is a lot like that. He knows the right way for us to travel this life. In fact, He’s led multitudes out of oppression into the “good life” of His love and grace. And He’s never lost anyone who’s trusted Him.

## Focal Passage Outline

### GOD’S GOODNESS IS THE STANDARD

(Ps. 25:4-5,7)

### GOD’S GOODNESS IS BASED ON TRUTH

(Ps. 25:8-10)

### THE “GOOD LIFE” ALIGNS WITH GOD’S GOODNESS

(Ps. 25:12-13)

## GOD’S GOODNESS IS THE STANDARD PSALM 25:4-5,7

A while back, my wife wanted to paint our sons’ room. But first, she needed to know the dimensions of the walls. Using my own ingenuity, I stepped off the width from one corner to the other and shared my results.

Then my son ran a tape measure along the same wall. His answer was quite a bit different from mine. Needless to say, my wife trusted the tape measure more than my stride. Why? Because stepping off a distance offers an estimate, but a tape measure provides a standard.

**When is an estimate “good enough” for a job? When do you need an exact standard?**

**Read Psalm 25:4-5,7.** David was known as a man after God’s own heart. While he made some big mistakes, he also worked to protect and maintain an intimate relationship with God. Often, he poured out his feelings to God in the songs that ended up in the Book of Psalms.

Psalm 25, one of the psalms attributed to David, demonstrates that close heart connection between the shepherd boy who became Israel’s greatest king and the Lord. It’s a psalm of dependence. Throughout the chapter, David confessed his shortcomings. But he also acknowledged his absolute need for God—and God’s absolute reliability.

**When has God been faithful to you despite your rebellion against Him? What does that tell you about how He feels about you?**

In verses 4-5, David begged God to reveal His **a ways** and to guide him in His truth. David understood that humans—himself included—are bad about doing things on our own. In our hearts, we know God has a perfect plan, but our heads look for an easier way. Eventually, we end up stuck in a spiritual ditch, crying out to God for help.

David wanted to avoid those pitfalls, so he asked God to lead him in the right paths. He was even willing to wait on God when the answer didn't come immediately. Patience is a virtue, but it's not always easy. Still, David knew it was better to wait on God to move than to stumble forward without Him.

**When have you struggled to wait on God? What difference did it make when He finally responded?**

Testimonies are powerful, and David testified to God's grace and mercy. First, he asked God not to **\* remember** what he had done wrong. It's not that David was counting on God having a bad memory. Instead, he knew that God erases our sin and frees us from the penalty we deserve.

But David also praised God for His mercy—His “faithful love.” Not only is God perfectly good, but He is also perfectly loving. And He never passes up a chance to demonstrate His love. David counted on God's love to cleanse him and to sustain him through the storms of his life.

In response, David showed gratitude for God's goodness. But His words go even deeper than that. They don't just remind us that God doesn't show us what goodness looks like. They also remind us that He is the very definition of goodness. He is the standard for everything good.

## GOD'S GOODNESS IS BASED ON TRUTH PSALM 25:8-10

In the movie *Black Panther*, Wakanda's King T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman) twice visits his deceased father, T'Chaka, in the “ancestral plane.” The first time, T'Challa seeks his father's advice for guiding the people of Wakanda well. But the next time, he challenges T'Chaka about a truth he “chose to omit”—a truth that put the nation in danger.

In real life, ignoring truth can be just as dangerous. Truth is never optional. It's always necessary. It's the very foundation of the good life because it's the very foundation of God's goodness.

**What are some truths you'd like to “omit” from your life? How would that affect your relationship with God?**



## Diggin' Deeper



## Waiting on God

God's timing is perfect. In contrast, our timing is not. The Bible is filled with examples of people who tried to get ahead of God and suffered the consequences. If we're honest, each of us could find some similar examples from our own lives. But while waiting on God's timing can be difficult, it's absolutely worth it. Moving along with Him leads to blessing, while doing things on our own leads to frustration and pain. **Look at the verses below and write down what each of them has to say about the wisdom of waiting on God.**

- Psalm 33:20-21
- Psalm 40:1
- Isaiah 40:31
- Lamentations 3:24-26
- James 5:7-8



## Did you know?

The fear of God is a common theme in Scripture, especially in Wisdom Literature. Psalms and Proverbs both state that fearing God is the first step toward gaining true wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10). The fear of the Lord also leads to a blessed life (Ps. 128:1; Prov. 19:23) and protects us from sin (Prov. 16:6). The apostle Paul wrote that an appropriate fear of the Lord also motivates us to share His love with others (2 Cor. 5:11). This reverence for God reveals Him for who He really is. Just as important, it allows us to see ourselves as we truly are in comparison to Him.

- **Why is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom? Why does wisdom fall short without it?**

**Read Psalm 25:8-10.** In the earlier verses, David thanked God for His goodness. But in verse 8, he shifted his emphasis. He started telling the world about the great God he served.

David emphasized two qualities of God. First, he pointed out that God is **b good**. This goodness is much more than an adjective for God. It is the very essence of who He is. In other words, God doesn't just do good things. Everything about Him is good. So, even when we might question what He is doing, we can still believe He is good toward us.

The psalmist also said that God is upright. He is perfect in character. We stumble and fall. We make selfish decisions. But God never does. His actions are always based on His glory and our benefit.

**How do you focus on God's goodness and uprightness in tough situations? What difference does that make in your life?**

Think about your greatest teachers in school. What made them so great? Usually, great teachers help us see things we've never seen before. They give us a new way to look at information that changes our lives.

David said that God is a great Teacher. When sinners need to know how to escape bondage, God shows them the way home. When humble people look for wisdom and guidance, the Lord points them in the right direction. Whenever we have big questions that keep us up at night, God helps us move toward an answer.

Why? Because He loves us! God has established a **c covenant** with His people. As we trust Him, He leads us. He never promises that life will be easy, but He does promise His peace and His presence.

**Think about God's covenant with you. How well are you upholding your end? What needs to change?**

## THE "GOOD LIFE" ALIGNS WITH GOD'S GOODNESS PSALM 25:12-13

David became an incredibly wealthy king—the ancient Israelite version of the "good life." But he never really focused on material stuff. Possessions had their place, just like they do today, but he understood that a truly good life is all about knowing and following God's plan.

**What do you fear? What's the difference between a healthy fear and an unhealthy fear?**

**Read Psalm 25:12-13.** David began verse 12 with a question about the person who fears the Lord, but not because he needed an answer. In fact, he shared the answer with his readers.



Live It!

Remember *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*? A teen from the streets moves in with his wealthy relatives. Suddenly, this proverbial fish out of water was living the “good life”—and many fans probably wanted to swap places with him each week. We all have our ideas of what “the good life” means. But God’s goodness is the only thing that can make life good for us.

On an index card, write a short prayer to God, asking Him to teach you more about His goodness. Read the card aloud each day for the next week and be intentional about pursuing and sharing God’s goodness.

The fear of God has nothing to do with terror. Instead, it’s a healthy reverence for who He is and what He does. It’s the difference between being scared of Him and feeling secure in Him. We know He is good, so we can trust Him.

It’s like the respect we have for a hot stove. If we have a healthy fear for what it can do, we can actually benefit from it. But if we get careless or take it for granted, the results can be devastating.

**What does fearing the Lord look like in your life each day? How can you learn to fear Him more?**

David said that when we learn to fear God, we experience His blessings and direction in our lives. God gives us the freedom to \* **choose** our path in life. We aren’t robots. We can follow Him or reject Him.

But if we follow Him, He will lead us into a good life. God isn’t some bully trying to steal our fun. On the contrary, David wrote that God allows His faithful descendants (His kids) to **d inherit the land**. He fulfilled that promise to the ancient Israelites in Canaan, and He will keep His promises to us today.

Why? Because we serve a good, good God!

**SO WHAT? How does this apply to me?**

What’s it mean to be a “good” person? Each of us has our own definitions. But here’s the thing: The only reason we have even a hint of what “goodness” means is because God demonstrates His goodness to us. He is the standard. And because He is good, we can imitate Him each day.

• **How is God the standard for all goodness? What other things do people use to define goodness? What makes those things inadequate?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• **Why does God give us a choice about how we respond to Him? What does that mean for our walk with Him? Our ministry toward others?**

\_\_\_\_\_



• **As you reflect on the goodness of God, how can you live it out each day? What can you do to share His goodness with those around you?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 1. GOODNESS NAVIGATOR

Psalm 25:4-5,7

Have you ever taken a road trip with someone who refused to use a GPS to guide the journey? If so, it probably didn't end well. After all, people who won't ask for or follow directions often end up lost and confused. It's the same for us. If we choose to go through life without God's instructions, we'll be in a mess. His desire is to lead us on a path that promises goodness and well-being. But we have to follow Him to make it happen.

***Lord, deepen my trust in You. Lead me on paths that please You and keep me following Your plans.***

### 2. FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Psalm 25:8-10

"Follow the Yellow Brick Road," is a song of hope from one of America's most iconic movies, *The Wizard of Oz*. The characters in the story repeat this song throughout the film as each of them seeks a treasure that's missing from their lives. They believed that the road would lead to good things. Spiritually, God lays a road before us, and it's paved with golden "bricks" of wisdom. And He reveals Himself on that road, guiding us and teaching us how to stay in His will.

***Lord, You are my divine Guide. Lead me daily down Your road of righteousness.***

# DAILY READINGS

### 3. FEAR TO FUTURE FAVOR

Psalm 25:12-13

According to Proverbs 9:10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Often, people assume that this kind of fear means "being afraid." But that's not how it works. As David mentioned in Psalm 25, "fear" refers to a proper reverence or awe for God. Those who revere God receive favor for themselves and their family. They establish their own footsteps in Him, and that produces a lineage of genuine faith. And that's a future worth working toward.

***Awesome God, make me wise and show me Your ways to good life. Empower me to set a clear example as one in awe of You, both for my own security and for the benefit of my descendants.***

### 4. TASTE TEST

Psalm 34:8

Taste tests allow individuals to experience food beyond just its smell and appearance. It also helps people compare one kind of food to another. Tasting is one of our senses God has given us so that we can experience life more fully. But the Lord challenges us to reach for so much more than what we can pick up with our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and touch. He wants us to go beyond a limited experience with Him by trusting the fullness of His presence and the promise of His protection. If we do, nothing else will be able to compare to Him.

***Good Father, thank You for the invitation to experience the fullness of Your presence and the blessings of Your goodness.***

# All-Knowing

Background Passage: Psalm 139

Lesson Passages: Psalm 139:7-12,23-24

**THE QUESTION:** HOW MUCH DOES GOD REALLY KNOW ABOUT ME?

**THE POINT:** GOD KNOWS ME YET LOVES ME STILL.

## LESSON PASSAGES

### PSALM 139:7-12,23-24

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go to escape your **a Spirit**? Where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in **b Sheol**, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I live at the eastern horizon or settle at the western limits, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand will lead me; your **\* right hand** will hold on to me. <sup>11</sup> If I say, “Surely the **\* darkness** will hide me, and the light around me will be night”—<sup>12</sup> even the **darkness** is not dark to you. The night shines like the day; darkness and light are alike to you.

.....

<sup>23</sup> **c Search** me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. <sup>24</sup> See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the **d everlasting way**.

## KEY WORDS

**a Spirit:** God’s Spirit is found at work throughout the Old Testament. He was active in creation (Gen. 1:2) and served as the Power behind the words (2 Sam. 23:2; Zech. 4:6) and actions (Judg. 3:10; 14:6) of godly individuals.

**b Sheol:** The grave or the place of the dead. Both the righteous and the unrighteous could enter Sheol, though it is often equated with wickedness.

**c Search:** The Hebrew word used here means to examine, probe, investigate.

**d Everlasting way:** God’s way. The faithful follow a path that lets them experience the presence of God in this life and leads them into the presence of God in the next life.

For more information about key words (\*), visit the glossary on pages 160–161.

## MEMORY VERSE

**1 Peter 3:12**

Because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do what is evil.



# HOW TO TEACH



## Step 1: Read the Lesson and study the Leader Commentary.

### Unit 1

## Ain't He Alright!

**A Bible Study on the Attributes of God**

In the Black Hills of South Dakota, a masterpiece has been in the making for more than seven decades. It started in 1947 when Korczak Ziolkowski was hired to create an immense statue of Crazy Horse out of a South Dakota mountain. He worked on the job until his death in 1982. Now, he is buried near the worksite, and his family has continued the project with no announced completion date.

Sculptors remove excess material to provide an accurate image of their subject. But God didn't need a sculptor to reveal Himself to the world. We learn about who God is and what He does through His Word. That's what the five lessons of this unit are all about.

**UNIT 1, LESSON 1**

### Good God

Background Passage: Psalm 123  
Lesson Passages: Psalm 25:4-5, 7-10, 12-13

The leader pages for this lesson are found on pages 102-105.

**THE QUESTION: ARE YOU LIVING THE "GOOD LIFE?"**  
**THE POINT: TO UNDERSTAND GOD IS TO UNDERSTAND GOOD.**

**LESSON PASSAGES**

**PSALM 25:4-5, 7-10, 12-13**

*\* Make your way very known to me, O God, teach me your paths. \* I wait for you all day long.*

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*\* Do not \* remember the sins of my youth or my acts of rebellion, in keeping with your faithful love, remember me because of your goodness, Lord. \* The Lord is to go to and upright; therefore to show strength the way. \* He leads the humble in what is right and teaches them from his way. \* All the Lord's ways show faithful love and truth to those who keep his covenant and desires.*

-----

*\* Who is this person who fears the Lord? He will show them the way he should \* choose. \* He will have a good life, and his descendants will do inherit the land.*

**KEY WORDS**

**Ways.** God's plan and purposes. He awaits them to those who seek Him.

**Do not \* remember.** Don't dwell on the past. The word used to describe God here is His active word. He wants to describe Himself through Genesis 1.

**Covenant.** An agreement in the Old Testament. The act of Moses was God's covenant with His people. Obeying the law led to blessings for the people. Jesus created a new covenant of blessing and salvation through His death and resurrection.

**Inherit the land.** For the ancient Israelites, Canaan was the promised land. For contemporary believers, "the land" represents a blessed life focused on God.

**MEMORY VERSE**

*Psalm 101*

**Truth and justice are the Lord's good. How happy is the person who does nothing but truth!**

**BEFORE YOU TEACH**

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11-15)

**STEP 1: PREPARE YOUR TEACHING ENVIRONMENT.**

There are many ways to prepare for a lesson, but don't forget to spend time on your learning space! Think about how to make your area more inviting by removing old posters or teaching aids. Make the teaching environment a comfortable place where learners look forward to coming.

**STEP 2: REFLECT ON GOD'S GOODNESS.**

This lesson begins a unit that emphasizes the goodness of God. Sometimes, this quality of God is overlooked or, worse, taken for granted. It's also possible that some learners are struggling with the idea of a good God. This week, reflect on God's goodness in your life. Study verses on God's goodness and meditate on how you have seen His goodness firsthand. Then, teach from the overflow of your own life. You'll realize that we can't have His goodness if we don't get right where they are.

**STEP 3: CONTACT MISSING LEARNERS**

This is the first week of a new unit, which is a great time to reach out to learners who have been missing in recent weeks. Make a phone call or send an email to let them know that they have been missed. Tell them about this unit and encourage them to come find out more about our good God.

**STEP 4: READ THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION ARTICLES.**

You can find additional help from articles taken from *Biblical Illustrator*. The article for this lesson, "Our Forgiving God," compares how the one true God compares to false gods. To find these articles, visit [www.lifeway.com/journal](http://www.lifeway.com/journal) and click the "Downloadables" link under "Leaders Resources."

**LOOK BACK**

As you begin this new unit on God's goodness, take a few minutes to reflect on the previous lesson and unit. Identify any connections between lessons and the information you have studied about the God's goodness. Be sure to take notes of those insights and share them with your learners as you lead into this week's studies.

**YOU OBJECT LESSON**

**COMPASS**

To help learners understand the idea of a standard, direct them to close their eyes. **Say:** With your eyes closed, if you could go anywhere in the world, where would you like to go? Have everyone raise their hands to open their eyes but to keep pointing toward their chosen "truth." Note that everyone pointed in the same direction. Show learners the compass and use it to identify "true north." **Say:** You can have your own compass, but the compass defines what's really north. **Say:** You govern the compass, you'll never find your true north. Explain that spiritually, God is our standard—our truth north—for the definition of goodness. **Say:** That's what to experience His goodness in our lives, and we need to imitate His goodness in our relationships with others. *Anything else falls short.*

**GOOD GOD (TEACHING PLAN)**

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11-15)

**INTRODUCTION**

To introduce the lesson, place learners into teams of two or three and direct them to discuss the following question: **What are some kinds we use to get from one place to another? After a few minutes, allow each of the groups to report in their work. Record their responses on the board or a large sheet of paper. Talk about how each item listed can help someone reach a destination.**

Enlist a volunteer to read the information about Harriet Tubman in the lesson introduction on page 12. Talk about how the provided direction for the individuals who wanted to escape slavery. **Say:** And she could honestly say that she never read a paragraph on the Underground Railroad. Point out that today's lesson focuses on the perfect direction God provides in our lives. **Say:** He loves us, and He is a good God. Because of that, He wants to us to experience a good life. And He has never left anyone who has put their trust in Him.

**DIG INTO THE TEXT**

**GOD'S GOODNESS IS THE STANDARD**

**PSALM 25:4-5, 7**

**Read** the first question under "God's Goodness is the Standard" (p. 12). Allow learners to share their responses. Write these pairs of words on the board: *delectable, liver, Galilee, Green Pasture, Ask* (or each pairing which one is larger than the other?) Discuss responses. Explain that a meter is longer than a yard, a gallon is larger than a liter, and a pound is approximately 453 grams. Point out that before we can understand whether a measurement is accurate or not, we have to establish that the standard is trustworthy. **Say:** And the same thing is true when we think about goodness.

**Read** Psalm 25:4-5, 7. Provide background about David as the writer. **Ask:** What did David ask God to do in these verses? What do his words mean, track, guide, help? Use information from Key Words, "Hope," and the Leader Commentary on page 105 to discuss we could not know goodness without God.

**Point** out the information about "tremy" and "hathil love" on page 13. Remind learners that whenever they are tempted to question God's goodness, they can always reflect on His mercy and His faithful love.

**GOD'S GOODNESS IS BASED ON TRUTH**

**PSALM 25:8-10**

**Ask:** If you could spend a day with any historical person, who would it be? How each learner to share his or her selection. **Say:** From these people, we could learn what things were really like in their time. How could they know the truth about their stories? Read the paragraph about The Blind Painter under "God's Goodness is Based on Truth" (p. 13). Point out that truth is always important and its absence creates big problems.

**Read** Psalm 25:8-10 about twice and encourage learners to listen for words that associate with truth. When you see dots, let them share the words that resonated with them. Use information from Key Words "Good" and the Leader Commentary (p. 105) to explain the power of David's confidence about God's goodness.

**Step 2: Prepare to teach an exciting lesson using the Before You Teach page for each lesson.**

**Step 3: Use the Teaching Plan for each lesson to prepare and facilitate an in-depth discussion of the lesson passage. Don't forget that you can cut out the Teaching Plan if you want to be on the same page as members of your group.**

**Leader Commentary**

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11-15)

**Good God**

Lesson Passages: Psalm 25:4-5, 7-10, 12-13

**The Question: Are you living the "good life?"**  
**The Point: To understand God is to understand good.**

**Good God**

This commentary helps you think about the question: **"Are you living the 'good life'?" and drives home the one truth: To understand God is to understand good.**

**FOCUS ON THESE POINTS**

**God's Goodness Is the Standard (Ps. 25:4-7)**

As a sinner, David asked Him to make His ways known. That request sets a great example and reminds us that knowing God means realizing who we are and who He is. We're sinful and can't find Him on our own. But if we ask, but He will reveal Himself.

We need God to be our guide. David used the language of "paths" as a metaphor for life. To walk a straight path is to obey God's will. So, seeking God's path simply means seeking His wisdom. We need that as a father race. That's why even Solomon challenged us to follow God and not our own understanding (Prov. 3:5-6).

We also need God as our guide in David's mind. God's teaching and His goodness were two sides of the same coin. Each emphasized the Lord's efforts to move His people in the right direction. God created us, He knows what's best. David had learned this lesson well over the years, so he was able to walk on God. He knew walking is always better than going it alone.

In verse 7, David confessed his own rebellion. He begged God to forget (or forgive) his sin and to remember His own goodness. Our sin is a constant reminder, which is a byproduct of His goodness.

We all want a healthy, successful life, and God wants that for us as well. But we can't get to create our own good God. God's character—not our weakness—is the only meaningful stick to the "good life."

**God's Goodness Is Based on Truth (Ps. 25:8-10)**

David moved from begging God to demonstrate His character to praising God for His character. He confessed that God's integrity is beyond dispute because He consistently does what's right, He tells the truth.

His decisions, but He always does what is best—even when we don't understand.

God requires humility. The Hebrew word for humble (*anani*) is common in the Psalms and is sometimes translated "weak" or "afflicted." The idea is a weaker person relying on the strength of another. When we see God for who He is, we recognize His goodness and trust His guidance. But that's impossible unless we are humble (Is. 66).

In addition, those who surrender to God experience His blessings. God isn't a grasping deity. He is a Redeemer motivated by love and faith. His faithfulness would illustrate God's character better. His goodness is defined by His love for us, and it's rooted in His commitment to truth. And those who obey Him receive the benefits of that goodness.

**"Good Life" Must Align with God's Goodness (Ps. 12:1-2)**

David focused on hearing God. This is not a frightened plea, but an awe-inspiring prayer. He didn't need to be saved of God, but he would honor Him if we approach Him with properly, we'll know the "good life."

This abundance is not necessarily material, but more about peace and security. David's prayer readers would have understood "hearing" the Lord in terms of God's promises to the wilderness and the land flow. His words with milk and honey. Spiritually, it continues to bring people through dry lands into a life of goodness.

"Descendants" indicates a legacy passed from one branch of a family tree to another. (See Deut. 1:31-34). Our commitment to the good life can have an impact on our children and grandchildren because they will follow in our spiritual footsteps.

To them, we make the provision instead of the Provider. Truly, God doesn't mind us coming still as long as our staff doesn't lean on us. We just need to trust Him forever and praise His glory.

Read more commentary/articles to improve your understanding? Visit [www.lifeway.com/OL](http://www.lifeway.com/OL).

## Step 4: Visit [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com) for more leader commentary, articles to enhance your understanding of the lesson passage, and a midweek plan that can be adapted for midweek or worship services.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

## STEP 1 PREPARE YOUR TEACHING ENVIRONMENT.

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## BACK

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# YOU OBJECT LESSON



## COMPASS

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## DIG INTO THE TEXT

### GOD'S GOODNESS IS THE STANDARD PSALM 25:4-5,7

- Read the first question under “God’s Goodness Is the Standard” (p. 12). Allow learners to share their responses. Write these pairs of words on the board: *Meter/Yard, Liter/Gallon, Gram/Pound*. **Ask:** *For each pairing, which one is larger than the other?* Discuss responses. Explain that a meter is longer than a yard, a gallon is larger than a liter, and a pound is approximately 453 grams. **Point out that before we can understand whether a measurement is accurate or not, we have to establish that its standard is trustworthy.** **Say:** *And the same thing is true when we think about goodness.*
- **Read Psalm 25:4-5,7.** Provide background about David as the writer. **Ask:** *What did David ask God to do in these verses?* (Make His ways known, teach, guide, forgive) Use information from Key Word **ways** (p. 11) and the Leader Commentary (p. 105) to discuss how we could not know goodness without God.
- Point out the information about “mercy” and “faithful love” on page 13. **Remind learners that whenever they are tempted to question God’s goodness, they can always reflect on His mercy and His faithful love.**

### GOD'S GOODNESS IS BASED ON TRUTH PSALM 25:8-10

- **Ask:** *If you could spend a day with any historical person, who would it be?* Allow each learner to share his or her selection. **Say:** *From these people, we could learn what things were really like in their time. We could learn the truth about their stories.* Read the paragraph about *The Black Panther* under “God’s Goodness Is Based on Truth” (p. 13). **Point out that truth is always important and its absence creates big problems.**
- **Read Psalm 25:8-10 aloud twice and encourage learners to listen for words they associate with truth.** When you are done, let them share the words that resonated with them. Use information from Key Word **good** (p. 11) and the Leader Commentary (p. 105) to explain the power of David’s confession about God’s goodness.



# GOOD GOD (TEACHING PLAN)

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

- Briefly summarize the definition of **covenant** (p.11). **Ask:** *Why is it important to know that God always keeps His promises? What impact should that have on the way we live each day?* Discuss responses. Draw a connection between God's faithfulness and His goodness. Point out that David challenged his readers to be humble before God. **Say:** *That's how we plug into God's promises, and it's also how we remember that He is faithful to keep His promises.*

## THE “GOOD LIFE” ALIGNS WITH GOD’S GOODNESS PSALM 25:12-13

- **Encourage learners to think of people living “the good life.”** **Ask:** *What makes life so “good” for them?* Encourage learners to talk about what they hope their “good life” will look like someday. **Say:** *David had a lot of material possessions as king, but he never defined the “good life” by that stuff.*
- **Select a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 25:12-13.** Use information for the Leader Commentary (p. 105) and the “Did you know?” feature (p. 14) to explain what it means to fear the Lord. Emphasize the difference between terror and reverence. **Say:** *Because God is good, we don't have to be afraid of Him. But we do need to respect Him for who He is.* Use Key Word **choose** (p. 160) to highlight our role in experiencing the “good life.” **Say:** *God wants to give us His rich blessings. But He lets us decide what we will do.* Challenge learners to examine their lives and to evaluate their choices regarding the good life.

## SO WHAT? HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

One of the worst parts of mopping a floor is wringing out the mop. You have to exert so much effort and pressure to get as much dirty water as you can out of the mop. Sometimes we feel more like the mop than the one wringing it out. We feel pressed, squeezed, and twisted. We are hurt, confused, and frustrated. That's when we wonder if God really is as good as He claims. God understands those questions. He's not scared of them. And He's not mad at you for asking them. He just wants you to come to Him when they arise. He wants a chance to remind you just how good He is.

- *How is God the standard for all goodness? What are some other things people use to define goodness? Why are they inadequate?*

- *Who has served as a guide for your life? Whom have you guided in one area or another? How can you use God's guidance and direction as a model for the future?*
- *Why does God let us choose how we respond to Him? What does that mean for our walk with Him? What does it mean for our ministry toward others?*
- *If a friend asked why you believed God is good, how would you respond? How could you use what you learned in this lesson to share the truth of God's love?*

## CLOSE THE SESSION

*Prior to the lesson, enlist a church leader from outside your Bible study to share a testimony about God's goodness in his or her life. Encourage the guest to talk about how God has been a guide and a teacher during difficult times. When the speaker is done, allow the learners to ask questions. Then, remind learners that God does not play favorites and that He offers help and support to everyone who is humble enough to ask. Encourage learners to complete the Live It! activity on page 15 this week. In addition, challenge them to spend time this week recalling God's goodness in their lives—and asking Him to guide them through a storm they may be facing right now.*

## Good God

**Lesson Passages:** Psalm 25:4-5,7-10,12-13

**The Question:** Are you living the “good life”?

**The Point:** To understand God is to understand good.

*This commentary helps you think about the question, “Are you living the ‘good life?’” and drives home this one truth: To understand God is to understand good.*

### FOCUS ON THESE POINTS

#### ***God’s Goodness Is the Standard (Ps. 25:4-5,7)***

As a seeker, David asked God to make His ways known. That request sets a great example and reminds us that knowing God means recalling who we are and who He is. We’re sinful and can’t find Him on our own. But if we ask, He will reveal Himself.

We need God to teach us. David used the language of “paths” as a metaphor for life. To walk a straight path is to obey God’s will. So, seeking God’s path simply means seeking His wisdom. We need that as a fallen race. That’s why even Solomon challenged us to follow God and not our own understanding (Prov. 3:5-6).

We also need God as our guide. In David’s mind, God’s teaching and His guidance were two sides of the same coin. Each emphasized the Lord’s efforts to move His people in the right direction. God created us, so He knows what’s best. David had learned this lesson well over the years, so he was able to wait on God. He knew waiting on Him is always better than going it alone.

In verse 7, David confessed his own rebellion. He begged God to forget (or forgive) his sin and to remember His own goodness. David asked God to demonstrate mercy, which is a by-product of His goodness.

We all want a healthy, successful life, and God wants that for us as well. But we don’t get to create our own scorecard. God’s character—not our preference—is the only measuring stick for the “good life.”

#### ***God’s Goodness Is Based on Truth (Ps. 25:8-10)***

David moved from begging God to demonstrate His character to praising God *for* His character. He confessed that God’s integrity is beyond dispute because He consistently does what’s right. We might question

His decisions, but He always does what is best—even when we don’t understand.

Of course, submitting to God requires humility. The Hebrew word for humble (*anawim*) is common in the Psalms and is sometimes translated “meek” or “afflicted.” The idea is a weaker person relying on the strength of another. When we see God for who He is, we recognize His goodness and trust His guidance. But that’s impossible unless we are humble (v. 8).

In addition, those who surrender to God experience His blessings. God isn’t a grouchy killjoy. He is a Redeemer motivated by love and truth. In fact, no two words illustrate God’s character better. His goodness is defined by His love for us, and it’s rooted in His commitment to truth. And those who obey Him receive the benefits of that goodness.

#### ***The “Good Life” Aligns with God’s Goodness (Ps. 25:12-13)***

David focused on fearing God. This is not a frightened terror, but an awesome reverence. We don’t need to be scared of God, but we should honor Him. And if we approach Him properly, we’ll know the “good life.”

This abundance is not necessarily material, but more about peace and security. David’s Jewish readers would have understood inheriting “the land” in terms of God’s promises in the wilderness and the land flowing with milk and honey. Spiritually, God continues to bring people through dry lands into a life of goodness.

“Descendants” indicates a legacy passed from one branch of a family tree to another. (See Deut. 4:1-14.) Our commitment to the good life can have an impact on our children and grandchildren because they will follow in our spiritual footsteps.

Too often, we chase the provision instead of the Provider. Truly, God doesn’t mind us owning stuff as long as our stuff doesn’t own us. We just need to trust Him foremost and pursue His glory.



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