



Links Players

EIGHT GREAT TRAITS 2: GOODNESS

Make every effort to add to your faith goodness... (2 Peter 1:5, NIV)

MAYBE THE NICEST THING YOU CAN DO FOR ME on the golf course is rake the bunker well. No deep furrows, no willy-nilly tracking, and please remember that your splash divot needs to be raked, too.

What's interesting is that we golfers do good things like this though we almost never know whom we are doing them for. The golfers who benefit from our careful rake jobs, or our repairing ball marks and replacing divots, are those who come behind us. We may be off the golf course before they even start later in the day. So if you need credit for your kindness, you're not going to get it here. And if you ignore the job completely, you'll never hear the blame. The motivation must come from a purer sense of what's right.

Golfers whose goodness looks like this are said to have good etiquette. They know how to respect the course, the game, and the other players, whether or not those players are in their group. And when we see players like this, it's easy to enjoy their company—as long as they're not, you know, snobby about it.

And now we have set up our lessons from 2 Peter 1, where we are continuing our study in eight traits that show up in our lives when we “participate in the divine nature” that comes to us by way of the Holy Spirit. The first of these traits is faith. The second is goodness.

When we dive into the Greek root of the word translated as *goodness*, we find the ideas of virtue and moral excellence. It is an excellence on display via practices like modesty, purity, and charity. No surprises, really. To demonstrate goodness is to do things that most anyone would call good.

Then behind such goodness must lie a humble and pure motivation. We do not do what is good in order to win the acclaim of men. Rather, we hope that when our good deeds are noticed, they cause others to give glory to God (Matthew 5:16).

Finally, we must recognize that goodness done with excellence is accompanied by grace. We do not raise a stink when others can't seem to get it right, nor do we harbor a quiet pride that says more loudly than we know, “I'm better than you.” Rather, we pray that our actions will inspire another to do the same, in the Lord's timing and by his lead—just as he has patiently led us.

Opening questions Whom do you play golf with that would receive high marks from you in regards to etiquette? Do you sense a broader goodness in this person, or is their good character limited to this context?

READING Colossians 3:12-14; Matthew 25:34-40; Galatians 6:9-10

Virtuous traits (Colossians 3)

What demonstrations of virtue are listed here? How does the opening line inspire you to pursue these traits? Which do you find to be a challenge?

Christ-serving acts (Matthew 25)

What specific acts of goodness are given here? Whom do these acts serve? What is the reward for doing these things?

Staying motivated (Galatians 6)

How might someone grow tired of doing good? What is our motivation for going forward with good work even when it is difficult? Who should receive the goodness we offer?
