'GOOD': A SCRIPTURAL GUIDE FOR MAKING GOOD CHOICES
Outline-Logic

1. Start Here: God is Good

2. We are not God:
We are not so good

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4. Context:
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Synopsis

'Good' must be one of the most important matters in Scripture: it appears 1,000+ times.

    'Good' in Scripture appears to refer mainly to making good choices.
    'Good' and 'evil' appear together in Scripture 100x

Starting Point: God is good. He <u>alone</u> is good. He is good in all His ways: His almighty power, wisdom, love and truth
- Many scriptural texts reveal He is the universal good in every Bible story
- And He created a good universe (not perfect)

What about Humans? Scripture is adamant that, though humans may do some good or that some good results from our efforts, we are not so good. Why can Scripture say this?
- We are not the same as God
- Scripture defines 'Not Good'
- Disjunct: most people only want to hear what agrees with their assumptions
- Origins of human evil

Test case Matthew 12:33-37: We can be reasonably certain that Jesus is not talking about specific people or saying that there are good and bad people. Rather, He reminds us that because in reality kinds don't mix, <u>good cannot come from bad</u>; this applies to both kinds of categories: people as well as trees.

Context: Traditions of Good and Evil in the Ancient World continue significant today
- Good and Evil in the Hebrew OT
- Good and Evil in Greek Philosophy
- Good and Evil in the Greek NT
- Significance continues today

The Problem of Evil & How to Deal With It
- The number one complaint against God: "Why did this happen to me?"
- Decisively dealt with 3,000 years ago in the story of Job
- Starting point: God is good
- Nature and human moral traditions insufficient
- God always provides a better / 'third' way

Scriptural case approach to make good choices, particularly re: good & evil
- Question: What is Good? (Job 34:4)
- Hymn: God is good and His love endures forever
- *Ki Tov!* How good is God!
- Know, Discern & Choose 'Good' over 'Evil'
- Key criterion for 'Good': "What is good in His eyes"
- Jesus & the New Covenant Supersede all other approaches

Choose Between Two Ways: 2 Approaches, Based on 2 Different Kinds of Assumptions, Lead to 2 Outcomes

Conclusions & Recommendations

Supplementary Information (Appendix): 'Notes':

Backup (Sources)

GOD IS GOOD
God is good and does good. His Word is good. He shows us good / what good is.
He is the universal good in every situation in Scripture.

1. God alone is good. According to Jesus, God is the only One of whom we can make this bold statement (Mark 10:18). God is good in all His ways: in His almighty power, wisdom, love and truth (Heidelberg Catechism Q122). The following are some of the many statements throughout the Bible about God and His goodness:

The Lord is good, His covenant love / loving goodness endures forever
The Lord is good, His covenant loyalty endures forever (1 Chr 16:34); …by faith (2 Chr 5:13); (after God's glory filled the temple) (2 Chr 7:3); Hear me O Lord, for your covenant loyalty is good (Psa 69:16; 109:21); for you, O Lord are good and your covenant loyalty is plenteous to all (Psa 86:5); for the Lord is good and His covenant loyalty is everlasting generation after generation (Psa 100:5); predicted returnees would praise using these words (Jer 33:11).

The **good Lord** pardons them (2 Chr 30:18); O taste and consider / see that the Lord is good; none that fear Him lack (Psa 34:8); the Lord is good (Psa 54:6; 135:3); He is a stronghold in the day of trouble (Nah 1:7).

The Lord's name/reputation is good for your covenant ones (Psa 52:9)**.**

The Lord is good and does good. Teach me your stipulations (Psa 119:68)

The Lord has shown us what is good (who He is and what He speaks/does) (Mic 6:8) [700 BC; actually since 1700 BC]

The Lord's good hand was on him/God's hand was on him for good (Ezr 7:9; 8:18; Neh 2:8; Neh 2:18).

The Lord's Word is good. None of His words failed (Jos 21:45; 23:14; 1 Kg 8:56); **God's good word** will be fulfilled (Jer 29:10; 33:14). The Lord's angel talked to us in good and comforting words (Zec 1:13).

The Lord's Spirit is good (Psa 143:10); God gave the children of Israel in the wilderness **His good Spirit** to instruct them (Neh 9:20).

God gives good gifts (Psa 68:18; Jas 1:17-18; 2 Pet 1:3-9; Eph 4:7-9)

Jesus is the good shepherd (Jn 10:7-18; see also Psa 95:7; 100; Eze 34:14-16, etc)

2. God created a good universe (not perfect).* God created the universe to exist distinctly alongside Him (Gen 1 & 2). Two realities exist in tandem, one self-sufficiently, and the second dependently. 'Distinct' means that these two realities are not one and the same thing. Think of a potter holding a beautiful vase he made. God 'saw' His creation good (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). His final appraisal was "*tov meod*" very good! (Gen 1:31).

God's goodness is more than enough for everything He creates. His goodness is overwhelming and endless. Metaphors include: a river of life flowing from the new temple (Eze 47), overflowing from the Spirit within us (Jn 7:38), and endlessly flowing from God's throne in the

New heavens and earth (Rev 22:1). God provides over-abundance of everything we need "for life and godliness" (Eze 47:6-12; 2 Cor 9:8; 2 Pet 1:3). Christ "fills everything in every way" (Eph 1:23; 3:19).

God's goodness is so overwhelming that He includes the newcomer / outsider / immigrant / refugee (Eze 47:23) in His creation. He also includes places and memories of sin and rebellion against the Lord: (e.g., Meribah [Eze 48:28]; see Exo 17:1-7). How 'counter-intuitive' is that? God made the universe good, and then He allowed evil to exist within it. That God can include the bad with(in) the good signifies not only the greatness of His goodness, it reflects reality as it actually is, not how we might imagine it.

Does this make sense? How it is possible and why cannot be fully understood by finite human minds. He tells us enough in Scripture for us to believe. Yet it is beyond our full comprehension. This paper helps us to delve a little deeper into what Scripture means by God's goodness and how He intends His goodness for us.

* 'Good' in Scripture (e.g., God called the creation 'very good') is not the same as "The Good" *ta agathon* Plato and possibly Pythagorus onwards. In other words, platonic perfection does not really exist.

Q: *If* God alone is good, can there be a created good? Or merely relatively good 'words', 'things', 'actions' / 'deeds', etc.?

WE ARE NOT SO GOOD

Almost every story in the Bible contains statements of God's goodness and His good works. In contrast, Scripture is just as adamant that, though humans may do some good or that some good results from our efforts, we are not so good.

We are not the same as God. In the movie Rudy, the main character learns: "There is only one God and I'm not him." It stands to reason that since we are not God, we are not good to the extent God is. We are not so good. What are the implications? The original text of Psalm 14:1 / 53:1 goes further: "there is none who does good." The apostle Paul rightly infers, "there is none   righteous." For he that does not do good, is not righteous; and therefore if there is none on earth that does good and does not sin, there is none righteous (good) upon earth, "no, not one" single person (Gill, John. 1759? Exposition of the entire Bible, on Rom 3:12-18).

Scripture defines 'Not Good'. The Bible describes what God saw in humans just before the Flood: "Every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Gen 6:5). Even after the Flood:
• none who understands (Psa 14:2)
• none who seeks God (Psa 14:1; 53:1)
• all go their own way (Psa 14:3; 53:3); gone out of their way to…(Calvin)
• all became corrupt Psa 14:1: 15:1)
• God made humans 'straight' / upright, but all seek 'imaginative' alternatives (Ecc 7:29)
• every throat/mouth = open grave (Psa 5:9); they use tongue to deceive (Psa 140:3; Jas 3:5)
• every mouth full of cursing and bitterness (Psa 10:7; Jer 2:19)
• feet swift to shed blood (Isa 59:7); destruction and misery are their ways
• no one knows the way of peace (Isa 59:8)
• no fear of God before their eyes (Psa 36:1)
• therefore, none righteous (good) in God's eyes (Rom 3:10-18)

Disjunct. Despite the evidence all around us, most people do not want to hear this indictment from Scripture because it does not agree with their assumptions. Evidence:
• child raising: parents learn that even toddlers lie, disobey, hurt without being taught
• increasing criminal behavior in society despite social justice and remediation programs
• increasing dishonesty in society (for example two of society's most trusted institutions: academia and the press are reeling from widespread plagiarism and bias)
• an unintended consequence of social media and the current political polarization is exposing the reality of human nature: people want anonymity. but, many if not most, use it to do mischief, attack others' reputations and foment actual harm.

These situations reinforce the false notion that humans cannot unequivocally claim that we are good. Still, people want to believe that we humans are basically good. How often we hear, "she didn't deserve this," "I deserve it," a vicious criminal "is a good person inside," and so on. People naturally link "people are not good" to 'hell and damnation' preachers.

Origins of human evil. The story of the Garden is that our first parents, given everything, chose to try on their own to be like God. They sinned, causing a breach with God, and gained as a result suffering and strife. Like that first choice in the Garden, our human tendency is to replace God, who is the *real* Starting Point for everything, with something we invent. We substitute our *human* assumptions about the Natural universe: "created birds, animals and reptiles" (we may refer to these as Type 1 assumptions). Or we make assumptions based on our human imagining: "images made to look like mortal man" (Romans 1:18-23) (we may call this Type 2 assumptions). We can call what we learn from Scripture 'Type 3' assumptions.

See "Test Case." Also see Appendix for more on social media and good

TEST Case: Matthew 12:33-37

> Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of snakes! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Jesus).

Does Matthew 12:33-37 teach that some humans are bad? Or, that some, or all, are good?

When reading the Bible, it is always important to remember to look first at the context. In this story, Jesus was engaged in an increasingly heated series of exchanges with religious influencers known as the Pharisees. They were the self-appointed grassroots authorities on truth and the self-appointed morality police of that day. They viewed Jesus as a rival. His intent was to unmask their self appointed claims to be Israel's moral authorities (Calvin Commentary on Matthew, Mark & Luke 1563, Pringle trans. 1853; The NT and Wycliffe Bible Commentary 1973, 42). All the while Jesus was engaging with them, He was doing so in full view of the crowd of onlookers who were placed in the position of choosing between Him and the 'gospel', and the Pharisees and their moralism.

Exasperated, the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a Law breaker and of doing the Devil's work. They were so incensed they were plotting to kill Him. In this passage Jesus's point in this passage is that good (words and deeds) can only come from good. Good cannot come from bad.

Why does Jesus talk about good and bad trees and good and bad people? What is His intention? The only truths Jesus declares are: "a tree is known by its fruit," and "the mouth speaks out of the overflow of the heart." Otherwise His case is about comparisons.

In this story, there is little reason to think that He is referring to actual people (Jamieson, Faussett & Brown Commentary). Rather, Jesus is speaking of different *kinds* of created beings and things: good and evil acts, trees and people.

1. We know this because Matthew, careful by trade, uses precise grammar to communicate (what some modern linguists call a Class / Category Article before each noun): "the good tree" and "the bad tree," "the good person" and "the evil person." The Class article distinguishes one kind / group from another kind / group. In contrast, the Individualizing article distinguishes one particular / individual from another particular / individual: "don't put your light under the bowl, but on the lampstand" (Wallace, Greek grammar beyond the basics 1996, 230).

2. Because Jesus frames His comments by the word 'make' we further know Jesus is speaking categorically. People cannot 'make' trees any other way than in their thoughts, by their logic. Jesus is making logical comparisons, so He speaks using what today are known as Correlative Conjunctions: something is "either this or that":
-Either good or bad
-Either the tree is 'good' and so bears good fruit or the tree is 'bad' and so bears bad fruit

-In the same way good things are done by the 'good' person and bad things by the 'bad' person (Dana & Mantey, A manual grammar of the Greek NT 1966, 248).

3. Comparing two things or persons while keeping the categories straight means 'bad' trees cannot bear good fruit; good things do not come from bad and vice versa.

Finally, this text is one of only a very few possible recorded instances in the Bible using a personal noun or pronoun with the word "good" or "evil." Another key rule of biblical interpretation good to remember: the preponderance of teaching outweighs a few instances of a possible different teaching. The Bible invariably (more than 300 times) cites instances of people *doing* good and bad things, and only cites a very few somewhat obscure instances, such as this one, in which people seemingly *are* 'good' and 'bad'.

In summary, we can be reasonably certain that Jesus is not talking about specific people or saying that there *are* good and bad people. Rather, He reminds us that in reality kinds don't mix: good cannot come from bad, and that applies to both kinds of categories: people as well as trees. Those who had "ears to hear" would make the connection to the 'moral-police' in comparison with Jesus. See more in Appendix.

TRADITIONS OF GOOD AND EVIL IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

A. GOOD AND EVIL IN HEBREW OT
  1. Good: *tov*
    a. *tov* = qualitatively good 600x+
    b. Presupposed throughout: only God is good
    c. Good is inextricably linked to personal faith in God (Psa 34:10; 84:11; 23:6).
    d. Good always a gift from God
    e. Humans unable to be good unassisted (Gen 3:5)

  2*.* Evil: *ra*
    a. "The OT has no comprehensive theory of evil."
    b. The OT speaks concretely of specific acts, very seldom theoretically
    c. Does it derive from the fact of being a creature?
    d. Is evil sent by God himself (1 Sam 16:14)?

B. GOOD AND EVIL IN GREEK THOUGHT
  1. 'Classical' Greek & Philosophy:
    a. **Good *kalos*** useful, sound, genuine, beautiful, moral goodness in Sophocles, Pinar.:
      total state of soundness and order
    b. **Dualism** developed in Greek thought:
      ta agathon The Good = metaphysical principle: Pythagoreans & later Plato
                   OR
      Evil *kakos* Human ignorance = source of involuntary evil Democritus, Socrates, Plato;
      solution = 'enlightenment'; from *kakos* inadequate, lacking good, Homer onwards
    c. Plato synthesized these two: higher: metaphysical principle
                                     lower / material: lack / ignorance
    d. Plato in old age came to believe: evil World Soul (see -> Hegel)
    e. Aristotle: *kalos* = goal of all action (Eth. Nic. 1, 1), not religious

  2. Hellenism & Intertestamental Greek:
    a. Hellenism: refuted humanism for religious
    b. ***kalos*** good => 'Ideal' *Enneads* 1, 6
    c. ***kakos*** evil = inadequacy, imperfection, no personification; solution: perfection; see *Eros*
    d. Philo: origin of good to God and evil to humans; humans have possibility of choice
    e. *LXX* "***agathos*** good understanding and ***kalos*** beautiful"
      (1) Everything coming from God is good: creation Gen 1:18, Law Deu 30:15
      (2) God promised to fulfill promises in the end, even with incomplete fulfillment by Israel
      (3) Represented hope for remnant in hard times
    f. *LXX* ***kalos*** usually translates ***yareh*** = beautiful external appearance (Gen 12:14; 29:17)
      (1) When it translates ***tov*** = pleasant, enjoyable, beneficial, as in "pleasing to God."
      (2) Probably mistranslated Gen 2 & 3 "the tree of knowledge of good and evil"
    g. **Note:** *"The meaning which the Greeks gave to kalos,* which became decisive for
      Christian antiquity and via Christendom for the development of thought throughout the
      western world, <u>scarcely penetrated the world of the OT or the NT</u> [emphasis mine]*. . . .*
      It is striking that there is no room in the OT for the Greek ideal of beauty as a motive for
      living and for education. Everything is directed towards the will of God expressed in the
      law. Any ideal of self-perfection is thus excluded." (103)
    h. *LXX* uses ***kakos*** for *ra* 227x and ***poneros*** 226x; // corresponding sin & punishment

  3. Influence in later European thought: Augustine *de Civ* 19, 3; 22, 19; *De pulchro*; **Aquinas**
    Sum. Theol. 1 Q 5, 4; 1a 2ae Q 27, 1

C. GOOD AND EVIL IN GREEK NT

  1. Good *kalos* used equally with *agathos*, almost synonomously 101x
  2. Good *agathos* 130+x in various forms: good, excellence (qualitative), serviceable;
   a. Jesus: only God is good and He is the only one good Mk 10:18; Luk 18:18; Mat 19:17
   b. Only in Christ are humans given opportunity to actually share in God's goodness and do good to others.
   c. Particularly in Paul's writings, do we come to grips with natural man irretrievably in bondage to power of sin and death, no good in him.
   d. Through redemption in Christ, God's goodness overflows to believers Rom 8:28; Eph 2:10; Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 1:5, 19; Col 1:10, Gal 6:6, etc.
   e. Eschatalogical good Phil 1:6

  3. Good *chrestos* good, kind 17x, 13 in Paul (e.g., "Kindness of God our Savior" Tit 3:4)

  4. Evil *kakos* 50x, 26x in Paul; evil, bad, unjust; used attributively; *phaulos* = synonym
   a. Less important than *poneros* evil and personal guilt
   b. No dualism in NT
   c. God cannot be source Jas 1:13
   d. Comes from human heart in the form of evil thoughts that act out Mark 7:21f
   e. Paul: humans do evil against their will (Rom 7:15, 17ff, rules as a 'strange' law 7:21, 23)
   f. Christ conquered evil, hence the many exhortations to flee, lay aside, etc.

  5. Evil *poneros* 78x mostly in Synoptics, 26x in Matthew

  Note: Von Rad argues that "good and evil" in Scripture constitutes a merism (= 'everything'). He argues that human sin since the Garden is that we don't need God now that we *know* everything (*Genesis* 1961, 87). Instead, Scripture indicates that 'good' and 'evil' are much more than a euphemism for 'everything'. Based on the verbs ('listen', 'discern', 'learn', 'choose', 'switch', and so on), used with 'good and evil', we may know and yet may not realize the implications:

<div align="right">Beyreuther 1975. NIDNTT 1, 98-107</div>

D. SIGNIFICANCE OF HUMAN TRADITIONS CONTINUES TODAY

  1. We are not God, so we do not naturally start our thought process with God in mind. In particular, we in the United States are a mixture of cultures, predominately Western culture from Europe (see B above), plus some African and Asian cultures and languages.

  2. God is distinct from us (not the same thing). We do not naturally think like Him or know the things He knows. The Bible developed over 2,000 years in the Ancient Middle East. It was written by godly men trying to listen to God. It is called the 'Mystery' (information from and about God that we otherwise would not know Dan 2:19; Eph 1:9). It models a different way of life that will one day include everyone under God's Fatherhood. "As the heavens are higher than the earth . . . . My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways my way." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

  3. Some things do not mix, for good reason. A main characteristic of each of the cultures mentioned in D.1 is that they tend to combine and merge everything. They want everything subsumed under one theme, god, etc., and to not allow real differences.

A wise man, Daniel, 2,500 years ago imagined a great statue of strong metals representing future empires. But the feet were a mixture of steel on brick. A boulder dislodged "not by human hands" easily smashed the weak feet, bringing down the whole statue. The rock then grew into a mountain that filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:31-45). Great theories, technology, and cultures based on false assumptions are only as strong as their starting points.

One thing that does not mix is truth and error or misinformation. Think of the changing 'science' on Covid. And think of the many people who have been led to their death by false information on their GPS (see Backup). Because of its uniqueness, Scripture demands 'either / or' , NOT 'and…and' combining with other starting points. Truth matters! (see What is Good)

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The number one complaint against God, or at least against the idea of the divine, and by extension, against Christians, is that He allows pain and suffering, or worse, cannot prevent it. Popularized by Rabbi Kushner, people ask, as did Job: "Why did this happen to me, if God is good and all powerful?"

In order to continue, let's address what is meant by **evil:** There are at least two kinds of evil: evil caused by humans, deliberately, accidentally, or by unintended consequence, and natural evil (natural disasters and diseases). An attempt to explain how God can permit evil to exist, or even to cause it, is called a 'theodicy'. The Bible is the first to provide answers thousands of years ago.

"Among the most significant works of world literature," the Book of Job is one of the most influential stories ever written.* Dated at least 3-4000 years ago, Job is a beautifully written story of a wealthy, wise, and generous Middle Easterner. He suddenly undergoes a series of tragedies through which he loses everything, including his health. All that remains are his wife, four friends, and his trust in God.

Developed in three sets of interrelated dialogues between Job and his four friends, the Book of Job definitively answers God's role in evil and provides the comfort and guidance we need. Although one cannot find all the answers to seemingly ever-present evil, following these five guidelines eliminates most bad logic, and all blameworthiness of God:

1. Best place to start: God is good. It is unthinkable that God causes evil. The evil-doers in this story are clearly indicated: (a) the 'adversary' is the one who accused God of wrongdoing, (b) 'gangs' and 'marauders' destroyed Job's family and wealth, and (c) three of the four friends, by their false notions, slandered God's reputation and caused more pain for Job than they helped.

2. Neither 'Nature' (Natural Theology) nor human lore ('wisdom' traditions in most human cultures) are sufficient. They may be relevant, but not determinative; neither are a sound basis for answers, so do not look to either for authority.

3. We can rule out punishment as a 'reason'. Likewise we can rule out its counterpart: there is no 'reward' for doing good, particularly the reward of eternal life, or of a pain-free life.

4. God actually limits the evil others can do to Job, and God's creation of and rule over nature is for our benefit; as He made nature good, so He can be trusted to be and do good to humans. Furthermore, manipulating and abusing nature can cause harm and suffering.

5. Several suggested 'third ways', or alternatives, are surprise offerings. This includes the possibility that God Himself provides mediators to help us connect with Him, these show the lengths to which God is willing to know us and to help us in trouble.

For more on the problem of evil, see Appendix.

* "If I had to choose, [Job is the] only work worth saving" (Victor Hugo). "The greatest poem, whether of ancient or modern literature" (Tennyson). "A work of literary genius" (Daniel Webster).

CASE APPROACH: 140 KEY USES OF 'GOOD' IN SCRIPTURE

Question: What is good?
"*Let us discern for ourselves what is right and know among ourselves what is good*" (Elihu to Job and his three friends (Job 34:4) [2000 yrs BC]. The OT way of instruction was to provide a few basic and 'universal' stipulations of what God is like and what being in covenant relationship with Him entails. Additionally, 'leader notes' consisting of 600+ case rulings, or *Torah* (Exodus - Deuteronomy) are provided to give more thorough guidelines for future decision-making.

In the same way, the following scriptural uses are provided as models for making good choices. The responsibility of choosing good is up to us.

1. 'HYMN' "The Lord is good; His love / loving goodness endures forever" - 15x
During the historic and difficult process of freeing the 'children of Israel' from bondage in Egypt and renewing His Covenant with them, God assured Moses of His goodness and love, the essence of His Covenant. God made two key self-declarations to Moses:

> I will cause all my **good** 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 (Exo 33:19).

> The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in **love** and faithfulness / loving goodness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished (Exo 34:6-7).

These two sayings were coupled and simplified probably during the reign of David:

> "Give thanks. For the Lord is good. His love endures forever" (Psa 100:5)

Most likely this hymn was used as a song of praise for celebrations of return and expressions of hope for God's future deliverance. For example it was sung when the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem, after capture by Philistines (1 Chr 16:34); when the Ark was installed in Solomon's new temple (2 Chr 5:13); at the dedication of the temple (2 Chr 7:3); Jehoshaphat defeated combined enemies by singing this song (2 Chr 20:21); at (annual?) celebrations (Psa 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1; Jer 33:11; Nah 1:7); and to celebrate laying the foundation for the new temple after return from the Babylonian captivity (Ezr 3:11).

This refrain is the most used descriptor of God throughout the Bible. The song is not repeated in the NT, as no Temple ceremony is recorded. Nor is the refrain found *per se* in any of Jesus's times with disciples. Nevertheless, this oft-mentioned hymn of God's good and never ending love is reflected in Jesus's reason for His incarnation (John 3:16) and in His insistence on love (Jn 13:1 *eis telois* until the end / completion; Jn 15). Thus it often appears in the writings of His followers (1 Jn 3:16; 4:9, 10, 12; Rom 5:8; 28-39, esp. "nothing shall separate us from God's love" 8:38-39; Eph 3:17-19; 1 Cor 13:8-13, and many other texts). Good to remember!

2. PRAISE   "*Ki Tov*! How good (is the Lord / our God)" - 15x
Used many times in the OT, "*ki tov*" meant that "someone / something is good" or "beautiful." 15x it was used in praise to God, most often in the Psalms: 1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3; Psa 34:8; 52:9; 54:6; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 109:21; 118:1, 29; 135:3; 136:1; also in Jer 33:11; Ezr 3:11.

3. KNOW & DISCERN GOOD & EVIL - 66x
   In the **OT** the words used are ***yada*** to know & experience, ***shama*** to listen carefully, ***biyn*** to discern (Gen 2:17; 3:5, 7, 22; Lev 27:14; 2 Sam 14:17; Psa 109:5, etc.). In the **NT** most often used are ***ginowsko*** to know by experience, and ***diakrisis*** to sift, sort, discern (Mat 7:17f; Luk 6:43-45; Rom 7:18; 1 Tim 1:8-10; Heb 5:14, etc.). There are hundreds of examples in Scripture of intending, thinking, speaking and doing good, not evil (2 Sam 3:13; 1 Kin 2:18, 38; Psa 45:1; Jer 18:20; Isa 39:8; Jos 21:45; 2 Chr 10:7, etc.)

4. KEY CRITERION for what is GOOD: "WHAT IS **GOOD IN <u>HIS</u> / <u>YOUR</u> EYES**" **- 30x:** 10x of God & 20x between humans Job 10:3; Jud 10:15; 1 Sam; 3:18; 2 Sa 10:12; 2 Kin 20:3; 1 Chr 19:13; 2 Chr 14:2; Isa 38:3; Jer 26:14; Mal 2:17.

5. JESUS & NEW COVENANT SUPERSEDE OLD WAY OF LEARNING, CHOOSING, DOING:
   a. Covenant (OT) discernment was good, but did not go far enough (Book of Hebrews). It was unable to change the learner's basic assumption about God and reality. Therefore, even though some may have practiced Covenant-learning, no one had the basic desire or ability to put into practice what they learned in order to fulfill the Covenant with God (Rom 7:14-25).

   b. Jesus fulfilled the intent and all the stipulations of the Covenant. He paid for all past and future failings to keep the Covenant. And to those who believe and repent, He transforms them and gives them the Holy Spirit to guide them and enable them to bear good fruit (fulfill the Covenant).

   > I will ask the Father and He will give you another Consultant to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. . . . will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. . . . Remain in me, and I in you. . . . Whoever remains in me bears much (good) fruit. . . . This is my command that you love one another as I loved you (Jn 14:16-17, 26; 15:4-5, 12).

   > But I (Paul) say: 'Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (choose to do evil) . . . . But the (good) fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, doing good, faith, gentleness, self-control' (Gal 5:16, 22-23).

   c. As we walk in the power, and under the guidance and enablement, of God's Spirit, we can use the above criteria to choose and do good (Col 1:28-29).

CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO WAYS
Two Approaches Based on Two Different Kinds of Assumptions Lead to Two Outcomes

	Type 2	**Type 3**
Assumption	Everything must be equal	There is a God & He is good
Approach	Conform / Accommodate to	God / Jesus our example / model for
	Performance markers / Standards use Rules / Principles / Creed	Quality / Character to Point out / Show / Instruct
Outcome	Goal / Ideal State / Perfection	Pay attention / Follow / Love

Different starting points almost always lead to different ending places / conclusions

Outcomes: Each Type actually asks a different question / has different Outcomes in mind:

Type 1: What is Beneficial? What **result**, what does evolution advance / eliminate?

Type 2: What is the Ideal (Goal)
 -(2A) to become like / assimilated into
                Or
 -(2B) to realize / achieve?

Type 3: What / Who is Good?

Approaches. When asking the question / e.g., "What is good," the Approach used to arrive at the answer may indicate the Starting Point. Consider asking another way: is 'good' a goal to be achieved, or a quality? Practically, there are only two 'ways' today (Type 1 is mostly passé):

Type 2 Approach: develops a systematic grid of do's and don'ts, standards, performance markers, etc. In other words, spelling out in as much detail as possible what is the overall ideal goal / state. One's response is to mirror / conform / comply / accommodate oneself to that ideal.
                OR
Type 3 Approach: Point out / describe / love
Biblical Hebrew uses *yarah* to point out, direct, shoot (an arrow), which yields the better known word *torah* point out, direct, instruct. Instructing children in bow shooting is both a pointing out where to shoot and how to shoot. So it is with the Hebrew way of instructing in the good: it is

both the aim and the target. This is *torah* 'instruction', the word the Bible uses for the Ten Commandments and the five Books of Moses. When it comes to the NT, it is helpful to remember that the instructors were Hebrews writing in Greek for predominantly Greek speakers. The closest Greek word they found was *nomos* (usually translated 'law'), primariy because of its relatively general usage (other than the Stoics and Hellenists prior to NT and neo-platonists after). *Nomos* actually is closer in meaning to 'established usage' than to 'law code' or 'principles'.* See Appendix (Assumptions-based approach taken from Richardson, David. 2016. Transformed. Clovercraft.)

Starting Points / Assumptions: What is a Human? And What is Good?

If God is ruled out / impossible / imagined, then either:

a. Humans are evolving expressions / projections of a perfect ideal. 'Good' is whatever makes a perfect or better world. Perfect = everything is the same / equal / equilibrium

= Type 2 Assumption: what one thinks and imagines exists (most common)

OR

b. Humans are random atoms or evolved animals. Nothing is innately good or bad—I / we decide.

= Type 1 Assumption: things only based on what is *real* and *exists* independent of one's mind

OR

c. On the other hand, humans are created by God in His image to be His children and allies in stewarding the world. God is the source, model and standard of good.

= Type 3 Assumption: God exists distinctly from all His creation and He is good (like a potter lovingly holding the beautiful vase he made)

* A special semantic problem for modern readers is the general tendency to confine the usage of the term *nomos* 'law' to codified statutes. [This] has led to much fruitless debate in the history of NT interpretation" (*BDAG* 3d. 677).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
"The true measure of all our actions is how long the good in them lasts…" Elizabeth II

This paper reviewed scriptural evidence for 'good' and 'evil'

Key Findings:
- 'Good' = one of the most important matters in Scripture and in life
- Scripture: 'good' = quality, based on God Himself. Completely different from Greek philosophy: 'The Good' = goal / Ideal State / perfection
- God alone is good
- God is good in all His ways: in His almighty power, wisdom, love and truth
- God's goodness = starting point for human good choices
- God created a good universe, not perfect
- Despite our assumption of goodness, people are not so good,
- Good only comes from good, it cannot come from bad
- Good choices result in good ends / outcomes
- Starting points determine outcomes
- We are responsible to make good choices; Scripture provides guidelines
- We are unable on our own to do what we know
- God always provides a good alternative / way out

Conclusions

1. Most of what we think of good or evil is not how Scripture defines it; Scripture is our most reliable guide
2. Knowing is not doing
3. In our personal life and with others in our family, business, or career we can test the truthfulness of the <u>scriptural axiom</u>:

   Good yields good, bad yields bad, bad cannot yield good (Mt 12:33-37)

   or   We reap what we sow (Gal 6:7-9)

Recommendations

1. <u>Believe</u> in Christ, <u>trust</u> in God who alone is good, and <u>allow</u> God's Spirit to transform you
2. <u>In</u> the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, <u>follow</u> scriptural guidelines to choose good (Gal 5:16-24)
3. Regularly <u>test</u> the scriptural axiom and <u>refine</u> your choices in order to grow (Rom 12:1, 2); choices become patterns
4. <u>Team up</u>: God's way, the biblical way of choosing good, is easiest and best followed with others: spouse, partner, others (Prov 27:17; Ecc 4:12; Eph 4:9-12)

Next Steps

Daniel V. Porter, 2021

GOOD & EVIL IN SCRIPTURE

'Good' must be one of the most important matters in Scripture for it appears 1,000+ times in various forms. 'Good' and 'evil' appear together in Scripture [200x+].

OT Hebrew words:
RA
raa n m evil / badness
ra a evil / bad
ra n m evil, distress, misery
raa v be evil / bad
Most often seen in contrast / opposition to *tov* or *shalom*, in opposition to God's will, and involving pain or suffering. (*BDB*. 2001. 947-50) (Livingston, G. H. 1980. 2191 RAA. *TWOT* II. 854-857)

TOV
tov v pleasing / good (be / do)
tov a pleasant / agreeable / good
tov n m good (thing) / benefit / welfare / goodness / goods
tov n f welfare / benefit / good (things) / good
Good / goodness in broadest sense. *Vb* usually with "it is." *Nouns* treated as substantival usages of the *adjective*. Economic / quantitative [root?] often present. Often with "in one's eyes." (*BDB.* 2001. 373-76) (Bowling, Andrew. 1980. 796 TOV. *TWOT* I. 347-348)
(c.f., MVP, prbly from *Accordance*: "always adjectives, though may be used substantively")

Uses of 'Good' in Hebrew / OT
'Good' in Hebrew: verb, adjective, noun same word. [MVP: 'good' always = *a*; can be 'substantival']
Uses: in general, *n + tov = adj*, and *v + tov = n*; or sentence part closest to *tov*
-of God
-of people
-of animals / things / objects
-with *me-od*; 6 uses
-good & evil
-parallel terms

Greek NT words: TBD
AGATHOS

KALOS

KAKOS

PONEROS

Uses of 'Good' in Greek / NT

'Good' in Greek:
-classical and contemporary literature
-of God
-of people
-of animals / things / objects
People not good = stated
-fruit
-good and evil together

e.g., "I gave him to Jesus" = I'm trusting Jesus to take care of him. Better: "I acknowledge he (already) belongs to the Lord. I trust Him to take care of him."

TO KNOW IS TO DO
"To know the good is to do the good" (attributed to Socrates' belief *Gorgias* 460b & 509e; *Meno* 87c; *Apology* 37a, ca. 400 B.C.). "To know is to do" (misquoted by Lubbavitch Rabbi Yitschak Meir Kagan).

The Bible, on the other hand, states: "It is sin to know to do good and not do it" (James 4:17 ca. 45 A.D.) See **Appendix** for further on Type 2b Good.

DISCERNING GOOD & EVIL

Is evil the opposite of good?

SPECIAL NOTES

Note: A special semantic problem for modern readers is the general tendency to confine the usage of the term *nomos* 'law' to codified statutes. [This] has led to much fruitless debate in the history of NT interpretation" (*BDAG* 3d. 677). See pg 13 in text.

Note: Limits of English search:
  Doing English word searches yield problematic results. Recommend to use:
- Good English language Bible: *King James Version* or *New King James Version* Bible
- Good Bible dictionary: Wm. D. Mounce gen ed. 2006. *Mounce's complete expository dictionary*. Zondervan
- Good *unabridged* dictionary, includes word etymologies, because meanings change over time:
  - Oxford dictionary,
  - Cambridge unabridged, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/unabridged
  - Webster's 1828 dictionary, webstersdictionary1828.com

Further Notes:
- Nothing special or sacred about most words in the Bible (e.g., holy, sacred, sanctify, righteous, transgression and so on). Most are ordinary words used for particular uses.
- 'Good' used multiple times of God, and very few and qualified uses of people:
  - God is good and does good
  - People are not good; may do good things
  - Number of uses parallels the distinction between God and humans

BACKUP (SOURCES)

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