

*“All that is necessary for evil to prevail is for good people to do nothing-Carlton Smith*

Off the top of your head, list a few good people. What makes them good? I think the internet is good. Sure, there are bad areas that seem rotten or negative. However, the immense information on the current net is so good. There is a lot of false information, but you can see society in the images. There is a lot of truth in how the internet presents itself. I typed in *funny people* and all the pictures are distorted. *Happy people* are laughing. Their mostly in groups too. If I type in *great people* it becomes very interesting. I see Einstein to Mr. Bean. Yet, if I use the words *nice* or *good*, I get quotes and sayings. Almost no pictures of people.

That means something to me. Where are all the good people? A few years ago, I was offered to date a recommended girl at church. She was considered good. She politely brushed me off. I was nowhere close to being a good Christian in those days. I was raw and inexperienced in the Christian life. She could see good a mile away and it was not me.

In another church, I liked this other girl. She was interested but not interested. I think I'm a good man. Yet, she knew I was not Christian good. Christian people hate the thought of someone being single. I was offered many chances to date girls they deemed as good. One ended up being a disaster because she and I were not that good. What is good? That depends on who you ask. God has standards that most people hate. His good is not good enough for them. I think good is subjective.

I have become a connoisseur of goodness. What I mean is that I am fascinated by what is considered good. My wife and I chose to try and not sleep together before marriage. It's what good Christians do. That was really hard. So hard, that we moved the marriage date up just to pull it off. In the meantime, we asked five good prominent Christian couples to help us stay

good. In conversations with all of them we found out all five had sex before marriage. That still stuns me.

So, we ran back to our bedroom and did it. No, but we did begin to wonder what is considered good. In the end, I am not so sure I recommend being celibate before marriage. It might have easier to bash my head against the wall for fun. I am twisted over that issue. Clearly, I am still twisted over what is good too. God has taken me on a ride of goodness. I have been introduced to various seemingly good people. Behind the scenes I realized they all have a mask. These people were not as good as they appeared.

I had a friend who spent thousands of dollars on becoming a Pastor. About five years later he graduated with about 40,000 in debt. He was a bank teller. Yet, he desired to be better than that. He wanted to be a good minister of the Lord. A church in another city recruited him. This is the good stuff. He sold everything like a good little Christian. The senior staff asked him to monitor what is wrong with the board and staff. He did it because it was the right thing to do.

A month later they acted on his findings and let several members go. Then they thanked him very much and fired him. That incident taught me something about people. My Ex had at least three divorced and bitter ladies convince her to divorce me. Was I that bad? That's up for debate. What all this has taught me that bad people will come in spinning good intentions. Once the bad deed is done, the good loose and the bad win. Further to that, the instigators leave and never return. There are bad wolves in good sheep clothing. By the way, my friend is a good bank teller again.

I have many other stories, but I want to talk about good people. They say opposites attract. There are other sayings like "she is a good one." How about "go out and find a good

mate.” Finally, “avoid the bad relationships by picking a good person.” With divorce rates so high, who is good then? Why fire a good man who is doing what you asked? I am a good man but clearly my Ex could do better. How do we know a good person?

Is good, good enough? We want to be good people. At-least I hope we do. I know that friends wanted me to date good girls. They saw good in me and in those ladies. What did they see? For many of us it comes back to the mask. That facade people wear looks good. A pastor is called a good man because he is a pastor. Quietly, he leaves because of a sex scandal. Was he ever really that good? Did he become bad? To my parents, I was a teeter totter of a good boy and bad. Seemingly, I couldn't make up my mind. It's just not that easy to define goodness.

Good people not only look good, but they do good. The Lone Ranger is a good man. He rode a white horse and did good things for people. Jesus did miracles one day and they honored him. He was called the good shepherd. The next day someone was yelling *crucify him*. After Donald Trump was elected, people were yelling out names to *replace him*. Some offered replacements for Donald. Were the replacements good people? They were sports stars and actors. What makes famous people good? Is the Pope good? He must be because he is the Pope. Right?

What broke it for me was one small incident. A guy at church was elevated to elder. They are supposed to be the cream of the crop. He had a party at his house. Some were drinking beer. Now don't get me wrong. I don't really care. In Christian circles it's customary not to drink. Well at least in public anyways. Some take a vow to God to abstain from drinking alcohol. As if God demanded it. However, this man looked like a nice man. At church he stood with his hands in his pockets like a really important person. He had a sweet wife. He served and spoke softly. He dripped goodness.

He was a banker and rich. They coddled him. To the laymen in the church he was standoffish, slightly rude, cold, and untouchable. Eventually they tossed him from being an elder. Yet, in the beginning, he was elevated because he was deemed good. How did he go from being good and accepted to not so good and rejected? What we see as good might be all wrong.

I look in the mirror and see a good man. Some have said I'm not good enough. What I have realized is that men and women who are not good in private tend to have a good poker face (mask) in public. They also crush good people who make them look bad. That whole thing with the elder at church changed my heart. I look for different things in good people now. I think I can see under most masks just a little.

So, what makes a good person then? I'm not sure but relationships are ruined by bad people that look good. There are a bunch of us that think a bad person is only bad part of the time. That is not true. Usually it is what it is. A bad person is bad. Conversely, a good person has a way about them. I know a man who smiles and laughs a ton. He does not believe in God but he is a good man. A nice man. I know another man who never smiles. Yet, he is a good man. He would give the shirt off his back for you. Yet, he is not Christian either. Clearly, they are good people. We know what good looks like.

Good people spend their time on others. Good people probably compromise too much. They are willing to forsake themselves to see others excel. They could be shy. Sometimes they are just good. I have heard of actors that are rotten in public. I know others who just seem to be always doing good things. Usually those good people have good relationships. They try and make the people around them better. In public, we know someone might be good by the deeds they do.

Is good all about a smile. Oh, defiantly not. Is good having money, I doubt that. Is good famous, smart, and pretty? Not likely. Is good just Christian? Well, like I said, God has taken me for a goodness tour. I have met the meanest people and they were mostly Christian. I have met a few non-Christian's who were very mean. However, I do think many Christians have tried to corner the market on mean. I have read that Sister Tereasa was good. I believe Stalin and Hitler were not. Hitler painted. Don't good people paint?

I had a pastor say once "it's simple, we know in our knower." He was right. We know good people. What about those we got wrong? We knew the truth, but we didn't want to know. I have ignored some warnings. We want that relationship too much. Most of our disaster relationships are such because we hold on way too long. But marriage is for life. Friends are a treasure? Family is blood. On and on I could go. No matter the type of relationship, deep down we know good and bad from the start.

Yet, friends stab you in the back. Family cheat on us. Marriage partners beat and berate us. Is it their fault? You see, that is the crux of relationships. We pick most of it. The spouse was good but they went bad. I doubt it. We picked good friends but did not see that coming. That's were loneliness, and pride make bad choices just to have them as friends. Oh, we saw it coming. We just ignored the signs

Family? I'll get to that in another chapter. For now, there is just this. Yes, we cannot pick our family. Yet, we have a right to expect good behaviors from them. Their family for heaven's sake. I will leave it at that for now. What are your criteria of a good person? Maybe that needs to change. It's not like I see good and bad for who they are. Bad people are really good at looking

nice. I will put up with a lot. The trouble with some good people is their breaking point. They think it's bad to have one. Bad people will point that out too.

I can't tell you how many non-Christians have told me how to act Christian. I have also been told by couples that had sex before marriage not to sleep together before marriage. Good is only good to you. To someone else it might be horrible. Recently I viewed Game of thrones (the first season). Clearly, it's not a good show for me. My review on line ruffled feathers. Some felt it was very good. I've noticed that people think drugs are good. Others think smoking is bad. It's all over the map.

I try and have good relationships. That bombed with my mom. Something in that relationship was bad. She said it was me. I have wondered myself. Since she died, I have struggled with not being able to fix it. She is gone, it's too late now. It will bug me forever. I chose to distance myself from that bad relationship. I doubt that anything has eaten me more. There is good in everyone of us. Why can't we exploit that? Honor that. Why must we look beyond the good and berate the bad? That was the problem with my mom and I.

The Santa song says *be good for goodness sake*. What a great line. Our relationships are rotten because we refuse to look for good. We refuse to reject the bad. Instead we ignore good and try and make bad a little better than it is. Maybe if we were good solely because goodness is good, we might have better relationships. Clearly, we would toss bad ones a little quicker too. Aren't good relationships better than bad ones? Why spend hours and days trying to fix bad people?

People say they hold doors because it's the right thing to do. A Christian might say they give to the poor because Jesus gave. It's not a terrible reason. I have a better one. Do it for

goodness sake. Jesus did. Do you think he helped others only because he was God? No, he did it for goodness sake. God says he looks at the heart. That is good advice. Good people are out there. I'm not so sure there are that many of them out there. Yet, they say we really only have three close friends. So, choose wisely. Pick the good ones.

Why have ten bad relationships? Bad people ruin relationships. Good people make them better. Don't they? Instead, try having three good ones. To say "a little recklessness is not good" is bad advice. Spice is good for the soul. It does not make you bad. Now, what you think recklessness is might determine your fate. What attracts you might be good or bad. We might have to adjust that one. Possibly, those things that hurt you might be plainly bad for you. Give it up or perish. Pick your friends wisely.

Good people are not boring. To the bad, they are called boring. Being good is good. Being with good people is good too. I feel that far too often we get into the company of bad people by our own hand. It's our fault. Playing the victim card won't change the fact you make a bad choice. There is a story of a mom. All moms are good, right? She dumped her husband and moved in with a bad boyfriend. He said he would leave if she did not get rid of the kids. So, she killed them. Who is the victim? Many say, the mom. It's the kids.

It's been tough just liking good people. I try so hard not to say anything bad about people who have hurt me. It's not good to do that. Sometimes bad people need a slap. The bad have no problem dishing on us for not being good enough. People and relationships are complicated. There should be compromise. We will make mistakes. I feel good people care about the mistakes more than bad people do. Good people get run over in the process. Bad people love to justify running people over too. Why pursue liking bad people?

Basically, it is what it is. How often have I said to my wife about someone “I just knew it?” I have spent months trying to devise ways to honor bad people. In some ways, the goodness in me has taken a hit that has never fully recovered. I am much leier of people now. She asked me the other day if I will ever jump for joy in a Christian concert like I used to. My eyes went wide thinking about that. In those days, my good heart believed that everyone had goodness in them. Christians were the goal. Now I’m not so sure. Why? I let bad people beat the jump out of my joy. I’m Leary of the mask people wear.

I don’t read the label (Christian, family, volunteer) on people and assume the best or worse. I let people present themselves to me. The mask does not work with me that well. I watch character. I hear really good too. “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.” I do believe that good and bad are in everyone. Which one do you hide? Which one do you let run amuck?

Be good for goodness sake. Oh, how I want to just repeat that over and over. Keep a small group of friends. Why? Good people are hard to find. Do not tolerate bad behaviors. Letting terrible humans run amuck just might change you for the worse. Remember bad company corrupts good character. It always does. It’s about a legacy too. Our children are watching us. They are learning what it means to be good. If that does not scare you, I don’t know what would. Let’s be good people.

We need to discuss bad people, but before we do let’s have a frank discussion about stupid people. To some degree I was stupid for believing all people are good. It’s not true. We do have stupid stubborn streaks. There are several stupid desires that lead us astray. Some people call the term “stupid,” just mistakes done with good intentions. Stupid people do exist. They’re



out there and they are thriving. I fear, at times I have been one of them. This word stupid is used for all the right and wrong reasons. It has been attached to good and bad people too. Let's try and untangle the word stupid.