

Spread Some Goodness



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There are two C-words that have overtaken my thoughts these past few weeks. Undoubtedly, you are very familiar with the more than enough about it from the media and everyone around you. For now, might we just put that C-word aside and have a few moments without it? I'll get to my other C-word in a bit.

First, I want to introduce you to LaVerne and his wife, Norma. A few months ago, I didn't know either of them - and now, they will forever have a place in my heart. You see, back in February a hospice nurse contacted me to tell me that LaVerne would like to meet me and give me a cross he made. Who am I that I would receive such a gift from a stranger?

Days later, I had the privilege of spending time with these two precious people. Being in their presence seemed to stop the clock for me. Gone were my current worries, gone were thoughts of my long list of things to do, and gone was any desire to hurry on with my day. I was just present with LaVerne and Norma - learning about them, their lives, their family and the cross.

As soon as LaVerne learned who I was, he immediately got up from his sofa and made his way into the bedroom to bring me the cross. It consists of two old square nails that have been fastened together and erected upright on a small piece of wood. He showed me his tin can of nails and the tool he uses to adjoin them. He's given many away over the years and I am most grateful to be the recipient of one. He then showed me all of the articles he has kept of mine - he just started pulling them out from different areas of his home - and even had a few in his walker seat! It blesses me beyond words to know that he thought enough about me to save my articles and seek me out in order to give me one of his crosses.

During our hour together, I learned that LaVerne has a twin brother, who is perfectly named: Verne! These two brothers married sisters! Oh, the stories he had to share! As I listened intently, learning about their lives, I also learned that my new friend LaVerne gets a sweet twinkle in his eye and a great smile on his face every time he's about to say something funny. Oh, what a hoot he is! I wish you could all meet this man and his lovely wife.

At one point, I asked what their secret is for being married 64 years. LaVerne confidently stated, "just being good to one another". There is so much I love about this, especially since I

have been studying goodness for a while now. Let me explain.

I'm in the midst of writing a children's book about the Fruit of the Spirit. Ideas and words seemed to flow well with the first five qualities of the Fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness. But then I hit goodness and got stuck. I began asking others what they think it is, I've studied it in articles, books and in the Word of God. I wonder, what do you think goodness is? Do you remember, as a child, your parents saying "be a good boy/girl?" That's such a broad statement - and as children, did you know fully what it even meant? As an adult, how would you now define goodness? Are you good to one another in your marriage, in all your relationships, and with strangers you might come into contact with?

Goodness seems to be a word that is specific, yet broad, all at the same time. Perhaps a sneak peek into part of my book, might reveal to you what I have learned about goodness:

GOODNESS follows kindness. Being "good" is more complex. Since God says only He is good - It might leave you a bit perplexed.

GOODNESS is in your actions. It's more than a feeling inside. GOODNESS is acting like God - Allowing Jesus to be your guide.

GOODNESS is reading God's Word - So you'll know all of His good ways. He'll teach you what to say and do, Every hour of every day.

What would Jesus do? That's the question you should ask. So you can show His GOODNESS, No matter what the task.

GOODNESS is living out fully All the fruit parts in your actions. When you live your life like this, You will be a big attraction!

All the GOODNESS flowing out - Is Jesus shining through you. So learn and practice all of these And others will see Jesus too.

May I give you some timely examples of goodness? People making masks for hospitals in need - that is sew-goodness. Victoria's Ristorante and other restaurants feeding kids in need - that is goodness. Teachers work endless hours to prepare an online school for their students - that is goodness. Health professionals working overtime, putting their fears aside to serve others - that is goodness. Making positive posts to give hope to the hopeless - that is goodness. Supporting leaders with prayer and encouraging words - that is goodness. Business

owners communicating well with employees who may be fearful - that is goodness. Sharing toilet paper and other needed supplies - that is goodness.

Here's some goodness in relationships: Building one another up with words of affirmation - that is goodness. Being a good listener and showing compassion for others feelings - that is goodness. Giving hugs and words of comfort to your children who may not be able to voice their needs or fear in such a time as this - that is goodness. Being on the lookout for ways you can serve others and then serving them - that is goodness.

Here's some goodness with the Fruit of the Spirit in mind: Loving your neighbor, as yourself - that is goodness. Spreading joy to others - that is goodness. Keeping the peace, as far as it depends on you - that is goodness. Being understanding with an extra dose of patience - that is goodness. Looking for ways and carrying out acts of kindness - that is goodness. Encouraging others with hope in Christ through your faithfulness - that is goodness. Extending a gentle word instead of a harsh reaction - that is goodness. Controlling your words and actions in a time of stress and unknown - that is goodness.

It seems to me, not only did LaVerne get goodness right in his marriage, but he got it right in life - being good to one another is the key to everything. If you focus on goodness by living out the Fruit of the Spirit, things will not just go well for you, they will go very well for you. And this brings me to my other C-word: Christ.

Honestly, there was a day a couple of weeks ago, when a great fear crept inside me. I listened to the media all day, I pondered the what-ifs, I created worse-case scenarios in my head, I sought others out to listen to their fears and piggy-back off of them - and at the end of the day, I was a fearful mess. But then the Holy Spirit reminded me of a better, perfect, holy and powerful C-word - Christ.

Since then, I have abided in Him. I have balanced the media with the Word of God and His promises. I have dug into the hope we have in Christ Jesus and what He has done. He tells us specifically in His word "In this world, you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world" - John 16:33b. If we believe in Christ, that He is the son of God who died for our sins, we will be saved. We will have eternal life with Him. What a comfort and what a powerful hope we can have in such a time as this.

I wonder if you have this hope? I wonder if you think about the radiance of Heaven and what it will be like to be in the presence of Christ? Perhaps you don't think of this. Perhaps you have worldly thoughts and don't believe in God. If this is the case, I pose this question: What will you lose if you are wrong?

I am reading a book called Heaven by Randy Alcorn. It speaks to what we have in store if we believe. It is not my desire to force my faith upon anyone but to share my faith with everyone who will listen. This is because I greatly desire all to share in the inheritance of Heaven with me. So here is what I've come to ponder. If I am wrong, if there is no God, no Christ, no Heaven,

then I really have nothing to lose. But if someone who does not believe in God, in Christ, in Heaven, is wrong, then it seems to me that they have everything to lose.

At such a time as this, with one C-word swirling around in much of what we hear and think about, it seemed wrong of me to talk about a less important C-word - Cars. I'm supposed to write about cars. I love cars. I love that I work with great people that care for people and fix cars. I love that we help keep people safe as they use their vehicles in so many ways that make life on earth great. But today, as the viral C-word is so very heavy on so many people's hearts and as we approach Easter, it seemed vital to talk about a more important vehicle - the vehicle to Heaven, Christ, my Lord and Savior.

I dearly hope my words have not offended anyone. I dearly hope, even if you are an unbeliever and have decided that will not change, you might still glean something from my words. I dearly hope, for those of you who will be traveling with me to Heaven, I may have said something that has rejuvenated the hope we have in Christ and also encouraged you to balance the viral C-word with the better C-word: Christ. And may all of you be encouraged to move forth in such a time as this finding ways to spread goodness.

When I first met LaVerne, this man full of goodness, I learned he and his twin brother would be celebrating their 94th birthdays a few weeks later on February 23rd. I wanted to bless him as he had me by returning to celebrate a little with him. While there, I got the joy of spending more time with LaVerne and Norma and they graciously let me photograph them under the faces of their great-grandkids printed on a blanket. They have also given me their permission to share this with all of you. That smile that you see in this picture, it's the great one I told you about! It fills me with such joy every time I see it!

To my utter delight, it seems that the birthday visit was timely indeed because, at the very end, who came bearing chocolate celebratory Culver's shakes? None other than birthday boy #2 - Verne, as well as his family. I felt I had hit the jackpot of celebratory goodness!

As I said my goodbyes, LaVerne had it on his mind to give me another cross. I could not accept as my hope is someone else might be as blessed as I was to receive just one. Just one cross - isn't that all we need? A single cross to think about - another great C-word. As we approach Easter, might you think extra about a cross and nails and what they symbolize?

Every harsh word we have spoken, every bad thing we have done, every angry outburst that has rolled out of the overflow of our sinful hearts and onto someone undeserving, every terrible thought that has gone through our minds, every piece of gossip we have spread, every hurt we have caused, every addiction we have fallen into, every wrong we have committed, every single solitary sin we have done, was nailed to the cross. We are forgiven. We have the vehicle to be free of our past and live in paradise one day. We have only to accept that vehicle and turn the key. I hope and pray you'll do just this and be in Heaven one day with me and my new friends, LaVerne and Norma.



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