

5 WAYS

you can

DO GOOD

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by

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The world, as you may have learned, is a place of much good and not a little evil. For the most part we are in favor of the one and against the other, although we seldom label something or someone as “evil.”

If you’re old enough or have access to the Internet, you might know about a serial killer named Ted Bundy. He didn’t look like evil wrapped up in a human body, but he was evil.

There aren’t any pictures of Jesus, so I can’t really say whether or not he looked like the embodiment of good. Based on what he did, how he lived, and the impact he had on the world, however, I’d say he was the embodiment of good.

Most people would agree with that, regardless of whether or not they believe that he was also God in human form.

In fact the vast majority of people, I think, would say they’d rather be more like Jesus than more like Bundy. At the very least people want to be thought of as good, and at the best they truly want to be good.

At Do Good University we say “Do good. It’s in you.” Our logo, a D and a G inside a U, reflects that and we believe it. What we don’t believe

is that everyone is naturally good. If that were so there would be much less crime, much less hurt, much less stress, and much less of almost everything that is bad in the world.

If people had to work hard at being bad, being bad wouldn't be quite as popular as it is with all of us.

But we do believe that some good and the ability to do good is within all of us. We can choose the good over the evil, using our free will. Sometimes that's simple, sometimes it's easy, and sometimes it seems like doing good is the only possible choice.

Life, in that way, is kind of like a multiple choice test. I used to think those were the best, because I could generally figure out the answer (or thought I could) by eliminating options that were too far out on either side of the topic.

But real life multiple choice questions can be very challenging, and it's a little bit simplistic to say "choose the good" when every choice has within it some element of good and maybe a tinge of evil.

So let's jump in and look at 5 Ways You Can Do Good. Maybe these will act as kind of a baseline for you, and you'll find some of those multiple choice pop-quizzes a little easier the next time around.

Do good. It's in you.



1

Give Something Away

I don't know what possessions you have. It could be a little or it could be a lot, but whatever it is I'd guess there are some things you no longer use, no longer need, or no longer want.

Here's the cool part about every one of those things: somewhere, someone else could use them, needs them, or wants them.

When I talk to people about doing good, the first idea that comes to mind is often giving. Charities, churches, and all kinds of nonprofits rely on the financial gifts of others.

So do beggars and buskers. A case could be made, of course, that buskers are not asking for something for nothing. They are giving away their talent and hoping that some who happen by will reward them.

But beggars—often called panhandlers today—are definitely asking for something for nothing. Many of them appeal to people's "better nature" by claiming to be a kindred soul. "Veteran" is a common theme of the ubiquitous cardboard sign, and so is "God bless you."

Beggars have been part of civilized society as long as there have been civilized societies. There is a reference to begging in the book of Job, considered by some to be one of the oldest books in the Bible.

But the point I want to make is not from Job, it's from the book of Acts in the New Testament. If you care to look it up, the story is in chapter 3 and it involves Peter and John, two followers of Jesus, and a beggar.

This particular beggar had positioned himself near the temple gate. He had been lame from birth, so he was carried to his spot every day that he might beg from those going to the temple to pray.

One day when he was there Peter and John came by, and the beggar called out asking them for help. (Cardboard had not yet been invented, of course.) Here's the rest of the story from the CSB translation:

Peter, along with John, looked at him intently and said, "Look at us." So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them.

But Peter said, "I don't have silver or gold, but what I have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"

Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong. So he jumped up, stood, and started to walk, and he entered the temple complex with them — walking, leaping, and praising God.

All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple complex.

So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him.

The point I want to make from this event is that money may be a fine thing to give to someone who asks, but something else may be better. No, we don't have the ability to heal miraculously, but we may still have the ability to change someone's life.

What you give away could be money, it could be a favorite sweater, it could be a house, or it could be time. There's a story on DoGoodU.com about a fellow who decided to give time to his friend. Lots of time.

You can [read the whole story online](#), but suffice it to say that this gift of time not only changed the lives of the recipient and his wife, it changed the life of the giver as well.

So when you think about giving something away, think about that. Will it be life changing for someone else, or perhaps even for you?

One more story about giving something away, and this time it was money that was given.

Who's your caddie?

I have a friend who was a caddie on the PGA Tour. He was a very good caddie and he worked for some very good players. One of those players, with my friend on the bag, won a major championship. That meant a great pay day for the player and also for the caddie.

But the player was more generous than the standard scale and went above and beyond, paying off the mortgage on my friend's house. I don't know how much that was, but primarily it was a great relief for the recipient, just to know he didn't have that payment to worry about.

As players often do, this one eventually decided he needed a different caddie, so my friend lost his job. He wasn't worried, though, knowing he had a little money in the bank, no house payment, and a good reputation.

But no mutually acceptable offer came quickly, and my friend was getting low on funds. One night he was watching an evangelist on TV, and the feeling came to him that he should give that evangelist the rest of his money.

Clearly that was not a logical choice. No financial advisor would recommend it as a strategy, and few friends would say, "Great idea!" But my friend didn't ask anyone else. He believed he was supposed to give

away all he had left, and the next day he did exactly that.

In his mind there was no reward waiting for him, there were no accolades, there would be no newspaper articles or viral videos. No one would even know. He didn't know what was next, but he stepped out in faith and wrote the check. And mailed it.

I don't remember the exact timing of the sequence of events that followed, but one thing that happened was a phone call. It came from exactly the right PGA Tour player, asking my friend if he was available to caddie and if he'd like to meet to talk about the possibility.

That turned into a years long gig, and both the caddie and the player were richly rewarded by their working relationship and their friendship.

You might wonder how the money impacted the evangelist. I've wondered that myself, but I've never asked. The impact on the giver, who was doing good by giving and by obeying, was enough for everyone.



2

Visit Someone

“Tell me again the name of the town you’re from.” The request came from John, a relatively new friend I was playing golf with. Both of us were preachers, both of us had grown up in Illinois, though in different parts, and both of us now lived in California.

When I told him the name of the town, he asked me if I knew Hank and Irene Wilson (not their real names), a couple who lived there.

“Of course,” I said. “Everyone knows them. They moved there about the time I was headed to school, so I don’t know them well, but I know them.”

“Next time you’re back home,” he said, “stop and tell them hello from me.” And I said I would.

The fact was that I rarely went back to Illinois. My father had passed away several years earlier, my brother had moved to Virginia, and my sister had been lost in an accident when she was just 18, more than 40 years ago.

I was not without real family there, though, because later in life my father, who was a widower, had married a local woman who was a widow, giving me new sisters. Still, there were few occasions when I would go back to the small town where I had lived. I doubted that I’d be able to do what John had asked me to do, but I remembered it.

About four months later, though, a reason came for me to go home. My step-mother was going to have a big birthday—she was turning 90.

By the time I arrived my calendar was full. I had “places to go and people to see” for every moment of the three days I’d be in town.

As I drove down Main Street, running late to have dinner with my step-sister her husband, I realized I was passing the home of John’s friends. “I’ll call them,” I thought, “and tell them John said hello.”

Reason kicked in and said I could have called from California, and that wasn’t what John had asked me to do. I turned around, pulled into the driveway, and knocked on the door.

The blessing

The lady who answered didn’t recognize me, nor I her. She might have been Irene for all I knew, so I said, “I’m Lewis Greer, George’s boy, and I stopped to say hello.”

Her face lit up with recognition and she told me her name and said she remembered me from when I was a little boy. Right behind her, I noticed, was a lady wearing a robe as if dressed for bed, and she was smiling. It was Irene, and she was inviting me in.

Hank was sitting in a chair eating dinner and watching TV. He didn’t get up, and I recognized his Parkinson’s Disease immediately. But he nodded to me, and smiled.

The lady who answered the door was there as his caretaker.

Irene sat down in her chair and said it was great to see me and asked me why I had stopped.

I told her about John’s request, and she said, “You mean Johnny?”

My friend John was the son of her friend John. The families had been neighbors in northern Illinois and very close. So these were John’s parents’ friends, and I totally understood that relationship. I was glad I had

stopped.

Still standing, my duty fulfilled and dinner waiting, I said I needed to let them get back to their meal and get on to mine. Irene asked me to wait another minute, there was something she wanted to show me.

She went to retrieve her billfold. It was one of those long wallets that could hold a checkbook, and it was well used. She opened it and pulled out a newspaper clipping and handed it to me.

I had seen the clipping before, but not for many years. The date on it was June, 1971, and there was a picture—a high school yearbook headshot—of a girl who had been killed in a car wreck. It was my sister.

Without going into the ensuing conversation, I can tell you that I learned things about my sister that I might never have known if I hadn't stopped to visit Hank and Irene.

Of course I had no idea of the blessing I was going to receive just because I dropped in to say hello. It was a gift that, I believe, I would likely have never received otherwise.

More beauty

One more beautiful thing happened as I finally left that evening. As I got to the door and turned to say goodbye, I noticed that the caretaker was off to the side and crying a little.

When I looked at her she nodded toward Hank, who had gotten out of his chair by himself and was standing without help, shuffling toward me to shake my hand. It was something he never did.

A few years later Hank lost his battle with Parkinson's, just as my own father had almost a decade before. Irene moved to a different city to be closer to her son and his family, and she tells me she still carries that clipping about my sister.

Being a person of faith, I would call that visit a "divine appointment."

The circumstances, the timing, the conversation, and the wonder of it all are almost impossible to explain otherwise.

But my point is this: like many other people I am just not big on going to visit someone. Meet for lunch? Sure. A round of golf? Count me in. Stop by a house, or even a hospital or a nursing home just to say hello and visit for a while? Not so much.

There are few things, however, that are equal to “visit someone” when it comes to doing good. It takes effort, it takes intent, it takes caring about someone else more than you care about your own time, and it takes a little courage.

Since that amazing evening, I’ve done better about visiting. I’m still not great at it, but at least I get it.

Perhaps there is someone in your life that could use a visit. Right now I’m thinking of four or five people I could stop to say hi to, and I know they’d appreciate it.

Who knows what I might receive in return, but if it is nothing more than a smile on the face of another person, it will be a good thing.

Go visit. Do good.



3

Just Listen

Calvin Coolidge was the 30th President of the United States, serving from 1923-1929. He had been in public office prior to his time in the White House, including a term as Governor of Massachusetts.

But somewhere along the way he became known as Silent Cal because of the paucity of his words. One story that illustrates that perfectly was that a lady, sitting next to the President at a dinner party, told Mr. Coolidge she had asked the hostess to seat her next to him. She said, “I bet her \$5 that I could get more than two words out of you.”

To which Silent Cal replied, “You lose.”

Later Mr. Coolidge denied having said that, but I haven’t found any denial of a conversation he had with Herbert Hoover, his successor as President.

Apparently Mr. Coolidge stopped by to see Mr. Hoover a couple of months after the new President was in office, just to check in with him.

Mr. Hoover reportedly said that he didn’t understand how Cal had done it, saying something like this: You took as many meetings as I do, you had just as much to work on as I do, you had just as many demands on your time as I do. Still you managed to leave the office every day at 6 p.m.

Coolidge is said to have replied, “I did take as many meetings as you, Herbert, but when you’re in those meetings you probably talk back.”

Saving time is what I call a “bonus benefit” of listening. Not talking back eliminates a lot of time in the current conversation and it may even serve to shorten future conversations. While saving time is a good thing, it is not the good we are after here.

One mouth, two ears

The old saying goes that God gave you one mouth and two ears, so you should listen at least twice as much as you talk. Good advice.

That old saying is not in the Bible, at least as far as I know, but there is a great deal in there about listening. Most of that has to do with listening to God, and it often goes kind of like this.

King Saul was told by God, through a prophet, to wipe out a particular tribe of people who had defied God in bad ways for a long time. Saul said he’d do that and he pretty much did. But not completely, because he kept a lot of the sheep and cattle from that tribe, and he even let their leader and a few others live.

When the prophet came to see Saul, he asked him if he had done what he was supposed to do, and Saul said he had.

“Then,” the prophet asked, “what is this bleating of sheep that I hear?”

Saul explained that he had kept the best of the animals alive so he could use them for sacrifices to God.

Did the prophet say, “Great idea. I wish I’d thought of that”? He did not.

He said, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen is better than the fat of rams.”

In other words, there is a hierarchy of responses when you are dealing with God, and the very first one is to listen to what he has to say.

The truth is that the same hierarchy can be applied to many of the relationships we find ourselves part of every day.

There might be a relationship with a spouse, for instance. How important might it be in a marriage to make your first priority listening to what the other person is saying?

Let's say your spouse wants you to help around the house on a Saturday morning, but you have other plans. So you do what you want, but on the way home you stop and buy a nice gift for the offended party.

Does that get you off the hook? Probably not. Listening and "listening intelligently" (often translated obeying) gets you off the hook.

If you have kids, or if you are a kid, you might relate well to this story as told by author Charles Swindoll in his book *Stress Fractures*.

I vividly remember some time back being caught in the undertow of too many commitments in too few days. It wasn't long before I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions through the day.

I distinctly recall after supper one evening the words of our younger daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me about something important that had happened to her at school that day. She hurriedly began, "Daddy-I-wanna-tell-you-somethin'-and-I'll-tell-you-really-fast."

Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, "Honey, you can tell me... and you don't have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly."

I'll never forget her answer; "Then listen slowly."

Want to do some good? Just listen to someone.

The problem I've observed with listening is that we don't hear. And we don't hear because we are too busy formulating the answer to the question or statement that we are not listening to carefully.

We hear what we want to hear, filter out the rest, and answer based solely on what we think was said.

When I was young I found a passage in the Bible where Jesus said to some people, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Well everyone has ears, I thought, so what in the world does that mean? It wasn't until later that I figured out this truth: I myself often didn't hear what was really being said.

What stopped me from hearing? Mostly it boils down to one of two things, or a combination of both: selfishness and pride.

In a movie (I think it's *Other People's Money*) there is a female character who is at a cocktail party and in a protracted conversation with another guest, who is a man.

As she talks and talks she finally realizes that she's only been talking about herself. He's being polite, but his eyes are glazing over.

So she says to him, "But enough about me. Let's talk about you. What do you think about me?"

That's a great line, and it is funny because it's true.

Like most acts of doing good, listening is more about others than it is about you. Imagine what great listeners we would be, and how much good we could do, if we could just get our own voices out of our ears.

Do good. Listen when people talk to you.



4

Grow

Like listening, we tend to think that growing as a human being—what we sometimes call “growing up”—is automatic.

Our own experience, both personally and in observation of others, is quite to the contrary.

Growing is one of the very best things we can do, though, because people who are “grown ups” are do gooders. I don’t mean to say that “adults” do all the good in the world, far from it.

C. S. Lewis had a wonderful way with words, and he took on the topic of what it meant to be grown up in a piece called “On Three Ways of Writing for Children.”

Critics who treat 'adult' as a term of approval, instead of as a merely descriptive term, cannot be adult themselves. To be concerned about being grown up, to admire the grown up because it is grown up, to blush at the suspicion of being childish; these things are the marks of childhood and adolescence.

And in childhood and adolescence they are, in moderation, healthy symptoms. Young things ought to want to grow. But to

carry on into middle life or even into early manhood this concern about being adult is a mark of really arrested development.

When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.

The key to this wonderful quote is the last sentence. “When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.”

So what do I mean by grow? I mean to get stronger in the things of life that are more important. To put it another way, I mean “get better.”

For some reason I want to be better at most of the things I do. I want to be a better speaker, a better husband, a better golfer. (OK, everybody who plays golf wants to be a better golfer.)

Some of those things are easier to measure than others. When I play golf I keep score. I can look at my scores from last month or last year and compare those to my scores from this week, and I can tell if I’m getting better or not.

Pencil marks on door jambs

When I was a young boy our family did what a lot of families used to do (and maybe still do) to measure our growth. We put pencil marks on a door jamb. It was clear to see that I was growing a little during those years because of those marks.

Wouldn’t it be nice if we could put our “insides” up next to some kind of door jamb and measure our growth. Perhaps God would hold the pencil and say to us, “Now stand up straight and tall and let’s see how much

you've grown." Then he'd draw a line with our initials and the date.

What are the marks of growing up in this way, since we can't use the door jamb methodology we were talking about? How do we measure?

One way is by relying on the observations of others, whether those are positive or negative, and paying attention.

The well known writer Anonymous said, If one man calls you a donkey, pay him no mind. If two men call you a donkey, look for hoofprints. If three men call you a donkey, get a saddle.

One person's opinion that you are good is likewise something you hear but pay no attention to. When another person tells you you're good, you might think there is possibly something to it. When the third independent voice is added, it is likely that you really are good.

Be careful, though, in all circumstances, to not live your life simply for the praises of other people. You can get them if you try, but if you try then you are only getting a shadow of the real thing.

Another way to tell that you have grown in the right way is how you feel about what you are doing. Some people call this "conscience," and it is both real and valuable.

Over the years most of us learn the difference between right and wrong, and we learn to feel better when we do right and not so good when we do wrong.

At about the age of 10 or 11, I stole a 5¢ item from a local drugstore. It was a pencil sharpener, the kind that fit in your pocket and was made mostly of colored plastic.

I don't know why I stole it, other than I could, but I know exactly how it made me feel. It was anything but good.

Somehow I made it through a night undetected as a master thief, and I tried very hard to make myself think I was cool for what I had done. On

the surface it was working. Under the surface, though, I was less of a “cat burglar” and more of a stupid dog. Finally I told my dad, and no amount of punishment he might have devised would have hurt me as much as I’d already hurt myself.

Actually right and wrong is pretty easy for most of us. The real dilemma always comes in when the choice is between two things that are both right. The study of ethics concerns itself with those kinds of problems.

One of the most famous and longstanding moral dilemmas is known as The Trolley Problem. You can find much about it online, but the basic concept is that you see a trolley coming rapidly down a track and you realize there are five people tied on that track unable to move.

You also see that by pulling a lever, which you have time to do, you can switch the trolley to a different track. On the track there is a worker who would not have time to move and would be killed.

Do you pull the switch? What if the one person on the track was not a worker you didn’t know, but your child? What if the person was a known criminal? What if the person was a famous celebrity you admired?

If you can—and are willing to—grapple with those kinds of questions, you are growing toward good.

Like most “do good” actions, this one takes some effort. Unlike most do good actions, this one is more about you than it is about others. But it is still good, because it leads ultimately to much more good.

Finally, one way you can tell you are growing is when you get smaller. Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself, it is simply not thinking of yourself at all. If you really want to grow, try that.



5

Teach

Here's the deal: you know stuff. Other people want to know the stuff you know. Teach it to them.

I'm not talking about knowing how to get away with cheating on a final exam, of course. You should teach things that advance people and advance society and do good.

Yes, a lot of people see the good guys on TV picking a lock and think to themselves, "That's a skill I'd like to have." Not enough to go online and try to learn it, but if you had it kind of magically, that would be cool.

Speaking of magic, that's something else we see on TV. Our question there is "How did he do that?" The answer is, as you know by now, magic.

Really it is misdirection, subtle manipulation, and amazing skills that can be learned over time. In other words, magic.

There is a form of magic you can perform, however. You can turn a frown into a smile. You can change someone's bad day into a good day. In fact you can go beyond changing moments and changing days all the way into changing lives.

Many people would not immediately think of teaching as a way to do good. At the same time most of us would say that our lives were affected

in positive ways by one or more teachers. We get it, we just don't think of it. Perhaps the reason is that we have a limited-time view of doing good.

What I mean by that is that we feed a hungry person, whether that person is in another country or sitting in our kitchen. Once the meal has been served, our good deed is done.

Just as that meal has a relatively short physical duration, it might have a fairly long lasting impact. But even that, outside of dramatic circumstances, will wear off fairly soon.

It's that understanding that gave rise to the saying from the philosopher Maimonides, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

The comparison is simple and excellent. The good that is done in feeding a man for a day is real and important. It's also something we know how to do, have done, and are comfortable with doing.

The good that is done in teaching a man to fish is also real and important. It's something, however, that we don't necessarily know how to do, haven't done, and are not comfortable doing.

So let me see if I can teach you something about teaching so that you can do good in that way.

What do you know?

There are two places to begin when it comes to teaching that leads to good. One is to take stock of what you know, then try to find people who want to learn that. The other is to find people who want to know something, then you learn it and teach it to them.

You may think the first way is the only way that makes sense, but many teachers come at it from the second way. Here are some examples of both.

When I was in Bible College, several of the students (including me) wanted to learn enough Hebrew to read parts of the Old Testament in the

original language. One of the staff who was there as the Director of Admissions had taken some Hebrew classes himself earlier, so he dedicated himself to learning that language and teaching it to us.

On the other side, I wrote a book on golf a few years ago. There is nothing in it about how to hit a golf shot, but there is a lot in it about playing the game and scoring better.

Was there a demand for that book? I hoped there was, but I didn't know. So I wrote the book then went out looking for people who might want it and benefit from my decades of experience.

If you have the ability to learn things (you do) coupled with the ability to explain those things to another person (you probably do), you can teach. If you think you can teach even one person, I recommend highly that you do just that.

How do you teach?

There are as many ways to teach as there are to learn, if not more. One of the best ways is to teach by example.

In fact we are all teaching by example every day, and sometimes we should probably pay more attention to what we're teaching.

Have you ever seen a child imitate a parent? It happens all the time. They sound the same, they move the same, they laugh the same, they even think the same.

Children aren't clones, but they are often "spittin' images" of one of their parents. Sometimes that is good. Sometimes a son who is out with his mother will suddenly say some words that will prompt Mom to ask, "Where did you hear that?!" The answer is often, "Daddy says it."

When our examples are good, teaching this way is effective and long lasting. We want to mimic the people we love most, the people we respect the most, the people we spend the most time with. It's a great opportunity.

We also teach by words, and to make this transition it is not uncommon for a parent to say to a child, “Do as I say, not as I do.”

That can be confusing for a child, but all of us who are adults know the difference, and we generally know which one the teacher wants us to follow and learn from.

Using words to teach is a time honored tradition that is still perhaps the most used method. Words are found in books, classrooms, doctor’s offices, on driving ranges, football fields, basketball courts, law courts, and just about any place you can think of that qualifies as a teaching place.

Words can be direct, and often should be. Some people think the Bible is fairly hard to understand, but it is often quite direct. For instance, the Bible says, “Trust in the Lord and do good.”

It also says, “Insofar as you are able, do good to all people.” All of that is pretty direct and easily understood. Not always easy to do, but we shouldn’t confuse the two.

The problem with words has already been hinted at in the chapter about listening. People don’t always hear what you say, no matter how clearly and plainly you say it.

I was a professional tennis teacher for quite a few years. When I was learning how to learn and how to teach, I’d go to a public park with my own basket of tennis balls, find someone who looked like they might want a lesson, and offer to teach them for free.

In reality they were teaching me while I was teaching them. I’d explain something about the game, get a blank look, and immediately have to come up with a different way of saying the same thing.

Later I learned to ask my students questions about their hobbies and other sports they played. Then I would use those as the basis for my tennis instruction with them. Basically I learned to speak their language, or at least a language they knew.

Teaching good

This little book is intended to encourage you to do good, and it lists some specific ways you can do good. More than that, though, it is intended to teach you something about what good is and how it looks in real life.

There are so many variations on this theme that no book could contain them all. People are always inventing new ways to do good, and that is good because other people are inventing new ways to do evil.

Our hope at Do Good University is to teach thousands of people to do good, and have those thousands each teach hundreds, and those hundreds teach other hundreds.

We use words, examples, illustrations, encouragement, entertainment, and celebration to teach good. Join us in doing good, and join us in sharing with others ways they can do good.

Do good. It's in you.