



A Culture of Goodness Which Shows God's Heart

Every family and church and organization—even the most troubled—have **individuals** who are good people who show God's heart. But families and churches and organizations become hurtful and damaging and toxic when the **culture** (the common guidelines of behavior) is not healthy.

We always want **individuals** to seek holiness of heart and life. That is the goal of United Methodist Christians.

Unless/until our **churches** cultivate the characteristics of God's goodness, they will continue in behavior that has negative – not uplifting—effects on people. A healthy church depends on a climate—a culture—that reflects God's heart.

The Essential Characteristics

1. An absolutely unwavering commitment to God's way over our preferences.

The Christian life is a sacrificial life where we are—first and foremost—to an allegiance AWAY from our personal preferences TO God's way.

A healthy church does not build itself around personal preferences of any pastor or staff; any church leader or group, any family no matter how long they have been there or how much money they have. In a church that is healthy, everyone seeks God's way first and foremost. Everyone sacrifices their preferences for the sake of the good. There is no building block of health more important than this one.

2. Members of a healthy church—a church where God's goodness can be seen—have these characteristics:

- Empathy for others (Not judgment/criticism of others.)
- Grace
- Speaking the truth and challenging falsehoods
- Standing for justice
- Speaking out against wrongdoing (No matter who is doing it. When something wrong is being done by someone near and dear to you, you have a special responsibility to speak up as someone that person would trust and listen to.)
- Protecting hurting individuals (Not protecting the group or institution at the expense of people who have been hurt.)
- Accountability for Christian behavior is applied to ALL
- Service

No individual—and no church—is perfect. We all sin. We all have shortcomings. We all have blind spots.

At our best, we use these hallmarks to **SELF-CORRECT**. At times, when we get caught up in a trap of sin, church exists to surround us with a community that reflects the goodness of God. This kind of healthy community—and only a healthy community—can help us avoid going deeper into sin. Avoidance will not help us. These characteristics – applied with grace and truth—are to help, redeem, restore and renew us.

To build a culture of goodness takes 5-7 years of intentional practice and reinforcement. A culture of goodness is the core foundation of a healthy church—just like these characteristics are the essence of healthy individuals.

This presentation was inspired by a Master Class offered by The Resilient Church Academy of Fresh Expressions USA. It is based on the text for that workshop: A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing by Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer (Tyndale Books 2020)