

Andrews University

## Digital Commons @ Andrews University

---

Faculty Publications

---

7-20-1967

### Calculated Goodness is a Counterfeit

Sakae Kubo

*Andrews University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Kubo, Sakae, "Calculated Goodness is a Counterfeit" (1967). *Faculty Publications*. 4054.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/4054>

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).

# Calculated Goodness

Is a

Counterfeit

*Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Luke 6:35, 36.*

**T**HE dominant thought in this admonition of our Lord is to love, to give, to do good to others without thought of expecting anything in return. The hope of being repaid is not an honorable or valid motive for doing good. Our Father in heaven "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). We are to "be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish," and to "be merciful, even as" our "Father is merciful" (Luke 6:35, 36, R.S.V.).

The life of Christ illustrates this principle. He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). He spent His life doing good to those who could least help Him—the poor, the outcast, those without position or power. Even those who would harm Him—the betrayer Judas, and Peter, who denied Him in the judgment hall—were recipients of His kindness and consideration. He went about doing good with a prodigal and impartial love.

The love of Christ for suffering humanity was not a calculating love. No ulterior motive led Him to do good. He did not heal the ten lepers on the condition that they thank Him for the gift of health, nor did He heal the demoniacs with a view to increasing the size of the little group that followed Him. Jesus did good for no other reason than that He was good. To this kind of love, to this kind of doing good, He calls us.

In every relationship we should take care that our goodness is not a calculating goodness, based on the expectation of receiving some benefit in return. Between employee and employer, student and teacher, rich and poor, minister and layman, minister and conference president, goodness can have ulterior motives. It is easy to do good when we want a job, a raise, or a better position.

## The Genuine and the Counterfeit

Jesus showed this plainly in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. When Jesus said to those on the left, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," they answered, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Jesus answered, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Those on His left hand protested that they had never seen Jesus to help Him. If they had seen Him in need, they would gladly have done anything for Him, that He might reward them appropriately. In effect Jesus said, "The least of these my brethren, the hungry and the thirsty, the

stranger, the naked, and the prisoner—these can never return your kindness. You could gain nothing from them, so you passed them by. Yours is a calculating goodness."

Those on the right hand also protested when Jesus said they had helped Him, knowing that they had not helped Jesus personally. They had never seen Him thirsty, hungry, naked, or in prison. But Jesus said that in helping unfortunate ones they had helped Him. The test of sincerity and spontaneity in the doing of good is seen best in our attitude toward those from whom we can expect to gain nothing in return.

Such was God's relationship to us, for we read in Romans 5:7, 8 (R.S.V.): "Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." We were enemies when God set about reconciling us to Himself. God could expect nothing from us. Being weak, sinful, and finite, we are far from being any benefit to God, yet He loved us and acted in our behalf.

Jesus develops this aspect of truth further in Luke 14:12-14 (R.S.V.): "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." We are not to do good in order to be recompensed. What a radical philosophy in this age of materialism and commercialism!

We despise the man who does good simply because, as we say, he knows on which side his bread is buttered. We despise the woman who marries a man simply for his money. We despise the man who becomes a friend in order to gain something from us. How do people feel about us when we do good with the ulterior motive that they might become Christians? Leslie Weatherhead relates the following experience:

## The Influence of a Kind Act

He once met a family in which a boy was partly paralyzed. The father became ill and died, but no one seemed

# Take an honest look at your motives for doing good to others.

By SAKAE KUBO

Associate Professor of New Testament  
Andrews University



ALFRED U. SOORD, ARTIST

*Christ's mission to this earth was a living demonstration of the infinite goodness of God. He invites us to emulate His great example by doing good to others—without thought of reward.*

to care. Neither the minister nor the members of their church expressed sympathy or concern. But some Roman Catholics gave them material assistance, and helped the semiparalyzed boy to regain confidence in himself.

"Then," Weatherhead relates, "looking at me, the woman spoke a sentence that has lived with me ever since. She said it with a half-frightened look in her eyes, as though she were afraid I would rebuke her: 'I hope you won't think we have done wrong,' she said, 'but we have become Roman Catholics.' She added quickly, without waiting for me to reply, 'They never said a word about religion. They were just unceasingly kind to us.'

"I felt rebuked and humbled. The thing that remained with her was the love shown her by these devout Catholics, who never asked for any return in terms of churchgoing, creed believing, or religious training. They had found her in need, and that was sufficient reason to help her."

How does it feel to be given the "red carpet" treatment when one is not a church member, and then suddenly be left to himself upon becoming a member? What kind of goodness is that? And how do we treat the fellow who once seemed interested, but finally decided not to accept our message?

## Our Motives in Helping Others

Our medical work is the right arm of the message, and our Dorcas welfare work is an agency for softening hearts to the message. But if we are using them simply as strategy instruments for soul winning, then in what way are they different from the other acts of calculating goodness of which we have spoken?

Is a person whom we have helped back to health, for that reason obliged to listen to our message and become an Adventist? Are these humanitarian activities a manifestation of the spirit of the Master, done out of spontaneous love without expecting anything in return? It is not our responsibility how the recipients respond to our acts of kindness. It is only our responsibility to do good. The medical work must not be simply the right arm of the message, but the heart of the gospel. The medical work, welfare work, and other humanitarian endeavors must not be simply agencies for soul winning, but expressions of the spirit of Christ.

I am not saying that kind acts, and the medical and welfare ministries do not bring results. I am saying that they should be done in the same manner as Jesus did them. He did not make friends to get people to come to church. He did not heal or do good to get them to join His movement. Many did, to be sure—because they were attracted to His prodigal, spontaneous love. But their response was not the determining factor in His doing good.

The story of the good Samaritan illustrates how we ought to do good. He did not look around to see if there were photographers or newspaper reporters present, nor did he examine the man to see if he was a good prospect for his church, nor did he calculate that if he would be kind to him, he might become a Samaritan. No, he just saw a fellow man in need of help, and helped him out of the goodness of his own heart. His was goodness for goodness' own sake, with no ulterior motive.

## The Key to the Golden Palace

A Russian legend illustrates this point.

The Golden Palace was said to contain everything a child would desire, and all children sought to do something good to obtain the key to the palace.

One child brushed her hair and cleaned her clothes, but was turned away with the admonition to do something good for somebody else.

She went out in search of that someone, and found a beggar into whose hand she poured all the precious coins she had saved. Having completed her mission, she rushed

back to the Golden Palace with high hopes of receiving the key. But again she was turned away. She was disappointed, but encouraged to try again.

Seeing an old woman carrying a heavy bundle up a steep hill, she rushed up, took the bundle, and ran up the hill. Depositing the bundle at the top, she dashed down the hill and demanded the key. But again she was turned away. This time she was thoroughly disappointed, and her spirit was broken. Though told to try again, she completely gave up. She didn't want the key anyway.

As she was returning home she heard a cry in the bushes. Trailing the cry to its source, she found a dog caught in an animal trap. She tried her utmost to release the dog. Her hands were bleeding but she finally succeeded. She tore off strips of her dress to make bandages, and wound

them around the dog's bruised paw.

Suddenly the doorkeeper from the Golden Palace appeared before her, offering her the key. But she protested, "I don't deserve the key. I didn't help the dog for the key. I forgot all about the key."

The old doorkeeper, with tears in his eyes, said, "You forgot yourself, dear child; the key is for those who forget themselves."

And so it is. Unexpected rewards often come when we forget all about rewards.

We must be like our Father in heaven. He loves us because He is love. He loved us while we were yet enemies. He did not love us only because He expected us to love Him in return. He loved because He is love, and because He loves us, we find it in our own hearts to love in response.

## The art of living

By MIRIAM WOOD

*when you're Young*

**NOT TO BE FOUND** Too many people, I think, spend a large share of their lives waiting around for happiness. Having absorbed (from infancy, apparently) the concept that happiness is the most desirable of all estates, they begin a determined search for it—in a vague, fuzzy, nebulous future. So many authors have written about happiness in this way that it's almost standard procedure to pair the verb "find" with the noun "happiness." The logic is inescapable: Happiness doesn't *come*; you have to find it or wait for it, and when it arrives, pulling into the harbor of your life like a glorious ship in full sail, the matter is settled. You jump aboard, and go sailing off, away from "all this."

There's only one flaw in this concept—it isn't true. First of all, happiness can't be cornered at the foot of the rainbow or anywhere else. It doesn't wear a label or placard. It can't be bottled and sold. (Many sad alcoholics will testify to this fact—and before long, many sad drug users will do the same, I'm sure.) Happiness is not an entity in itself. It's a corollary, a by-product, a result of something else. And it almost never comes in large packages. Like the manna given to the children of Israel, there's enough for "one day only," although I'm not suggesting this in a completely literal way.

If you've been planning to be happy when all your current problems are solved, please prepare yourself for some

sad news. You very well *may* solve the particular problems that are now tormenting you—but you'll go right on to a new set. And it's quite possible that the new ones will be even more revolting than the present ones! I'm not suggesting that problem-free periods don't exist during one's life; I'm just suggesting that they're rare. Therefore, it's pretty tragic to put off being happy because of problems.

At the risk of being thought horribly cruel I'd like to propose that you never try to "find" happiness. Forget the word. Instead, substitute phrases and clauses such as "living up to the best within me," "doing my work in the best possible way," "sense of duty," "reaching my goals."

Next, try substituting "gladness" for "happiness." This may strike you as a bit of hair splitting in a semantics sense, but the two words really do have vastly different connotative meanings.

Last, make a game of discovering "gladness" in very small, insignificant things. (Do I sound like Pollyanna? Well, she wasn't far wrong.) A beautiful sunset. Two hours to spend in any way you like on a soft spring day. An unexpected compliment. The smell of hot rolls. A letter from that special person. A chance conversation that results in a new, rewarding friendship.

Going out on limbs isn't my favorite exercise, but I shall do so this time. I'll guarantee that if you follow this simple routine, you'll "find happiness"—without ever searching for it.

## Living Hands

By FELIX A. LORENZ  
Associate Professor of Religion  
Columbia Union College

ONE of the great tragedies of history is a bold and virile people slowly disintegrating until later generations are, in effect, only a lifeless monument to a great and noble past.

Historian Edward Gibbon, speaking of the Macedonian Greeks of the tenth century, laments "the reproach and shame of a degenerate people." A thousand years later these countrymen of the great Philip of Macedon and his illustrious son Alexander the Great, "held in their lifeless hands the riches of their fathers, without inheriting the spirit which had created and improved that sacred patrimony" (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 5, p. 488).

How many nations—and churches—have lost their greatness because they bore the sacred heritage of their valiant forebears in lifeless hands! To inherit a great nation or a great cause is not enough; the hands that shaped that greatness must also be inherited.

The historian's warning could rightly apply to our nation, our culture, or our civilization. But it seems more important that we direct his challenge to our religious heritage. As we compare our hands with those of our ancestors—are they alive, full, vibrant, or do they hang limp and empty at our sides, lifeless hands?

### Living Hands of the Pioneers

When lame James White, leader of the young church, hauled stone for the railroad, chopped cordwood for



With his own hands James White labored to provide means for preaching the gospel.