

Stop Pretending That Being Good Is Easy

There are a couple of things that make it especially easy for people to do wrong:

1. **We refuse to name evil for what it is.**
2. **We assume we are good.**

Evil never appears in obvious guises. We all know it. It's been said before. And I've written a couple of times about how mundane choices can often slip past our ethical detectors.

But when we also assume that we are "good people," we find it far easier to make exceptions, make excuses, and turn blind eyes to doing the wrong thing.

We're not good people. We live lives of compromised character. And our weakness stems from our assumption that being good is supposed to be easy.

It's not so much that we're not willing to try hard to be good (though that's also a problem). **Because we assume that being good is easy, we assume that we've already fought and won the battle to be good.** We compare our decency to the decency of others and find no great violation – so we consider ourselves moral.

So we let our guard down. And when we do run into opportunities to be less than honest, less than kind, less than faithful, it never occurs to us that we might be doing evil. We assume that we've got the "good person" thing down pat.

We don't.

Morality is complicated. Sometimes it's hard to not manipulate. It's hard to not take advantage. It's hard to not lie. Many immoralities things can seem expedient or excusable in the moment. In fact, there's a good deal of social pressure to do them. Goodness is not common, and deep goodness will not be popular with others.

But if we do want to be good, we can. It takes work, every day. But it's possible. And we can do ourselves a favor by dropping the pretense that being good is supposed to be easy. We can be more comfortable with honest repentance of our failings. We can take more time and more care with our moral decisions. And we can grant more significance to the importance of little actions for good.

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