

Ep #508: Be Good?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo episode 508.

Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems, and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Hi, beautiful friends. I am in Miami. We just got back from an epic trip where I watched Christian golf and went to Antigua and played some pickleball, and then went to Barbados for New Years, and now I'm in Miami about to move into my new place. We're in a hotel right now until my place is done, and then I'm living in Miami for a whole year.

It's going to be a year of a lot of work and less travel, so we're going to explore Miami and I'm going to explore myself and a lot of goals with myself for this year. So, if you want in on the journey, you got to join us in Get Coached, Self-Coaching Scholars for the behind the scenes.

I'm recording a small behind-the-scene video every week to kind of share with all my students the progress that we're making, I'm making personally, and the struggles that I go through and the fun that I have. So that's what's up.

I'm sitting right now, it's Saturday morning, I'm sitting and looking - there's this beautiful view outside the room to the ocean and it's just very inspiring and gratitude-producing right now. And kind of an interesting background for me to be talking about this topic, which is being a good person.

And I've talked about this in my trainings and in the podcast before, but I want to talk about it directly and only in this podcast, and I was inspired to do it because I was recently listening to Oprah talk. And I was fascinated by her perception and her way of thinking about her life.

And one of the things that - just a little bit of background of what had happened, she had posted some stuff online about doing some fundraising

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when the Maui fires happened. She has a house in Maui and she was doing some fundraising to help the people of Maui.

And the interpretation of what she was doing and the vitriol and what she would call bullying and the hate that she got coming online from her attempt to, which she says is do something good, was very unexpected, painful, disheartening for her.

And as she was talking about just knowing who she is and knowing that she was a good person, it was really interesting how, for her, that was the most important thing is that she was a good person and that people saw her as a good person. And when people didn't see her that way, how incredibly painful that was for her.

And so I'm thinking, Oprah Winfrey, who has done so much for my life and so much for so many people's lives really struggling with thinking that she's not a good person, or that people would think that she wasn't a good person. I don't think she struggles with knowing she's a good person, but I think that it was very difficult for her to see other people not seeing her in that way.

So this got me to really thinking about this concept because I do think that we are exposed to a lot of, I'm going to call it rhetoric, a lot of teaching in our lives because, especially in America, the way that I think the education structure is set up is that we are supposed to be happy and we're supposed to be good people.

And very few people would argue that being happy and being a good person is a negative thing to focus on, right? It's, in many ways, the purpose of many of our lives is to be good and to be happy, and to be both of those things at the same time.

And I've talked a lot in the podcast and in the trainings about being happy and trying to be happy all the time, and how so much of that causes us to be unhappy because we're so unhappy about not being happy 100% of the

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time. And my philosophy on that is that there needs to be an education that life is a balance of positive and negative, happy and unhappy.

And when we understand that, we'll be less unhappy about our unhappiness because unhappiness is part of life and we do want it to be part of life because we want to be unhappy about the things that we want to be unhappy about, period.

And the same thing, in my opinion, goes for being good and being a good person. So I feel like the training, the concept, the belief that many of us are ingrained with that we must and should be good people is a trap because it's very subjective. What does it mean to be a good person? Where are the rules for being a good person?

A lot of my students are raised in a religious background where they are taught the exact rules of how to be a good person and you follow all of these rules and if you follow all of these rules, you are a good person. And if at any point you don't follow one of these rules, then you need to make up for it to maintain being a good person.

And I actually think in that case, it's less of a trap because you know how to define it. You can define it by these external rules. And yet, the things that many of my clients that I work with them on struggle with that. They sometimes disagree with the rules.

There are certain rules that maybe they disagree with, and so then it makes it a little bit more cloudy on how to be a good person and how to judge other people if they're a good person because then all of a sudden, they're judging you on whether you've followed all the rules. And if you don't follow all the rules, then by definition, you aren't a good person in their eyes.

And so the reason I think it's a trap is because it sets us up to, if we don't do this consciously, which is what I'm going to teach you to do in this podcast, we don't do this consciously for ourselves, it sets us up to be

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following external rules, even if they don't align with what we feel deepest in our hearts and our souls.

So the question then becomes, who decides who's good? Who decides if you're a good person? Is it you? Is it your religion? Is it the mob of people on the internet? Is it your friends and family? Who decides who a good person is?

Like I said, it's so subjective what good means. And I know for me, when I was growing up as a girl in America, there was a constant barrage of, "Be a good girl and you'll be rewarded. Be a good girl." And for me, I was raised in a religion where it was be a good girl so I could go to heaven.

And that meant the rules for that when I was younger was to make the adults happy by being well behaved, not in trouble, taking all of the authority that was given to me and obeying it, and making sure - the way that I remember thinking about it is making sure that when people saw me, they smiled and I smiled and that I was pleasing to everyone. And as long as I was good, then everything would be okay.

And that was from my parents too. Are you going to be a good girl? So I was constantly looking externally to how to please the people, how to make them all think that I was good, and then therefore, I would be rewarded. And I was a very obedient, in many ways, little girl, especially in front of authority figures whether I agreed with what was going on or not, and that got me into some traumatic situations where I was trying to be good in abusive situations in order to be in this person's eyes who was an authority figure, a good girl and a good person.

And it gets very conflicted because when you're looking externally for that approval and that praise and that acknowledgment, then sometimes the rules are this, and then sometimes the rules are that. And it gets us, many of us, into a situation where we don't learn how to trust ourselves. We don't learn how to trust our own guts. We don't get to make those decisions for ourselves.

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So if you're struggling with this at all, you have to ask yourself, what is the reason why you want to be good? If this is something like, you want to be a good person, why? Why do you want to be a good person? It seems like an obvious question, but the question could be maybe the goal isn't to be good. And my theory is if it is that we want to be good people and that's important to us, then we need to be the ones that define that for ourselves.

We need to remember that we are governing our own lives and we can define what it means to be good without someone else trying to knock us off of our own knowing and our own understanding of what goodness is in our lives.

And the challenge with that, my friends, is what I define as good and what someone else defines as good might be contradictory. And so they may think that I'm evil because I believe something different than them in terms of loving people and being open to everyone living the life that they choose to live.

And understanding that choices that we make in our own life do have consequences, of course, but that everyone and this is my belief system, everyone is worthy, 100% worthy as a human being and nothing can take that away. I believe that for every single human, and their experiences in this world and the way that they are educated as children will have a huge impact on whether they utilize their own agency to be their version of good.

And what I mean by that is I think there's a lot of mental challenges, cognitive challenges that happen with people who have a lot of extended trauma in their childhood that lead them to do things, break the laws in ways that we would then define them as not being a good person.

And then you go back into their history and you understand in many ways why someone might end up stealing something, or someone might end up lying about something, or someone might end up getting a fist fight with someone, for example. It doesn't mean that any of those things are okay or

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that any of those things are good, but I think that person can still be a good person at their core, a worthy person at their core.

So if we start to question this for ourselves, the first question is why do we want to be good? Then the second question has to be what does good mean to me? I am a good person if...

Now, when I Googled this, when I look up the general definition, being a good person means we act rightly. So we do the right things. And so we would question, like when I think through history, when I think present day, I think about wars, I think about justification of actions, I think in many situations, people think they're acting rightly, even though they may be causing harm.

People believe in their actions of rightness for the sake of what they believe is good. And so that puts us kind of into this challenge with having a general definition of what goodness is and what it means to be good. So the characteristics that a lot of people would agree that define goodness are empathy, being generous, being honest, being polite, smiling, being thoughtful, being gentle, being kind-hearted, not ever hurting anybody, right?

And these are just some general ideas that most people would agree. And I was looking at this and I kind of laughed a little bit about the honest one because a lot of people would argue that honesty is the best policy and you should always tell the truth and good people would never lie, and yet if we all went around just telling each other the truth all the time, I'm pretty sure we wouldn't actually think we were all good people. We would think that we were non-empathetic and rude and judgmental because we are. That is what we are.

So if we're trying to be good people, how do we deal with all the parts of our humanity that lead us to things that would not be perceived as good? Being honest all the time, I promise you, is in theory a very good idea and a

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very wholesome good thing to do, and in practice, could make a lot of people think you're not a good person. See what I'm saying?

And I was talking to my friend Aprille, she went to Barbados with me and I was talking about a situation that I'm dealing with in my personal life and she said, "I think generosity is overrated." And I was like, "What?" And she goes, "I do," she goes, "I think generosity is completely overrated as something to do."

And what's really interesting to me is Aprille is one of the most generous people I've ever met. She is generous to me in extraordinary ways, both financially and emotionally and personally and with her time in every way. So I just thought it was interesting when somebody takes something that's supposedly a good thing and says it's not so good, it's overrated. It makes you question like, what else should I question as goodness?

I think another one that I deal with more often than not is the idea of being kind and being nice and being gentle. Those are good things, especially I was taught that for girls. We should be kind and gentle and nice in all situations, and I think about a lot of painful situations that I've been through where I was trying to be kind and gentle and nice that did not serve the world by doing that, by trying to be good in that situation.

And in fact, ended up not confronting things that I needed to confront from people who were causing other people harm. And being unkind and not gentle in those situations I think for me was the better thing to do that would make me more of a "good" person.

So when I think about what it means for me to be a good person is to use my life, to use my precious gift of a life to evolve myself and to help other people as much as I possibly can. And if I can do that, it means I've lived a good life and that I'm a good person.

And so for me, a lot of the components of being a good person is having courage, courage to stand up for others. Sometimes that's not kind and

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gentle. And the fortitude to work through challenges and work through shame and work through embarrassment and work through pain. And end up on the other side of all of that is for me, goodness.

I think a lot of times in my life when I have been in the most pain, I have been creating self-loathing. And self-loathing may seem beautiful to other people, which is so interesting because it's like, if I'm hating myself and I'm constantly trying to make everyone around me happy, trying to constantly make everyone else see me as a good person, trying to make everyone else think that I'm a good girl as I was growing up, it caused me to hate myself. And how can that be being a good person?

Sacrificing what is in my heart, sacrificing my desires for other people, is that goodness? A lot of people would say yes, that the people who sacrifice their own personal desires, the people that don't use their life for their own selfish dreams are the good people that go out and do everything for everybody else.

And so knowing that there are these different perspectives of goodness, you're never going to be able to make everybody think you're good, which is really frustrating if the goal is to be a good person and you are looking externally for the rules on how to do that.

And I have coached so many people on their belief that they are not good, that they are not worthy, that they are not acceptable. And the reason why is because they can't figure out the rules that they can follow so everyone will think so. And the reason why you can't is because everyone has different rules. Everyone has different expectations of goodness and of how you should live your life.

And if you have people in your life that you are seeking approval from, if you have authority figures that you're seeking approval from in your life and they are not acknowledging you as a good person, then that could be detrimental to your own self-image because then you may not see yourself as a good person.

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So then what is the solution to this? How do we live a more conscious life? How do we live a “better” life that’s aligned with goodness, if that’s why we are here and that’s important to us? Then we have to make a plan for what goodness is for us, and we have to remember it if someone else doesn’t think we are good.

And that was one thing Oprah said. She goes, “I know who I am, I know what my intentions are, I know what it means to make a contribution and use my influence. And it hurts me when other people don’t see that.” She was really struggling with it, it really hurt her that other people weren’t seeing it that way. But she had to just keep coming back to her center and knowing who she is and what she believes in and honoring that.

And for her, in many ways, that is aligned with her relationship with God and what she believes is expected of her. And that is her paradigm for how she sees goodness.

If there was some ultimate judge of goodness in the world that we could all align with and follow the rules for and understand, then this would be a very clear judgment. We could say this person’s good and this person isn’t. But because there isn’t, I believe that we’re all here to create that for ourselves. That is why we have our own agency. That’s why we have our own freedom of choice to decide most of all what we think consciously and therefore what we feel and do.

And if you haven’t thought about this, like really thought about this, it’s worth thinking and asking yourself the question, is it important for me to be good in my own eyes and why? Because the answer may be no. Goodness may not be something that you want to continue to value as the focus of your life.

Just like for me, I no longer am constantly seeking happiness, to be happy all of the time, because it’s just not what the world is set up for me to do. And I love the contrast of the discomfort, the comfort, the unhappiness, the

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happiness, the mixture of that recipe has given me a way better life than trying to be happy all the time.

It's ironic. When I was trying to be happy all the time, I was basically miserable all the time. So what does it mean for you to be a good person? If accomplishment in your life is important, if being generous is important for you to be a good person, if sharing, if being fair, if being empathetic, if helping other people, if dedicating your life to other people, making a contribution, whatever it is for you, write it down. Know the rules of what it means for you to be a good person.

If you have a religion that you were raised in, what are the components of that that you really resonate with, that really make sense to you? And are there some that don't? And have you given yourself permission to believe that you're a good person even if you don't align with some of the things that maybe you were taught? Can you trust yourself to be able to discern and evaluate that for your own personal life?

And once you've created that definition for yourself, then you have to explore what will it mean for you if people disagree. One of the things for me that I've really become clear about is that there are a lot of people who believe that a woman in my position, having wealth, means I'm not a good person.

It means that I'm greedy and evil and out only for myself. And so I have to decide if that is something that is really important to me, that every single person thinks I'm a good person, then I should probably have less money because maybe they wouldn't think that as much, right? Isn't that crazy?

And so I have to decide, no, for me, I can be a very good person. I talk about this a lot in my *What's Possible* book. I can be a very good person and a very wealthy person and a happy person half of the time. Those things are not mutually exclusive. And they're also not exclusive.

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It's not like you have to be rich to be happy, or you have to be wealthy to be happy, or you have to be wealthy to be a good person. But it also goes the other way too, right? You don't have to be less rich in order to be a good person.

And so what does it mean for you? What does goodness mean for you? What do you want it to mean? And how can you live into that that feels like freedom, even if someone else disagrees?

Another area of my life where I've really had to do a lot of work since I was in my 20s was saying no and being honest about things that I didn't want to do. And that I would tell that person no without maybe giving them an explanation or giving them an honest explanation that I just don't want to.

Really challenging in the beginning to believe that I was a good person when I was saying no, especially I had - I give this example a lot where one of my friends had asked me to come to a bake sale and sell some baked goods for her son for a fundraiser that they were having and I said, "No, I'm not going to do that."

And she said why, and I said, "I just really don't want to." And that was it. I told her I would give her the money that would be made from the bake sale, I'd be happy to donate that money, but I didn't want to come and do the bake sale.

And can you walk away from that, especially if you're not going to give the money either? Can you walk away from saying no to something that someone needs really and that is for another person, and still be a good person? And I think the answer is yes.

I don't think you have to follow the rules of what other people think, like you should volunteer your time at this bake sale in order to prove to me that you're a good person. And if I say no and she doesn't think I'm a good person, that has to be okay with me, right? Because otherwise I'm lying, I'm

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doing a lot of things that I don't want to do, against my own will, and pretending that I'm a "good" person when that's not my actual truth.

My definition of a good person is different than that. So that's what you have to decide for you. What are your values? What do you believe? And where do you look to find those answers? Can you look inside of yourself and feel confident that you know who you are and you know that by your definition you are good, and that is good enough?

And if other people don't think you're a good person because they don't like the way that you set up your Maui fundraiser, then you can still stand in your own goodness and know that for yourself. And that requires a tremendous amount of autonomy and courage and fortitude to be your own person.

One of the things that I think is fascinating about humans and human nature is that we are definitely group-oriented. So we like to be in groups for safety and we like everyone to agree on the same things. That's why we like to be in groups of people that believe the same things, and we like to work against things we don't think are good together, and we want to be good. We want to all see ourselves as good and we want the people around us to see us as good.

So this is where we can actually get into a lot of trouble. If you look through history, there are groups of people who believed in the atrocities of what they were doing in the world because everyone in their group believed that they were good and the other people were bad, and that they were doing good things, even though in retrospect, we look back and we're like, "How in the world did that happen?"

We see it as pure evil, but in their minds, they could see it as them being good, them doing righteous things in the world. And so that's why it's so important for us, even when we're parts of groups where everyone agrees on something, we have to question, is this right for me? Do I believe that this is good? Does this feel like love? Does this feel like goodness to me?

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And if it doesn't, we've got to go. We've got to change that. We've got to acknowledge that in my opinion because I think that it's very important to be able to look at ourselves and know that we are worthy and know that we are good by our own definition. And not necessarily by our parents or the people around us, unless we consent to that definition of goodness.

So as you go through this process, as you go through questioning who do you look for for the ultimate approval, I hope that you will decide that consciously and you won't let it be just the group of people that's around you. You will let it be you, based on what you know for sure to be true for us.

And then know your why. Why you want to be good. Because what will that bring you in your life? Being good, even by your own definition, is a challenging task. So you want to make sure that there is a reward in it for you.

And I just want to leave you with one caveat on this. You are gentle with yourself when it comes to defining your own behavior and judging your own character based on it. It's important to separate who you are from your behaviors because a lot of times, you might lose your temper, or you might do something that hurts someone else, or you may overeat a bunch of food, or you may drink too much, or do too many drugs, or cheat on someone.

You may do something that you don't define as good and you may feel guilty about that. And I think that's a good barometer for you. That's a good way to put up those guardrails and bring you back on track. But do not let yourself fall into the trap of making that evidence that you're not a good person.

Because if you don't think you're a good person, you will perpetuate not being a good person. And it will make you believe in yourself less and less and less, and you will try more and more and more to convince other people that you're good to try and compensate for that feeling. And that will

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end up leaving you hating yourself and pretending. I've been there, my friends, and that is not worth doing.

There needs to be space for getting off track, there needs to be space for mistakes, there needs to be space for failure so we can bring ourselves back, realign, and carry on.

Alright my friends, I hope you have the most beautiful week and I will talk to you next week. Take care.

Hey, if you've ever wanted to work with me as your coach, now is the time to do it. You can join me in Get Coached in Scholars by going to TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. This is going to be the best year ever. It's your turn to change your life. Let's go.