

“Good Will Toward All and the Will to do Good”

A SOPHIA One-sheet by James William Lincoln and Eric Thomas Weber



Part I: Good Will and the Will to do Good

“And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, **‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’**”

– King James Bible, Luke 2:10-14

“Goodwill® works to enhance the dignity and quality of life of individuals and families by strengthening communities, eliminating barriers to opportunity, and helping people in need reach their full potential through learning and the power of work.”

– Goodwill Industries International Inc., Goodwill® Mission Statement

“There is nothing it is possible to think of anywhere in the world, or indeed anything at all outside it, that can be held to be **good without limitation**, excepting only a **good will**.”

– Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

Part II: Investigation Questions

- (1) What does it mean to have good will towards others?
- (2) The winter months are often associated with a season of good will and giving. Should we think of good will as having a “season” and, if so, what does the seasonal quality of holiday good will mean for the rest of the year?
- (3) What is the relationship between peace on earth and good will?
- (4) When you give a donation for the benefit or gift you receive in return, such as a t-shirt, free parking, or better tickets to a sports game, does the thing you receive change whether or not your gift was charitable?
- (5) Is good will towards others a kind of altruism? Is altruism always at odds with self-interest? Why or why not?
- (6) What do you think of Goodwill’s mission statement (above)? Does it seem to align with Kant’s or Luke’s vision of the good will? What do dignity and the quality of life of individuals have to do with good will?
- (7) Is Goodwill’s mission a good model for the religious and moral idea of good will? Are there other individuals or organizations that embody good will?
- (8) Does good will around the holidays mean being charitable? If so, should we be more charitable at other times of year?

Part III: More questions on good will and what the right thing is to do:

- (9) Can being charitable to others become patronizing in a hurtful way? If so, when? What's the difference?
- (10) Would a person of good will ever lie? If so, under what conditions? If not, why not?
- (11) If you try to do the right thing but fail, have you still done a good thing?
- a. Imagine trying to help someone out of an automobile accident, and in the process that person gets hurt more than if only paramedics had helped. Have you still done a good thing in this case?
 - b. Next, imagine trying to help save a drowning child who dies despite your efforts to save her or him. Have you still done a good thing in trying to help?
- (12) Do people today have good will toward those with whom they disagree politically? Should they? Why or why not, to each question?
- (13) Think of a President or other public figure with whom you have disagreed intensely. Did you, do you, or would you have good will toward that person? Should you have? If so, why? If not, why not?
- (14) When some people are caught doing something wrong, they admit that they knew what they were doing was wrong. Why do some people feel motivated to do the right thing and others not? Does everyone sometimes do the wrong thing?

Notes:
