

Godliness

- I. Understanding godliness
 - a. Godliness does not only mean righteous living
 - i. “Cleanliness is next to godliness “exemplifies this use
 - ii. 1 Timothy 5:4 is an example of this: “But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.”
 - b. An important aspect of godliness is the God-focused nature of one’s life
 - i. 2 Peter 3:11 – “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,”
 - ii. A life that places God on the throne in the center of his life will make choices in view of His rule
 - iii. A life that partakes of God’s nature will reject carnal pleasures that draw him back to the world
 - iv. A life that views eternity with God as a destination will avoid every obstacle and detour that would inhibit his travel or take him away from God
 - v. A life that views God as the source of all knowledge and wisdom will seek His counsel before choosing a course of action
 - c. As godliness matures the Christian’s life will reflect God’s nature and eclipse his worldly nature
 - i. The natural tendency to hate one’s enemies and seek retribution and vengeance will be replaced by a godly desire to love, pray for, bless, and act in the interest of one’s enemies
 - ii. The natural tendency to seek glory for oneself and exert his will on others will be replaced by a mind of Christ that esteems others better than self, denies self, and glorifies God
 - iii. The natural tendency to hoard possessions will be replaced with generosity and selflessness that will not close its heart to a brother’s need and will earn money in order to give to the needy
 - iv. The enemies of the apostles knew that they had been with Jesus because of the change in their nature reflected in the boldness of their actions, Acts 4:13
 - v. 2 Corinthians 3:18 – “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another...”
 - d. Godliness is the logical expression of children who wish to be like their heavenly Father
 - i. 1 John 3:9-10 – God’s children will not be characterized by a sinful life
 - ii. A child who wants to be like a parent does not do so in order to replicate actions but they see something in the nature of their parent that they want to emulate
 - iii. We should be so awestruck by God’s glory, holiness, love, and nature that we want to embody all of His characteristics to the greatest degree we can attain;

not in order to gain some reward or avoid some pain but to simply be like Him because He is the most wonderful being we know

- e. The characteristic of godliness is a God-focused attitude producing pious living as its fruit with the goal of being like the Father in thought and action

II. Challenges to a God-focused life

a. **W_Question #1: What obstacles stand in the way of a God-focused life?**

- i. The physical nature of our existence challenges our ability to focus on spiritual priorities
- ii. The myriad of details that one must face everyday can distract us from godliness
- iii. An person uncommitted to God will waver in his priorities and live inconsistently

b. Leaving a life immersed in selfishness and rebellion for a life focused on God and holiness

i. **H_Question #1: How can one develop godliness after wallowing in moral decay and self-will? (1 Peter 4:1-6; Ephesians 5:1-12)**

1. Exchange self-will for obedience to God's will

- a. This will not be easy for one who has prided themselves on self-reliance
- b. It will be easier when one sees self-reliance as an illusion
- c. Realization that one does not know everything and may actually know nothing
- d. Replace pride with humility and selfishness with selflessness

2. Ask God's forgiveness for sinful actions and unholy thinking

- a. It is a challenge for one who has embraced immorality to seek holiness
- b. It is a challenge for one who has lived in rebellion to forgive themselves
- c. 1 Peter 4:2,7: live no more for passions but for God's will exercising self-control
- d. Do the works of light (Ephesians 5:7-11) avoiding the wickedness of darkness

3. Allow God to cleanse the mind

- a. We have to cut off the pollutants from our minds that defile our thoughts
- b. Philippians 4:8 – "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
- c. This demands the characteristic of self-control and virtue to avoid what is evil and to courageously choose those things that are excellent

- ii. Remember the foolishness, chaos, and shame of wickedness when tempted to return to a defiled life (2 Peter 1:9)

- c. Lack of commitment to godliness
 - i. **W_Question #3: What characteristics in a person's life would impede the full development of godliness?**
 1. As already observed, self-will, pride, and unholy living
 2. Seeking one's own comfort over doing good works
 3. Lack of total commitment to God
 4. Affection on things of this world
 5. Lack of good habits that develop godliness
 6. Love of anything that one would not give up for God
 - ii. **H_Question #4: How does godliness encourage perseverance?**
 1. Godliness can motivate the Christian to make a wise choice in a difficult situation because of the desire to be like God and not do anything inconsistent with that goal
 2. When godliness is firmly integrated into the life of the Christian, he will not want to give up all that he has become in exchange for the passing pleasures of sin
 3. 2 Peter 3:11 – continue in godliness in view of judgment
- d. Lack of direction
 - i. **H_Question #3: How does knowledge strengthen godliness?**
 1. God has revealed all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)
 2. Knowledge teaches us about God so that we might grow in our love and admiration of Him and fuel our desire to be like Him
 3. Knowledge teaches what to do and what to avoid in order to be like God
 4. Knowledge explains the wasted life and eternal punishment of an ungodly life
 - ii. **W_Question #2: Can one have a God-focused life without daily prayer and study? Explain.**
 1. One cannot go towards God daily without seeking His counsel, aid, and leadership
 2. Godliness is an immersion into the divine nature, not an occasional visit
 3. Kempis: "Daily ought we to renew our purposes, and to stir up ourselves to greater fervor, as though this were the first day of our conversion; and to say, 'Help me, my God! in this my good purpose, and in Your holy service; and grant that I may now this day begin perfectly; for that which I have done hitherto is as nothing.'"
 - iii. **H_Question #5: How can you exercise yourself to godliness? (1 Timothy 4:7-8)**
 1. Study and meditate on God's word to learn about Him and His way
 2. Pray to God for help, wisdom, guidance, and to offer praise
 3. Strive to see things from God's viewpoint (i.e., love for enemies)
 4. In every decision ask if the decision helps you to become more or less like God or whether it pleases God

iv. H_Question #2: How should a God-focused life affect our choices?

1. Choose to do what is right in the “little things” that seem inconsequential
2. Choose to do what is right when no one is looking
3. Realization that some “minor” choices can have a major impact on our life and eternity and should be considered in the context of a desire for godliness

III. Godliness is the product of discipline

- a. We have to train ourselves for godliness—it will not come naturally.
- b. Godliness is profitable for this life and the life to come