

Godliness: *For Goodness Sake*. Intro

There are at least two charges that are presented to us by the Apostle Paul, both of which are challenges to our growth and development into Christlikeness. One is putting off the old self, i.e., dealing with sin in our lives. The second is putting on the new self, i.e., growing in Christian character (**Eph 4:17-24**).

"To put on the new self" is to abandon old, sinful behaviors and adopt a new identity defined by righteousness and holiness, created in the likeness of God. This process of sanctification and transformation is a conscious, ongoing process that involves renewing one's mind, rejecting deceitful desires, and actively living out our faith (**Phil 2:12-16**).

With this intentional effort toward growing in godliness, we have the fruit of the Spirit as a nine-fold list of traits that identify Christian character (**Gal 5:22-23**). There are also additional lists that are just as important to our understanding of what constitutes this type of character (**Col 3:12-16; Eph 4:2-3 and 32; James 3:17; 2 Ptr 1:5-7**).

For the purpose of our study, Godliness is more than Christian character. It covers the totality of the Christian life and provides the foundation upon which Christian character is built. It is the development of our godliness, "God-likeness", that shapes how we live and how we are viewed (**1 Tim 4:8**).

There is no higher compliment that can be paid to a Christian than to call him or her a godly person. In light of any other accolades that could be attributed to us, none of them matter if at the same time we are not seen as godly people; for goodness' sake (**Titus 2:11-13**).

This is why we are to train ourselves to be godly by pursuing it with unrelenting, persevering effort, not as a burden but as a privilege and a duty. This pursuit is simplified by God so that we don't need any special talent or equipment, or any prominence or pedigree (**2 Peter 1:1-4**). The most ordinary and most talented believers are both gifted for godliness.

What then is godliness? What are the marks of a godly person? How does a person become godly? Our goal in this study is to dive deeper than just answering these questions with terms like "Godlike", "Christlike", and "the fruit of the Spirit". Yes, godliness includes all of these, but it is certainly more than that.

Foundationally, godliness is *devotion in action* (**Gen 5:21-24; Heb 11:5**). From these two passages, we discover that Enoch walked with God, enjoyed a relationship with God, and pleased God. In other words, we could say he was devoted to God. This is the meaning of godliness.

The New Testament word for godliness, in its original meaning, conveys the idea of a personal attitude toward God that results in actions that are pleasing to God. This personal attitude toward God is what we call devotion to God, but it is always devotion and action.

Akin to, but different from, what we know to be our practice of scripture reading, prayer, meditation, and fasting as our daily “*devotions*”. Even our daily devotions are a part of our devotion in action. But not just a rote or routine activity, it is an attitude *toward* God and is inspired *by* God.

This attitude of devotedness to God is composed of three essential elements: The fear of God. The love of God. The desire for God. All of these focus on God. Therefore, the practice of godliness is an exercise or discipline that focuses upon God, and out of this arises the character and conduct that we usually think of as godliness.

It is this God-centered devotion that we need first before trying to develop Christian character, making it nearly impossible to please God without taking the time to walk with Him and develop a relationship with Him (**Heb 11:6**). When we fear Him, love Him, and desire Him, He will then be the center-most part of our lives (**1 Cor 10:31**).

Devotion to God, then, is the mainspring of Godly character. And this devotion is the only motivation for Christian behavior that is pleasing to God. He will be at the center of our thoughts. Our most basic duties will be done to His glory. Our daily walking, talking, living will look like Him.

Godliness is more than Christian character; It is Christian character that springs from a devotion to God. But it is also true that devotion to God always results in godly character. Therefore, our working definition for this study is that: *Godliness is devotion to God that results in a life that is pleasing to Him* (**Col 1:9-12; Heb 13:20-21**).