

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.

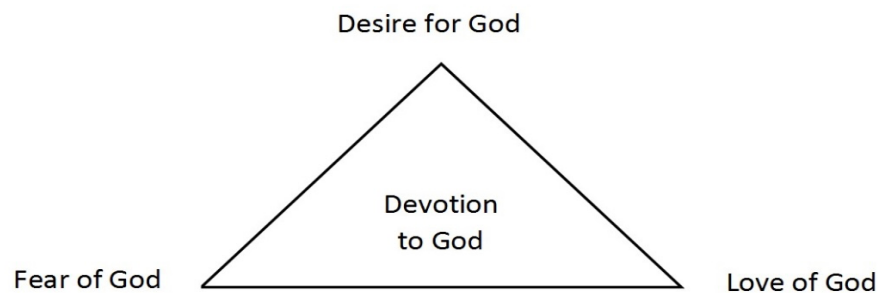
Godliness is more than Christian character; It is Christian character that springs from a devotion to God. But it is also true that devotion to God always results in godly character. Therefore, our working definition for this study is that: *Godliness is devotion to God that results in a life that is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

Godliness: *For Goodness Sake*. Part 2

We have created a working definition that: *Godliness is devotion to God that results in a life that is pleasing to Him (Eph 2:10 AMP)*. In other words, the practice of godliness is an ever-evolving *exercise* or *discipline* that focuses on God, and out of it is developed the character and conduct that helps us to look more like Him.

The ability to wear this *garment* of godliness (**Eph 4:22-24**) is in devotion and focus on Him above all else, where He becomes the preeminent presence in our lives (**Col 1:9-18**). Our concept, or what we believe about God and our relationship with Him, will determine our approach and our conduct.

Therefore, if we desire to have a Spirit-led devotedness to God, it requires an intentional fear of God, love of God, and desire for God. Individually, the fear of God and the love of God form the foundation of true devotion to God, while the desire for God is the highest expression of that devotion.



The Fear of God:

While the fear of God may seem like an OT concept, it is as much of a truth and expectation in the NT, with some distinction (**Jer 32:40; Acts 9:31**). The OT presented it primarily as an “anxious dread”, while the NT presents it as that of veneration, reverence, and awe.

Fear as anxious dread is produced by the realization of God’s impending judgment on sin (**Gen 3:10**) and rightly so, particularly for the unsaved. As believers, we have been delivered from the fear of the wrath of God (**1 Jn 4:17-19**), though we are still subject to the discipline of God for our sinful ways, in which we still fear God (**Phil 2:12-13**).

This fear is the soul of godliness. It is the attitude that elicits from our hearts adoration and love, reverence and honor. For the saved, it focuses not on the wrath of God but upon the majesty, holiness, and transcendent glory of God (**Is 6:1-5; Mt 17:1-8**). It is impossible to be devoted to God if our hearts aren’t filled with a reverential fear of God.

We have to see Him first in His transcendent glory, majesty, and holiness before we see Him in His love, mercy, and grace. In the heart of the godly, there is a healthy tension that exists between the reverential awe of God and his glory and the childlike confidence in God as a heavenly father.

Without this tension, a Christian's childlike confidence can easily degenerate into a presumption that God's love makes all things permissible. This is how we end up with a lack of seriousness in our approach to the throne in prayer, our public presentation of God, and our light and trite embrace of the things of God.

Much to its demise, modern-day Christianity dishonorably magnifies the love of God almost to the exclusion of the fear of God: God is not only love (**1 Jn 4:8**), He is also Holy (**1 Ptr 1:16**). We need not preach fire and brimstone as an awakening to the love of God, but neither should we look for His love so much that we ignore His law and precept.

In other words, we should magnify the love of God, and although we bask in His love and mercy, we must never lose sight of His Majesty and His Holiness. This is why a "right concept" of God is so essential. It underpins and shapes our theology, daily actions, and relationship with the divine.

To fear God is to confess His absolute uniqueness (**Ex 15:11**); To acknowledge His Majesty, holiness, awesomeness, glory, and power. Along with this confession comes a healthy fear that helps to regulate our conduct (**Deut 6:2**). When we begin perceiving God as these things, our worship will begin to determine our behavior.

The fear of God should provide a primary motivation for, as well as result in, obedience to him. If we truly reverence God, we will obey him, since every act of disobedience is an offense to his dignity and His Majesty. It shows that we are, intentionally or unintentionally, dismissive of His person, character, will, and word.

The essential ingredients of the fear of God are correct concepts of the character of God, a pervasive sense of the presence of God, and a constant awareness of our obligation to God.
-Rev Albert N Martin, *The Fear of God*.

Questions:

1. In what way do you think you may have conflated or misaligned the fear of God and the love of God? How can a new understanding of the distinction between the two help you appropriate them?
2. A good way to make your study of godliness practical is to plan specific applications you can make in your daily speech, attitudes, and behavior. Take a moment to think out and write down some applications of godliness that can challenge you this week. Then consider which scripture passage is used in this study would be helpful to keep in mind for these applications.

Godliness: *For Goodness Sake*. Part 3

Three things are essential for a life of devotion to God that bears the fruit of godliness; a life that is pleasing to Him. Of these three, *the fear of God* and *the love of God* form a foundational necessity that gives support and motivation towards the third, *a desire for God*.

We've discovered that the fear of God, for the believer, is not the "anxious dread" that it once was in the ancient OT history of Israel. In contrast, the unbeliever should be afraid of the judgment and wrath of God (**Jn 3:36; Rom 5:8-9**). The fear of God, for the believer, is a reverential "fear" that is inspired by the majesty and holiness of God.

It's in this embrace of a healthy fear and reverence for the person and character of God that we begin to understand, accept, and share in the love of God. Understanding it means that we don't bring our own definition to it. Accepting it means that we don't try to change it to suit ourselves. Sharing it means exuding it in its truest sense.

The Love of God:

Only the "God-fearing" Christian can truly appreciate the love of God as that which bridged the gap (chasm) between a Holy God and a sinful creature. It is out of this reverence for His uniqueness that love is born. While His love is multi-faceted, all acts of His love come secondary to sending His Son to die for our sins (**1 Jn 4:9-10**).

Part of our pursuit of godliness is never forgetting that we were at one time objects of His wrath and are now His beloved children of light (**Eph 5:8**). This is only because of the cross of Calvary and its display being the ultimate expression of God's love. Jesus did not die just for us to have peace and purpose in life, but to save us from the wrath of God.

In a slight conundrum, the more we understand being rescued from His wrath, the more we can appreciate His love, and the deeper our perception of God's love to us in Christ, the more profound our reverence and awe (**Ps 130:3-4**). In our practice of godliness, then, we must seek to grow both in the fear of God and in an ever-increasing comprehension of the love of God.

As a challenge, this awareness of God's love for us in Christ must be *personalized* in order for it to become one of the solid "foundational corners" of our triangle of devotion to God. It is not enough to believe that God loved the world; we must be gripped by the realization that God loves me, specifically as an individual.

There's more to it than an idea that God's love is a giant umbrella covering all of those who seek to find safety and refuge beneath it. God's love is that large in a sense, but it is also so minute and specific that it finds itself meeting the very smallest and seemingly insignificant details of our very lives (**Mt 10:27-31**).

The uniqueness of God's love is that He can know us in every aspect of our person, sinfulness included and still love us (**1 Tim 1:12-17**). Like Paul, the more we understand our unreservedness, the more we should be grateful and find ourselves growing in adoration and devotion.

If God's love for us is to be a solid foundation stone of devotion, we must realize that his love is entirely of grace and it only rests upon the work of Jesus Christ, then flows to us because of our being in Him. This is the only reason His love can never change, regardless of what we do.

God's love is unconditional, despite our spiritual ups and downs, sin, failure, discouragement, and our inability to make us question it. As difficult as it is to believe, God's love for us does not fluctuate according to our experience with it. His love is both the initiator and the sustainer (**1 Jn 4:19; Rom 8:35-39**).

An awareness of His love should stimulate in us an increased devotion to Him. And this devotion is active; it's not just a warm, affectionate feeling toward Him. It's godliness. Christ's love for us should *compel* us to abandon living for self and embrace the blessedness of living for Him (**2 Cor 5:14-15**).

Devotion to God begins with the fear of God, a biblical view of His majesty and holiness that elicits a reverence and awe of Him. The fear of God leads naturally to an apprehension of the love of God shown in Jesus Christ. As we increasingly contemplate God in His majesty, holiness, and love, we will be progressively led to the apex of the triangle of devotion: the desire for God.

*O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be! Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here's my heart;
O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above.*

- Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Godliness: *For Goodness Sake*. Part 4

Our newly explored definition of godliness has given us some metrics by which we can consider for ourselves how godly we truly are. Not with a mere “form of godliness”, but with a genuine measurable standard of attitudes, actions, and activities that determine how near or far we are from this ever-evolving pursuit (**2 Tim 3:1-7**).

The first of these measurables is the fear of God, which we have determined is, as believers, awe and reverence over and against, as non-believers, anxious dread. The second of these measurables is the love of God; how we understand it, how we receive it, and how we share it.

A Desire for God: Is the third measurable that becomes the pinnacle of our consideration of, *and* self-examination for, the concept of genuine godliness. Once we understand it, this measure is one that we can only gauge for ourselves, as a matter of our own heart's desire.

When the three come together, true godliness engages our affections and awakens within us a desire to enjoy God's presence and fellowship. It produces a longing for God himself. This alone can be what helps us determine the depth of our pursuit of godliness (**Ps 27:4; 42:1-2**).

As an example, the psalmist creates for us a standard of intensity for our desire for God's presence and fellowship that begs us to question our own. How much do we long for His presence? How much do we desire to be in fellowship with Him? Do we have a thirst to be with Him?

David enjoyed dwelling upon the majesty and greatness, the holiness and goodness, of God. But David did more than contemplate the beauty of God's attributes. He sought God himself (**Ps 63:1**). The Apostle Paul *matured*, after a true encounter with Jesus, into the same kind of desire (**Phil 3:7-11**).

This is how we take the pulse and heartbeat of the godly person. It is to be satisfied with God alone, but to never be satisfied with the present experience of God. For the godly, there is always a yearning for more, far beyond a casual desire; an overwhelming need for more of Him.

While this may seem more mystical than practical, it's not. It simply takes us beyond the casual thought of serving God, being busy doing his work, and even beyond some of our devotional practices. It is the desire to simply, yet profoundly, want to be with Him, wherever He is, in whatever He's doing (**Lk 10:38-42**).

It's discovering and acknowledging our inadequacy and insufficiency in and of ourselves and shifting our life's focus to our reliance upon God. Like a physically thirsty person who

needs water, or a hungry person who needs food, this spiritual thirst arises from a recognition of our dependence on God (Especially those who believe Him to be able).

This is imperative for our understanding of God's ways and why He allows us to experience dry, barren, dark, oppressive seasons. It is our experienced lack of what we really need that makes us really desire what we really need. This is why we shouldn't shun barren places and dry spells: they teach us both to want most and to seek most what we need most.

The Bible indicates from the beginning to the end, and for all eternity, that fellowship with God is God's plan for us; from "Adam where art thou" to "I stand at the door and knock" (**Gen 3:9; Rev 3:20**). His goal for us then, is that we are sanctified and mature to a state stage where we desire for ourselves the same thing that He desires for us (**Ps 37:4**).

To know that God has planted a desire and yearning for Him in our hearts produces and exudes an aura of warmth. It is the complete opposite of the cold and callous "form of godliness" that comes from a false sense of legalistic morality. Authentic godliness is warm and inviting, never cold and offensive.

This longing for God also produces a desire to glorify Him and please Him (**Is 26:8-9**). It is nearly impossible to separate our desire for God Himself and a desire for His glory. These two go hand in hand. The more we desire to be with Him, the more we will glorify Him. The more He is glorified, the more we will long to be with Him.

This is devotion to God; The fear of God, which is out of reverence and awe, veneration and honor toward him, married to an embrace deep within our souls of the love of God for us, demonstrated by Christ on Calvary. These two attitudes complement and support each other, producing within our souls a deep longing for the one who is awesome in splendor.

Godliness: *For Goodness Sake*. Part 5

But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise (train) yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come (1 Tim 4:7-8).

Much of what we have discovered thus far about godliness has been in principle, and our progress in them is possible. So, much more than just concepts or ideals is the need to put them to work so that they can have an effect on our lives. Just as the body needs to be exercised or trained to perform at optimal levels, our Spirit does even more so.

Particularly because our spiritual well-being, health, and wellness are often what determine our mental, emotional, physical, and even financial well-being. The unfortunate ignorance of many is assuming that our physical life will ever shape our spiritual life or that what we do outwardly will transform us inwardly.

Spiritual development and physical development share some similarities. With each, growth only comes with exertion and proper feeding. The Apostle Paul teaches Timothy that the same work and commitment that others put towards physical exercise should be put towards the pursuit of godliness.

There are several principles attached to the command to train or exercise ourselves toward godliness. The first is *personal responsibility*. As much as we would love for God to deposit or download godliness into us, it is ours to work out through confidence in His divine enablement (**Phil 2:12-13**).

Like any other endeavor that we are industrious with, we have to create a discipline, both intentional and regimented, around our growth in godliness. It is ours to pursue and to labor towards with the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit, who is simultaneously working on the inside to help us in sanctification (**1 Thess 5:23**).

The second principle is that *the object of this training is growth* in our personal spiritual life. Yes, we are to progress in ministry and service to others. But the ultimate goal is to grow in the fear of God, the comprehension of the love of God, and the desire for the presence and fellowship of God. It's then that ministry and service become second nature.

As the Apostle Paul compares physical training with training in godliness, the third principle is the *importance of minimum characteristics*. As with any training, exercise, or discipline, there are certain basic essentials, or bare minimums, that are associated with every practice.

The first of these undeniable minimums is *commitment*. Occurring repeatedly throughout scripture, there is an expectation that commitment is a driving force behind our pursuit of

God and godliness (**Ps 63:1; Jer 29:13; Phil 3:12; Heb 12:14; 2 Ptr 1:5-7**). There is a price to godliness, and it never goes on sale. It never comes cheaply or easily.

No one ever becomes godly without a commitment to pay the price of the daily spiritual training God has designed for our growth in godliness. The deliberate use of the verb exercise or train, *gymnazō* (GR), implies persevering, painstaking, diligent effort.

The second undeniable, irreducible minimum is a *competent teacher*. A competent teacher coaches, encourages, corrects, and helps maintain the highest standard. This is what the Holy Spirit does for us (**Jn 14:16-17, 14:26**). He teaches, trains, rebukes, corrects, and encourages us through His Word.

We simply can't grow in godliness without the knowledge of truth that comes from the teaching of the Word (**Titus 1:1**). This is not just the academic knowledge of Bible facts (**1 Cor 8:1-2**); it is spiritual knowledge taught by the Holy Spirit as He applies the truth of God to our hearts (**Lk 24:27, 32**).

The third minimum in the training process is *practice*. Practice is what puts feet to the commitment and applies the teaching of the coach or trainer, for which there is no shortcuts. Practice is where the skill is developed. The practice of godliness is what enables us to become godly Christians.

It is repeatedly agreeing with the Holy Spirit and attempting to *work out* the information, lessons, and wisdom with regularity and consistency. Studying, praying over the principles, and asking the Holy Spirit to apply them in our lives is the practice of godliness that becomes great gain.

(To be Continued)...

Godliness: *For Goodness Sake*. Part 6

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14).

Godliness as a defining characteristic of believers is attainable as we grow and mature in Christ. It doesn't happen overnight. It is a process that requires intentionality. The process consists of several minimal characteristics: commitment, yieldedness to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, practice, and time in the Word of God.

While all of these are certainly essential, it is the time we spend in/with the Word of God that is most transformative, from its initiating our faith to its refining our faith (**Rom 10:14-17; 2 Tim 3:16-17**). The word of God is the primary source for spiritual nourishment, transformation, and guidance.

As essential food for spiritual growth, it provides nourishment and strength. The word of God is described, both for new and mature Christians. As a tool for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, it transforms the mind (thoughts) and life (actions): it leads to a transformation of thoughts and actions.

As a source of revelation, it divulges God's will, His character, and His purpose and desire for the lives of His people. As a "lamp for my feet, and a light to my path," the Word of God provides wisdom, guidance, and instruction on how to live lives that are pleasing to Him.

When it comes to godliness, a prominent practice will be our time in the Word of God, and how we spend it varies according to the method of intake. These five methods of intake are important for growing in godliness: hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating.

The most common method of scriptural intake is ***hearing the Word*** of God taught by pastors and teachers. Unfortunately, this is a lightly regarded method by many who view it as somewhat ineffective based on personality-driven ministry.

Too often, we listen to be entertained instead of instructed, to be moved emotionally rather than moved to obedience. We are to hear and apply it to our lives (Ezek 33:30-33; Rev 1:3). The type of hearing God commends is with eagerness of both exploration and application (Acts 17:11; James 1:22-25).

The second method of scriptural intake is ***reading the Word*** for ourselves. This is the opportunity to learn directly from the Master Teacher Himself, the Holy Spirit. This is one of the ways that God speaks to us, teaches us, and reveals Himself to us directly as if we were speaking face to face (**Ex 33:11**).

Reading the word for ourselves helps us gain an overall perspective of the Bible. This can be done at length, with an approach that helps us understand the entirety of the scriptures as the history of Christianity, the whole counsel of God, and the plan and purpose of God as a whole (Acts 20:27).

The third method of scriptural intake is *studying the Word*. Reading the Word gives us breadth, but studying the Word gives us depth. This method requires greater diligence and mental intensity for analyzing a passage, comparing scripture with scripture, asking questions, making observations, and organizing the fruit of our study.

Every Christian, especially those pursuing godliness, should be a student of the Bible. Our growth and maturation can be weighed upon the scales of our scriptural diet (**Heb 5:12-14**). If the practice of godliness is important to us, we will create time for this level of engagement with the Word of God, i.e., commitment.

Bible *study* requires teachability to accept what we study, intention to obey it, mental discipline to apply it, prayerful dependence for help with it, and diligence to keep searching through it as for a hidden treasure (**Prov 2:1-5**). The result of these principles is the growth and development of godly character and living (**Vs. 5**).

The fourth method of scriptural intake is *memorization of the Word*. This storing of the Word enables us to grow in every area of our lives. Specifically, for our practice of godliness, it enables us to grow in our devotion to God and in the Godlike character that makes our lives pleasing to Him (**Psalm 119:11; Prov 7:1, 10:14; Jn 14:26**).

The fifth method of scriptural intake is *meditation on the Word*. In the OT, the word meditate means to murmur or to mutter, which in essence means to rehearse or recite as if talking to oneself. Meditating on the scriptures is like talking to ourselves about them, turning over in our minds the meanings, implications, and applications to our own lives.

This too is a command of God for godliness (**Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2**). Memorization is the first step toward meditation. Meditation takes the scriptures from mere memorization in the mind to application in our hearts. It opens our understanding, engages our affections, and addresses our wills.

Communion with God is the result of walking with him. His word is absolutely necessary and central to our communion with him. Pleasing God requires knowing his will; How he wants us to live, what he wants us to do. His word is the only means by which he communicates that will to us. It is impossible to practice godliness without a constant, consistent, and balanced intake of the word of God in our lives.

Godliness: *For Goodness Sake*. Part 7

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Col 3:12).

While all authentic Christians have a basic God-centeredness as an elemental part of our spiritual lives, we must grow in this devotion to God. This is why training ourselves to be godly is necessary; We have to make every effort to add godliness to our faith by growing both in our devotion to God and in our likeness to his character.

A crucial aspect of our growth in godliness must be a balanced approach to all three of the essential elements of devotion: fear, love, and desire. The labor of commitment, yieldedness to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, practice, and time in the Word of God only accent the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about our growth (1 Cor 3:7).

One of the ways to Express this vital dependence on God is by praying that *He* will *cause* us to grow in our devotion to Him (Ps 51:10, 86:11; Eph 3:16-19). Being committed to the practice of godliness, is reflected in our prayer life by our regularly asking God to increase our fear of Him, to deepen our understanding of His love for us, and to heighten our desire for His fellowship.

Upon His granting of our petitions, the ultimate test of our growth is much more than our activity; it's in our attitude of life. Obedience to the will of God is the ultimate test of our fear of God and the only true response to His love for us. God specifically states that we fear Him by keeping all of His decrees and commands (Deut 6:1-3; Jn 14:15, 15:10).

We can truly know if we fear God by determining if we have an earnest desire to obey His commands, to love what He loves, and to hate what He hates. Thusly, walking in the fear of God is equated with obedience to God and the measure of our obedience is an exact measure of our reverence for Him.

This is why God often reveals our own sinfulness to us as a means of answering our prayer for a deeper realization of His love. He reveals this to us so that we have an opportunity to acknowledge, repent, and be restored. Both the fear and the love of God motivate us to obedience, and that obedience proves that they are both at work in our lives.

Obedience is ultimately what helps us live a life of godly character and conduct. It's built on the inward foundation of devotion to God. It is the total opposite of the outward structure of character and conduct that breeds a cold morality, legalism, self-righteousness, and spiritual pride (Mt 23:23-27).

Taking on God's character comes from a hearts disposition that is devoted to doing *what* He says and doing *as* He does (1 Sam 15:22; Eph 5:1-2). This level of godliness consists of

two distinct but complementary traits, and both must be pursued equally: God-centeredness and Godlikeness.

When it comes to Godlikeness, a good place to start, but not be limited to, is the list of gracious qualities known as the fruit of the Spirit (**Gal 5:22-23**). To this list, the scriptures encourage us to add other traits like Holiness, humility, compassion, forbearance, contentment, thankfulness, considerateness, sincerity, and perseverance.

While these two lists may seem insurmountable in our own strength, we have to remember that each of these, individually and collectively, are the result of His work in us. This does not free us from our responsibility for the development of our Christian character, but instead that we fulfill our responsibility by his direction and by his enablement.

The first of several (6) basic principles that apply to all aspects of godly character is, ***Devotion to God is the only acceptable motive for actions that are pleasing to God.*** In other words, motives matter. Most of our motivations in this day and age are self-centered and or reward-based, where we pursue God for our own interests.

The pursuit of godliness and godly character must always have at its core the desire to live pleasing to God. When we are considering our actions, our forgiving, our serving, our witnessing, our giving, our testifying, we have to check even these virtuous things against our motives behind them.

Whether we walk in godly character to maintain our reputation before others, we want to feel good about ourselves, we want to arouse God's blessing, we want to live up to our upbringing, or we even fear being the recipients of God's discipline, even these motives don't have pleasing God at the center (**Gen 39:9**).

Take caution that unchecked and unsundered motives can expose the nature of true character. Ill motives will always expose ill character. We often need to be aware of our motives because our motives are attached to our character, and our character needs to be aligned with a devotion to pleasing God and being more like Him.

All of our actions, to be acceptable to God, must be done out of a sense of devotion to God, and what we are devoted to will be what motivates us the most (**Col 3:23**).