

R12.2 August 2022 Blog God-Likeness aka Godliness

The Bible calls us to Godliness.

Definition 1: The Old Testament word “Hasid,” appears 32 times, and most often refers to “godly” people. It is the base word for the “Hassidic” sect of Judaism. These recipients of grace experienced a demonstration of the impact of grace in their attitudes and conduct.

Definition 2: The New Testament Greek word for godliness is “Eusebeia” which appears fifteen times. The Apostle Paul describes godliness as a mystery. The mystery is God in the flesh, the life and essence of Jesus Christ (see 1Timothy 3:16).

Paul writes, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery” (see 1 Corinthians 2:7); the mystery being the Gospel of Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 3:3-4). To know Jesus is to know God. Jesus becomes the key to understanding the mystery of godliness. Why? Because “He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3). He is the epitome and ultimate example of godliness for us.

The pursuit of knowing Jesus Christ is to know God and become godly, to take on His character and His ways (see Jeremiah 9:23-24). It is who we are—and who we are becoming! How does this happen? Through knowledge (revelation), then justification, receiving the Holy Spirit, and discipline in developing a world view truth system (see 1Timothy 4:7), which leads to practice and maturation (see Hebrews 5:14). Growing in godliness is the pursuit of knowing God through His Son, learning truth and applying/obeying what is learned.

“Practice” becomes all-important as it is the evidence of godliness in us and provides assurance that we belong to Him and are on the path of growth in becoming more like Him (see 1John 2:3 and Hebrews 6:11-12). As a result, we take on the thinking and traits of God. Granted, we cannot fully define God given His omniscience. Therefore, an exhaustive godliness checklist is impossible. But

we know through His Word some of His characteristics, which He desires for us: virtue, truth, moral excellence, purity in motives, devotion to God, a heart for obedience, a desire to please God, wisdom, piety, faithfulness, self-control, perseverance, brotherly kindness, love, patience, kindness, goodness, all of which are displayed in Jesus (see 1Timothy 4:6-12, 2 Peter 1:4-8, and Galatians 5:22-23).

To pursue an understanding of God, we must produce a healthy fear of Him. And to fear Him will result in the display of our accurately handling biblical truth and doing good works, worthy of His approval. "Godliness" as used in 1 Timothy 2:10, "theosebeia" in the Greek, denotes Godly fear. Fear of God and good works, these are the marks of godliness.

What is contrary to godliness? Disputes, envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, constant friction, use of godliness for temporal gain, pleasing of men (1Timothy 6:5). This is a casual and fleshly view of God.

The world values and encourages success. The Bible encourages only faithfulness. The world encourages pragmatism, but expediency and efficiency over obedience is contrary to the scriptures. Our culture encourages political-correctness, and it demands it in our attitudes, speech, and conduct. To the contrary, godliness demands truth in love. Our culture expects us to not upset others and to compromise to avoid disagreement. Culture values men-pleasers, this is a mistake. Godliness demands God-pleasing. Saltiness in speech and contending for the faith have been replaced by niceness and politeness. We have moved from asking for forgiveness for true transgressions against God and others, to apologizing for offending people with our speech.

The world thinks: Truth is defined by the individual. Yours is as legitimate as mine.

Love means feeling good about someone, not the biblical mindset of doing what is in the best interest of another.

A pattern of these kinds of behaviors reflects an inaccurate understanding of the character of God and the expectation He has for us and serves as an introduction to the pathway to hell.

The man of God is taken away from evil (see Isaiah 57:1). He is driven by truth. Love and joy are experienced in his everyday life. His weapons are not power, pragmatism, diplomacy, politics, niceness, happy talk, and success as the world values, but the values and characteristics of Christ.

Granted, we are still bogged down with the flesh. Although it is ugly and a thorn in the side, we are no longer slaves to it (see Romans 6:6-14). We are now slaves to righteousness and on the path of godliness. We pray that we would become less so that He can become more (see John 3:30) and “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts” (Romans 13:14).

Paul writes, “But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment” (1Timothy 6:6). Here he criticizes the misuse of godliness as a vehicle to gain temporal profit or success but encourages godliness as the motive for eternal rewards. He suggests that contentment in the temporal is of great gain in the profit pursuit godliness offers in the eternal (see 1Timothy 4:8).

Application:

1. Continually study who Jesus is, His person and who He is to you in your life.
2. Study the meaning of true love in biblical terms and endeavor to apply it in your relationships with others. Consider whether withholding the truth to spare someone’s feelings is true love.
3. Do a study and discuss with your accountability group “what is contentment?” Grade yourself on this trait.
4. Growing in godliness seems to be a process. Are you lacking in some of these qualities? Pray and ask for them. God desires them for us. Prayer is the vehicle to obtain. “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2).
5. If Jesus is our model for godliness, what other examples can we emulate? A study of the lives of Enoch, Elijah, and Daniel would be a good start. Here we see men as thinking, convicted, driven, and obsessed, displaying godliness in their spheres of influence. Note that they faced circumstances and cultural challenges like what we experience today.