

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 11 – Godliness

Randy Thompson
Valley Bible Church
www.valleybible.net

Introduction

We have studied some of the general, overarching solutions for living a life that is glorifying to God. We have talked about the amazing work of God that He does in our life at the moment of salvation. We have talked about the Spirit's filling ministry in our lives as we live a worshipful life, bowed before God and not other masters. We have talked about the put-on/put-off dynamic of spiritual growth. Today, we want to talk about the need to cultivate a God-centered mindset.

Our understanding of God and what we think about Him affects us deeply. Therefore, we must cultivate a deep understanding of who God is and what He has done for us in Christ.

God is infinitely glorious, beautiful, and great. He is unchanging, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and sovereign. He is faithful, righteous, holy, loving, compassionate, forgiving, and longsuffering. By contrast, people (we) are sinners, totally corrupted, depraved, and dead in our trespasses and sins. The result of sin is that we are lost, separated from God, totally incapable of moving toward Him on our own, without hope in this life and destined for hell in the next. God loved us so much that He sent His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus did not die on the cross so that we could have our "best life now" or be healthy and wealthy. He died so that those who exercise the gift of true saving faith would be saved from their sin!

When we understand God for who He has revealed Himself to be in His Word, all other affections fall away and we are driven to our knees in worship. Having a proper God-consciousness is critical to living a life pleasing to God. The more our thoughts are set on the things above, the more it will cultivate a heart motive to obey, please, honor, and glorify Him.

"Focusing on the Attributes of God is one of the most proactive and preventive activities you can undertake in order to be prepared to overcome the snares of sin and Satan." Kenneth Mick Sr. in "Lion slayer: Using the right truth to slay the enemy"

Let's think about our days. So, Monday morning after church on Sunday, your alarm goes off long before the sun rises, 9 minutes later it goes off again, 9 minutes later it goes off again... until you finally stumble out of bed, take a shower, get dressed, eat breakfast and put some coffee on for your wife, and leave your wife a little love note. You commute to work taking one of your co-workers because his car is broken-down. You do your work putting in 8 hard hours because you are getting paid for 8 hours. You are a great co-worker, treating your workmates with kindness and thoughtfulness. You leave work, but first jump start the car of someone in the parking lot. You come home, eat quickly, and take the kids to an activity where you volunteer. You finally get home in the evening, get kids to bed, help your wife clean up from dinner and the day, and plan for the other activity that you do with the kids that week. You watch some TV to relax a minute, go to bed, and wake up the next morning to start this over again.

Obviously, from this example, we do not know what is going through this person's mind. However, just from this example, what is missing? Is God relevant in this person's life? Is God important? What about us? This study will look at God being relevant in our life.

Godliness Defined

The word for God being relevant in our lives is "godliness". In order to define something, often times it is instructive to define its opposite first. So, let's begin with defining "ungodliness".

The Greek word for “ungodliness” is “asebeia” deriving from “a” meaning “without” and “sebeia” meaning “worship”. It is used in six verses in the New Testament (Romans 1:18; 11:26; 2 Timothy 2:16; Titus 2:12; Jude 15, 18) and describes a heart attitude of a lack of reverence or piety toward God. It is living as if God is irrelevant. It describes the person who is living without regard for God and in a way that denies His existence and right as Supreme Ruler and Authority of one’s life. It is a non-responsive attitude toward God that is displayed in a life that gives little or no thought to God and shows a meager desire to know him. When our focus is off God in any way, then we are living in an ungodly way.

Jerry Bridges in his book “Respectable Sins” says this: “Ungodliness may be defined as living one’s everyday life with little or no thought of God, or of God’s will, or of God’s glory, or of one’s dependence on Him.”

Remember the day in the life of the “good” person that we started with? For many people, ungodliness is consistent with living a good life: having high morals, being a thoughtful spouse, being a diligent worker, lending a helping hand, being a loving and involved father or mother, or being a good friend and neighbor. We can be all these things and still be living in an ungodly way. We do not blaspheme God or willfully deny Him, but neither do we care about Him or what He wants us to do. We live as though God does not matter.

Let’s look more closely at those four things that describe ungodliness.

No thought of God

Having no thought of God is how the unsaved lives.

¹Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. Psalm 36:1

⁴The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*. All his thoughts are, “There is no God.” Psalm 10:4

God should be the most important thing in our life. He should be foremost on our minds. Our thoughts should be, “God desires _____ from me and _____ for me!” This is not complicated. The more we think of God, the more we are aware of His presence in our life; the more we will desire to live in a way that honors Him.

The Spirit through Paul exhorts us to “set our mind on the things above”.

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²**Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.** ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3:1-3

“Set your mind” means to have this inner disposition. Have your mind set on God. This is meditating on God’s attributes and works. This section in Colossians goes on to talk about putting off sin as a result of setting our mind on things above and not on the things of the world.

❖ **What fills your thoughts?**

We must set our mind on God!

The second thing that describes the ungodly is...

No thought of God’s will

John MacArthur in his commentary of James says, “...nothing more clearly summarizes the character of a genuine believer than a desire to do the will of God.”

⁸I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.” Psalm 40:8

¹⁰Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Psalm 143:10a

God’s will for us is found in God’s Word. God’s Word must be on our minds.

¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. ³He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:1-3

¹⁴I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. ¹⁵I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways. ¹⁶I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word. Psalm 119:14-16

⁹⁷O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Psalm 119:97

As we go through the day and enter new circumstances, we need to be thinking: what are God’s precepts, principles, and promises for me now?

¹¹Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. Psalm 119:11

One of the indicators of ungodliness is the meager desire to develop a close relationship with God. What should this desire look like?

¹As the deer pants for the water brooks, **So my soul pants for You, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;** When shall I come and appear before God? Psalm 42:1-2

¹O God, You are my God; **I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,** In a dry and weary land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1

❖ **Do you yearn for God?**

❖ **Do you thirst for God?**

❖ **Do you think of God’s Word so you can know God better and what He wants for you?**

God’s Word must be important to us!

The third thing that describes the ungodly is...

No thought of God’s glory

To glorify God is to show His character in our motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. We glorify God when we live in a way that those around us can look at us and see what God’s character is like (Exodus 33:17-23). When a Christian lives a life that brings glory to God, he is fulfilling his/her purpose (2 Peter 1:5; Isaiah 43:7). Glorifying God is the believer’s highest calling. We can do it every minute of every day no matter what our circumstances.

- We can glorify God when we have work we enjoy.
- We can glorify God when we have work we do not enjoy.
- We can glorify God when we have no work.
- We can glorify God if we are single.
- We can glorify God if we are married to a wonderful person.
- We can glorify God if we are married to a horrible person.
- We can glorify God at leisure.
- We can glorify God at rest.

- We can glorify God at all the time.

The true believer is freed from the power of sin over their life. Therefore, we can glorify God all the time because glorifying God is a choice. Regardless of the circumstances, we can choose to display the fruits of the Spirit as we are filled with the Spirit.

❖ **Do you care about God's glory?**

❖ **Do you desire to honor God with your choices?**

It is ungodliness that makes us not care about God's glory.

The fourth thing that describes the ungodly is...

No dependence on God

When we are not dependent on God, we make plans without consulting Him, asking His blessing, or remembering that our success depends on Him. The truth is: we live only because God so wills it; He controls life and death.

²⁸for in Him we live and move and exist, Acts 17:28

³⁹“See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; **It is I who put to death and give life.** I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand. Deuteronomy 32:39

⁹“Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this, ¹⁰**In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?** Job 12:9-10

Making plans without recognizing our dependence on God is tantamount to saying, “I am the sovereign ruler of my own life.” Acknowledging our dependence on God affirms His sovereignty over all aspects of life.

¹³Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” ¹⁴Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead, *you ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” ¹⁶But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. James 4:13-16

Living independent of God is boasting and arrogance – it is evil. Believers should not live in this ungodly way.

❖ **Are you living independent of God?**

❖ **Do you show yourself the ruler of your own life by disregarding God in your plans?**

What does all this tell us? I can live a good, moral life and be a regular church attendee and still be ungodly if I do not care about God, or His will, or His glory, or live independent of Him. We must live with a God-presence (or consciousness) mindset; thinking of God's word; panting for God; thinking of glorifying God; in complete dependence on God.

“Godliness” [eusebeia] then is the opposite of “ungodliness” and means fully devoted to God in reverence and loving obedience. It is used 15 times in the New Testament (Acts 3:12; 1 Timothy 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 4:8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:1; 2 Peter 1:3; 1:6; 1:7; 3:11). It reflects an attitude of one's life living with a continual awareness of God's presence affecting and governing every aspect of life. It is a practical awareness of God in every area of life – a God-consciousness.

Godliness Practiced

Now, we have defined godliness and ungodliness. We know that we can be ungodly and still carry on our Christian lives. Hopefully we know that we do not want this type of life because living

ungodly only brings spiritual bankruptcy. Fortunately, the Scriptures give practical insight into how to practice godliness.

1. Ungodliness deserves God's wrath.

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, Romans 1:18

²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob." Romans 11:26

¹⁵to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Jude 1:15

¹⁸that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." Jude 1:18

We must understand that ungodliness is a trait of the unsaved whereas godliness is a trait of believers. Those that suppress the truth about God live in an ungodly and unrighteous way and deserve God's wrath.

❖ **As a way of life, do you care about God, or His will, or His glory, or live dependent on Him?**

If the answer is "no", then I am living like the unsaved who deserve God's wrath. Either I am not saved or the faithful discipline of God is coming (Hebrews 12:7-11).

2. God's wrath toward sin should motivate us toward godliness.

¹¹Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 2 Peter 3:11

Judgment is coming on the world, in fact, it is imminent. Since the Lord is not slow about His promise to bring final judgment to the universe through His own power, "what sort of people ought you to be" or literally "how outstandingly excellent you ought to be". The revelation of the future should drive us to a changed lifestyle; to holy conduct (external actions and behavior) and godliness (internal heart attitudes and reverence).

❖ **Does God's faithfulness in bringing future judgment drive you to holy conduct and godliness?**

3. Ungodliness denies the power of the Spirit-filled, worshipful life.

¹But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵**holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power**; Avoid such men as these. 2 Timothy 3:1-5

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Salvation results in a changed life as the believer is freed from the penalty, power, and one-day the very presence of sin. Ungodliness denies the power of the life-changing gospel.

"Form of godliness" is a silhouette; a shape of godliness, but nothing of substance. We talk about orthodox doctrine, but through our days we do not care about God, or His will, or His glory, and live independent of Him. The demonstration of denying the power of godliness is the

way these people live. Look at the list of 20 things. These are not righteous things, they are sin. The ungodly will increase in the practice of sin because their focus is not on God.

❖ **Have you denied the power of the life-changing gospel?**

4. Godliness can be encouraged or hindered.

¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. ¹⁶But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 2 Timothy 2:15-16

The Spirit through Paul gives us a contrast here. The believer whose focus is God and His word will not be ashamed. For this person, the Word of Christ will be richly dwelling within them (Colossians 3:16). The opposite is true for those whose heart is on worldly and empty things. Those are the things that will come out of the ungodly person's mouth (Matthew 15:18-19).

Godliness can be promoted in our lives by regular communion with God through His Word. Ungodliness can also be promoted by a heart focused on worldly and empty things.

❖ **Does your heart and mind pant for God?**

❖ **Do you desire to grow closer to God through His Word?**

5. Believers are commanded to deny ungodliness.

¹²instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, Titus 2:12

“Deny” is “arneomai” and literally means “to say no”. The use of this word here calls for a definite, effective refusal, renunciation. It is a purposeful action of the will. This is not a simple, polite “no thank you”. This is resolute scream of “NO WAY!!!”

Worldly desires are passions that are promoted by Satan's world system – they are pleasures and pursuits of this present passing world. These desires are given free rein by an ungodly mind-set. If I live my life with little or no thought of God or God's will or God's glory or dependence on God; if I never think about God, then there is no war against sin.

¹¹Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage *war* against the soul. 1 Peter 2:11

This denying, this saying no, is described as a WAR against fleshly lusts! Is war pleasant? Is war easy? Do we go into war half-heartedly? NO! We bring all resources to bear to destroy the enemy! The same should be here too when we deny ungodliness. We are in a war against sin. God's honor is at stake! We can honor God or honor ourselves.

❖ **Is your heart purposed to say “NO!” to ungodliness? ...for God's honor's sake.**

6. Believers have everything we need pertaining to godliness.

There are believers that are often, if not always, looking for a new gimmick, new theory, new method of overcoming whatever ails them. They are never satisfied with their resources in Christ. The Scriptures declare that we have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness.

³seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 2 Peter 1:3

We have everything we need to live at the heart level in a way that honors God, that brings glory to Him. When we struggle with sin and difficult life issues, the problem is not that God has not

given us all the resources in Christ to deal with those things. The problem is that we chose to not avail ourselves of those resources. We have been freed from sin. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have the powerful Word of God. God's "divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness."

❖ **Are you availing yourself of God's resources?**

❖ **In what areas of your life do you attempt to use worldly wisdom to overcome sin and difficult life issues?**

7. Godliness must be pursued.

¹¹But flee from these things, you man of God, and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:11

In this passage Paul exhorts Timothy to flee from sin and pursue or follow after righteousness (right conduct on the outside), godliness (right heart motives on the inside), faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

Many Christians have conflicting pursuits. Maybe their highest pursuit is money, or prestige, or pleasure, or adventure, or peace (physical or in relationships), or one of many other things. But the believer's pursuit must be godliness. There should be no distractions in our pursuit of God.

❖ **What is your highest pursuit?**

❖ **What do you put before God? Where are your highest affections and desires?**

8. Godliness requires discipline and effort.

We must live with a God-presence (or consciousness) mindset; thinking of God's word; panting for God; thinking of glorifying God; in complete dependence on God. Does this take effort? You bet. Again, the Spirit through Paul says that it takes discipline.

⁷But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness**; ⁸for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come. ⁹It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. ¹⁰For it is **for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God**, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. 1 Timothy 4:7-10

Discipline is from "gumnazō" which means "to train" or "to exercise". It speaks of the rigorous, strenuous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes. The best way to train is to have a plan. The plan for discipline for the purpose of godliness is the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life: time in the Word, time in prayer, fellowship with God's children, disciple making, etc. The desire training comes from a life yielded up to God as we are filled with the Spirit.

The passage goes on to say that we are to "labor" and "strive" for godliness. "Labor" comes from "kopiaō" which means to work to the point of weariness and exhaustion. "Strive" comes from "agōnizomai" meaning to engage in a struggle.

❖ **Does this describe you?**

❖ **Are you laboring and striving to grow in your intimacy with God?**

❖ **Are you in training? Do you have a plan? Is godliness the goal of your plan?**

Challenge

How godly are you? How much of your life do you live without regard for God? How much of your daily activities do you go through without any reference to God? God calls us to godliness; for

Him to be first all our days. We must live with a God-presence (or consciousness) mindset; thinking of God's word; panting for God; thinking of glorifying God; in complete dependence on God.

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 11 – Godliness – Additional Study

We do not want to be legalistic regarding how often we should be doing the things listed below. The number is between you and God, but self-evaluation is sometimes a good thing. Rate yourself below:

1. How many times in an hour do you think of God: 0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5+
2. How many days a week do you spend significant time reading the Bible: 0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7
3. How often before making a decision do you evaluate if God will be glorified or not: never / very seldom / seldom / sometimes / often / very often / always
4. How often do you attribute life events (small or big) to God: never / very seldom / seldom / sometimes / often / very often / always

If you answered in the lower half for any of these categories, then you are possibly living in an ungodly way. Repent and commit to honor God in this area of your life.

If you answered anything else, good, but excel still more!

Reread this study looking up all the Bible passages.

How does the filling of the Spirit (worship) impact godliness?

How might ungodliness be the basis for other sins to creep into your life?

Of the four things that describe ungodliness (living with little or no thought of God, or of God's will, or of God's glory, or of my dependence on Him), which do you most see in yourself?

Evaluate your days.

What times of the day do you most see these qualities of ungodliness in yourself?

When you see a quality of ungodliness, at that time, what are you trying to accomplish or what are you thinking?

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5 – In what ways do you hold to a form of godliness, but deny its power?

Read Romans 1:18 and 2 Peter 3:11 – How should God's wrath toward sin motivate you to godliness?

Read 2 Peter 1:3 – Do you believe this great promise of God? How is this belief demonstrated? What might be in your life that you are allowing to take the place of God's resources?

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-10 – What is your plan for training in godliness? In what ways are you laboring and striving to see yourself grow in godliness?