

# Applying Scripture to Life

## Topic 7 – Godliness

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### Review

So far, we have looked at the believer's mandate to make disciples, sin and its consequences, the definition of true saving faith and the amazing work of God in the believer's life at salvation, Holy Spirit filling, the powerful Word and its work in the believer, the work of the Spirit and the Word to progressively sanctify believers, the excellencies of God which should take us to our knees in worship, and the role of the body in bringing care to the brethren.

### Introduction

Let's think about our day. Monday AM after both church services 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, make breakfast and lunch, take care of the animals, and put coffee on for your wife. You commute to work taking one of your co-workers because their car is broken-down. You do your work putting in 8 (or 9 or 10??) hard hours because you are getting paid for that many and you don't want to steal from your employer. You are a good co-worker, treating your workmates with respect and kindness. You leave work, but first jumpstart 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 the kids to bed, help your wife with the evening chores, 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 don't know what is going in this person's mind. But, just from this example, what is missing? Is God relevant in this person's life? Is God important? What about us? Today, we will look at putting off living as if God is irrelevant.

### Godliness Defined

The word for God being relevant in our lives is "godliness". To define something, often it is instructive to first define its opposite. 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 NT (Rom 1:18; 11:26; 2 Tim 2:16; Titus 2:12; Jude 15, 18)

<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all **ungodliness** and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (Rom 1:18)

<sup>16</sup>But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further **ungodliness**, (2 Tim 2:16)

<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup>instructing us to deny **ungodliness** and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, (Titus 2:12)

<sup>15</sup>to 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. ... <sup>18</sup>that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own **ungodly** lusts." (Jude 15, 18)

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It 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 ungodly.

Jerry Bridges in his book "Respectable Sins" says,

"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 parent, or being a good friend and neighbor. We can be all these things and still be living in an ungodly way. We don't 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.

<sup>1</sup>Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. (Psa 36:1)

<sup>4</sup>The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*. All his thoughts are, "There is no God." (Psa 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".

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

## No thought of God's will

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."

<sup>8</sup>I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart." (Psa 40:8)

<sup>10</sup>Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; (Psa 143:10a)

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

<sup>1</sup>How 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! <sup>2</sup>But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup>He 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. (Psa 1:1-3)

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

<sup>97</sup>O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. (Psa 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?

<sup>11</sup>Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. (Psa 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?

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

<sup>1</sup>O 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. (Psa 63:1)

❖ **Do you yearn for God? Do you thirst for God? Do you pursue God's Word so you can know God better and what He wants for you?**

## 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 (Ex 33:17-23). When a Christian lives a life that brings glory to God, he is fulfilling his/her purpose (2 Pet 1:5; Isa 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 don't 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 every moment.

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?**

### 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.

<sup>28</sup>for in Him we live and move and exist, (Acts 17:28)

<sup>39</sup>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. (Deut 32:39)

<sup>9</sup>“Who among all these does not know That the hand of the Lord has done this, <sup>10</sup>**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.

<sup>13</sup>Come 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.” <sup>14</sup>Yet 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. <sup>15</sup>Instead, *you ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” <sup>16</sup>But 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 don’t 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” then is the opposite of “ungodliness” and means fully devoted to God in reverence and loving obedience. It is used 15 times in the NT (Acts 3:12; 1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 4:8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1; 2 Pet 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 don’t want this type of life because living ungodly only brings spiritual bankruptcy. Fortunately, the Scriptures give practical insight into how to practice godliness.

1. God’s wrath toward sin should motivate us toward godliness.

<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (Rom 1:18)

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (2 Pet 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?**

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

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

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 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 don’t 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, they are not walking in the Spirit.

### **❖ Have you denied the power of the Spirit-filled life?**

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3. Godliness can be encouraged or hindered.

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

The Spirit through Paul gives us a contrast here. The believer whose focus is on God and His Word will not be ashamed. For this person, the Word of Christ will be richly dwelling within them (Col 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 (Matt 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?**

4. Believers are commanded to deny ungodliness.

<sup>12</sup>instructing us to **deny ungodliness** and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, (Titus 2:12)

“Deny” 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 His will or His glory or dependence on Him; if I never think about God, then there is no war against sin.

<sup>14</sup>Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage *war* against the soul. (1 Pet 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 recourses 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.**

5. 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 recourses in Christ. The Scriptures declare that we have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness.

<sup>3</sup>seeing 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 Pet 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?**

6. Godliness must be pursued.

<sup>11</sup>But flee from these things, you man of God, and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness. (1 Tim 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?**

7. 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.

<sup>7</sup>But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness**; <sup>8</sup>for 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. <sup>9</sup>It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. <sup>10</sup>For **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 Tim 4:7-10)

Discipline 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, true fellowship with God’s children, etc. The desire for 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” means to work to the point of weariness and exhaustion. “Strive” means to engage in a struggle. Godliness takes effort.

- ❖ **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?**
- ❖ **What are some ways you can increase your godliness – living your days always thinking of God, His will, His glory, and in dependence on Him.**

### **Conclusion**

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, His Word, His glory, and living in dependence on Him.



## Additional Study

We don't 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:

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

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

Read 2 Pet 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 Tim 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?