

Flint Hills Bible Church  
Biblical Soul Care Sunday School  
*Godliness Part 1: Devotion To God*

**I. Introduction**

1. Review: what is Brad Bigney's definition of idolatry?

We just finished a wonderful series on idols of the heart. In that series we explored several common idols that steal our affection and attention away from God. He is the only one who deserves this worship. With this in our minds, we are going to talk about the connection between heart affections, and the growth in Christian character. This morning we are considering Devotion to God.

2. Name some bible characters who are godly men/women?
3. What about that person stands out to you (what is godliness)?
4. How many people do you know today are godly in the same or a similar way? Are you?
5. How would you counsel someone toward growth in godliness?

**Objectives:**

After our lesson, my prayer is that we will understand the only God-pleasing motivation for growing in godly character.

\*Much of the content for this lesson has been adapted from "The Practice of Godliness" by Jerry Bridges.

**II. The Forgotten Foundation of Godly Character**

6. Why is it that so many people fail in their pursuit of the fruit of the Spirit, or other godly character traits?

7. Why is the idea of a “sacred - secular” divide so crippling to a Christian’s character and sanctification?

Godliness is not just having certain character traits. Jerry Bridges in his book *The Practice of Godliness* says this:

***“Godliness certainly includes christian character, but it is more than that. There is another, even more fundamental aspect to godliness than godly character. It is the foundation, in fact, on which godly character is built.”***

If godliness is not only being like God in your character, or doing things that God does, or only obedience to His commands, then what is it? Let’s look at two brief definitions:

### **Definition of godliness**

*Reverence for or devotion to God, producing a practical awareness of God in every aspect of life.*

Martin H. Manser, [\*Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies\*](#) (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

Jerry Bridges defines godliness as *“Devotion to God which results in a life that is pleasing to Him.”*

8. What stands out about these definitions?
9. Name a person who is revered today. What do people say about him/her, do around him/her?
10. Describe a devoted employee/student/spouse/parent. What are they like?

### **Summary:**

Devotion to God is the only acceptable motivation for godliness. It is the only motivation that will please God in your endeavors. If you are devoted to God, you will grow in godliness. Next we will take a closer look at the ingredients that make up true devotion to God.

### **III. Devotion To God**

Devotion to God is the heart of Christian character, or godliness. If there is no devotion to God, then all of our attitudes, works, and words are hypocrisy.

**1 Timothy 2:8–10 (ESV)** — **8** I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; **9** *likewise* also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, **10** but with what is proper for women who profess **godliness**—with good works.

11. Considering what we know about anger and quarreling from past studies, What is the connection between godliness and anger?
  
12. What about godliness and the clothing that the women in Timothy’s church were wearing?
  
13. Can you think of biblical examples of people who profess godliness but were known for quarreling or dressing in ungodly ways?

**2 Timothy 3:1–5 (ESV)** — **1** But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. **2** For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3** heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, **4** treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **5** having the appearance of **godliness**, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

14. What is Paul warning Timothy to avoid?
  
15. What is the power that ungodly people are denying by settling for an appearance of godliness?
  
16. What are some things that we can be devoted to besides God?

**Summary:**

It is possible - even common - to desire godly character, without desiring God himself. We are wrongly motivated when this is the case.

**IV. Growing in God-Centered Devotion**

1 John 5:3

Jerry Bridges, identifies three ingredients to God-centered devotion. The fear of God, the Love of God, and the Desire for God.

a. Fear of God

“The fear of God is the soul of godliness” - John Murray

**Acts 9:31 (ESV) — 31** So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

**1 Peter 1:17–19 (ESV) — 17** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, **18** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

**Revelation 15:3–4 (ESV) — 3** And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! **4** Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

b. Love of God

What do we learn about God’s love for us in the following verses?

**1 John 3:1 (ESV) — 1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

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**1 John 4:9–10 (ESV) — 9** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

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**Luke 15:3–7 (ESV) — 3** So he told them this parable: **4** “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? **5** And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. **6** And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ **7** Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

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What should our response be to God's love for us?

**Luke 7:44–47 (ESV) — 44** Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. **45** You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. **46** You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. **47** Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

What did the woman do? Why did she do it?

What is the contrast between the woman and Simon?

How is our love for God tied to our fear of God?

c. Desire For God

**Psalms 63:1–3 (ESV) — 1** O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. **2** So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. **3** Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

Thought question: do you feel this way about coming to church on Sundays? What about on other days of the week?

**Philippians 3:7–10 (ESV) — 7** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— **10** that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

What is Paul's great desire - his great driving motivation?

**Psalm 73:25–28 (ESV) — 25** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. **26** My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. **27** For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. **28** But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

What is wrong with Asaph at the beginning of Psalm 73? What was his desire?

When does he change his perspective?

Can you relate to Asaph? How are you feeling about your health, career, wealth, position/station in life?

What if all the gifts of God that we enjoy now are taken away (like Job)? How would you respond?

**Summary:**

This morning we have considered the foundational element of godliness. To be like God in our character we must begin with a devotion to Him that is characterized by an unrivaled love for Him, a reverence for Him above all others, and a desire to have a relationship with Him through Christ. No other motivation will suffice. Next we will consider the characteristics of godly character, and then we will get into the everyday practicality of godliness.