

If you are newer to this Bible study or even see this Saturday as your first time it might feel like you are “parachuting” into the middle of a deep forest with no GPS. That is not a good feeling! So, I thought it might be helpful to provide a little overview on where we have been and where we currently are in our discipleship series on walking godly while living in an ungodly world.

You will be encouraged to know that each lesson in our series stands on its own as the Word of God feeds and guides us closer to Christ every other week and further equips the redeemed man to fight sin and strive for holiness. Yet, at the same time, each lesson methodically builds upon one another as they each paint a biblical picture of what genuine godliness is, where godliness comes from, why godliness must be pursued by every follower of Christ and, most importantly, how to practically train oneself unto godliness according to the divine means of grace.

While there are many clear commands given to the believer to progressively pursue godliness in his walk with Christ it is 1 Timothy 4:7 that has served as the scriptural impetus for this whole study. In that passage Paul commands Timothy, and by implication all of us to, “train yourself to godliness.” The Greek word often translated as “train” literally means, “to control oneself by or thorough discipline.” Paul is also clear that this training has a specific direction and is unto “godliness.” The Greek term for godliness means “awesome respect accorded to God.” Thus, godliness is really an internal attitude of God centeredness that leads to external acts of Christ likeness! Godliness is a life that is focused on God and a life that is lived out for God. This is what Timothy, and every follower of Christ is not only called to but were saved for (Rom 8:28-29; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 1:4; Col 3:10).

It is helpful to note that this Greek term translated as “train” is the Greek word from which we get our English word “gymnasium.” We understand that the gymnasium is to be a place marked by serious sweat, ongoing toil, and sacrificial labor in the pursuit of disciplining one’s body. Yet, the validity of this kind of training on a physical level is even greater and more important on the spiritual. Paul goes on in 1 Timothy 4 and reminds his son in the faith that while physical training is of some value it is the spiritual training that is of greater value because it deeply impacts both your earthly and heavenly life in every way. This study is all about learning and living in the biblical gymnasium as we seek to discipline our lives to godliness the way God designed it and demands it for His ultimate glory.

So far, in our study we have learned much about godliness by looking at many biblical exhortations given by God as well as many helpful examples of faithful men in the Scriptures who proactively pursued and walked in holiness. We have also considered the reality of “ungodliness” and where that comes from and what that looks like in a life to better help us guard against this natural default proclivity as we train.

A big part of our study to date has been learning about God’s designed means for how we are to train ourselves to godliness which is just another facet of the believer’s ongoing sanctification. We have learned that training oneself to godliness is all about three specific works and gifts of God, **His Word**, **His Character**, and **His Grace**. Growing spiritually as a godly man demands that you be a man who is in God’s Word, learning about God’s character, and overwhelmed by

God's gospel grace. Each one of these areas become specific targets and tools the man of God uses and aims for as he disciplines his heart toward progressive holiness in Christ.

### **Godliness is a Work of God's Word**

So far we have learned how godliness is a work of God's Word in and on the life of the believer. There is no salvation or sanctification apart from God's sovereign and sufficient Word (Rom 10:17; Jn 17:17). We have clearly seen that God has designed His perfect Word to be the powerful tool in perfecting His people (Ps 1:1-6; 19:7-11; 119: 9, 11; Jn 17:17; 2 Tim 3:15-16; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet 1:22-23; 2 Pet 1:3-4)! This study has helped us see not only that God's Word through God's Spirit is the ultimate means of grace in sovereignly bringing godliness to the life of the believer but also how God's Word works on the life of believers. We did an in-depth look at how to read, study, and mediate on the Word to train ourselves to godliness. God has been very clear to all of us that progressive godliness is without question a ramification of His Word's work on our hearts. This section taught us many things but most of all we learned that if we are not growing in God's Word than we will not grow in godliness!

### **Godliness is a Result of Growing in God's Character**

That brings us to the current focus which teaches us how godliness is also a result of growing in my right understanding and personal response to God's character. Training ourselves to godliness is not only driven by God's Word but also driven by **who God is in His character** (Ex 20:18-21; Lev 11:44; Ps 76; 130:3-4; Prov 1:7; Ecc 12:12-13; Isa 6:1-7; Mt 5:48; 2 Cor 5:9-11; 2 Cor 7:1; Col 1:15-20; Heb 12:28-29; 1 Pet 1:15-16). We ultimately go to God's Word that we might hear from (2 Tim 3:15-16; Ps 19:7-11), know (2 Pet 1:16-21; Ps 119:12-16), and follow Him (Ps 86:11; 119:33-40). God's character is meant to drive and shape the believer's conduct (1 Pet 1:16-17)! It is God's faithfulness that fuels the believer's faithfulness (Ps 89; Lam 3:22-24). It is God's awesome character that provokes the believer's awe of God (Heb 12:28-29). It is God's serious judgment that further motivates the believer's pursuit to please the Lord (2 Cor 5:9-11). Therefore, training oneself to godliness will demand growing in a mature understanding of the person of God.

Forgetting who God is and forsaking Him is the natural proclivity of the fallen heart in all men and the constant fight for every true believer (Isa 55:10-11; 1 Pet 2:11). Training oneself to godliness is, in part, about moving from being a forgetful man to being a faithful man (Isa 6). This study is really about the ongoing fight from being a man who forsakes God to being a man who daily forsakes self (Lk 9:23). Thus, we must daily remind ourselves of who God is in His great and holy character. As Paul rightfully said, we must remember both the "kindness and severity of God" lest we fail to see and respond to Him rightly (Rom 11:22). Therefore, growing in a right understanding of and response to God is all about growing in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1). This gets to the heart of our current study as we have been learning all about how godly men fear God (Isa 11:1-5; 1 Pet 2:17)!

### **Godliness is a Fruit of Fearing God**

The fear of the Lord is ultimately your proper, humble, and positive response to the revelation of God! In the simplest of terms, the fear of the Lord is the right life changing response to who God is in His holy, awesome, and severe character! The biblical fear of the Lord is a reverential awe that stands in wonder, trembling at the thought of the awesome power and unapproachable holiness of the One True God (Ex 20:18-20; Ps 33:8; 66:1-2; Mal 1:6; Mt 10:28; Heb 12:28-29). It is reverential awe that bows in utter humility because of God's undeniable transcendence and immutability (Mal 3:6) and bows in a right understanding that there is an infinite chasm between Deity and sinful humanity (Ps 96:4; Isa 6; Rev 14:7; 1 Pet 1:17-18). The holy fear of God is a solemnly honest and joy filled recognition that though I rightfully deserve wrath and condemnation, I have graciously received unfathomable mercy and unending kindness in Christ (Ps 130:4; 147:11; Phil 2:12-13; 2 Cor 5:11). A biblical fear of God is always driven by...

- A humble conviction of personal sin (Isa 6; Lk 18:13)
- A clear understanding of God's perfect purity (Ex 3:4-6)
- A concrete understanding of God's cosmic power (Ex 20:20)
- A constraining consciousness of God's personal presence (2 Chron 16:9; 2 Cor 7:1)
- A compelling awareness of one's obligations to God (2 Cor 5:6-11)
- A captivating awe of receiving underserved grace in Christ (Phil 2:12-13; Heb 12:28)

Many have defined the fear of the Lord as having reverential awe for God. What that means is the fear of the Lord is a clear, shocking respect personally for the awesome power and holiness of God! While that is a good start that is not a completely accurate understanding of what the Bible teaches. This reverential awe for God only gives us once side of the biblical fear of the Lord. Growing in a healthy or holy fear of the Lord demands that one grow in his understanding of the awesome character of God as well as the severe judgment of God (Rom 11:22). This is where we currently find ourselves in our study on who God is. Therefore, this Saturday we will once again biblically wrestle with this reality of the fear of the Lord as we consider how our God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:28-29). This will help us see how the Bible displays the fear of the Lord as **a reverential awe for God mingled with a holy dread and terror before God that always leads to humble adoration, faithful worship, and submissive obedience to God!**

I pray this overview of where we have been and where we are currently in our study will both encourage and equip you to get the most out of our time in the Word together on Saturday. Humbled by this opportunity to marvel and mature together as we learn to live even more in awe of God's underserved sovereign grace!

For His Glory,  
Matt White  
Isa.66:2