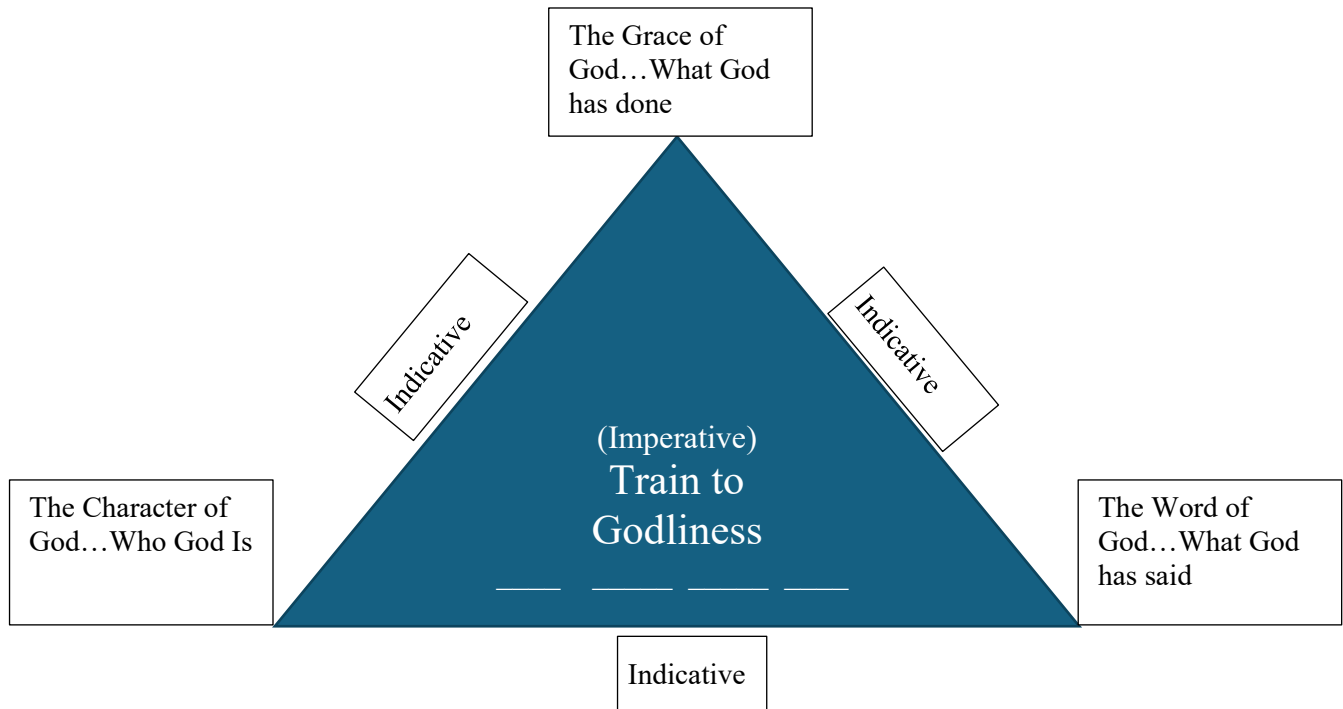


Godliness Men's Bible Study Review 1 Tim 4:7



Godliness is devotion in action!
Duty + Delight = Devotion
Mt 22:36-40

Men,

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 Result of Growing in 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 the understanding and obedience to 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 second section of the study which teaches us how godliness is also a result of growing in a 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 the second section of this study as we have been learning all about how godly men fear God (Isa 11:1-5; 1 Pet 2:17)!

Godliness is a Result of Growing in God's Grace

Finally, as we are about to start learning in this next section, training ourselves to godliness is also a result of what God has done, is doing and will do through Christ (Rom 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 6:1-14; 8:18-39; Eph 2:1-10; Col 1:13-23; 2:9-15; 3:1-4; 1 Cor 1:30-31; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; Heb 12:1-2; 1 Pet 1:3-9; 2:22-25)! Remember, it is the divine indicatives of grace (statements of fact) that motivate our submission to the divine imperatives (commands) for holiness (Col 1-2 feed Col 3-4 cf. Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 7:1)! Therefore, the cross of Christ (2 Cor 5:14-15) always drives my ongoing joy filled pursuit of Christ which brings great delight amidst the difficult duty of training myself to godliness (Phil 3:7-16)! This whole framework (the triangle illustration of godliness above) helps us see how godliness is really a Trinitarian work in what God has said through His perfect Word (God the Spirit), who God is in His perfect character (God the Father), what God has done through His perfect sacrifice (God the Son)! Notice how before we ever consider what we must rightfully do, pursue holiness, we focus on the sufficient Word, saving Person, and sovereign work of God! This always protects us from going in the wrong direction, man centered "godliness", while actively propelling us in the right direction, God centered godliness!

If all of that helps us understand where godliness comes from and what ultimately drives it, then where do we look to learn how to actually "train ourselves to godliness"? If 1 Tim 4:7 is the

command than how do I rightfully fulfill that command without falling prey to focusing on a list of attributes? 2 Peter 3:18 is a helpful corollary here as we always rightfully train ourselves to godliness by growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Christ! Growing in the grace of Christ is the fruit of focusing on what God has done, is doing and will do through the gospel! One of the greatest ways to grow in Christ is by saturating your heart and life in God's amazing grace given in salvation. These become the roots of your life in Christ (Col 2:6-7) being sovereignly planted and nurtured by God Himself through His Word as He grows us to fear and obey Him with joy (Phil 2:12-13). Therefore, before we consider the fruits of godliness (Gal 5:22-24), we must begin digging deep into the glorious roots of our salvation which include election, regeneration, justification, reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, adoption, and glorification. Prepare yourself as we begin examining and pondering deeply the amazing, undeserved, all sufficient and unstoppable grace of God lavished on us in Christ!

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 mornings. 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