

2 Peter 1:5-7

GODLINESS IS MINISTRY, BUT...

study #3

Godliness is in our key passage.

(2 Pet. 1:5-7)

1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; **1:6** And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; **1:7** And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Godliness enables fruitful ministry.

(2 Pet. 1:8-11)

1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **1:9** But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. **1:10** Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: **1:11** For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Godliness is necessary but not well understood.

Many today may be surprised to find godliness in Peter's linked set of key virtues. Moreover, though it is closely related to 'worship' and 'piety,' many church members today think of piety is a negative way and have much to say about worship without giving a thought to godliness. (The piety controversy is discussed at length in *Discussion B*.)

This study is probably the most controversial in this series, and several worksheet lines are deliberately so. Yet, this may also be the most needful and important of the four studies.

Faith, hope, and love are rightly stressed in churches today, but sadly godliness is often neglected or even vilified. This is probably because godliness is easily misunderstood and entertainment has impacted churches today more than key passages on godliness like **2 Pet. 1:1-11** and **2 Tim. 3:4-5**.

GODLINESS is not well understood. *(It is more important than many realize.)*

Mark the lines (as completed) below as either correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

A	() Godliness is a high priority in the Bible.
A-1	() Godliness comes before brotherly love in 2 Pet. 1:6-7.
A-2	() Godliness is a key aspect of the Christian life (2 Pet. 1:3).
A-3	() Godliness is mentioned often in Luke's Gospel (Lk. 2:25, 37).
A-4	() Godliness is more profitable than physical exercise (1 Tim. 4:8).
A-5	() Godliness is mentioned more in the New Testament than brotherly love.
A-6	() Paul included godliness with righteousness, faith, and love in 1 Tim. 6:11.
A-7	() The judgement of the ungodly is often mentioned in Second Peter (2:5-6, 3:7).
B	() The essence of Godliness is loving and serving God.
B-1	() Godliness involves worshiping the Lord.
B-2	() Godliness involves prayer (Lk. 2:37, Heb. 5:7).
B-3	() The opposite of godly is worldly (1 Tim. 1:9, Tit. 2:12).
B-4	() Godliness involves fearing God (Acts 10:2, Heb. 11:7, 12:28).
B-5	() Godliness involves praising the Lord (Psa. 149:1-9, Lk. 1:46, 24:53).
B-6	() True godliness begins with genuine faith and doctrinal truth (1 Tim. 3:16).
B-7	() Because the godly are persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12), they need endurance (2 Pet. 1:6).
B-8	() Godliness involves loving God, but brotherly love is more about loving other people.
C	() Godliness is controversial and often neglected today.
C-1	() Many Christians today rightly reject piety (Acts 3:12).
C-2	() Godliness is not as important as faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13).
C-3	() Godliness and physical appearance are totally unrelated (1 Pet. 3:3-6).
C-4	() Godliness is not as important as some of the other virtues in 2 Pet. 1:5-7.
C-5	() If worship is stressed, there is no need to stress godliness as well (2 Tim. 3:5).
C-6	() One of the greatest hinderances to true godliness is pleasure seeking (2 Tim. 3:4-5).
C-7	() The neglect of godliness in many churches today is a sign of the end times (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

Several of the thought-provoking lines above are controversial and incorrect or only partly correct. For comments on them and the author's answers, see the discussions on the next three pages.

The following discussion was overheard in a Church Leadership class at fictional Quest Bible College. Those present were discussing the points on the worksheet for this study on the previous page.

Dr. Quest (on godliness being controversial)

This worksheet may be the most controversial one we will ever use, because it involves church worship which has been a hot issue for decades. In a way, the worship wars are over, since most churches have decided what position to take. The infighting within individual churches has subsided, but competition and hostility between churches with different views of worship has not.

Most of the A and B lines deal with godliness in general and are not controversial, and most of them are correct. The C section lines are a different story. We may disagree on many of them. Why do you suppose the study on godliness in general (A and B) comes first?

Theo (on doctrinal godliness in 1 Tim. 3:16)

I think it is to show that godliness is more basic than worship. Lines in the B section show that godliness involves worship (B-1) but is based on the Christ-centered truth in 1 Tim. 3:16 (B-6), one of my favorite verses. It shows that godliness is centered on what God did for us through the Lord's incarnation, resurrection, and ascension. So our expressions of godliness in worship must be doctrinally sound. My study Bible notes say that 1 Tim. 3:16 is from an ancient doctrinal hymn.

Evan (on the gospel in 1 Tim. 3:16)

My study Bible says that 1 Tim. 3:16 is an ancient summary of the gospel. Theo seems to think it is all theology. No, that's not it. We need to preach the gospel to the lost on Sunday morning rather than spend all our time teaching systematic theology to the saints.

Dr. Quest (on the relative importance of faith and godliness)

It didn't take long for the controversy to begin; did it? Before it heats up too much, let's look at something Theo, Evan, and all of us agree on. The Christian life and Peter's summary of it in 2 Pet. 1:5-7 begins with saving faith. So it is true to say that faith is more foundational than godliness. We probably all agree on that, but does that mean that faith is more important than godliness? That is the issue raised in line C-4. I suspect Theo would say no but Evan would say yes.

Evan (on faith being more important)

What about the two thieves who were crucified with the Lord? One repented and believed (Lk. 23:42). Soon after he was with the Lord Jesus in paradise (Lk.23:43), where he probably began an eternal study of godliness. However, the only issue that really mattered while the thief was still alive was saving faith. So, yes, I do believe that line C-4 is correct.

Theo (on saving faith including godliness)

What about the fear aspect of the repentant thief's faith? Notice what he said about fearing God in Lk. 23:40! Genuine faith, like godliness, involves the fear of the Lord. So his faith included godliness from the beginning. His prayerful and saving request in 23:42 also was obviously godly. It is grave error to totally separate the virtues from one another. Line C-4 is wrong.

Dr. Quest (on how Evan and Theo can both be correct)

Let's not forget that Peter was writing to Christians who already had saving faith. So faith was not a virtue to be added like the other seven. Evan views line C-4 as incorrect because of this. I agree. Yet, what Theo said about saving faith involving godliness from the beginning is also true.

We will continue this discussion next time. — Let's not neglect brotherly love!

The following discussion is a continuation of the one on the previous page, which was overheard in [a Church Leadership class at Quest Bible College](#).

Dr. Quest (introductory remarks)

Last time, we began to see how controversial godliness can be. So before we jump into the debate on the C lines again, let's talk about lines A-3, A-5, and B-3 which also can be a little tricky.

Tech (on the data regarding godliness)

I used a search engine to see if godliness is stressed in Luke or not and discovered that A-3 is false in a way, because the term 'godliness' is not mentioned directly. Yet, the temple scenes, devote elders, and the angelic choir in chapters one and two set the tone for the Gospel. Also, Luke ends in the temple (24:53). So line A-3 is at least partly correct. — In addition, I was surprised to discover that godliness is mentioned about twice as often as brotherly love (A-5).

Dr. Quest (on godliness and brotherly love)

Does that mean that godliness is twice as important as brotherly love? No! I checked the data myself, and the verb form of brotherly love is mentioned more times than godliness is. So strictly speaking line A-5 is incorrect. Yet, it still helps show that godliness is far more important than many realize. Since the essence of godliness is loving and serving God (B), how could godliness not be important? What about line B-3 on the contrast between godliness and worldliness?

Theo (on the meaning of worldliness)

Definitions can be as tricky as data. My thesaurus says the opposite of godly is ungodly. Yet to be ungodly is to love the world. So I marked line B-3 correct. Godly people love the Lord instead of the world (1 John 2:15). Judas and Demas did not. By the way, I think line B-8 is also correct.

Dr. Quest (on negative attitudes toward piety)

Speaking of controversial terminology, what about piety, the key term in line C-1? Obviously, there is hypocritical piety like that of the Pharisees (Mat. 23:14), but are we throwing out the baby with the bathwater today by rejecting piety in general? Younger believers tend to take piety and being pious in a negative way, but piety is nearly equivalent to godliness. Does the rejection of this term indicate a sea change in attitudes in our churches toward godliness? I'm afraid that it does. What do you think?

Tech (on piety and godliness in 1 Tim. 5:4)

My search program led me to 1 Tim. 5:4. The KJV and the NKJV call for showing piety at home regarding widows, but the ESV has godliness instead. The Greek verb in the verse means to show godliness. However, godliness usually has to do with honoring God rather than other people. Probably that is why the KJV and the NKJV have piety instead. I suspect the ESV rejected piety because readers today tend to take it in a negative way.

Dr. Quest (on godliness in churches today)

Thanks, Tech. The translations indicate an attitude change, but is it only about terminology? I don't think so. We have many large churches today in which most formality and older views of godly worship are rejected while entertainment and positive experience have become high priorities. I think Paul predicted this in 2 Tim. 3:4-5 and that lines C-6 and C-7 are correct.

There are reasons to disagree, however. So I will give you a chance to raise objections next time. Both Peter and Paul show that godliness is very important. So it is good to discuss it more.

The following heated but important discussion is a continuation of the one on the two previous pages, which was overheard in a Church Leadership class at Quest Bible College.

Evan (on the pros and cons of large churches)

Dr. Quest, last time you spoke negatively about many large churches. In part, I agree since I am not a charismatic and some worship teams go too far in trying to make the worship enjoyable. Nevertheless, I believe that some larger churches are very good, because they are reaching the lost. That is why they are so large, and many traditional churches are dying. So please explain.

Dr. Quest (on the need for all Peter's virtues)

We must not be blind followers of tradition, and there are legitimate reasons to disagree regarding godliness and worship. Evan just raised the top reason, evangelism. Yet, Peter shows that we can not pick and choose the virtues that we like and reject others. Faith is our foundation and love for others, including the lost, is our goal (2 Pet. 1:5-7). However, a pastor or evangelists who focuses on faith and love but neglects self-control will fail no matter how gifted he may be. (I know of several such sad cases.) We agree on this, of course, but what about godliness?

Evan (on the need for personal godliness)

Earlier we talked about pastors and evangelists needing to maintain their devotional life no matter how busy they may be. That's personal godliness, and I'm sure we agree on the need for it. However, we have been talking about godliness in the church. Isn't that a different subject?

Dr. Quest (on the need for church godliness)

No, not really. The church as a whole can neglect its devotional life just as much as a church leader can. We would have little sympathy for a pastor who does not spend enough time preparing his Sunday morning message because he was busy playing golf, fishing, or surfing the net. We might be more tolerant of his lack of preparation if he was busy visiting the sick or spending quality time with his family, but even these things are usually not legitimate excuses. Likewise, if the church's devotional life is constantly neglected for the sake of evangelism week after week, it will lead to serious problems, even if the church grows numerically. Like the individual pastor, the church can not skip, neglect, or corrupt its devotional life. The church must be godly too.

Evan (on the emphasis on worship in many large churches)

I get all that, but the large evangelical churches I am talking about put a great deal of effort into their worship. They have high quality programs, professional level help with their multi-media, and stress worship in everything that they do. People come to church to worship the Lord.

Dr. Quest (closing questions on what really happening in church)

Do they really? It is not just talking about worship or working on program quality that matters. Are the church members and others who come actually getting into the Word, understanding the gospel, and growing in Christ, or are they simply enjoying the programs? Line C-5 is false, and line C-6 is tragically true (2 Tim. 3:4-5). Also line C-3 on appearance is at least partly incorrect.

my application
