

Title: Godliness

Text: 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Main Point: The constant practice toward godliness increases discernment between good and evil.

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Series: Castine's 5 values

THE APOSTLE PAUL AND 1 TIMOTHY

The Apostle Paul writes to his understudy, Timothy, regarding doctrinal controversies and false teachings (1 Tim. 1:3–7; 4:7; 6:3–5, 20–21). I define Paul's problem as legalism. By this term I mean those who teach things beyond what the Bible teaches: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Further, Paul wants Timothy to know how God expects him to organize the church: "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:14-15).

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND "GODLINESS"

The New Testament uses five Greek words that communicate something about godliness, as listed below with their English translation.

- εὐσέβεια (piety; godliness)
1 Timothy 2:2; 3:16; 4:7; 4:8; 6:3,5,6,11; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:1; 2 Peter 1:3,6,7; and 2 Peter 3:11
- Κατά θεός (of God or godly)
2 Corinthians 7:9, 10, 11
- εὐσεβῶς (godly, in a godly manner)
2 Timothy 3:12; Titus 2:12
- εἰλικρίνεια + ὁ + θεός (godly sincerity)
2 Corinthians 1:12

- θεοσέβεια (piety and godliness)

1 Timothy 2:10

- εὐσεβέω (profound respect; worship)

1 Timothy 5:4

- εὐσεβής (pious; devout; godly)

2 Peter 2:9

As the above word study indicates, the largest concentration of Greek words translated “godly or godliness” is in 1 Timothy. Now, I think it is helpful to define godliness in the New Testament:

“Godliness encompasses the whole of true religion, with reverence toward God serving as its foundation and principal component.” (Spiros Zodhiates, in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000)). “The Greek term *εὐσέβεια* (*eusébeia*) (from which “godliness” is translated) combines *eu* (“good”) and *sebomai* (“to worship”), technically denoting proper outward piety or correct religious behavior.” (Douglas Mangum and E. Tod Twist, 1 Timothy, ed. Douglas Mangum and Derek R. Brown, *Logos Research Commentaries* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2026)).

“More specifically, godliness represents a reverence toward God that arises spontaneously from the heart in response to His character.” (Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator: II. Peter* (London: James Nisbet & Co., n.d.), 60–61). “The word literally means well-directed reverence, though it does not imply an inward, inherent holiness—it is actually an externalized piety.” (Spiros Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary*). “This distinction matters: one can be godly and not be saved, but you cannot be saved and be ungodly, as both the ungodly and the godly need salvation.” (Spiros Zodhiates, *Sermon Starters* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992)).

“In the New Testament, particularly in the Pastoral Letters (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus), godliness is often directed at behaving properly as a Christian, having the right attitude, and living in a way that is pleasing to Christ.” (Mangum and Twist) “When applied to the Christian life, it denotes a life acceptable to Christ, indicating the proper attitude of the believer toward Christ who has saved him—it is both an attitude and a manner of life.” (Spiros Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary*). “ Importantly, it does not come automatically, but is something into which we must put effort.” (Spiros Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary*).

From this point forward, when I say “godliness,” I mean a follower of Jesus who worships Him and seeks to model Jesus in “behaving properly as a Christian,” indicated not only by action but also by attitude. This means a godly Christian is a growing Christian.

GODLINESS AND 1 TIMOTHY 4:7-8

1. For those who may be interested, Paul uses two different Greek words translated “train” in 1 Timothy 4:6 and 1 Timothy 4:7.
 - 1.1. *ἐντρέφω* (“train” in 1 Tim. 4:6) combines the sense of nourishment with formation, meaning to nurture someone within a particular framework or tradition (Spiros Zodhiates, in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000)). Rather than emphasizing strenuous exercise, it focuses on gradual development through sustained care and instruction.
 - 1.2. *γυμνάζω* (“train” in 1 Tim. 4:7) conveys the idea of exercise or training, emphasizing the development of skill or capability through repeated practice and exertion. The word carries connotations of rigorous, disciplined conditioning—the kind of intensive preparation that builds strength or proficiency over time. (Spiros Zodhiates, in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000)).
 - 1.3. The practical difference lies in their emphasis: *γυμνάζω* highlights the active exertion required for development, while *ἐντρέφω* stresses nourishment and formation within a particular context or body of knowledge. Both involve training, but *γυμνάζω* suggests more vigorous, self-directed effort, whereas *ἐντρέφω* implies a more organic process of being shaped by immersion in teaching, practice, or tradition.
2. Paul commands (using a strong form of the Greek verb) Timothy to exert himself through constant practice to become more like God.
 - 2.1. He presents a word picture of an athlete training in a gym. Whether you like to train or not, the word picture is easy to understand. If you want your body to perform at a high level, there are no shortcuts.
 - 2.2. If you wish to become godly, there are no shortcuts. Growing in godliness is a lifetime of hard work.
3. Paul explains why the hard work is worth it: “Godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”
 - 3.1. The word “value” translates the word *ὠφέλιμος*, which means something advantageous or profitable.
 - 3.2. “Godliness” is profitable in every facet of life: relational, financial, physical, spiritual energy, endurance, and joy.
 - 3.2.1. This does not mean that the Christian life is easy or without suffering. No human being, Christian or not, escapes suffering. It does mean godliness gives suffering a perspective and strength that ungodliness does not.
 - 3.2.2. It also means the benefits of godliness are available to those willing to train hard for them.

- 3.3. As I have said often, there is a direct correlation between this life and the next. Paul indicates that godliness has value not only in this life but also in the next, although I do not understand how. However, I accept that God is preparing me for the next life.
4. I finish with suggestions for those wishing to train for godliness.
 - 4.1. Training requires consistent Bible study and application (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - 4.2. Training requires intentional, ongoing effort to change ungodly behaviors into godly ones: growing in “virtue [honesty, courage, patience, justice, and kindness], knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, and brotherly affection” (2 Peter 1:5-8).
 - 4.3. Hebrews 5:14 says it well: “Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” Through constant practice, godly people become increasingly able to distinguish good from evil.