

What stood out to you most from the sermon? Why?

Key Takeaways:

1. The mystery of godliness revealed in 1 Timothy 3:16 is Jesus himself. Every line of that ancient hymn points to what God did in Christ, not what we do to impress him. Godliness does not start with our effort. It starts with his.
2. Godliness isn't a list of things you don't do. It's a life increasingly shaped by Jesus. Defining godliness as a list of things we do not do is a distortion of the truth. The false teachers in Ephesus looked incredibly spiritual, yet they were drawing people away from Jesus by replacing him with rules. Real Christians can create real chaos when they focus on anything but drawing closer to Jesus.
3. Godliness looks like gratitude. Because our acceptance is based on what Jesus did and not on what we do or avoid, we are freed to receive the good gifts God has created with genuine thankfulness. When a gift leads us to worship the Giver, it becomes an act of godliness.
4. Godliness takes work. No one drifts into godliness. Paul commands Timothy to train himself in godliness, using the same language as athletic discipline. The Bible is not anti-effort. It is anti-earning.
5. Godliness is measured by progress, not perfection. God is not making us into people who can check all the right boxes. He is making us into people who look more and more like Jesus. Growth is the goal, not flawlessness.

Discussion Questions:

1. When you were growing up, or when you first encountered Christianity, how would you have defined godliness? Where did that definition come from?
2. Have you ever been in an environment where godliness was primarily defined by a list of things to avoid? What was that like?
3. Read 1 Timothy 3:16 together. This verse is an ancient hymn that early believers sang together. What does it tell us about where godliness actually comes from? How does this reshape the way you think about what it means to live a godly life?
4. The false teachers in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 were forbidding marriage and certain foods. On the surface, their teaching sounded holy and disciplined. Why is it dangerous when something looks spiritual but is actually pulling people away from Jesus? Can you think of modern examples of this pattern?

5. What is it that influences you? What are you fixated on? Who or what has had the most influence on you this week? Take a moment to answer that honestly. What does your answer reveal about where your attention has been?
6. Read 1 Timothy 4:4-5. Everything God creates is a gift to be received with gratitude. What is the difference between enjoying a gift and depending on a gift? How do you know when that line has been crossed?
7. Ask yourself two wisdom questions when enjoying God's gifts: Does this gift lead me to worship the Giver? And is this gift safe for me to enjoy? How would regularly asking those questions change the way you approach everyday pleasures?
8. Read 1 Timothy 4:7-10. Paul tells Timothy to train himself in godliness and says that "we labor and strive." What does that kind of intentional effort actually look like in daily life? What practices or habits help you grow in godliness?
9. Nobody naturally drifts into godliness. You don't casually find yourself more godly any more than you casually find yourself winning a marathon you never trained for. Where in your spiritual life have you been coasting rather than training? What would it look like to take that area more seriously?
10. Read 1 Timothy 4:12-16. Paul tells Timothy not to let anyone look down on him, but instead to set an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Which of those five areas feels most challenging for you right now? Which feels most natural?
11. Spiritual gifts are not something discovered through a test, but through people who love you speaking truth about what they observe in you. Has anyone ever done that for you? If so, what did they say, and how did it affect you?

Practical Applications:

1. At your next meal, slow down before you eat. Instead of a quick, general prayer, name something specific on the table, the person who made it, the hands that grew it, or the one who paid for it. Practice receiving that ordinary gift with genuine gratitude.
2. Identify one area where you have been defining godliness by a checklist rather than by closeness to Jesus. Write it down and bring it to God in prayer, asking him to reorient your focus.

3. Ask someone you trust and who will speak truth to you: "What do you see in me? What gifts or strengths have you noticed?" Be prepared to receive their answer with humility, even if it surprises you.
4. In your Home Group, consider committing to a regular rhythm of speaking truth to one another about what you observe in each other's lives, both areas of growth and areas of gifting. This is the kind of community where godliness is cultivated.
5. In your Home Group, pray together specifically for one another's progress, not perfection. Name specific areas where group members are working hard to grow, and ask God to make that growth evident.