

**2 Peter 1:5-8 (NIV)** ... make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Parents, if you are going to be effective at raising your children, you need to know what their focus is. When my cousin was in the second grade he became focused on the American revolution. I was in junior high school and yet he knew a lot more about the American revolution than I did. He could rattle off information about battles and generals and all kinds of stuff. Whatever your child is currently focused on, pay attention. Become interested in it with him or her.

Maybe you have known a child who became focused on dinosaurs. Some get focused on a movie or a sports team. Some don't seem to have much of a focus at all, and that's okay. But to do a good job of parenting, you need to learn what your child's focus is.

You who are in school of some kind, to get good grades, you need to learn what the teacher's focus is. My first semester in seminary I failed my Old Testament midterm. We spent two months working through the first five books of the Old Testament. I dutifully took notes. I dutifully studied my notes. In his lectures, the professor gave us some German words. There are famous German theologians that you learn about in seminary. They coined some specific theological words in German. I did not give them much thought. They did not seem important to me. But, as it turns out, most of the terms the professor gave us were on the test. Once I figured out what the teacher was focused on I was able to do much better on the final and pass the course. In order to do well in school, you have to figure out what your teacher is focused on.

You who are employed, in order to succeed in your job, need to learn what your boss's focus is. Some bosses want to micromanage everything and want you to clear everything you do with them. Other bosses want you to get it done and not bother them at all. In order to succeed in your job, you have to figure out what your boss is focused on.

If you live with your parents, to get along with them, you have to know what your parents are focused on. Some parents focus most on grades. Others focus most on sports. Others focus most on showing them respect. Others focus most on a neat, clean house, including YOUR room. In order to get along with your parents, you need to figure out what their major focus is.

If you are married and want a happy marriage, you have to learn what your spouse is most focused on. What does your spouse want from you? Learn that, and give it, and see your marriage prosper.

And then there is you. What are you most focused on? What is the center of your life? What are you most interested in? What is it that shapes your goals and desires? What is the motivation for all you do each day?

The passage we have been working on suggests a focus for your life. Make every effort to add godliness to your faith. Godliness is not the best translation of **the Greek word "eusebius"**. Godliness makes it sound like we should become like God. That is not what *eusebius* means. **Eusebius means "to live in respect of someone or something"**. And in the Bible it always means to live with God as your focus, because God is all-important.

**The word godliness is connected to the words "devout" and "piety" in the dictionary.** They are all used to describe a person who is strongly devoted to a religious faith. However that is a general definition. We need a Biblical usage.

**Biblical godliness is living God-focused.**

Let me flesh out for you what this looks like. We see instances of it in the Bible. I point you first to Jesus. Jesus lived every moment of His life focused on God. Jesus never sinned. Jesus never failed to live as if God did not exist or did not matter. And so in Jesus' prayers we see this.

**Matthew 6:10** "... Your (God's) kingdom come, Your will be done on earth (in me, in my life) as it is in heaven."

**Matthew 26:39**

"...not what I want, God, but what You want."

And so, in our prayers, godliness would be reflected like this...

"I am Yours, Jesus. My body belongs to you. My sexuality belongs to You. I want the meditations of my heart, my thoughts, and my behavior to honor You."  
"My possessions are Yours. All my money is available to You."  
"My job is Yours, my education, my marriage, and my family. Teach me how to live in a way that honors You in all of these relationships."

Perhaps you see in these prayers how Jesus lived in obedience to God. But, do not make the mistake of equating godliness with obedience. Godliness includes obedience to God, but it is much more than obedience. There is something much greater than obedience at the heart of godliness.

**Godliness is a desire for God.** At the heart of godliness is not a desire to obey God. It is not a desire to please God. At the heart of godliness is a desire to know God. It is a desire for God Himself. We see this in the Bible in some of the psalms. Look at the beginning of this song from the Bible.

**Psalm 42:1 (NIV)**

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

Godliness seeks God. Godliness seeks to know Him. Godliness seeks to hang out with Him in prayer.

Because of knowing Him you will want to learn of Him in the Bible. Because of knowing Him you will want to praise Him in worship. Because of knowing Him you will want to please Him with how you behave in the world. But at the heart of Godliness is simply a desire for God. Godliness is a hunger for God Himself.

How do you measure such a thing? **(target)** We have urged you to try to graph these qualities in your life. How do you evaluate love for God? Look at your motivations.

When I was a child I usually did what my parents told me to do. I was a compliant child. But I wasn't compliant because I loved them. I wasn't compliant because I saw the wisdom of their rules. I wasn't compliant because I was grateful for the boundaries they set on me. I was compliant simply because I did not like getting spanked. I was not compliant out of love for my parents. I did love my parents. But that wasn't why I obeyed them.

**Why do you try to obey God? Figure that out, and you'll better evaluate your godliness.**

The same might be true of your relationship with God. You may seek to obey God so as not to get disciplined by Him. Your heart is not for Him. You still push against the boundaries He has set. You choose not to see the wisdom of them.

I like the Psalms in the Bible. But there is one I've always had trouble with. Anyone care to guess which one it is?

Look at what the writer of Psalm 119 says about how he feels about God's commands.

**Psalm 119:16 (NIV)** I delight in your decrees...

**Psalm 119:127 (NIV)** I love your commands more than gold.

Now as you judge yourself for godliness, can you say that you love the commands of the Lord? Can you say with the psalmist that you love God's commands? Do you love God more than all of your possessions?

At the heart of Godliness is a love for God, a desire for God. The best obedience grows out of love for God rather than fear of punishment. Sure, many of us first moved toward God because of fear of hell. But is that all the further you got toward God in your motivation? Is your life still about fearing hell instead of loving God? What is the motivation behind your relationship with God?

A further help in evaluating ourselves for godliness is to look at its opposite. The opposite of godliness is not "*devil-liness*". **The opposite of godliness is worldliness.** Worldliness is a love for the world. Worldliness puts us in opposition to God.

**1 John 2:15-16 (NIV)** Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.

**Worldliness is a focus on me.** Worldliness focuses on what my sinful body craves, what my sinful heart desires, or my sinful mind wishes for. Worldliness is focused on the things of the world instead of on God. And they cannot co-exist.

**James 4:4 (NIV)** "... don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

We all face the danger of this temptation. We especially, who have plenty of food to eat, central heat and air conditioning, and plenty of the world's toys, are in constant danger of letting the love of these things take root in us. Love for our comforts and luxuries can easily become the focus of our lives. We replace God, or more usually, neglect God because of these things. We must guard against loving the world. How much do you love the world? How devoted are you to your comforts and luxuries? Do you ever fast from them?

I read of a family with three children. Everyone has an e-reader and there are tablets, cell phones, and laptops. This family has declared that Sundays are a no-screen day. They set aside anything with a screen on Sundays and focus more on each other. So no e-readers, tablets, cell phones, laptops, or TV. I'm not saying you should do that. But it is a way to keep from being too attached to the comforts and conveniences in your life.

Now let me caution you as you try to understand godliness. **Don't confuse religious activity with godliness.** All of the qualities in 2 Peter 1 that we have looked at so far can be reduced easily to simple religion. Religion focuses on being good, being in worship services, attending Bible studies, controlling ourselves from outward sinful behavior. And you can do all these things without being focused on God.

You can focus on being good without being focused on God. You can focus on learning the Bible without being focused on God. You can focus on being self-controlled without being focused on God. You can focus on religion instead of on God. Jesus warns of this at the end of His Sermon on the Mount. At the end of the world there will many people who will describe all of the religious things they did in the name of Jesus. And Jesus will tell respond that He never knew them.

### **The Possibility of Your Godliness**

Godliness is a desire for God, a focus of your life on God. And while that may seem impossible to you, it is not. Look at the beginning of the passage for this series.

**2 Peter 1:3 (NIV)** His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

God is powerful enough to give us everything we need for life. He isn't speaking of physical life, though God is providing us with food, clothing, and shelter. No, he is speaking of everything we need for spiritual life. Spiritual life includes the abundant life of joy and peace we can have now, in Jesus. Spiritual life also includes eternal life in heaven. To make that possible He has given us a new heart and forgiveness of our sins.

Then He says He has given us everything we need for godliness. He mentions this one specifically, so that no one can mistake his meaning. Some people are making a lot of effort at the other virtues. They are working at being good. They are working at learning about God. They are working on their self-control. They are working at persevering. They are learning how to show brotherly kindness. But they are leaving out godliness. Peter knows that is a great temptation. So he mentions godliness specifically. He doesn't want us to skip over it. He doesn't want us to shortchange this one.

**How do you become God-focused? Make Him the focus of your prayers. For what do you usually pray, things you want or things God wants?**

Discover your current focus, with God's help. And then give it up. Turn away from it. Fill your heart with God. Make God Himself the focus of your life.

Fill your heart with Him. How do you feed your usual focus? You daydream about it. You imagine yourself living it. You feed it through reading, surfing the net, on TV. You think about it at different times throughout the day. However you are feeding the old focus, so feed your focus on God.

Is Jesus confronting your worldliness today? Is He confronting your sin? Is He confronting your religion? Is He confronting your sinful focus? Is He confronting your lack of desire for Him?

Confess your sinful focus to God. Turn away from this sinful focus. Turn to Jesus who died for you.