

Godliness

Personal Foundations For Ministry

As we begin our study of our Personal Foundations For Ministry it would be valuable to look into the process we go through to acquire habits (See Figure A). Habits can be good or bad and usually take time to develop. As we focus our efforts on attaining both godliness and these Personal Foundations we need to understand the five phases which we will go through. For those who have been rescued, God has provided His Holy Spirit who is the great enabler, change agent and life-giving resource in our lives. He has elected to utilize the Word of God, other godly people in our lives and the situations and circumstances we wake up and find ourselves in to accomplish His work in us.

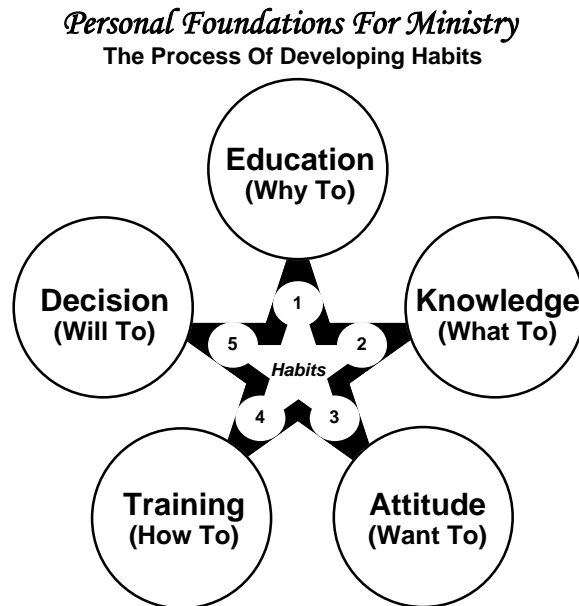


Figure A

He uses these tools to educate us about the reasons why we need to change. Once we know why then we become knowledgeable of what it is that is important to change to. What are the criteria or elements in which change is needed? As this is occurring, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts to change our attitudes to become one's which want to obey Him versus having to. When we really understand His Word we will become trained on how to implement the necessary changes He is calling us to make. Finally, when the time comes to actually make it happen, His Spirit energizes and enables us to decide that we will be obedient to Him. As we embark upon this study together, be aware of these phases and be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit in your life. May God grant each of us success in our pursuit of godliness and in our acquisition of personal Foundations which will maximize our effectiveness in ministry!

Personal Foundations For Ministry

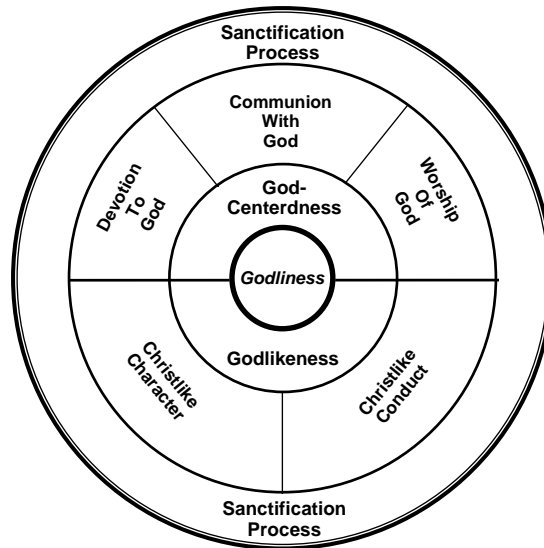


Figure B

What is godliness? Godliness is the delicate balance between God-centeredness and Godlikeness which results in a life which is pleasing to God (See Figure B). God-centeredness consists of devotion to God, communion with God, and worship of God. Godlikeness consists of Christlike character which in turn will produce Christlike conduct. It is godliness which, I believe, is the purpose of sanctification. I believe that Matthew alludes to it in Matthew 13:45 - 46 as being likened to a pearl of great price. It is so valuable that it is worth everything we have to acquire it.

Paul, in Titus 2:11 - 13, distilled the essence of our lives as Christians down to two things: 1) to turn down our natural, earthly cravings which the world offers and 2) to live self controlled, holy, and godly lives as we anticipate the hope we have of Jesus Christ's immanent return. In I Timothy 2:1 he urges us to pray for those in both government and leadership so that their decisions would allow for Believers to live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness. *(Other study questions)* In I Timothy 6:11, he also encourages the "man of God" to vigorously pursue godliness. I II Peter 3:10 - 18, Peter urges his readers to be holy in conduct and godliness because this world and it's world system is temporal and not eternal. It will be destroyed by fire.

In I Timothy 6:3 - 10, Paul says that God's Word promotes or, if you would, gives life to godliness. When we see our pursuit of God and our passion to acquire His character as being "all that we need", or "all sufficient" for our lives then we will find that godliness, when accompanied with contentment, holds phenomenal rewards because we will find true satisfaction and rest for our souls. We will experience true joy! He says that the love of money or the love of anything more than our love for God will shipwreck our faith and will bring all sorts of pain into our lives.

In II Peter 1:2 - 4, Peter explains what resources God has given us to understand godliness. He says that in the Word of God we gain knowledge of God, Jesus Christ, truth, and that in the Scriptures we have everything we need! How exciting it is to know that in His word we can find all we need for our lives with all of our questions and problems. It is sufficient for our acquisition of godliness. Through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, all of us as Christians have been given all we need! Deciding to pursue godliness is both our privilege and our duty.

(Other study questions) Throughout history God has had His men and women who portrayed godliness. Genesis 5:24 and Hebrews 11:5 - 6 speak of Enoch walking with God. Because of his witness or testimony of being pleasing to God he was translated from time and space as we know it, without experiencing death, into God's presence forever. Noah, in Genesis 6:7, was a righteous man and blameless in his time. He found favor in the eyes of the Lord and also walked with God. In I Chronicles 31:20, Hezekiah did what was good, right, and true before the Lord. In everything he did he sought God and did it with all his heart. In Job 1:1, Job is characterized as being blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil. In Daniel 6:10, Daniel committed himself to obey God no matter what became the ramifications. In Luke 2:25, Simeon is righteous and devout in his actions, conversations and conscience. In John 1:47 - 51, Nathaniel is without guile or ulterior motives. In John 8:28 - 29, Jesus explained that His aim was to be obedient to His Father and therefore please Him. Cornelius, in Acts 10:2, 22, is shown to be devout. Both he and his whole family feared God. He was generous and prayed continuously. In Acts 11:24, Barnabus is shown to be a good man, filled with both faith and the Holy Spirit. In II Timothy 1:5, Paul says that Timothy had a sincere, or pure, faith. He acquired it from a great legacy which had been demonstrated effectively by both his grandmother and his mother.

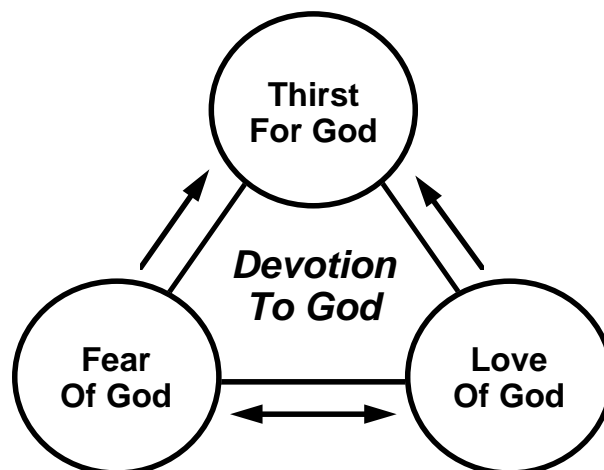


Figure C

Godliness is much more than Godlikeness which is the development of Christlike character and Christlike conduct. There is a need to have a desire or a “want to”. It is the fear of God, the reverence or awe, which creates our love for Him (See Figure C). When we understand His holiness, how far short we fall from His standard of perfection and holiness because of our sin, and what Jesus Christ has done to rescue us from His wrath, we will love Him with all our heart, with our complete being. This will create a tremendous thirst or desire for God. We will want to know Him and spend time with Him. This is what John meant, in I John 5:3, when he said His commandments aren’t heavy, burdensome, oppressive or wearisome. When we have personally tasted or experienced the depth of God’s forgiveness we will want to obey Him by keeping His commandments. Matthew says in Matthew 11:27 - 30, to come to Him if you are weary or have given up hope. He will give you rest for your soul. How? This rest comes from the assurance that we have been forgiven, that our guilt has been removed and that we possess eternal life. He says that His yoke is easy and His load is light. This is true because the Holy Spirit lives in us and it is “His” load and He carries it for us.

It is a person’s motivation which makes a godly man or woman different than someone who also is moral, benevolent and zealous in serving the Lord. The reason he / she serves the Lord is to glorify God. They do it because of their devotion to and passion for God. Many people today are busy doing things which are good and right but are not demonstrating godliness.

In I Timothy 4:7 - 12, Paul outlines how important the acquisition of godliness is in our lives. He says it is worth everything, any price. It has value for both this life and also for the life to come. It’s value in this life will be to lengthen our life and provide for our contentment, true joy, peace, and hope. It provides for our life to come, eternity, because, with God, “everything counts”. God is intensely concerned that our hearts, our passions, and our longings are for Him.

In the same passage Paul uses numerous athletic terms to encourage his protégé, Timothy. He ways to “discipline / exercise / train yourself for the purpose of godliness”. Here we see that effort is involved in this process. Verse 10 speaks of laboring and striving for it. Paul says to train “yourself”. This speaks of each of us having a personal responsibility here. The object of this discipline is twofold. The first objective in our lives is maturation in our speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. The second objective is to be an example for other Believers.

(Other study questions) As with athletics or training in anything in life there are necessary ingredients for success. Training in godliness is no different. First, there needs to be a personal commitment of one’s will to begin the process. The psalmist in Psalms 63:1 says that his goal is to earnestly seek God. He says his soul, his whole being, thirsts for Him. He understands that his thirst cannot be quenched by any other source. He passionately pursues Him. Jeremiah 29:13 says that the Lord rewards those who decide to seek Him and search for Him with all their heart. In Philippians 3:12, Paul says his

passion was to know God, to understand His will in his life and to pursue it with all his heart. The writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 12:14 says that the goal of our lives should be to become like Jesus Christ. We should take on His character, holiness. Finally, Peter says in II Peter 1:5 - 7 that we should eagerly pursue moral excellence which will lead to practical discernment which will lead to self control or discipline which will lead to patient persistence which will lead to godliness.

The second ingredient for success in training in godliness is the need for an excellent coach or teacher. We have this in both the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. John in I John 2:20 - 29 says that the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to know / discern truth versus error. Paul in Titus 1:1 - 3 says that sound doctrine or truth or, if you would, the Word of God, will always produce godliness when we submit our lives to it and to God through obedience.

The last ingredient for success is practice, practice, practice. Paul tells Timothy in I Timothy 4:10 - 12 that we must be a living example by laboring and striving in these things so that our conduct in speech, love, faith and a pure life would enhance the gospel of Jesus Christ. In verse 4 of the same chapter he says we must take great pains to be absorbed in scripture reading, exhortation, teaching and preaching so that our growth, progress or maturity in the Lord will be evidenced by all.

Once I am devoted to God because of the passion I have which results from my thirst for Him which comes from my love for Him which stems out of my fear of Him, I will want to commune with Him. I will want to practice His presence in my life. I will consult with Him, talk with Him and pray about each and every situation and circumstance of my life. Isaiah in Isaiah 26:9 says that day and night the desire of His soul was to spend time with, to fellowship with, to wait on, and to commune with his creator. He wanted to experience the presence of the Lord. When we experience this relationship we want to be like Him. In the presence of the Lord there can be now room for hypocrisy. Humility is the only appropriate response when one is overwhelmed with His holiness, our moral deprivation and His grace.

The third aspect of God-centeredness which complements our devotion to God and our communion with God is our worship of God. Along with being something I do, worship is an attitude I possess. Worship ascribes to God the glory, majesty, honor, praise and worthiness which are His. It is the most momentous, urgent, and glorious action which mankind can do. It is God-centered and the ultimate end of all creation. Once we are spending time communing with God and practicing His presence it will invoke our awe, wonder, reverence and worship. In Revelation 4:8 - 5:14, John gives us a glimpse of God's presence and the worship which occurs there forever and ever. All the created beings there praise God for His perfection, His omnipotence, His eternal nature, His being the Creator, His sovereignty, His redemption, and His worthiness. David in Psalms 95:6 says, "let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. Paul in his letter to the Philippian church in Philippians 2:10 says there is coming a point in time at the close of this age when the totality of rational, created beings in the universe will

either willingly or by force be made to bow down and confess or make confession that Jesus Christ is Lord (“Kurios”) of the Universe. God wants this to be the attitude we have in our lives each day.

True worship involves prostrating or falling down before God, be it either literally or figuratively. This attitude result from submission, reverence and humility. It even will cause us to throw our crowns at His feet which represents that whatever we have accomplished will pale into insignificance when we see Him for who He is. This should encourage us all the more to begin this process of demonstrating an attitude of worship in all that we do today!

In God’s eyes, who we are and why we do what we do is just as important, if not more important, then what we are and what we do. Once I understand my need to have my entire being centered on God in my devotion, communion and worship, I will want to obey Him in all that I do. Obedience is not an activity I do, but it is an attitude I possess which permeates everything I think about, say and do. Moses said in Deuteronomy 6:1 - 2 that we fear God by obeying Him in everything he has said. David in Proverbs 8:13 says that we demonstrate our fear of God by hating and saying NO to evil. John in I John 5:2 - 3 says that obeying God demonstrates or, if you would, gives practical examples of our love for and fear of God. He goes on to say in 3:23 - 24 that His commandment is that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another. The process of obedience will produce Godlikeness which is Christlike character and Christlike conduct which, combined with God-centeredness will produce godliness which gives us our personal foundations to be effective in ministry, which is God’s will and plan for us being worked out in our lives.

Note: Some ideas and concepts for this study were taken from The Practice Of Godliness

by Jerry Bridges, Navpress, 1983.