

## Godliness Kenneth J. Fleeman

Godliness is listed by Peter as one of the characteristics Christians must adopt as they progress in spiritual maturity (2 Pe 1:5, 6). Godliness is best described as piety which is a deep respect and reverence. Such intense feeling for God necessarily exhibits in one's actions. The mature Christian begins to think and to act like God. This is obviously limited to character and behavior. We do not assume the functions or abilities of God. God serves as Creator, Sustainer, Lawgiver, Savior and Judge. He is Omniscient, Omnipresent and Omnipotent. These are all reserved for God. However, God insists that we adopt His character in order for Him to adopt us as His children.

In order to think like God we must be mature in discernment. To love like God we must have pure motives and to behave like God we must be temperate.

### Thinking Like God

God is infinite in wisdom. He is the source of knowledge and the source of wisdom. (Jas 3:17) If we are to think like God we must do more than acquire knowledge. Eve wanted to know good from evil. She opted to eat from the tree of knowledge rather than trust what God had revealed. In the process she gained knowledge. That knowledge included learning of the severed relationship with God. We must make appropriate moral decisions and make proper doctrinal applications based on God's revealed word. Every thought must be properly directed toward obedience (2 Co 10:3). We must rightly divide God's word (2 Ti 2:15).

Mature Christians will be sober and reverent (Tit 2:1) and always choose obedience over things that appear to be wise (Col 2:20-23). They will feast on the meat of God's word and ably teach others (1 Co 3:2, 3; Heb 5:12, 13). Mature Christians will know when to instill fear and when to apply compassion to save souls (Jude 20). They will humbly and cautiously address the sins of brethren. (Ga 6:1).

### Loving Like God

Not only is God infinite in wisdom, He is infinite in love. His love is selfless and sacrificial. God ultimately proved His love by sending Christ to die for mankind while mankind was still in sin (Ro 5:8; Eph 5:2; Joh 15:13). God chose to love us even though we are undeserving. God is impartial in dispensing grace and willing to forgive beyond what we can imagine. He will accept all who are righteous and provides physical blessings to all men. (Ac 10:34, 35; Mt 5:45; 1 Jo 1:9; Mt 18:21, 22).

If we are to love like God loves then we must expand our capacity to love. We must include our enemies and learn to pray sincerely for those interested in bringing us harm. We must be willing to forgive each and every time a brother repents (Mt 5:44; 18:21, 22).

When God chooses to love the bond is unbreakable. (Ro 8:35-38). Our love is often superficial. How many relationships are broken over trivial slights and thoughtless words or actions? These losses are a result of selfishness on the part of both parties. Hospitality, benevolence, forgiveness, enduring friendships and lasting marriages are demonstrations of man's ability to love as God loves.

### Living Like God

Lastly, we must live as God lives. There is no sin in Him and we will choose not to sin if we truly belong to Him (1 Jo 3:5, 9; 5:18). God cannot sin because He has

resolved not to sin. Sin is not in keeping with His character or His purpose. God cannot be tempted with sin because He has no unmet needs or desires. We, on the other hand, constantly seek what we desire.

It is God who defines sin, judges sinners and compassionately shields man from unbearable temptation (Ro 7:7; Jas 1:13; 1 Co 10:13). Jesus resisted temptation justifying each righteous choice by citing scripture (Mt 4:1-11). God will preserve the righteous and banish sin from His presence for eternity (Rev 21:27).

God cannot lie (Tit 1:1,2; Heb 6:17,18) because God cannot change or deny His character. He can only be who He IS (Heb 13:8; Re 1:8). If we are His children then we can only be righteous and holy like Him.

Godliness is a mark of mature character that has beneficial results as we live this life and more importantly, godliness has eternal benefit (1 Ti 4:7,8). No wonder Paul told Timothy that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Ti 6:6). Are you satisfied with making the choices that God would make in your situation? Are you thinking like God? Are you loving like God? Are you living like God? (KJF)

### Maturity

In youth we "know it all". In middle age we wish we "knew then what we know now". In old age we know everything that we can learn by experience. God commanded the Israelites to demonstrate respect to those who were aged among them. "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD" (Le 19:32).

We would do well to respect the aged, serve their needs, learn from their experience and duplicate their godly behavior (Tit 2:2, 3). (KJF)

### A Moment's Wisdom

- 1Ti 4:7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.
- 1Ti 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.
- 1Ti 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.
- 2Pe 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,