CHARACTERISTIC SIX: GODLINESS

Lesson 13: How do I measure myself?

2 Peter 1:6 "…to perseverance, godliness,…"

Many of us know that as Christ followers there needs to be godliness in our lives, but many have a hard time even defining what godliness is? Wycliffe's Bible Commentary defines it as, "a spirit of reverence and deference to God in all matters."[1] In other words, we give God priority and the final decision in everything. It may go against what we were always taught or even fly in the face of what culture says is okay for today. True godliness says that God's word, not my opinion, triumphs over every matter in life. The way we measure our lives is not in comparison to what everyone else is doing or even what culture allows, but rather our measuring stick is God's Word alone.

One of the greatest tricks of the devil is to get you to compare yourself to others. On one hand, he can have you comparing yourself to others that seem to have everything together and thus cause you to see yourself as less than what the Father truly sees you as. On the other hand, he can flip the script and have you compare yourself to others who don't have it all together and make you think you are better than you really are. Trust me, you can always find somebody that is doing worse than you to make yourself look better. The Apostle Paul warns us of this in Galatians 6:1-5 when he says:

> Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.[2]

As followers of Jesus, we are called to help those who have fallen or struggling, however, in doing so, we can't become prideful but rather investigate our own lives to see if we are following God's word. God's standard for our lives is not in comparison to someone else's life or the world around us, but instead His written Word that He's provided for us.

The problem is that in today's culture we face the challenge of moral and cultural relativism. Moral relativism is the thought that there are no absolute morals or principles for life. This belief system is closely tied to cultural relativism, which is the philosophy that an individual's beliefs and values are a result of the culture they live in and therefore can't be judged against other culture's standards. It allows everyone to do what's right in their own eyes by basically saying, "It might not be right for you, but it's

okay for me." Really, it's nothing new. Every generation throughout history has faced it in one way or another, but it seems to have grown stronger over time.

This obviously goes against what the Bible teaches about absolute truth and morals, and it doesn't stand up when put under logical thinking. Can you imagine if you were a carpenter and building a house with a tape measure that changes every day? One day a foot is twelve inches, the next it's seven inches and the following day it's nine inches. There's no standard of measurements, therefore the house from the foundation up would be completely messed up, yet people do that every day with their lives. They use the excuse, "Well, everybody's doing it now, so it must be okay." (Cultural Relativism). Then we wonder why we build lives that are in disarray. It's simply because instead of using God's Word as our standard, we use our feelings or the world's standards as our measuring stick. We can't measure our lives and choices against what others are doing, because God doesn't grade on a curve. He doesn't look at us today and say, "I know it's hard to keep your pants on and stay pure, because everybody else is sleeping together before they're married, so I'm just going to let you slide on that." No! His word is clear. Paul sets the standard in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, when he states:

> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. [3]

The Creator makes the rules, not the creation and He doesn't even leave it open for debate. We may not like it, and it may offend our preconceived ideas about what we think is okay, but He knows what's best for us and what helps us to lay our head down in peace, instead of turmoil when we go against His standards. The Bible teaches these standards; it guides and corrects us in all matters of life. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."[4]

As followers of Christ, we must pattern our lives after the standards of God's Word alone, however we can't do it in our own strength, it's only through the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in us. Further, we must raise our voices like the Apostle Paul and many other great men of God before us, to today's culture and the ones that are pushing the agenda ungodliness.

Lesson 13 Questions

1. Explain, in the best way you can, what “godliness” is?

2. What is moral & cultural relativism?

3. Why is it not only logical, but also important to have one standard of measurement in our lives? What is that one standard for our lives as people of God?

4. As you reflect on your own life, what area or areas do you realize you need to change to line up with God’s Word?

[1] Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett Falconer Harrison, eds., *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 2 Pe 1:5.

[2] Ga 6:1-5. (NKJV).

[3] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2025), 1 Co 6:9-11.

[4] 2 Ti 3:16-17. (NKJV).