

## What qualities does the Bible say we should have (or avoid)

### BACKGROUND THOUGHTS

The first of our studies where it's useful to have tools (print or online): Concordance, Bible dictionary.

One goal of our life on earth is to build good character qualities, and dig out bad ones. See Gal 5:19-26, and Col 3:12-14

Php 2:12-15 says we “work out” these character qualities in partnership with the Holy Spirit, and the goal is to strive to be pure and blameless

It's vital to know what Bible says before you work on a characteristic. eg, if you think anger is always wrong, John 2:15 will be problematic!

Note many positive character traits become negatives when carried to an extreme; for instance, self-discipline is good, but can become legalism. That's why we do this in partnership with the Holy Spirit

This is a life-changing study if done well. Study qualities one at a time. Don't rush it.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Col 3:12-14

### METHOD

- 1) Name the quality you will study. Define with an English dictionary if necessary
- 2) Name the opposite, and define it too
- 3) Check the Bible dictionary definition and find out what the word meant to the writers who used it. Make sure your version of the Bible uses the translation you would expect (for instance, the KJV often renders “love” as “charity”)
- 4) Find as many references as you can; use a Concordance and what you learned in the Bible Dictionary to list all the places where the word and its close synonyms are used. Then, look through your references and interrogate them; ask each of them these questions;
  - i/ what are its benefits for the one who has it?
  - ii/ are there bad consequences of having it?
  - iii/ what are its benefits for others?
  - iv/ are there any bad consequences for others if one has it?
  - v/ are there any related promises from God for the one who has it?
  - vi/ are there any warnings or judgments for those who do (or don't) have it?
  - vii/ any commands in relation to this quality?
  - viii/ what factors help to produce it?
  - ix/ what does Jesus say about it, specifically?
  - x/ is this quality presented as one of a group? Any reason why?
  - xi/ what symbolism is used when writers describe it?
  - xii/ which writer uses it most? Any reason why?
  - xiii/ which Scripture is most specific about it? What would be your key verse if teaching on it?

Write a summary of your findings, and note any difficult passages which you don't seem to fit with the others.

- 5) Do a brief (200 word?) study on a Bible person who exemplifies the characteristic, in your view. How do they demonstrate it in their life? How did it affect their outcome? What were the results for others?
- 6) Memorise your key verse from step xiii
- 7) Write an application (see Study I, point 3 – personal, practical, possible, provable)

### Possible SAMPLES to start with

Honesty, godly, forgiving, loving, hopeful, gentle, servant

## AN EXAMPLE

**Godliness** [nb this example has been abbreviated to fit the page, but gives a sense of the work that has gone on]

1) Definition: God-fearing nature; having a character shaped by an awareness of God; piety, holiness; resembling God. Conforming to the laws and wishes of God; devout. Coming from God; divine.

2) Ungodliness: not godly. Heathen, wicked, outrageous. Irreligiously immoral; denying or disobeying God; impious.

3) A virtue, a standard of Christian life, a reflection of God's character. Greek *eusebia*, *theosebia*, "reverence toward God". Sometimes translated "devout". IVP Dictionary says it's a NT word – no direct equivalent in OT. Interesting!

NIV - "Good and holy life with an emphasis on its source ... genuine reverence toward God that governs one's attitude toward every aspect of life."

4) References:

**Godly:** John 9:31; Acts 8:2; 2Cor 1:12, 7:10,11, 11:2; 1Tim 6:3; 2Tim 3:12; Tts 2:12; 2Pe 3:11

**Godliness:** Acts 3:12; 1Tim 2:2, 3:16, 4:7,8, 6:3-6,11; 2Tim 3:5; Tts 1:1; 2Pet 1:6

**Ungodly:** Rom 5:6; 1Tim 1:19; 2Tim 2:16; 2Pe 2:6; Jud 15

**Ungodliness:** Tts 2:12                      Also, **Godless:** 1Tim 4:7; 2Tim 2:16

i/ Godliness is prayed for along with peace and quiet. It is an eternal good, with practical and spiritual benefits now. Those with it have "virtue"; they are "set apart" by and for God. Having "godly sorrow" is beneficial and leads to repentance; Paul had "godly jealousy" for the church; godliness is considered holy.

ii/ Persecution promised for everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ (2Tim3:12). Must say "no" to many things available in the world (Tts 2:12). Can be "a form of godliness" ie religious, and therefore harmful

iii/ The godly person is an example of good living and doesn't harm others; they are able to give 'godly teaching' because their lives match up. This seems to be a main theme in 1Tim, 2Tim and Titus.

iv/ Yes – godliness can become an offence (provokes persecution); it sometimes requires you to dissociate yourself from the ungodly, 1Pet 2:11. Also, we are to keep out of groups who practice "godless chatter" ... will they miss us?

v/ The godly will be rescued from trials (2Pet 2:9). We'll enjoy practical benefits (living a good example, able to teach), mental benefits (peace and quiet), and spiritual benefits (eternally, 1Tim 4:8). Linked to holiness; research this!

vi/ I can have a "form of godliness but deny its power" (2Tim 3:5). Important not to pretend or 'act godly'! This is religious hypocrisy ... what Jesus was upset about with Pharisees. Also, warned to "avoid godless myths and chatter".

vii/ Pursue it ... add it ... live in it ... train self to be ... say no to ungodliness ... avoid godless myths

viii/ It's a divine attribute (2Pet 1:3), so "rubs off" by being close to God

It comes from knowing the truth, and living by gospel (Tts 1:1)

It's an aspect of our choice for holy living, an outworking a practical desire to be like God (1Tim 4:7)

It has to be an inward transformation, not outward pretending (2Tim 3:5)

ix/ Directly, Jesus didn't use the word; but 1Tim 3:16 describes him as godliness. This is the "mystery" at the heart of the Gospel; Christ is human and divine. Our godliness is a reflection of Christ's divine nature.

x/ Yes: godliness + holiness are linked (1Tim 2:2; 2Pet 3:11). And see 2Pet 1:6-8, a sequence: "add to your faith goodness...knowledge...self-control...perseverance...godliness...mutual affection...love". Definitely part of a holy attitude to life which should grow over time. v8 says this makes you "effective and productive"

xi/ Words used with godliness – effort, development, discipline – imply some kind of sport or training.

"Pursue" – hunting analogy; or a type of race? Again, the implication is a need for effort, perseverance.

xii/ Paul mostly, and almost always in his pastoral epistles (to Timothy, Titus). Peter uses it a lot – presumably for the same reasons (Peter was writing to the scattered church.)

xiii/ 1Tim 4:8

Summary: Paul and Peter tell us that getting closer to God and caring enough to incorporate his nature in ours is central to church life. It is vital for leaders to teach and model it to all Christians. For Paul, the key to "godliness" IS Jesus. Being godly, we demonstrate him to the world. We get godly from nearness to God, but it also takes effort, a pursuit; while ignoring the ridicule and persecution of the ungodly, and keeping our minds and conversation on Jesus.

5) 1Tim 3:16 is extraordinary. Godliness is a "he" - Jesus. He appeared "in a body", demonstrating to us that true godliness is possible in our body. He was "vindicated" by being raised from the dead, overcoming all persecution, promising us that, even though we may be persecuted by living for God, we will be rewarded for it too. He was "seen by angels", showing that even at his weakest and when struggling, his godliness was powerful – his birth, his temptation and at Gethsemane (angels are mentioned at each). There were also angels when he was successful – at his resurrection and ascension. He was "preached among the nations". Godliness is available for all the world, including us gentiles. And he was "believed on in the world" – there are no barriers to us living godly lives. He was "taken up in glory", proving to us that God has an eternal place near him for the godly.

6) 1Tim 4:8 memorised

7) Introduce "God" meaningfully in 3 conversations this week where he wouldn't otherwise crop up, and try to transform some "godless chatter" into something profitable. Write an account in my journal of how that changed the course of the conversation for the better – and/or whether I get the promised persecution!

## NOW, YOUR TURN

This week, we're going to do a Character Quality Study on "meekness" – Jesus said in the Beatitudes, "blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth", so it will be useful to know how to be meek.

Note that we have a problem with the NIV and other translations, which translates the root word for meek [*anaw* in the OT, *praus* in the NT] and meekness [*prautes*] in various ways, including 'gentleness' and 'gently'. We want to look at the way the Bible uses the root word so, for this exercise, let's use the following passages.

Num 12:3

Psalm 22:26, 25:9, 37:11, 45:4, 76:9; 147:6, 149:4

Isa 11:4, 29:19, 61:1

Zeph 2:3

Matt 5:5; 11:29, 21:5

1Cor 4:21, 10:1

Gal 5:23, 6:1

Eph 4:2

Col 3:12

1Tim 6:11

2Tim 2:25

Tts 3:2

Jas 1:21, 3:13

1Pet 3:4, 3:15

Write out your responses to the questions, in line with the example above. Remember, this is the kind of study that you can take your time on, so don't feel you have to rush it. Try to use your "application" and let your Life Group know if it was successful!