

We often picture heaven as a place we are taken to, rather than a quality that is created in us. I am not saying that heaven does not exist as a place, but that for heaven to be heaven to you it must first be created in you. In short, we must be united to God in our lives before we are united to Him in heaven. We must pursue Godliness. 1 Timothy 4:7-10 states, "7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe." Let's spend some time this week pursuing Godliness.

Day 1

Godliness Has Great Value

The bible culminates in the wedding supper of the Lamb, which is God being united to His people. Everything in the bible, all the trials, battles, and challenges lead up to this moment. It is the point of all creation. The wedding supper of the Lamb is not an awards dinner at the end of time to mark those who have done a great job, are most improved, or whose "sales" (evangelism) numbers are the best. It is the deification of creation, or the participation of creation and, especially man, in the life of God. If you are a Christian, this has already begun in your life. You are being sanctified, which means being brought into the sanctuary of God. This happens at first counter-intuitively. You are not brought into the sanctuary, but the sanctuary is brought into you. You are becoming Godly as your character, nature, and actions come to reflect the creator of the universe. Because this is the culmination and goal of all of creation, there is nothing more worth your time than the pursuit of Godliness in your life. It has value for all things, all times, and all circumstances. It is not possible to overstate its value. Spend some time in prayer today asking God to reveal the importance of Godliness to you, that you may come to value it according to its worth, and that you will pay the price for it that it demands.

Verses: Revelation 19:7-9, 2 Timothy 2:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Prayer Topics: Holiness, Faithfulness, Purifying

Day 2

Godliness Requires Training

Paul contends that Godliness requires training. What is training? An archaic definition means to travel by train. This is not the definition we want. But it is illuminating. Trains being pulled by locomotives do have something to do with this. The word train means at its root to be pulled along and was originally used to denote the train of a robe that a king would wear. God's glory cloud is pulled along into glory by Him. When we train in the modern sense, we are taught a skill or behavior by the instruction of a person and practice. We are pulled along into something new. There is intentionality, structure, and pursuit. It is related to the idea of discipleship, which means to be under the discipline of a teacher. The general idea behind all of this is to submit yourself to someone to be formed by them. It requires effort, work, thought, discipline, diligence and personal responsibility. We are to train ourselves to be Godly, meaning it will take initiative and seeking on our part. At the end of our lives, if we have not attained Godliness, it does no good to say that someone like our parents or friends did not train us. We must seek out training, look for teachers, structure our lives to the pursuit and attainment of Godliness, for nothing has more value for eternity.

Verses: Proverbs 22:6, Psalm 144:1, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Prayer Topics: Coaching, Repetition, Progress, Cultivation

Day 3

Godliness Increases Self-Control

Self-control is the governing of one's desires. The truth is that we are more like a committee than we would like to admit, a group of competing desires that ebb and flow lacking unity and direction as we experience random thoughts, physical privations, and emotional turmoil. If you have ever watched a three year old you have seen what human beings are on the inside if the inner person is not strengthened to reign in this unruly convocation. The two Greek words that are often translated into self-control have the meaning of soundness of mind and inner strength, and both of these are necessary for self-control to be effective. We must have a mind that can look towards our long term good as we experience the ups and downs of daily life. We must not let these momentary lapses derail us from our ultimate goal of being Godly. Secondly, we must have the inner strength to actually follow through on what our mind is telling us. It does no good to have a sound mind if there is no strength to take these wise decisions and turn them into fully realized actions. We must pray for wisdom and strength, and we must practice doing hard things so that we develop the mental toughness to see our desire for Godliness become fruitful.

Verses: Proverbs 25:28, 2 Timothy 1:7, 2 Peter 1:3-11

Prayer Topics: Restraint, Regulation, Rule (of the Self)

Day 4

Godliness Leads to Faithfulness

A faithful person is one whose word is their bond, who does not deviate from their path due to opposition or cost, and one who is willing to make the sacrifice necessary to preserve the unity of covenant. God is always faithful. He has not, is not, and will not let anything keep Him from being faithful to His promises. God's desire is to be united with us, to see the participation of all creation in His glory. We must also become faithful, because He is faithful, in fact, as we come to resemble God more, we will find ourselves becoming less deceitful, less obscure, and more reliable. We will find that sacrifices that used to scare us and give us pause no longer bring concern to our minds. We will find ourselves being more direct, simpler and more straightforward, and clearer in our thinking, speaking, and actions. We will let our yes be yes and our no, no, regardless of the cost or consequence. We will cease trying to win favor or influence people, but will let our invitations have the proper level of disinterest. We will be true and strong, and that will lead to greater blessing for us and those who come into contact with us.

Verses: 1 John 1:9, 2 Timothy 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Prayer Topics: Binding, Devotion, Sincerity

Day 5

Godliness Ends in Love & Joy

Joy in the pursuit of Godliness comes from an unexpected place: the knowledge of our sinfulness. If we really understood in our hearts and minds how ugly, evil, and deadly sin was, and how permeated our lives were with it, we would welcome any correction, chastening, or discipline necessary to root it out. The idea of having our sins and faults pointed out would bring a sense of relief, gratitude, and joy. We

would never wish to continue with them or to hide them, but would pay any price to be rid of them and set free from their pernicious influence. After a sense of joy would come love, first for the God who set us free and then for others who have had the same destructive plague on their lives. We would want to bear any burden and endure any hardship to help others to come to understand the great freedom and glory that salvation offers. Right now, however, many of us see the hiding and denying of our sin as the path to love and joy. We feel, mistakenly, that if we just hide it, we can be happy, because sin isn't really that bad, in fact, we often find it useful or fun. We think that love for others is expressed in helping them to deny or hide their sins, just as we endeavor to hide and deny our own. But deep down, we have the sinking feeling that the time for fooling ourselves will come to an end, and the whole charade will be exposed to our shame. True joy and love await, but at the formation of real Godliness in our lives. Pray for the strength, wisdom, and spiritual vision to see the truth about your sin, and the trust and faith in God to allow Him to work in your life for your glory.

Verses: James 4:17, Romans 6:23, Romans 3:23, 1 John 1:8-10

Prayer Topics: Forgiveness, Redemption, Joy