

## **Building Character: Godliness** **2 Peter 1:6-7**

According to Peter's "building blocks of character" the fifth to be added is "godliness." Godliness refers to a correct attitude toward God and a way of living that is in keeping with that attitude. Thus, godliness implies an inward and an outward state of being that is in keeping with what God has revealed about Himself (Eph. 5:1), and with His revealed will for man, in particular the Christian (Eph. 2:10). Both of these elements being true, it is impossible for a non-Christian, or even an unfaithful Christian, to be characterized as "godly" because his unbelief would indicate an improper attitude toward God. Though some may feel compelled to defend unbelievers because of the "good things" that they do, it is clear that their lives cannot be characterized by the word "godly" or their actions by the word "godliness."

Paul teaches in 1 Timothy 6:1-6 that the doctrine that all Christians must consent to is "*according to godliness,*" that is, it is in accordance with a right attitude towards God and it exhibits behavior appropriate to that attitude. In this context, appropriate behavior would include due respect to all brethren, whatever their social status or station in life. We also understand from these verses that social climbing at the expense of others is contrary to godliness, and that godliness is "*great gain*" regardless of social status. Consequently, the characteristic of godliness is to be desired over social status, and should be pursued rather than social climbing. The Bible also teaches us to pray for a life of peaceful godliness (1 Tim. 2:1-2), that "*godliness is profitable unto all things (1 Tim. 4:8),*" and that all should flee hurtful lusts to "*follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Tim. 6:11).*"

So then, godliness is a trait of character that is acquired as it is learned from God's word and accepted, and which contributes to the strengthening of the Christian so that he will "*be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:8),*" and that he will "*never stumble (2 Pet. 1:10).*" Godliness is to characterize the entire life of the Christian, inclusive of all activities and relationships, whether to God, to the church, or to the world.

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