

Small Group Study, week commencing 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022

### For starters

What do you think of when you hear the word ‘piety’? Does it have positive associations for you, or negative ones? Why?

### Introduction

Peter continues to build up his equation for a fruitful Christian life, i.e.

*faith + goodness + knowledge + self-control + perseverance + godliness + mutual affection + love (verses 5-7)* = *effective and productive knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 8)*

In this study we take a closer look at **godliness**.

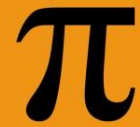
“The word *eusebeia* (godliness) is quite untranslatable. Even *piety* is inadequate, carrying as it does a suggestion sometimes of something not altogether attractive. The great characteristic of *eusebeia* is that it looks in two directions. The man who has *eusebeia* always correctly worships God and gives him his due; but he always correctly serves his fellow-men and gives them their due” (William Barclay).

### Read

Read [2 Peter 1:3-6](#).

### Study

1. “You’re shinin’ your light, and shine it you should, / But you’re so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good” (Johnny Cash, “[No Earthly Good](#),” from *The Rambler*, 1977). What does the phrase “you’re so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good” mean? Do you agree with the sentiment?
2. Godliness carries the sense of duty towards both God and other people (see quote by William Barclay above). Read [Acts 10:1-4](#). How does Cornelius exemplify godliness?
3. The root of the Greek word *eusebeia* is connected to danger and flight, and in ancient Greece it implied a reverence or fear of the gods. In Athens, Paul found an



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altar established out of fear of offending a god by mistake. “You are ignorant of the very thing you worship (*eusebeō*)” ([Acts 17:23](#)). What is the role of the “fear of God” in the Christian faith? See [Acts 10:2](#), [2 Corinthians 5:11](#)).

4. Godliness can be imitated ([2 Timothy 3:2-5](#)). How is it possible to have a “form of godliness” (verse 5) and yet still be “lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive ...”? How can we recognise genuine godliness and its impostor?

5. Read [1 Timothy 4:7-8](#). How does godliness hold “promise for both the present life and the life to come”? How do we train ourselves to be godly? See also [Titus 2:11-14](#).

6. “God saves us from the reductionism of such legalism which enshrines spirituality as a series of wooden laws and then says, “If you can do these six, sixteen or sixty-six things, you will godly.” Christianity, godliness, is far more than a checklist. Being “in Christ” is a relationship, and like all relationships it deserves disciplined maintenance, but never legalistic reductionism” (R. Kent Hughes). In what areas of your life might “disciplined maintenance” be required?

### Prayer

Use the following prayer, or pray with your own words.

*Dear Father, please keep me from wanting my life to about me.*

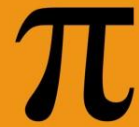
*My dreams are too small, my desires are too selfish, my actions are too sinful for me to focus on what I think is best. Father, you know I can be down and discouraged. You know my weaknesses.*

*I pray you would give me the courage to see that my life is about Christ. I need to follow his life and love you as he did on earth. I pray my life would be about adding to your reputation. I pray my focus would be consumed with showing gratitude for the grace and mercy given to me.*

*Father, I confess that my energy is too often spent on the script I want to write. Help me to have the humility to see that you are the only one I can trust to write my script, my story. May you grant that my story would become your story. May your words become my words.*

# Godliness

2 Peter 1:6



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*I confess that I often want only what seems good to me and for me. Help me see that what I want most, even it is a “good” thing, may not be what you want for me. Help me to love you more than what I love here on earth.*

*I pray for clarity and grace to see that you do not treat me as my sins deserve. I pray for wisdom not to trust what I think my story should be. I pray for the grace to see that obeying you is my blessing and my reward.*

*May my life become a living narrative that points to you and not to me. I pray in the name of Jesus, your son, my Saviour and my God. Amen*

(from Pray About Everything, Paul Tautges).