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Godliness and Humility



Charisma and Character - Steve Gregg

In "Godliness and Humility," Steve Gregg explores the components of a theocentric, or God-centered, life through the lens of the fruits of the Spirit listed in 1 Timothy 6:11. He emphasizes the importance of holiness and acknowledging God's presence in daily life, as well as cultivating an attitude of humility rather than self-aggrandizement. Gregg cautions against the dangers of self-deception and false humility, and encourages a focus on gratitude and thankfulness as a marker of a truly God-centered life.

Transcript

This is the last in a long series of 16 lessons on the subject of the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. The series is called Charisma and Character, and we spent a long time talking about the gifts of the Spirit early on in the series. We've been spending now a long time talking about the fruit of the Spirit, and that long time is about to be capped off with this final study in the Scriptures.

And each week we've been taking as many as we could of the fruit of the Spirit, and just looking at what the Scripture teaches on these things, what it means to have this fruit in your life, and as much as possible being practical about how to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in your life as well. Tonight I want to talk about two fruits of the Spirit, which are Godliness and Humility. Now, if you read the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, 22 and 23, you will not find these two fruits in the list.

They're not there. But in an earlier lesson, we looked at a number of other lists of fruit that Paul gave other than in Galatians 5, where he listed a number of things, which in each list there were at least three items that did belong to the list in Galatians 5, plus some others. And when we combined those lists, we got a much fuller list of the things that Paul viewed as the fruits that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the spiritual person, the person who walks in the Spirit.

And those would include the topics that we're looking at tonight, which are Godliness and Humility. Now, the first of those words has always been a bit vague to my mind. What is Godliness? I mean, to say that somebody is godly obviously suggests that they

are religious or something.

But what specifically does it mean? I mean, how does the word godly differ, for instance, from the word righteous or holy or some other word like that? Any of which might convey the idea that someone was a person of God, a person with a spiritual life and an inclination toward God. But what specifically does the word godly mean? I've heard people say it means godlike. Over the years, in fact, that's probably the most common thing I've heard preachers say, that godly means godlike.

But I'm not sure that that's true. I haven't been able to find that meaning in the lexicons. I did look up today, I prepared these notes that you have today, the Greek words that are translated godliness in the New Testament.

There are two such words. One of the words, the principal word, is called Eusebia. I'm sorry, yes, that is the correct word.

Eusebia, it's from two Greek words, eu, which means good or well. And the other one is sebumai, which means to be devout. So literally, the word godliness in the Greek means to be well-devout.

But devout is also a word that many people don't quite understand today. We sang one song tonight about being devoted to God. Well, obviously, devout is a cognate of the word devoted.

Somebody who is devoted to God is devout. And the other word that is translated godliness in the New Testament is theosebia, which has the same second part to the word, which means to be devout. But the first part comes from the Greek word theos, which means God.

So it means devout toward God. Both of those Greek words in the New Testament are translated godliness. And if we would get a Greek scholar's definition of godliness instead of a preacher's, I've given you a couple of them here.

This one comes from W.E. Vine. He says, the word godliness denotes that piety, which characterized by a godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to him. I think the core of that definition is the word piety and a godward attitude, which we'll have more to say about.

Spiros Zodiades, another Greek scholar, has given this definition of these Greek words. He says, godliness, or the whole of true religion, so named because piety toward God is the foundation and principle part of it. It has the general sense of a pious life or a life which is morally good.

Now, the word godliness is found in a list of fruits of the Spirit in 1 Timothy 6.11. Now, this is not the passage we usually look at for the fruit of the Spirit, as I've said every

time. Galatians 5, 22 and 23 is usually considered to be the list of the fruit of the Spirit. But if you look at 1 Timothy 6.11, it says, But you, O man of God, flee these things, in the prior context, these things refers to the love of money, and pursue some things.

You're supposed to flee from something, that is, the love of money, and you're supposed to pursue, on the other hand, something else. And he tells us what it is we're to pursue, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Now, faith and love and gentleness are in the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Patience is also very close in meaning to long-suffering, another word that's in that list in Galatians 5. So, we can see that this list of items here is another list very much like that in Galatians, which includes items of character that are, in Paul's mind, in the general category of the fruit that is produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, of the godly person.

Now, godliness is in that list. And I think that from the definitions we've looked at, I would use... I'd give another word for the word godliness. I would paraphrase it as a person who is theocentric.

Now, you might say, well, I like the word godliness better because it's more familiar. And I'm sure I know what theocentric means. Well, theocentric means that you have a god-centered life.

Theos is the Greek word for god. There's also a similar word, christocentric, which means Christ-centered. But a theocentric person with a theocentric life, they are god-centered.

They're focused upon God. Now, one might think that this is just, you know, universal among religious people. After all, aren't all people in one of two categories, those who believe in God and those who don't believe in God? And if you believe in God, then, of course, you'd be god-centered, wouldn't you? Well, not necessarily.

It's quite obvious that in the Gallup polls and other surveys that have been taken of the American public, what, 80, 90-something percent of Americans say that they believe in God. But you could not argue for a moment that even half of those people who make that claim, probably not even a tenth, live a God-centered life, where God is really at the core of every motivation, every plan they make, every ambition that they hold dear is all focused on what does God want, what is God pleased with, what is God's will. How can I best conform to God's wishes in my life? A God-centered person, a godly person, has this, as it says in Vine's definition, a Godward attitude.

And, therefore, godliness is to have a heightened awareness of God in your life and to give to that awareness top priority. Now, I must just testify for my own self that I was a believer in God, and even a Christian, I would say, as near as I can tell, for many years in my early life. I received the Lord when I was a child.

I was raised in an evangelical church. I believed the gospel. I read the Bible and believed

it.

I even witnessed in school. I preached publicly in junior high school. I was in a Baptist church in which I was the leader of the youth group for many years in a row.

That is, like the one they elected to be the president of the youth group or whatever, which wasn't a very important or spiritual role. But the point, what I'm saying is I was a sincere believer in the gospel. I wasn't faking it.

I, in those years, had decided that someday I would go into the ministry. That was the only thing I could be satisfied with, would be serving God. But you know what? I would have to say, in retrospect, I wasn't really godly.

When I was around religious people, I conformed somewhat inadvertently to religious norms. I knew pretty much what was okay, what was the protocol at the church, and what was the protocol at my home. At home, I acted one way.

At church, another way. And when I went to school, which was public school, I didn't have any Christian friends there, I acted yet another way. Now, when I was at school, I want to make it clear, I didn't act like a total pagan.

I never would have renounced Christ. In fact, I even witnessed at school. But I will say that when I was at school, when I was away from a religious environment, I can't really say that God was at the center of my focus.

I know that he was, it wasn't that he was nothing to me, but he certainly wasn't everything to me. And therefore, in school, I would slip into participating and laughing along with jokes that people told that were unedifying and lewd. In junior high years, I even allowed my speech to pick up some slang that was not clean at all, because my friends did.

I was attracted to and entertained by many of the same things my worldly peers were. It was simply not a godly life. I wasn't living my life day by day with a sense of the centrality of God in my life as a hub from which all other areas of my life emanated and radiated.

You know, I remember hearing this when I was a child in the Baptist church. I actually heard a preacher give this illustration, which I've since given to my children. Frankly, I think it is a good illustration for children since I heard it, and it impressed me as a child, but perhaps it's a good illustration for adults too.

But I remember as a child hearing about how the planets, of course, go around the sun because of the gravitational pull of the sun. They stay in an orbit around it, and because they do, and because they're in a proper orbit related to the sun, they don't bump into each other or anything else. They tend to be moving in an orderly way the way they

were designed to go.

However, that is because all of them have the sun as the center of their orbit. If any one of them would make themselves, if any planet would make itself the center of its own universe and try to act as if everything revolved around it, the whole universe would be in chaos because, first of all, it wouldn't be true. Things don't go around the earth, except the moon does, but the rest of the solar system and universe do not.

But as long as everything in the solar system has the sun as its center, everything goes orderly and there's no collisions and so forth. And the preacher that I heard this from as a child was making the point that that's how our own lives are. God is the center of our lives.

Everything falls into place. Everything is in order. The relationships go as smoothly as they can in a fallen world, and we don't complicate our lives with damaging sin and so forth in our lives.

And it's always God is the center of our being. We are as God intended for us to be, but as soon as we make ourselves the center, we expect circumstances to revolve around our wishes and our desires, and people to conform to our pleasure. Well, then we're out of our place in the universe.

We're out of our place in the moral and spiritual world, and things are going to get complicated and get destroyed. Now, as a child, hearing that, I was motivated by a desire not to have my life get destroyed and out of order, that I wanted to keep God in my focus, but I wasn't very strong in that area. And it wasn't until I was 16 and when I was filled with the Holy Spirit, which was a dramatic threshold I crossed at age 16, I experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit then, that suddenly, without my asking for that, I mean, as a byproduct of being filled with the Spirit, God became so real to me that I lived every day and every moment.

And some would think, if you haven't experienced this, some would think, oh, well, that's a preacher's exaggeration. He's taking preacher's license to say every minute, every day, you were thinking about God. It's true.

It's true. All the time. It's like God invaded my life and took control of the center of my life.

And nothing has mattered to me since, really, momentarily. I have temptations toward other things, of course, like everybody else does, but nothing has ever been able to grip me and command my loyalty or my interest or motivate me so much as my concern about the will of God, ever since that day. And it's a funny thing because things that used to matter a little or a lot, at varying degrees, insofar as they have nothing to do with the will of God, I just can't see any use for them today.

I don't want to make it sound like I don't have any place for entertainment in my life. There is place for entertainment in my life, but even when I entertain myself, I'm concerned about, well, how much should I entertain myself? With what should I entertain myself? What would please God in this matter? I'm not trying to say I live a totally monk-like existence. I don't.

But it's like God became the center of all things in my life. And when someone talks about being theocentric today, it rings a bell with me. And I guess I realize that in a room this size, probably everyone, I imagine everyone here is a Christian.

But I know that some of you will know what I mean. Your heart will just ring true. Yeah, I know what it means that God is at the center of my life.

And others will just say, well, I don't know if that's really true or if they're just talking because that's the way they think it's supposed to be. And they're just saying, you know, a lot of times preachers say what they think is supposed to be true. You ever heard someone say, well, now that I've been a Christian, I've never had a lonely moment again in my whole life.

I mean, people sometimes feel like they're supposed to say that, although very few Christians really could honestly say that. I mean, becoming a Christian doesn't bring an end to loneliness. Jesus certainly was lonely.

Paul certainly got lonely. The prophets were lonely characters. Being lonely is not a sin.

And becoming a Christian is no guarantee against having moments or periods of loneliness. But sometimes people dutifully say what they think is supposed to be true. So they testify to what they think they're supposed to be saying.

And I hope that you don't think that that's what I'm doing right now when I talk about having a Godward attitude that everything in your life can be focused on God. I don't mean that every moment of every day you're constantly trying to think, I've got to think about God, I've got to think about God, I've got to think about God. But rather that God takes possession of you in such a way through His Holy Spirit that you can't get Him out of your mind.

And that you don't have to force yourself to think about God. And there are times when you're not specifically thinking about God. But everything you think is dictated by the fact that God is at the core of everything in your life.

That, I think, is what Godliness is. Having a piety that's made up of a Godward attitude. Not self-worth.

Godward, outward concern for what God wishes, what pleases God, not what pleases me or what I wish. Now, I made a list here in the notes that I've given you of five things. I

could have made it longer.

In fact, I thought of making it longer, but I had so many other points to make, I thought, I just dare not. So I just made a few items here, which I think the Bible would suggest are components or aspects or ingredients of a life that is theocentric, that is God-centered. And the first might seem the most obvious, and that is holy conduct.

If you'd look with me at 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 11. Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 11, Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, he means the heavens and the earth around us, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? Now, I grant you that Peter does not use holy conduct and godliness as synonyms. They seem to be separate items.

But it's also clear that a person who's Godward in their life and God-centered in their life is going to be concerned about holy conduct to the point where these two are obviously related concepts. They're inseparable concepts, and Peter doesn't separate them. He puts them together.

Holy conduct will grow out of godliness. If you have God as the center of your life, then you will be separated from him in your own understanding. You see, holiness doesn't mean what some people think.

Some people think holiness means old-fashioned or joyless or religious or something like that. But actually, holiness, the word means set apart. You may have heard that before.

Holiness means to be set apart. And to be set apart for God is what it means to be holy. Now, being set apart for God, first of all, is not something you do.

It is something actually God did. When you were born into his family, you were set apart for his service, for his purposes. And this has its counterpart, its type and its shadow in the Old Testament, in the priests.

Because we are a kingdom of priests, the Bible says, every believer a priest. And the priests in the Old Testament were set apart. They were holy unto the Lord.

And it meant that they were not able to make choices for themselves like everybody else was with the same quite a bit of latitude. Because if a person was born of the house of Aaron, he was born holy. He might not act holy, but he was holy.

In fact, he might act very uncharacteristic of the way he was supposed to be acting, but he was still set apart. He could not legitimately do anything except be a priest. He couldn't, for example, his neighbors might grow up to be carpenters or merchants or fishermen or whatever, but he couldn't.

From birth, he was set apart for something, and that was to be a priest. And when you

were born again, you were born into a priesthood. And you were set apart for the service of that priesthood.

Now, being set apart is something that's independent of what you do. But what you do is not independent of what you were set apart for. Because having been set apart for God, being holy and set apart for him, it is incumbent on us to live in a holy fashion.

That is, to let that holiness dictate our lifestyle and our choices. For example, a son of Aaron, as I said, he'd have to go into the vocation that he was set apart by God for. There were certain people he could marry, and others that he could not marry.

You know, there was a stricter code in Deuteronomy for who the priest could marry and who other people could marry. Other Jews could marry certain people, but a priest, for example, couldn't marry a divorced woman. An ordinary Jew could, but a priest couldn't.

A priest couldn't marry a woman who'd been a harlot some earlier time in her life. An ordinary Jew could, presuming she was no longer a harlot and had become an honest woman and so forth. She could marry.

Ray had the harlot as a good example. She married a Jewish man and became an ancestor of Christ. But the priest had stricter guidelines.

And many of the choices they would make, how they'd spend their day, what they'd go into as a profession, who they'd marry, and things like that were dictated by the fact that they were set apart from the rest of the community for special purposes. And we are, taking the world at large, we Christians are set apart from the rest for special purposes. And that purpose is to please God and to do the will of God.

And therefore, we should be holy in our conduct as well as in reality. We are in reality holy. If you don't live a holy life, that doesn't change the fact that God has set you apart.

You are set apart. You're just not living like it. And if you're not living like it, you probably won't be set apart for long.

Because I don't think it's unconditional that you remain holy. Set apart, I believe that God calls us to live a holy life. And those who don't live a holy life, I don't think stay in the family that long.

I know there's people who have a different opinion about that. But if you are a Christian, then God has set apart you for something different than whatever you were doing before you were a Christian. And different from what your unsaved neighbors and friends are set apart for.

Therefore, this difference in calling should dictate a whole different character, a whole different way of life. And that's what holy conduct is. Now, godliness, God-centeredness,

makes me concerned that my conduct is agreeable with what God has called me to do.

And therefore, will be characterized by holy conduct. And holy conduct would mean, for example, for the Christian, that I would not just go to college just because other people go to college. I might go to college if I would go to college, if God called me to.

And He may well call some to do so. But in the world, it's just assumed you go to college. You get out of high school, what do you do next? You go to college, of course.

Well, the Christian shouldn't make such assumptions. The person should consider this. Who's there at liberty to do something with their life? They should do whatever God wants them to do.

Maybe going to college will be that. Maybe something entirely different. And choosing a vocation.

Maybe the parents always wanted you to become a lawyer, a doctor, or president of the United States. Prime Minister of Canada, for some of you, who could never be president of the United States because you have to be born here. But whatever your parents may have wished for you to be, or you may have aspired to be, or hoped you might be, once you're holy unto the Lord, it's what He wants you to be that matters.

Now, maybe He will make you a doctor or a lawyer. But if He doesn't, then that's got to go by the board. Your ambitions, your goals have got to be submitted to what God has called you to do.

Your choice of a wife, your choice of a husband, your choice of, you know, family size, your choice of how money is spent. All these things have to be brought into subjection to the overall purpose of God in your life. Godliness.

Issues for and holiness or set-aparthood of your conduct. That is, you're set-apart in that you're choosing things in your life upon a different basis than everybody else in the world does because you've been set-apart for something different than they were. And that doesn't mean you have to take up, you know, full-time preaching ministry.

It shouldn't be thought that choosing a holy vocation means you have to become a pastor of a church or necessarily a missionary on the mission field. It does mean, though, that whatever God calls you to do, you do it because He's called you to do it, not because you always kind of wanted to be that, or you always thought you'd get a lot more respect if you chose that vocation, or your parents always wanted you to do it, or your school counselors always said you just cut out for that kind of thing. You choose your vocation because you believe God wants you there.

And you do it day by day as a service to God. Now, it's okay if you enjoy it. Being holy doesn't mean you don't enjoy your life.

I can't imagine any vocation other than the one I'm in that could conceivably be as enjoyable as the one I'm in. I just can't even imagine. I pity everybody who isn't able to do what I do for a living.

And I pity them sort of halfway because I know that they wouldn't want to do it. Many of them wouldn't want to do what I do for a living. They may be happy in what they're doing, but I am so satisfied doing what God wants me to do, and so will you be, if you're really godly.

If you're making your decisions, you're concerned about what God wants. It's not just that you're doing it legalistically. Well, I always wanted to be a model, but I guess that doesn't maybe glorify God that much, so maybe I ought to plan to be a homemaker.

Oh, man, it's a hard drudgery being a Christian. But you don't choose God's way in a legalistic way if you're godly. You might do so if you're religious.

If you're religious and legalistic, you might say, Well, I guess being a movie actress isn't really God's call in my life. He probably wants me to be a wife and a mother. Well, if that is your choice and you do it grudgingly, then you're not being particularly godly in the choice.

Just because you make the right choice isn't what godliness is. Godliness is that God has captured your heart to the point where you wouldn't be happy doing anything else. You're not seeking any joy or any happiness or any satisfaction in anything but the will of God.

And that brings you such joy and satisfaction that the absence of joy and satisfaction in holy living is, to my mind, evidence of a lack of godliness. You're not God-centered yet. You see, you can still be doing outwardly the things you know are the right things to do before God, but your heart be rebelling all the way.

Well, if your heart's rebelling, your heart's not focused on God. God doesn't have your heart. He only has your outward actions.

He doesn't have your heart. Being godly means that your heart attitude is directed toward God. Your heart attitude is gladly submissive to God, eager to do His will.

And this is the attitude that we find in Jesus. He said, I didn't come to do my own will but to do the will of Him that sent me. And He said in Psalm 40, which is quoted in the New Testament as words of Jesus, He says, I delight to do thy will, O God.

Doing the will of God with delight is the mark of the holy conduct that springs from godliness, from being God-focused in your life. Another aspect of godliness I think that the Bible would have to include under the definition or one of the corollaries of it is what is frequently spoken of in the Scripture, the fear of God. Now, I've given a lot of

scriptures here in the notes about the fear of God.

I don't know if we'll look them all up. I don't know if we have time, but certainly holiness and the fear of God are related to each other, though they're not the same thing. If you look at Hebrews chapter 12 and in verse 28, it says, Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Now, godliness is very closely connected to reverence, which is itself related to the concept of godly fear or the fear of God. Now, a lot of people think that fear of God doesn't jive well with the whole attitude of loving Jesus. After all, doesn't the Bible say, perfect love casts out fear? Yes, perfect love casts out fear for this reason.

The fear of God is simply the fear, the dread, the terror of being wrongly related to God. I don't fear the ocean, but if I were, you know, if you put a ball and chain around my foot and threw me off the end of the pier, as of the bottom of the ocean, I would be in a relationship with the ocean that I do dread. I mean, I can hardly think of anything more dreadful than being sunk to the bottom of the ocean alive.

You know, after I'm dead, I don't care what they do with me, but alive, sunk to the bottom of the ocean without scuba tanks is a pretty scary prospect. Therefore, I plan to avoid it if possible. And that's just the point.

The fear of God is that way too. I don't fear the ocean, I don't fear God, except I do fear and dread the prospect of being out of harmony with God, being in improper relationship with God. The right relationship with me in the ocean is for me to sit on the beach and look at the waves, or to be out on a boat.

The wrong relationship with me in the ocean is to be underneath the water trying to breathe it. I wasn't designed to have that relationship. The fish have that, but I don't.

Now, likewise, right relationship with God is something that removes all fear. That is to say, if I'm sinning, or if I'm doing what I know God despises, or if I'm even contemplating doing that, it's a scary thing. There's dread over that concept of being wrongly related with God.

But because of that dread, I don't do those things that would bring me into that scary circumstance. Fortunately, unlike many things that we fear, we do have control over our relationship with God. We don't have control over whether there's going to be a nuclear war, so you can sit and dread that all you want, and your fear won't make it happen, or make it not happen.

In fact, your fear won't have anything to do with whether it happens. Same thing with whether you get cancer, or a lot of other things that people dread. Things that you can't help, yeah, you might as well be afraid, I guess.

But, I mean, you don't have to, because as Christians we're told not to fear, we can trust in God. But the point is, to fear God is to fear that which you don't ever have to be in wrong relationship with. You can't stop a foreign power from launching a missile at Portland, and you can't stop cancer cells from growing in your body, perhaps.

But you can avoid being in wrong relationship with God. The fear of God causes a person to turn from evil, and to do the thing pleasing in God's sight. And that becomes like a governor within the heart, that delimits behavior.

There are things that I don't even consider doing, because of my fear of God. I fear God. And, you know, Joseph, when his brothers came to Egypt, and he was still pretending to be somebody other than who he was, and they didn't know who he was, he first said, I'm going to keep all of you in prison here, and send one of you back to get your brother and bring him here.

And then he changed his mind a couple of days later. He said, I'll tell you what, I'm a man who, I fear God, so I'm not going to do that. I'm going to send all of you home, I'll just keep one of you behind.

Now, because I fear God, I'm not going to do something cruel. I'm not going to do something, I'm not going to exploit the situation, just because I have the power to do it. I'm not going to take advantage of people, because I fear God.

Now, when you fear God, that limits the number of things that you will allow yourself to do. And a person who is Godward in his thinking is going to be dwelling in the fear of God all the day long. There's going to be reverence and godly fear in that person's attitude, virtually all the time.

I mean, there are, even a godly person has moments of temptation. But we're talking about the principle course that their life takes, and the principle attitudes that dominate their character. In 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1, 2 Corinthians 7, 1, Paul says, Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Now, we talked about holy conduct a moment ago. Now we find out how to perfect holiness in us. You do so in the fear of God.

In the environment, in the mental environment of the fear of the Lord, holiness is something that is being perfected in you. Now, there's a lot of other verses there in the notes I've given you on the fear of the Lord. 1 Peter 1, 17, which is one of them, says, If you call him Father, who without respect of persons will judge every man according to his works, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, the fear of God, that is.

Jesus said, I'll tell you who to fear. Don't fear him that can kill the body and can do no more, but fear him who after he destroys your body can destroy your soul too, in hell.

There is a proper fear of God.

But in what sense then does perfect love cast out fear? Well, my perfect love for God, when my love toward God becomes perfect, which it is not, but as my love is perfected toward God, I do fewer things that I have anything to fear him about. You know, if I love him, I keep his commandments, Jesus said. And insofar as my love is perfected, then I live according to his commandments.

And when you're living within the perimeters, you've got no fear. Do I fear the police? Yes, I fear the police enough to stay within speed limit when they're there, or when I suspect they might be. Now I know I'm a spiritual man, I'm supposed to say I keep the speed limit even when they're not there.

And I wish I could say that, but I don't always do that. But I know if I see a policeman, I always look at my speedometer. Because I figure he sees me too.

If I can see him, he can see me. And if I'm going over the speed limit, my heart starts beating fast. I start watching the rear view mirror to see if he's going to turn his lights on and stuff.

Why? Because I don't like getting tickets, they're expensive. And I kind of fear getting caught. But you know, if I'm driving already well within the speed limit, and I see a policeman, it doesn't bother me at all, I'm not the least bit afraid.

Now, if someone said, hey why don't you just floor it and go through this 25 mile zone at 100 miles an hour, that'd scare me. My fear of being wrongly related with the law would prevent me from doing that. But when I'm already behaving myself, I have nothing to fear from the policeman.

And Paul said that in Romans 13, you know, if you do well, you have nothing to fear from those who enforce the law. So, the fear of the Lord isn't something by which I'm continually tormented by the fear of hell. It's rather that the fear of being out of proper relationship with God keeps me well within the boundaries of obedience.

And perfect love leads to obedience. And as I have disobedience, then fear, the fear that has torment, is cast out. Because obedience to God basically keeps fear at arm's length.

But if I begin to move toward the edges of obedience, toward disobedience, then fear looms large. And that keeps me back in the center of God's will. The fear of the Lord is something that should be an attitude that's resident all day long, every day, past the time of your sojourning here, in fear, Peter said.

And that is part of having a Godward attitude. You see people who obviously have no fear of God. I mean, when I'm in public places and people are just blaspheming God and using the Lord's name in vain all the time, I think, you know, it makes my skin crawl.

I fear for them. Because, first of all, it astonishes me that anyone can have so little reverence for God. And so little fear of God.

And it just brings, basically, it's at times like that that I realize what I don't usually realize, and how much I have the fear of God. I don't live every day knowing I have the fear of God. I fear God.

I fear God. I fear God. I'm afraid of God.

That's not in my mind until I meet somebody who has no fear of God, and suddenly I'm awake in the fact that, wow, I really, I fear the Lord too much to do what He's doing. He has no fear of God, and it's only by contrast I realize that I have it, you know. But that's, the fear of the Lord is just resident in the character and in the heart of a person who's God-centered.

When God's at the center of your life, you're going to have that fear of God. You know, I put down in this list also dignity, which is an interesting thing to have on the list. And I put it there because I was forced to by a passage.

I actually thought the passage said something else, and then I found out from looking at the Greek it meant something else than what I thought. In 1 Timothy 2.2, I was going to put this down under the fear of the Lord, or reverence, because it says in the New King James, which I'm reading, 1 Timothy 2.2 says, For kings, we're supposed to pray for kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. Now that last word reverence I think is translated honesty in the King James.

The New King James translates it reverence, and it's here connected with godliness. And since we're talking about godliness, oh, here's a good verse to stick godliness in with the fear of the Lord and reverence. But then I noticed there was a note there to the margin, which says actually literally the word is not reverence, but dignity.

And so I looked that up in the lexicons I was using and found out that in fact that's true. The word here means dignity, godliness and dignity. The word is also used over in the same epistle, 1 Timothy 3, verse 4, it says of the elder, he must be one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all, it says reverence in the New King James, it should be translated dignity.

Same Greek word is there. Now, there should be something dignified about a man of God and about his children too, about his family. There should be a certain dignity about being a man of God, a woman of God.

That doesn't mean arrogance. In fact, remember a few weeks ago I was talking about Aristotle, how he gave definitions of certain character traits in the Greek language and this particular word that's translated reverence here, and I'm calling dignity, Aristotle

said that this word represents the quality that's the mean or the middle point between arrogance at one extreme and servility where you just do whatever people say and just kowtow to everybody else. That is, from submitting too much because you've got no sense of dignity, on the one hand, to being so self-dignified that you're arrogant, somewhere in between there, where you submit at the right times, but you submit only because it's the right thing to do and you carry yourself with a certain degree of dignity.

I think that this is related to godliness in the following way, that a person who's thinking about God as the center of all things in his life wants to adorn God, wants to be a good testimony for God, wants to behave in a dignified manner rather than to bring reproach or to belittle or bring too much levity into his life and thus bring a blot on God's name because people watch your life and they say, oh, that's a Christian. I think I'll see what a Christian does. If you're an undignified person, it doesn't command respect for the faith and for the God that you are committed to.

If you're arrogant, that doesn't adorn the gospel. On the other hand, if you're just inappropriately silly or empty-headed or have no reverence, no dignity, then that doesn't adorn the gospel either. I think it's interesting because Paul is the one who links godliness with dignity here in this passage in 1 Timothy 2. I wouldn't have thought to put that down.

But to behave in a dignified way is part of holy conduct, part of being godly. And it's because of your awareness that God is watching. You don't want to look like a fool before God or man because before man, you'll make the gospel look foolish.

Now, there is such a thing as being a fool for Christ, but that's very different. To preach the true message of Christ, which in the world of the perishing is foolishness, and for them to be offended because you preach the truth faithfully is a very different thing than appearing foolish just because you're being foolish. You see, the preaching of the gospel seems foolish to the unbeliever, but it's not really foolish.

It's really the highest wisdom. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, Paul said. You're not really being foolish, although the world may judge you to be foolish when you preach the gospel.

It's the foolishness of preaching that God has chosen to convict sinners and to confound the wise. But you're not being foolish. But so many Christians behave in a foolish manner.

There's just no seriousness. There's no maturity maintained. There's just a silliness about them, a lightness, an undignified behavior.

That characterized them, and I really doubt that persons who are behaving in those ways are really that God is the center of their thoughts at times like that. Now, I could be

wrong. I can't judge anyone else but me.

But I know that when I've been that way, it was certainly just bringing my thoughts back around to God sobers me, you know. It makes me want to behave a little more dignified as a better testimony and to have that human dignity that was lost in the fall, but which I'm hoping God may recover in me as a result of his work through his spirit in my life. Now, prayerfulness and thankfulness, I was going to list these as separate things because they are different from one another.

But the reason I stuck them together is because all the verses that I've given you there, list them both. And I thought, well, I could give you just prayerfulness and list all those verses and then give you thankfulness and look at the same verses. But prayerfulness and thankfulness, let me talk about these for a moment, and then we'll read the verses.

Prayerfulness means that you don't just pray at appointed times. You don't just pray because it's time to have a meal, and we always pray before a meal, or we pray because the meeting is starting or the meeting is closing or whatever. We don't just pray because it's bedtime.

But we pray because it's natural to pray. Because we're focused on God all the time. It's the most natural thing in the world to talk to him about things.

When a concern comes, you quite naturally speak to God about it. Not that you say, well, you know, I have to get someone to pray about this next time we have a prayer time, but that you're conversant with God. God is so much at the center of your thoughts, so much at the center of your life, that you wouldn't think to wait to talk to him about something.

He's there. Why wait? I remember that was one of the things that was so different in my life after I got filled with the Spirit from what it was before, that prayer was perfunctory, prayer was a chore before that. But afterwards, I just conversed with God.

You know, there's a character in the Bible, besides Jesus, and probably the apostles, there's a guy in the Old Testament who's that way, and that was Nehemiah. If you read the book of Nehemiah, he was building the walls of Jerusalem, and he had a lot of opposition from various people, and it came in various forms. But the book of Nehemiah is punctuated by his just shooting up an instant prayer to God.

Someone would be accusing him of, we're going to tell the king of Persia that you're setting up a revolt against him here, and Nehemiah would just say, oh, Lord, you know, hear what they say, and remember the integrity of my heart, and help me to forget, you know, ignore their threats. You know, I mean, he just, all the way through the book of Nehemiah, there's just this occasional verse, probably, I don't know how many times there are, probably half a dozen anyway, where he just kind of prays. You know, after, you know, he tells what his situation is, then he just prays to God, and then he goes on

with his business, because he was mindful of God's presence with him all the time.

If something came up that worried him, or that was a burden on him, he just naturally spoke to God about it. He didn't wait until the hour of prayer when he could go to the tabernacle or the temple and do that. He just talked to God where he was all the time.

And thankfulness is a different thing, but it's very closely related, because thankfulness is most natural and heartfelt when you realize you have God as the source of the things in your life. Now, you see, this is, what's so hard to communicate is that I know many Christians, and maybe some here, would agree, yes, all good things come from God. Maybe they'd even agree all hard things come from God.

All trials come from God. Depends on how orthodox you are in your beliefs. I mean, if you have good orthodox Christian beliefs, then you probably would admit good things come from God, and even the hard things come from God, because the Bible teaches that.

But you can believe that and say that, but not really believe it. And not really, it's not very natural for you to say that. You know you're supposed to say that, because that's a Christian doctrine, but you don't really see those things in your life that way.

But when you are God-centered, you do. You do see those things. I mean, when something happens that's good, even if it's a small thing, you just see that as the hand of God blessing you, and you tend to give thanks for it.

And when you see something happen that isn't what you wanted to happen, something that's painful, something that creates loss or difficulty in your life, you see that as the hand of God, too, because you're so focused on God that you recognize His hand in everything, and you can thank Him for everything. The Bible tells us to thank God for everything, and the reason we can do so is because He works all things together for good to those who love God. Now, it's one thing to say, yeah, I know that verse that's in Romans 8, 28, and I memorized that in Sunday school.

All things work together for good to those who love God. So if you ask me, do I believe that's true? Of course. How can I not believe it? It's in the Bible.

Of course I believe that's true. But do you really believe it's true? Is that a settled awareness that's always with you, that no matter what happens, the first thought is, ah, God's going to use this for good somehow. Not that I have to convince myself by reminding myself of the Scripture that says so, but I know it because I know God.

I know God's in charge of my life. I know God's here. I know nothing happens without His approval.

I know that He wasn't on vacation somewhere else when this happened to me. He was right here with me, and this thing must have some purpose. He's always working for my

good.

This is what you know about God when you're living constantly in the awareness of His presence. And therefore, whether something good or seemingly bad happens, it's very natural to just thank God for it. And so the Bible tells us, of course, to do that.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5. In 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 17 and 18, Paul says, For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Now, here we have these two things together. Pray without ceasing.

It's kind of a, you just, it's natural to pray to God at any time, instantly, in season or out of season, if you're godly, if you're God-centered in your life. And also to give thanks in everything. Praying without ceasing and giving thanks in everything are simply part of being God-ward in your attitude, having awareness of God's activity in your life, of His nearness, of His concern, and counting on that, knowing that, living in the awareness of that all the time.

It leads to spontaneous prayer and spontaneous thanksgiving. In Philippians 4, 6, we have, again, prayer and thanksgiving joined together in a single verse. Not identified as the same thing, exactly, but still joined inseparably as parts of the Christian's devotion to God.

In Philippians 4, 6, it says, Be anxious for nothing. That means worried about nothing. But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

Now, obviously, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, thanksgiving is something else besides. You add it to that, but in everything, you make your requests known to God by prayer and with thanksgiving in everything. In everything in your life, you pray about it naturally, spontaneously, and you also thank God for everything.

You live in a constant attitude of gratitude to God. Now, you might say, well, that's a little idealistic. I'm not sure anyone can really do that.

Well, you can. I'll testify, you can. I know it's true.

And not only do I know it from my own experience, I know it from the experience of many, many people. And I think that we have, in many cases, been taught to settle or just been allowed to settle for a very sub-godly or ungodly, maybe is a better way of putting it, religious norm. That there's just a normal religious life that we've come to assume is acceptable and normal.

Everybody seems to have it. The religious people we go to church with, they don't seem to be any better about holding their temper than other people. They get angry and they grumble and they complain and they don't seem any more thankful than we are.

And we're not very thankful, it may be. And we think, well, I'm about normal. What I am is about normal for Christianity, judging from all those around me.

But there's a problem there. You're not supposed to be judging from those around you. You're supposed to be judging from what the Scripture says.

Jesus is the standard, not other people. And if we judge by the standard of Jesus, I think we've been allowed to be religious, but not godly. I think our Christian culture allows us to toe the line outwardly and remain in good standing in the church.

We're told what we should be doing all the time, and as long as we outwardly do it, everyone figures we're a good Christian. We figure we're a good Christian. Even though we may have very little or no real relationship with God happening.

Very little or no fellowship with God happening in our lives. And that is a tragedy, I think, because the normal Christian life includes such. Now, the other verses I gave you there under prayerfulness and thankfulness are all, Philippians 1 and Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1, they're all places where Paul said to his readers, I give thanks for you constantly and I pray for you constantly.

And I pray for you always, giving thanks for you and so forth. Thanksgiving and prayer were a constant part of Paul's life. On every remembrance of you, he says to the Philippians, I give thanks on every remembrance of you, praying for you.

And that is something that is natural for someone who's God-centered. You know, you think of somebody and say, oh, wow, it's really a blessing to remember that person. Thank God.

Thank you, Lord, for that person. You know, I really want to, God bless them. To do that quite naturally, spontaneously, is normal.

It's not an exceptional degree or a strange or fanatical degree of religiosity that does that. That's just normal awareness of God. And if a person doesn't have that God-awareness, then they can.

They need to realize that there is, and they should, because that's a fruit of the Spirit that is missing in their life. And one final thing I've listed under here, as I said, the list could be made longer, but I think another aspect or ingredient of a theocentric life or godliness is zeal for God. It is said of Jesus in John 2, 17 that the zeal of God's house consumed him.

He was zealous for God's house. You know, what that resulted in was taking a whip and driving money changers out of the house of God. He was so zealous over the holiness of God and God's holy temple.

In Romans 10, verse 2, Paul said that the Jews, although in their case it was not according to knowledge, they had zeal, but it wasn't real godly because they didn't know God. But there is a proper zeal for God that comes out of knowing God and being concerned for God. Just like if you have a good relationship with a good friend or with a spouse or with your children or someone like that, and something happens that you know is going to offend them.

Maybe it's something that wouldn't ordinarily offend you, but you know that this is happening in their presence. You know that it's going to wrench their gut. It's going to really offend them.

Do you feel that wrenching in your gut too? Because you know that your wife, your husband, your friend is feeling this about the situation. Well, a God-feocentric kind of life is one that is aware of how God feels about things. And when you see something, when you hear about something, you think immediately how God must feel about this.

When you hear of millions perishing without Christ, you think, oh, God must be grieved. And you feel grieved too. You have a zeal, a concern, an enthusiasm for the things of God, for God's own feelings and God's own reactions.

You share them. And the intensity of them weighs upon you because He's a real person in your life. He's not just a theological construct that you've been taught to believe exists, and you do, but He's a real person in your life.

Someone you care about. And someone that you're close enough to to know, oh, I think that bothers God. I think that really bugs Him.

And it bugs you. There's a psalm. I'm afraid I don't have it at my fingertips.

I don't know which psalm it is, and I feel embarrassed about it because I should have looked it up if I was going to make reference to it. But there's a psalm where David says, he's praying to the Lord, and he says, How I hate those who hate you. I make them my enemies.

It's an interesting statement. He's not talking about hating his enemies. He's hating those who hate God, and therefore he makes them his enemies because they are God's enemies.

Now we can talk some other time perhaps about the legitimacy of hating people, but certainly the point here is that David was so zealous for God that when he became aware that someone hated God, he could do very little but spontaneously feel like he was their enemy. He felt hostility towards someone because of their hostility toward God, not because of theirs toward him. When people had hostility toward him, he was very generous toward them.

Absalom, Saul. David never rejoiced to see those people fall or die. He wept over them when they died, even though they tried to kill him.

People who were hostile toward him didn't make his blood boil. But people who were hostile toward God, just his awareness that God was offended and being treated badly by these people and knowing how offended God was, I think he took up the offense with God. Yes? Is that the one? Now, 139.21, does he actually say that? Let me look it up here.

Okay, that's the one. I actually thought it was earlier. That's why I questioned it before.

Verse what? 21. Okay, that would be it. That's right.

Look at verse 20. It says, For they speak against you... Well, look at verse 19. Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God.

Well, that doesn't sound very generous, does it? We pray that he'll save them. But look at what David is motivated by. Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men, for they speak against you wickedly.

Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate you? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them my enemies.

Now, I mean, that sounds like a bad attitude to us Christians, but look at his next statement, verse 23. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my anxieties and see if there's any wicked way in me.

I mean, we usually use that prayer, see if there's any wicked way in me, thinking, well, you know, there's none obvious to me. Maybe you see some God. If there is, maybe you should show me.

I'm not aware of any. You search me. You try me and find out.

But he's just expressed this utter hatred toward certain people, and yet he doesn't see that as a fault. He says, God, you check me out and see if there's anything wrong with my heart here. But he didn't assume that there was.

He didn't consider being angry at these people was ipso facto a wrong attitude. In fact, it sounded like he kind of felt like he didn't have a wrong attitude. Like, you know, he had a right attitude and he wanted God to check him out and make sure that's true.

Anyway, whether his attitude was right or wrong, the point is that he was so zealous for God that when he heard people take God's name in vain and speak against God wickedly, notice he doesn't say, for God, they've encamped against me. They've slandered me, God. And I hate them for that.

No, he doesn't say that. He says, God, they've slandered you. They've brought reproach on you.

That just makes my blood boil. Now, I'm not saying that you have to have your blood boil in anger and hatred towards sinners, but it should cause a reaction. There should be zeal for the honor of God.

I mean, it used to be that someone could guarantee they'd get in a fight with somebody if they said, your mother wears army boots. Well, why would that cause anyone any trouble? I mean, if someone said that to me, I'd think, well, that's a weird thing to say. My mother doesn't wear army boots.

I mean, I just checked, and I'm not sure why you'd say that, but I guess, who cares? You know, I mean, that's just a silly remark. But it used to be that people felt like the honor of their mother was at stake. You know, I mean, you'd say that about my mother, you're going to die, you know, for that.

Because you've got to defend your mother's honor or somebody's honor, your wife's or someone else's. I mean, there just used to be this sense of honor that people had that if somebody that you respected, somebody that you revered was spoken evil of, you know, those were fighting words. Now, I'm not saying you need to fight physically with people who don't, you know, who don't honor God.

But the attitude of wanting to defend God's honor, wanting to rise to His defense, in most cases, biblically, that'd be speaking, not with fists or whatever, but rising up to speak to God's defense. And being zealous to do so would be a natural part of being a godly person, it seems to me. And without that, I think godliness is not all that it is supposed to be in a person's life.

Yeah, I know. Thank you. Okay.

Now, it would be impossible for me in a lecture to exhaust all of the items that the Bible gives that would rightly be categorized under godliness because it's really the whole of the Christian life. The whole of the Christian life is living with God as the center of your life. You know, loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Trusting God. I mean, all of our attitudes that the Bible enjoys are fairly God-ward. Love God, trust God, thank God.

Be zealous for God. There's all these things are there. But we can't simply summarize the whole Bible and so I wanted to just give a few chief points and then move along to this last point that we have before us and that is the fruit of humility.

Now, I was going to put humility first and godliness last but I felt that, you know, humility is in a sense a corollary of godliness too. Humility, true humility, grows out of an

awareness of God. There is false humility that grows out of other stimuli but true humility grows out of an awareness of God.

Let me talk about this and I've got enough in the notes that if I don't get through them all before the tape's over, actually, you can look up these at home. There are two words relative to this. One is the adjective humble.

The other is the noun humility. And they're obviously closely related. Teponos is humble and teponos frosune is the noun.

It means humility. And there's a lot of verses there that I've given you but basically, we won't look all those up, but it means low or lowly or low lying, brought low. And it doesn't only speak of what we usually mean by humility.

For example, when it says every valley shall be exalted and every mountain shall be made low. Making a mountain low or leveling it to the ground is the same word, the same concept of humbling it. To be humbled means to be brought low.

Of course, to apply it to a person's attitude toward themselves is to use low in a metaphoric sense, having a low opinion of oneself. Now here, we have definitely been, in the last generation, badly conditioned by our education and even by our churches because we've been told that it's not healthy to have a low opinion of yourself. And to think low of yourself is going to lead to all kinds of personality problems and relational problems and you've just really got to get a good self-image and self-esteem and so forth in order to be well balanced.

And in reaction to this, because by the way, that statement that you have to have a good self-image and self-esteem to be well balanced is not a true biblical statement. And in reaction to this, there are Christians, myself included, who've come on really strong and said, no, low self-esteem is good, low self-image is important, and so forth. Now really, there's been a lot of confusion over this because, on one hand, it is possible for a person to think too lowly of himself.

It's not our tendency, however. Our tendency is to think too highly of ourselves. Humility would be seeing ourselves correctly, seeing ourselves according to reality.

And even that, even seeing ourselves correctly, would not in itself make us humble people, but the important factor is seeing myself in reality in contrast to seeing God properly. See, if I see God properly and see myself properly, I'll be humbled by the comparison. If I compare myself with other people, depending on what standard I use for comparison, I might be humbled or I might be arrogant.

I might be pleased with the comparison. I mean, I might think that I can run faster than certain people or I can sing better or I'm better looking or whatever. On the other hand, depending on who I'm comparing with, I might think that I sing more poorly or I look

worse and I can run not quite as fast as these people.

I mean, depending on what I value and think is important for my self-image, I can either have a high or low self-image depending on what I'm measuring myself by. Now, of course, biblically, we're not supposed to measure ourselves by other people, but rather by God, by God himself. And that guarantees that if we have a correct self-image, we will think lowly of ourselves by comparison.

But, as I said, I don't think there's any virtue in seeing yourself more lowly than is appropriate. I think it's just a matter of being realistic. First of all, as we talk about humility, I want to just raise this question.

When we talk about the fruit of the Spirit, when we talk about the character traits that belong in the Christian life, what I've said all along is that really the character of God himself and of Christ is what we're supposed to have. But is God humble? I mean, is God a humble God? A lot of people don't think so. A lot of people, when they see God saying, you know, praise me, worship me, have no other gods before me, and so forth, they say, well, God must be kind of egocentric.

God must be kind of self-centered, is he not? And, maybe, maybe in one way of speaking, you could say God is self-centered. But if he is, I think another way we could say he isn't, and we'll see why in a moment. But if God is self-centered in any sense, it's because he is the center of all things.

The reason it's wrong for you to be self-centered is you're not the center of anything. You're just one of the little moons out there going around the big planet, see? He is the center. For the Earth, or for the Sun in our solar system, to be self-centered and to require all the planets to go around it is not particularly arrogant of the Sun.

That's just the way things should be. That's reality. For a planet to make itself the center and to be self-centered would be wrong because it's not in accord with reality.

And this is why, when God says, worship me, have no other gods before me, you know, love me with all your heart, soul, mind, strength, that sounds kind of self-centered, and in one sense it is. Because God himself is the center of all things. And it is for our good that we come in line with reality.

If we worship something more than we worship God, if we worship ourselves or some other person or some other thing, then we're not in touch with reality and it's going to hurt us. Spiritually speaking, we're out of touch. It's the truth that makes you free.

And insofar as you're not in touch with the truth, then you're not free and you're hurting for it. So, in one sense, if God is self-centered by asking us to worship him, he does it more or less for us because we're hurt by not doing so. If we worship anything other than him, it's not for our good.

Actually, God seems to be much more humble than we are by nature because he sacrifices himself for our good. And the Bible makes a number of references to God doing so. Even in the Psalms, believe it or not, the Bible in the Psalms talks about God as humbling himself or being humble.

In Psalm 113, verse 6, it says that God humbles himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and in the earth. Now, it means he comes low. He makes himself low just to observe the things, not only the things on earth, but the things in heaven.

God is higher than the heavens. In order even to acknowledge our existence, he has to humble himself because he is so much higher than we are that he could easily take no notice of us at all. Remember when David said in Psalm 8, you know, when I consider the heavens and the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you've made, what is man that you are mindful of him? That's a good question.

Why would God even notice us? When you consider that the planet we're on is nothing but a little speck of dust out in an infinitely large universe, and then we're so much smaller than the planet itself. We disappear on the planet even because there are so many other people, and yet God pays attention to each one of us. That's a humble thing for God to do.

He comes down to disturb himself and bother himself with our problems, with our needs. I mean, that's a humble thing for God. He humbles himself to behold the heavens and to behold the earth.

It is also stated, something similar in Psalm 138, in verse 6, it says, Though the Lord is on high, yet he regards the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar. God is a high God, but he regards the lowly. He humbles himself to associate with the lowly, and the chief example of God doing this is in Jesus.

And of course, Jesus' humility, or God's humility, in coming to earth in the form of Jesus, is set forth in Philippians chapter 2 as the model for our humility. It says in verse 5 of Philippians 2, Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in the appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Now, that's God's humility manifest in Christ.

He humbles himself to behold us, to even be mindful of us. He is on high, but he regards the lowly. And his manifestation of his regard for the lowly is seen in becoming lowly himself, and coming in the form of a servant.

And that humility of God is the model for humility in the Christian life. Now, I want to talk about pride and humility in terms of self-deception and reality. Humility is being in touch

with reality.

Pride is self-deception. Look at Romans 12. I want to look rather rapidly through a series of Scriptures here because we're going to have to wind this down.

In Romans 12, verse 3, Paul says, For I say through the grace given to me to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Now, don't think more highly of yourself than you should. In other words, think as lowly of yourself as you should.

Lowly thinking would be humility. Thinking lowly of yourself. Now, he didn't say think more lowly than you should either.

But he just said don't think more highly of yourself than you should. Why? Because if you think more highly of yourself than is true, then you're not in touch with reality. And God, you know, it's the truth that makes you free.

It's truth that God wants us to have. And therefore, it hurts Him because it hurts us to see us deceived. Self-deceived about our own importance and our own centrality.

In fact, that's what Paul says in Galatians 6, verse 3. He says, If any man thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. He's out of touch with reality. That's Galatians 6, verse 3. For if anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Pride is thinking yourself to be something when in fact you're nothing. And it's self-deception. Self-deception is no better than any other kind of deception.

In fact, if anything, self-deception is worse than most. Because if somebody tries to deceive you who's not yourself, you might be on your guard because you've learned not to trust people. But you trust yourself.

And so if your self comes to you with a deceptive thought, your guard is down. You welcome self-deception. You might be on your guard against people deceiving you, but you're very rarely on your guard against yourself deceiving you.

And self-deception, or any kind of deception, is not good for your spiritual life. It's not good for you. You need reality.

And pride is being out of touch. Now you might say, Well, Paul didn't say that people are nothing. He said if a person thinks he is something when he is in fact nothing, he's deceived himself.

But Paul is not affirming that we are nothing. He's just saying that if you were nothing and you think you're something, then you're in self-deception. But certainly it isn't

healthy for us to think of ourselves as being nothing.

But look at 2 Corinthians chapter 10. 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 12. No, not chapter 12.

I mean, not verse 12, but 11. No, not that one either. But you know what? Did I say 10? Maybe it's chapter 11 I wanted to look at here.

Well, let's see here. No, it's 12. It's 12, 11 is what I'm thinking of.

This whole section of chapters 10, 11, and 12 has a lot of the same kind of talk all the way through it. But the verse I'm looking for is in chapter 12, verse 11. Paul says, I've become a fool in boasting.

You have compelled me, for I ought to have been commended by you. For in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Now he says, I'm nothing.

But that doesn't put me behind anyone else, because everybody else is nothing. I'm not the least bit behind even the chiefest apostles, even though I'm nothing. Because they're nothing too.

Everybody's nothing. Yes, that's 2 Corinthians. Did I say first? Okay, correction.

2 Corinthians 12, 11. Paul says, I'm not behind the chiefest apostles. Now there's a good, healthy self-image.

He doesn't think he's worse than anyone else. In fact, he compares himself against the other apostles. Hey, I don't think I'm any worse than them.

They're no better than me. That sounds like a good, healthy self-image, where he says, because I'm nothing. And they're nothing too.

Now that's reality. That's being in touch with reality. It's not debasing yourself more than others.

Or exalting yourself above others. Just realizing, hey, all people are about the same boat. We're all nothing.

Compared to God. And that's the point. If we compare ourselves with other people as our way of finding self-esteem, we will either be discouraged or encouraged, but on a false basis.

The verse I mentioned first here, that we looked at and wasn't the right one, was 2 Corinthians 10. I want you to bring that to your attention now. 2 Corinthians 10, 12.

Paul says, for we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they measuring themselves by themselves or among

themselves, comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. It's not wise to compare yourself with others.

Now why would you do that? Why would anyone compare himself with someone else? I don't bother to do that. I've never seen any value in doing that. What's the point of comparing yourself with someone else? Well, you do so to make yourself feel good about yourself.

Or bad. You want to envy them. You envy them because they've got all the good looks.

They've got all the talent. They've got all the stuff you wish you had. And by comparison, you look pretty bad and you want to wallow in your self-pity.

Or you want to look at somebody who's got a lot less of all that than you have and feel good about yourself. But that's not wise. That's self-deceptive.

You know why? Because that's not a true standard. If you want to feel bad about yourself, you can always find someone who's got more than you've got. And if you want to feel good about yourself, you can always find someone who's got it worse than you.

But neither comparison tells you anything really about yourself. Because you can manipulate that process just by deciding who you're going to compare yourself with. It's unwise to make any self-assessment based on comparison with other people.

And you know what? On the Day of Judgment, God's not going to set you up with the rest of the humanity and say, Well, you know, you're in the top ten percent, you know. He's not going to compare you with others. He's going to compare you with what He knows you could have been, had you been committed to Him.

He's going to compare you with Christ. And when you realize that, then it kind of takes all the weight out of your arrogance. I knew a man who was very humble.

And I asked him once how he managed to be so humble, because he actually was very well-respected in the ministry. And yet he seemed to be very humble at the same time. I said, How do you manage to stay so humble with all the commendation and attention you get in the ministry and so forth from people who just look up to you? He says, Well, you know, humility is either difficult or easy, depending on who you compare yourself to.

He says, If you compare yourself to other Christians, there's times when you might feel it hard to be humble. But if you compare yourself to Jesus, it's never hard to be humble, because you never compare favorably to Him. And that's why true humility comes not from trying to convince yourself that you're less important than other people.

Paul didn't convince himself of that. I'm not a whit behind the chiefest apostles, he said, but I'm nothing. He wasn't boasting, and he wasn't belittling himself.

He was just realistic. We're all nothing. And the sooner we get that through our head, the happier we'll be.

And the more we'll be able to fellowship with God on His terms, because that's what He declares us to be. Now, some of you are going to say, But wait, doesn't that say we're made in God's image? Doesn't God love us? Doesn't the fact that Jesus died for us mean that God valued us highly and so forth? All probably true at some level. That is, God imputed value to us.

Jesus didn't die for us because we are innately worth it. He died for us because He wanted to impute worth to us that we did not possess. We are all worthless.

It says that in Isaiah. We are all a worthless thing, it says. But God wished to give us worth.

He wanted to impute to us value. And the only value we have now is that which is ours in Christ. In Christ, we have many things of value in us.

Outside of Christ, we have none. Paul said, In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. In my flesh, who I am by nature, apart from Christ, there's nothing good about that.

Nothing. No good thing. But in Christ, there's many things good in me, and I don't have any problem acknowledging that.

But I know who to give the credit to also. I'm still nothing. We have this treasure in earthen vessels.

I'm the vessel made of clay. That's nothing. But there's a treasure in it, and that's something good.

There's something good in there, but none of the credit goes to the vessel. Therefore, there's no grounds for pride if we understand what the Bible teaches. By nature, and because of our rebellion against God, we're worse than nothing.

We're worthy of death and damnation. That doesn't sound like a very high privilege that we have come into us, that we earned. But God imputes to us value that we don't innately possess.

He fills an earthen vessel with a treasure, but that doesn't in any sense give the earthen vessel grounds to forget that it's an earthen vessel and start being proud of what a treasure it has become. It hasn't become a treasure. It's simply the container of treasure.

And because it contains a treasure, it is capable of doing a great deal of good. But that's only because of the value of the treasure, not because of the value of the vessel. The vessel is worthless.

The vessel is nothing. Now, there is such a thing as a false humility, but that's not, of course, what we want. A false humility would be where we act like we think low of ourselves, but we really think highly of ourselves.

Paul talks about false humility in Colossians 2, verses 18 and 23. And there he equates false humility with legalism. Basically, afflicting the body, asceticism, denying yourself of lawful pleasures, being hard on the body.

He says these things have a show of humility, but they really don't have any real spirituality in them. There are some people who, in order to get attention or to think well of themselves, beat themselves up. They're hard on themselves physically.

They live in poverty, it may be, or they live ascetic lives, and they look so humble and so unassuming. But in fact, they congratulate themselves all the time about how humble and unassuming they are, and they are therefore not humble at all. They're still self-focused.

The ideal is to realize that I'm not worth focusing on. And therefore, the ideal is to be self-forgetful. Not self-abasing and not self-exalting, but just self-forgetting.

Forget about me. Let's think about things that really matter. And what I want isn't what matters.

Who I am, my recognition, recognition of me, that's not what matters. Why should we even bother thinking about that? Let's go on with the business of living and putting God first. That's humility, is forgetting about yourself and making God the issue, not yourself.

There's a lot of verses I've given there, which we won't have time to look at, pointing out that true humility is a result of one's vision of God, being in touch with reality with reference to God. Isaiah, when he saw the Lord high and lifted up in his train-filled temple, and the seraphim were saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord, Isaiah suddenly said, Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. Now, I'll bet before he saw God, he would have been able to say, I live among a people of unclean lips, but I'm different, I'm a prophet of God.

I'm a godly man. He was a godly man. In his generation, he was probably one of the most godly.

He loved the Lord, he trusted God, he was a faithful prophet of God. I'll bet until he saw God, it would have been quite natural for him to say, Ah, there's whole generations of people of unclean lips, but secretly in his heart saying, Thank God I'm not like others in that respect. But in fact, when he saw God, he says, I'm not unlike them.

I live among a people of unclean lips, and I'm a man of unclean lips. Because by comparison to God, I'm no better off than everyone else. Now, if I compare myself with

society at large, it's easy for me to feel I'm a pretty spiritual person.

Or even with other people in the church sometimes, I can feel pretty spiritual by comparison. But what's the point of measuring by that? When I compare myself with God, I don't feel very spiritual at all, or very good. It's like if my son and I were going to have a contest, seeing who could jump the highest off the ground.

And it turned out he could jump two feet off the ground, but I could jump three feet off the ground. Well, I could feel quite arrogant about that, I'd beat him every time. But if it turns out that we were both trying to jump to the moon, neither of us got any closer than the other, as a matter of fact.

You know, jumping three feet off the ground is not really any closer to the moon than two feet off the ground, not measurably. And if I'm saying, well, how spiritual am I? And I judge by other people, I may be more spiritual than them. But if we're all supposed to be as spiritual as God, then none of us come close.

And therefore, a vision of God suddenly eradicates any concept that I'm different from other sinners. When I'm just looking at men, I say, oh, I don't see how those people could be so simple. I would never do that.

But when I see God, then I suddenly feel, you know what? I wouldn't be surprised if I could do that. That's sort of like me too, you know. I mean, I'm not that different from them.

I live among a people of unclean lips, and I think I'm not much different than them myself. But you don't think that way until you see God. Think of Job.

When Job's counselors spent their whole time talking to him, saying, you must be guilty of something, or else all these bad things wouldn't happen to you. Job kept protesting, no, I'm righteous. I've never done a thing wrong.

I'm pure. I'm holy. I'm clean.

But then God showed up. And God began to reveal himself to him. And at the end of that encounter, Job had this important revelation to say in verses 5 and 6 of Job 42, the very last chapter of Job.

Verses 5 and 6, after God had revealed himself to him, Job said, I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. He didn't abhor himself prior to God showing up.

He was protesting, I'm righteous, I've not done anything wrong. But suddenly God's in the picture. Now the God I've only heard about, I now see him.

Suddenly I loathe myself. I abhor myself. Now some people say, you should never loathe

yourself.

You should never abhor yourself. But in the Bible, it's only people who abhor themselves that ever got anywhere with God. As long as people are trying to pump up their self-image and feel good about themselves, they never got anywhere with God.

It's when you agree with God about yourself that you can start on the road to spirituality, because you're being legitimately humble, as you should be. Well, I'm trying to decide which things to leave out. It looks like with the clock saying what it says, I'm going to have to leave out most of what follows here.

I will point out that in Colossians 3, verse 12, we are told to put on, among other things, to put on humility. This is part of putting on the new man. And Peter says something a little like that.

In 1 Peter 5, verse 5, he says, be clothed with humility, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Be clothed with humility. Put on humility.

How do you put on humility? And after all, doesn't putting it on speak of outwardness? Isn't that phony? Isn't it phony to act humble? Well, you can put on humility like you can put on your clothes. But not necessarily as a phony external kind of thing. You can put on a humility of mind.

How do you do that? Well, there's ways that you cultivate it, like any fruit of the Spirit. You cultivate fruit. There are choices you can make that will help that fruit to be there, and there are choices that will kind of work against it.

That's true of humility. There are choices you can make that will tend to puff up your pride, and there's others that will tend to keep you humble. Some of those would be, of the latter type, would be avoid all forms of self-promotion.

There are some people who just want to make sure everyone knows how many things they can do, and they boast about their abilities all the time. Now, some of them may be telling the truth. It may be that you can do a great number of things, but you need to be careful about boasting about yourself.

If in fact what you're doing is trying to get center stage, trying to cause people to notice you, or even if it's not verbally boasting, if it's just showing off. I mean, often people don't talk about all the things they can do, but they want to make sure everyone sees what they can do. And this too is nurturing to the pride.

It doesn't nurture humility to boast or to show off. Name dropping. This is something everyone does if they can.

If you know someone famous, if you know someone that you know other people will be

impressed to know that you know them, to drop their name in conversation. Yeah, when I was with Billy Graham on the golf course the other day, he was struggling with something he wanted to ask my counsel. I mean, you say that, and everyone's going to think you're something special, right? It's name dropping.

That's another form of self-promotion. You want people to think well of you. You're promoting your own image.

Social climbing. Paul says in Romans 12, 16, associate with those who are of low degree. Don't be proud, but hang out with the people who don't have much to offer you in terms of social status, but be humble.

Jesus said in Luke 14 that you should seek the lower places at the feast. Maybe you'll be exalted if the host wants you to be, but if you seek a high place, you may be humiliated as they have to put you in your proper place. So seek to associate with the lowly.

There are a number of other things. The way you dress can certainly nurture pride or can nurture humility. I'm not saying you have to dress frumpy to be humble, but it's very clear that, I mean, I don't even have to spell this out.

Everybody knows when they put on clothes whether they're dressing to get attention or whether they're just dressing to glorify God and keep their nakedness hidden. I mean, you be the judge of that about your own heart. You can't be the judge of that about anyone else, but I think everyone, if they just pause and think, well, why am I dressing the way I am, they can answer for themselves whether they're doing it to nurture humility or pride.

Also, be the servant of all. We just read in Philippians 2 that Jesus made himself the servant of all. That's the ultimate humility, and there's a number of scriptures in your notes about that, being a servant.

I just might say, although we've run out of time, that when Jesus put a towel around him and washed the disciples' feet, that was an utterly humble thing to do. Nowadays, though, when people do the servant thing in the church, sometimes that can be a pride-engendering thing because in Jesus' day, being a servant wasn't looked on as a great thing. It was viewed as a lowly thing.

Nowadays, since Christianity has esteemed servanthood, sometimes you can even be proudly being the servant of all. You hope everyone noticed that.