

Basic Training 9.1

Godliness and Morals, Part 1

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

- i. Introduction (5 12 5 5 12; 4 1 21 1)
1. This Basic Training series that we started with back in February, has addressed a number of foundational Bible topics that answer some basic questions about living for God.
2. Back in the beginning of the series, I mentioned several questions we hoped to address in this series:
 - a. How do we pray?
 - b. What does it mean to be saved?
 - c. What is does it mean to have a new life?
 - d. Who is God?

- e. What is worship?
 - f. Is the Bible God's Word?
 - g. What does it mean to be a good steward?
 - h. What is marriage?
 - i. What is morality?
 - j. What is the meaning of: "God made them male and female"?
 - k. Does modesty still matter?
 - l. Does how I talk really matter?
3. The final lessons in this series will be on godliness and will address the last four questions on that list before we wind down the Basic Training series.
- II. Godliness starts with God in our hearts
- A. A direction shift
1. From the moment when Jesus first called us to follow Him, He began a process of drawing us into a closer relationship with

Him, so that over time, He gets an increasing influence over the decisions we make.

2. That is a direct result of the Holy Ghost inhabiting us as His temple:

1 Cor 3:16-17

16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

3. He is leading us to stop defiling our temple and to make our temple holy in a lifelong learning called holiness, godliness, righteousness, or walking in the Spirit, among other things.
4. And remember, the purpose of living right is to remove things that come between us and God so we can move closer to him, not to judge others whom we perceive to not be as holy as we think we are.

5. 1 Timothy 6:3 describes a learning tool for our instruction in godliness: the “**words of our Lord Jesus Christ**” which provide “**the doctrine [teaching] which is according to godliness.**”
6. Then in verses 4-10, Paul lists several things like pride, envy, strife, a corrupt mind, lust, loving money, and then gives this warning about those sins:
1 Tim 6:11-12
*11 But thou, O man of God, **flee these things** [let go of]; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*
*12 Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life** [grasp], whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*
7. So as we learn to walk in the Spirit, there are some things we must leave behind and there are some things we must lay hold of.

8. The purpose of this study is to examine some of the topics of godliness that describe the things we should let go of, and some of the things we should grasp as we grow in God.
 - B. What I think or what someone said
 1. Because godliness is defined in the scriptures, we must heed a warning about the dangerous tendency to emphasize personal opinion and private interpretations over what the scripture says and means.
 2. That is what is behind such statements as: “I don’t think God cares about what we do, how we look, or where we go, as long as we love Him. He knows our heart.”
 3. That all just sounds so typically American. It’s freedom of choice; it’s about my right to be anything I want to be as long as I don’t violate my conscience or someone’s rights.

4. But as Americans, let's remember we are citizens of a higher country and not be guilty of replacing the Bible with the U.S. Constitution, or popular culture.
5. I'd like to ask you to help me identify the subtle danger in the following attitudes toward right and wrong:
 - a. "What I think, is..."
 - b. "The way I see it is..."
 - c. "I don't see anything wrong with..."
 - d. "I've always heard that..."
 - e. "I don't feel convicted when I..."
 - f. "I'm about as good as the next guy..."
6. These are making "I" – ourselves – or someone else -- the standard.
7. And while these sound harmless, they have at heart the same deceitful notion the serpent tried to convince Eve of. "Does God's word really matter? I think **not**. The knowledge of good and evil is within you."

8. There is a movement in our world to make what we identify with as the greater truth than God's Word.
9. Look at how Jude described this movement away from God's standards:
Jude 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares [with subtle deceptive ideas], who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [all kinds of evil], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. [our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ]
10. Yes God loves me. Yes God is merciful. Yes God is gracious. But it turns grace upside down to believe worldly ideas are fine because God is gracious.
11. It is denying the Lord and His standards to make such a claim.
12. Jude went on to compare dangerous behaviors that crept into Sodom and Gomorrah were still trying to creep into his

day:

Jude 7 Even as [what is happening here and now is like] Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh [unnatural desires], are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

13. Inhabitants of the city gave themselves over to this way of thinking. It seems to speak of a point of surrender they slowly evolved to by giving up what was right and natural to that which was sinful and decadent.
14. And considering Sodom, consider how Lot's opinion of the vile city slowly evolved.
15. While Lot was still a ways away from Sodom, he first **“pitched his tent toward Sodom.”** Next Lot **“sat in the gate of Sodom.”** Next, his daughters married citizens of Sodom and his family was ingrained in the culture.

16. And even when the city was facing certain destruction, Lot hesitated to leave, even at the angels' insistence.
 17. His sons-in-law refused to leave and never did. The angel even had to force Lot and his wife and children to leave.
 18. And even when he and his wife and daughters got outside the city, there was enough of the city still in the heart of Lot's wife, that she turned back to the city as it was being destroyed and was destroyed with it.
 19. **WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE** that same kind of pull of the world is still working to suck us into the deceptions of our day.
 20. Since the beginning of time, the enemy's effort has been to subtly weaken our grip on God's Word and elevate man's opinion over it.
- c. Cleansing from inside out

1. But we have a defense against that pull in the Word of God, plus the Holy Ghost working inside to purifying our hearts.
2. Notice the conclusion Peter came to as he watched the first Gentiles being filled with the Holy Ghost:

Acts 15:8-9

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

*9 And put no difference between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith.***

3. Peter saw that the Holy Ghost began the process of purifying their hearts of those Gentiles just as it did in the Jews.
4. Paul noted that the purifying process, which he called “perfecting holiness,” is both inward and outward:

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the **flesh** and **spirit**, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

5. The purpose of this lesson it to discuss godliness of heart by looking at God’s rules, or standards for morality.

III. Morality

A. It is essential

1. **[Definitions]** What is morality? It is based on the word “**moral**” which means **conduct or character from the point of view of right and wrong: moral goodness; of good character; right or proper in behavior; sexually virtuous.**
2. **So morality is the quality of being morally right; virtue; conformity to standards of right conduct.**¹
3. And notice that it was Jesus who revealed that the lake of fire was the sentence for violating God’s standards:
Matt 13:41-42
41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his

¹ Funk & Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary, Volume 1, A-M, 1984, p. 423.

*kingdom all things that offend [causes sin],
and them which do iniquity [evil];
42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire:
there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

4. That being the case, one of the roles of the church through the ages has been to proclaim both the good news about what Jesus said about love and heaven, and also what He said about sin and hell.

5. And we are called to God's standard of morality with God himself as the model to follow:

1 Peter 1:15-16

*15 But as he which hath called you is holy,
so be ye holy in all manner of conversation
[conduct];*

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

6. Or as Jesus put it:

*Matt 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as
your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

7. So if we want to see God, we must pursue that standard:
Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:
 8. Set your standard of living on godly morals and on seeing the Lord.
- B. Examples of moral violations [mature audience warning]
1. Part of following holiness, then, is embracing God's moral standards, and also being aware of the consequences of ignoring them.
 2. We will refer to the original language in this study to see how the Bible gives heavy, straight talk about the topic of morality.
 3. Beginning with sexual sins, look at:
1 Cor 6:9-10
*9 Know ye not that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?***

4. And what does that mean? He goes on to describe unrighteous conduct including some that comes straight out of the 10 commandments:

Be not deceived: neither fornicators [pornoisexually immoral],

nor idolaters [2nd commandment: people who worship idols],

nor adulterers [7th commandment: moikossexual conduct of a married person with someone other than their spouse],

nor effeminate [malakoi-a catamite, or the passive partner in homosexual sex],

nor abusers of themselves with mankind [arsenokoitai-sodomite, the active partner in homosexual sex]

[Romans 1:26-27 includes woman to woman lesbian acts, calling them “vile affection against nature”],

5. Then verse 10 goes on to describe other types of unrighteous acts:

10 Nor thieves [8th commandment], *nor*

covetous [10th commandment], nor drunkards, nor revilers [verbally abusive], nor extortioners [swindlers], shall inherit the kingdom of God.

6. So God's moral standards identify sexual sins, whether between unmarried persons, married persons with another partner, or male to male sexual relations, or female to female sexual relations.
7. And as you see, God's moral standards, repeated in the New Testament, also prohibits breaking His commandments.
8. Is morality a topic to take seriously? Yes. The consequence of disobeying God's standards is rejection from God's kingdom.
9. Similar standards and consequences are listed in Ephesians 5:
*Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean [impure] person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.***

10. And with the same intense, moral force, the list begins with sexual sins in v. 19:

Gal 5:19-21

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness [depravity, debauchery, lewdness],

11. Continuing with demonic evil, then bad relationship conduct:

20 Idolatry, witchcraft [sorcery], hatred, variance [quarreling], emulations [jealousy], wrath, strife, seditions [division], heresies [division],

*21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings [orgies], and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things **shall not inherit the kingdom of God.***

12. So let's go back to what I described earlier as dangerous attitudes. When we say things like, "I don't see anything wrong with.."

“The way I see it is...” “I don’t feel convicted when I...”

13. We must realize that we are not the ones who set the standards for entering the kingdom of God. God set the standard, so if we hope to go there, we must recalibrate our standards to match God’s standards.
 14. Why does God care? Why is He so serious about morality? Just think about how many innocent victims suffer from these sins, especially little children. Sin causes the lifelong suffering of innocent victims.
 15. So it is no wonder why God set a strong deterrent in place against immoral behavior.
- c. Keep my mind in obedience
1. Most of those passages we just read deal with sinful actions we commit with other people. But morals deal with more than just what we act out, but also with what is in our “heart and mind”.

2. Avoiding the physical act of adultery is necessary, but Jesus said that that sin can also take place in the heart without the physical act happening:

Matt 5:28-29

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

3. That is why we are instructed to keep our hearts with all diligence (Prov 4:23).
4. Even our thought life needs to be brought under the control of Christ:

*2 Cor 10:5 Casting down **imagination**s, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into*

captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

5. And this is why viewing pornography is a sin trap. We cannot unsee something we have seen, and those images create a lasting source of temptation to the mind.

IV. Conclusion

1. As we have stressed, having good morals is important. Not only because a lack of morals displeases God, but also for how good morals benefits us, our families and our community.
2. But certainly a strong deterrent against ignoring God's moral standards is the eternal consequence:

Rev 21:8 But the fearful [faithless], and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth

with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

3. Missing heaven because we choose sin raises a strong warning against choosing a life of sin.
4. So the next time you are tempted to say, “I don’t see anything wrong with that”, hesitate and make sure you are not approving something that God sees as abominable.
5. After such a lesson, it is important to clearly state, that our goal in life is not just to avoid a list of sins that violate God’s morals.
6. Our pursuit in life should be to be born again. To participate in God’s new covenant when He fills us with the Holy Ghost and begins the process of writing His law in our hearts.
7. And as we deepen our relationship with God, we realize how crazy in love with us He is, and as a result, we develop a strong

distaste for things that displease the one who loved us enough to die for us.

8. Simply avoiding a list of sins does not secure a place in the kingdom of God for us. It takes a spiritual rebirth to add us to God's family:

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

9. Tonight we studied Godliness and Morals. Next week, we will look at the subject of Godliness and Modesty.