

The Mystery of Godliness

1 Timothy 3:14-16

Pastor Adam McMurray

Godliness: Following Christ in a Fallen Culture

In our study through 1 Corinthians, we have been guided by the title “Following Christ in a Fallen Culture.” This is an important focus for us because it speaks to the significance of action. The activity of the Christ-follower is much more than just believing the right things. Those beliefs and convictions must translate to action—a change in the way we behave. This notion of the behavior or conduct of the people of God is a major theme in most of Paul’s letters to his churches. To capture this idea, Paul uses a fascinating and mysterious word that will become our focus this week. The word is **godliness**. For Paul, godliness was of utmost importance, it meant that the daily lives of the men and women in his churches would reflect the profound truths of the Gospel of Christ. In 1 Timothy 3:16 Paul writes to Timothy, “Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great...” Godliness is not simple or easy. If it were, we would have all achieved it. No, the notion that the followers of Christ could begin to align their thoughts, attitudes and actions with their deep devotion to God is one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith.

Godliness and the Conduct of the Believer

1 Timothy 3:14-16 serves as something of a purpose statement for the entire letter. The apostle Paul, knowing that he might be delayed in visiting Timothy in Ephesus, reveals his reason for writing and reminds Timothy of the significance of pursuing godliness. “I am writing...so that...you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household” (vs 14&15). The “conduct” of the people of God is extremely important. Again, it is one thing to know how we “ought” to conduct ourselves and quite another to actually do it! This has been the struggle of the Christ-follower throughout the history of the church and it is a struggle for us today. Godliness is not found in the lofty notions of how we ought to act, think or feel, but in the actual day-to-day living out of those convictions. The life of the Christian is not just about believing the right things. It’s about action—activity—change. Paul calls it “conduct.” Godliness means that you and I as followers of Christ begin to look like Jesus. This is what Jesus was talking about in Luke 6:40 when He said that, “everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.” The pursuit of the Christian is to look more and more like Jesus Christ. This is godliness.

Godliness in the Church

It is of no surprise that Paul writes these things within the context of “God’s household” the church. For Paul, the response of Godliness is not just an individual thing but a community thing. It is the conduct of the community that Paul wants to address—there is a reason for this. Paul wanted all of his churches to understand the significance of their mission in bearing and communicating the great truths of God. This is why he describes the church as “the pillar and foundation of the truth.” What we do as God’s church matters as much as what we believe because we are called to be the living expression of His truth in the culture around us.

Jesus Christ: The Mystery of Godliness Revealed

All of this brings us back to this notion of the great mystery of godliness. How can we understand it? How can we become more godly? How can our devotion to God and our belief in the Gospel be more clearly expressed in our thoughts, attitudes and actions? The answer, ironically, is found in another great mystery—the greatest mystery of all! Jesus Christ. The Immanuel—God with us who “appeared in a body” (vs 16.) In Jesus Christ we find truth and conduct perfectly combined and expressed. Christ is the mystery of godliness revealed. He is our hope, our model and our source

of godliness. We can become more godly only as we look to, lean into and follow hard after Jesus Christ. As the bearers of the truth of God, we must strive for nothing less.

For further Exploration and Discussion...

This week, read the following passages and consider how they form your understanding of godliness. 1 Timothy 3:14-16, 2 Peter 1: 3-7, 1 Timothy 4:6-10.

What action is required in your life today as a result of God's word to you? What areas of your life do not reflect who you are as a Christ-follower? How can you change that?

**RIVER WEST OFFICES CLOSED
12/24 - 1/2**

ARE YOU PLUGGED IN?

In January look for information on how you can get plugged into the community at River West Church. We will have sign-ups and information for for Community Groups, Bible Studies & getting involved with our ministries.

THURSDAYS STARTING 1/10

FOUNDATIONS:

ANSWERING CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, 7:00pm, RWLG

Join us for our new series starting Jan. 10th (note the date change) as we explore & respond to the new wave of militant atheism.

END OF YEAR DONATIONS

This is the time of year when many people consider giving year-end donations. If you are considering giving a year-end donation, please note that all donations must be postmarked by December 31st to be included in your 2007 giving statement. If you are considering giving a gift of stock, please contact Julie Messenger at 699.2226 Julie@riverwest.org for more details.

SATURDAYS

FITBODY, 8:30-9:30am

FitBody is a body conditioning class that will refine your body, spirit & soul. Set to Christian music, this class is designed for all "bodies" & all fitness levels. There is no charge for this class. Childcare is not available. For more information contact Gina Kulper at 636.8294 or gina6855@hotmail.com