

“Breaking Through to Godliness” July/August 2002 CES Tape of the Month

Introduction: Ephesians 4:22; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Romans 6:11

The Problem

Too often we fail to recognize the vast difference between religion and godliness, and get caught in a trap wherein we become satisfied with the external things, or forms, of faith. We pray, we speak in tongues, we prophesy, we know the Bible and talk about it a lot, we evangelize and build churches. We look good, are right, and are doing the right things (we think), telling ourselves that we are really pursuing God. But we may have adopted a religious posture of heart that has a form of godliness but does not deal with the impure motives and desires of an unclean heart, and even uses religious beliefs and practices to mask these realities. The practice of our religion thus pacifies us and lulls us into complacency, causing us to lose sight of the need we have for inner transformation of our motives and behaviors that do not please God. **We have to learn to develop an intense commitment to truth in the inward parts**, as David spoke in **Psalm 51:1-11**.

John 15:2 “Purging and pruning.”

Luke 8:15 “When they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance” (NRSV).

Romans 8:8 “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (NASB).

Matthew 7:16 and 20 False prophets—known by their fruit.

Seven causes and effects of being religious:

1. Self-righteousness (**Ps. 34:17-19, 51:15-17**)
2. Self-justification (**1 John 1:8 and 9**)
3. Spiritual pride (**Phil. 3:3**).
4. Spiritually blind (**John 9**)
5. Judge by the flesh (**1 Cor. 4:4 and 5**).
6. Dishonesty (**1 John 1:8 and 9**).
7. Hypocritical or two-faced (**Rom. 12:9**).

You might be religious if...

Definition of terms

1. Godliness= *eusebeia*, meaning “to revere or adore well.”
Bullinger: “practical piety rightly directed.” The opposite of *threskeia*, religion. *Eusebeia* relates to real, true, vital, and spiritual relation with God, while *threskeia* relates to the outward acts of religious observances or ceremonies, which can be performed by the flesh.”
Louw and Nida: “to live as God would have us live” or “to live like one should who believes in God.” **1 John 4:20 and 21**.
Occurrences of *eusebeia*: Acts 3:12; (1 Tim. 2:2); 3:16; 4:8; 6:5, 6 and 11; 2 Tim. 3:5; (Titus 1:1); 2 Peter 1:3, 6 and 7.
2. Religion= *threskeia* = a “ceremonial observance” (Strong’s); religion, worshipping. From *threskos*, “ceremonious in worship,” i.e., “pious.” From *threomai* (to wail); to clamor, i.e., (by implication) to frighten or trouble. Religion is man-centered, self-worship. The heart is set on self, not God, all the while

talking to and about God. Occurrences: **Acts 26:5; Colossians 2:18; James 1:26 and 27.**

Matthew 15:8 and 9 “Their hearts are far from me...”

The Lord looks on the secret motives of the heart: 1 Chron. 28:9; (Ps. 44:21); Eccles. 12:14; Luke 8:17 (Rom. 2:16; 14:10 and 12).

Biblical Examples of Religion and Godliness

Genesis 3 Adam and Eve

Genesis 4 Abel and Cain

Jude 10-12 “The way of Cain”

- **Beware of false leaders (Rom. 16:17, 18; Phil. 3:17-19; Matt. 7:16-20)**

Other OT examples: 12 spies (Num. 13); Gideon (Judges 6 and 7).

1 Samuel 10: 6-9; 15:1ff; 2 Samuel 12:13: Saul and David. Saul wanted to sacrifice to the Lord. Religion concentrates on sacrifice—what we are doing, giving up, etc.

- **The Lord wants mercy, not sacrifice: Matthew 9:12 and 13**
- **Luke 18:11-14** “the religious man’s prayer”
- **Matthew 12:7; Psalm 51:16 and 17**

Acts 8:13, 18-24 Simon the Sorcerer

Galatians 2:11-14 Peter’s hypocrisy

Acts 9:1 and 2 Paul’s zeal (cp. **Romans 10:2; Acts 20:24; 21:13; 1 Cor. 13:1; Phil. 2:5ff** Paul to Jerusalem

2 Timothy 3:1-13 These things apply to the Church today

Characteristics of godliness and religion or carnal Christianity

GODLINESS

RELIGION

Godliness is a truly reverent attitude of heart, indicated by appropriate actions that show true humility before God and not just an outward posturing or ceremonial show.	Religion is sinful man using his religious posture to mask his sin; giving the appearance of a right relationship with God but with no transformation or real change of heart that would evidence such a relationship.
Godliness is an attitude of heart that recognizes God’s power and authority and submits in loving and true obedience.	Denies God’s power and concentrates on obedience to outward ordinances—sabbath days, baptism ritual.
Power of godliness: a real, vital relationship with God, a power to deliver others.	The religious deny the power of godliness (2 Tim 3:5).
This power was prophesied to come upon those who would believe on Christ (Matt. 3:11; Mark 16, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:5 and 8); This is the same power Jesus was given (Matt. 3:13, Luke 4:1 and 14, Acts 10:38; 1 Cor. 2:8; Eph. 1:18-21).	Religious people will deny the power of God by inventing and teaching doctrines that talk God’s people out of what God has given them. <i>Cessationism</i> : the doctrine that the “gifts of the spirit” died with the first-century apostles.

GODLINESS**RELIGION**

Relationship or friendship with God marked by reciprocity.	No real relationship or reciprocity: either God or we are an object of the other.
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Godliness is a balance between extremes of religiousness (A and B):

Religious A	Godly	Religious B
I make God an object.	God and I are each a subject or an active party in a reciprocal relationship.	I see myself as an object of God.
I use God to get what I want (emphasis on my faith); I am in control by my faith.	I freely choose to harmonize my will with His will.	God is sovereign, and in control of my every circumstance.
I take the credit in my heart because I made it happen.	I walk with God to bring His will to pass.	God does it all; I am only a channel.

GODLINESS**RELIGION**

Worship in spirit (John 4:24; Phil. 3:3; 1 Cor. 12:3, 14 and 15)	Fleshly worship
Internal motivation-heart, mercy (Matt. 9:13)	External motivation-form; sacrifice
God-centered (Matt. 15:3-9)	Man-centered
About the benefit of others	About self
A total commitment ("24/7")	Part-time, or as required to look good
Marked by intimate and personal relationship	Concerned with image
Truth-seeking and truthful	Tradition-bound and hypocritical
Walks in the light, uprightly (Eph. 5:8-17)	Hides sin, walks in darkness
Integrated, unified, one consistent life	Compartmentalized, divided, separate lives (Peter)
Inner obedience motivated by love and trust	External obedience motivated by fear, pride, resentment, etc.
Being faithful	Looking good
Grace	Works
Contentment	Envy; covetousness (money and power)
Humility: find grace	Pride: resist God
Righteousness	Shame and guilt (fig leaves)
Openness about sin	Hiding sin
"Weak"	"Strong"
Accountable	Shifts blame & criticizes others
Mature in faith (Rom. 14)	Immature
Seeks to glorify God	Seeks recognition for self
Cleaves to the accurate Word of God	Adds commandments to the Word, or makes suggestions or statements into commandments

Some CES teachings that contribute toward a breakthrough to godliness:

- One baptism (spirit not water); not outward ritual or form.
- Can't lose salvation: don't play not to lose, or to pretend you're in fellowship. Doing works to demonstrate your salvation instead of from a heart of thanksgiving.
- Dispensational view of Scripture: no special days, etc.
- Dead are dead: this is the only life we have to live, and it matters. Our hope is anchored to the earth.
- One God & One Lord: we can do what Christ did—same empowerment as Jesus.
- All nine manifestations of the spirit are available and desirable for every believer.