*THE PRACTICE of GODLINESS* by Jerry Bridges

**Chapter Five– “Taking on God’s Character” – Colossians 3:12**

*“Godliness consists of two distinct but complementary traits, and the person who wants to train himself to be godly must pursue both with equal vigor. The first trait is God-centeredness, which we call devotion to God; the second is Godlikeness, which we call Christian character. Godly character flows out of devotion to God and practically confirms the reality of that devotion.*

*…Thus far in our study of the practice of godliness, we have concentrated on the aspect of devotion, of God-centeredness. Now we turn our attention to Godlikeness: the development of Godlike character.” (pg.49-50)*

**“So as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on** *(‘clothe yourself with’)* **a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians 3:12NASB)**

**T** he question arises, “What are the character traits that distinguish the godly person?” (pg.50)

**A** ll character traits whether listed in Galatians 5:22-23 or presented elsewhere in Scripture are

**K** indled and activated in the hearts of those who possess the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit who

**I** ndwells us, enables us and helps us to fulfill our responsibility to display His fruit in our lives.

**N** ot one of us can exemplify godly character traits without His divine assistance. If we desire to

**G** row in godly character we need to first understand some basic principles from God’s Word.

**O** ur first principle in our pursuit of godly character is that we must have ***THE RIGHT MOTIVES***

**N** ecessary for everything we do. If we are motivated by anything other than reverence for

**G** od, the honour of God and the glory of God then our actions will not be pleasing to God.

**O** ur desire to grow and ability to be like Christ not only flows out of our devotion to Him but is

**D’** irectly related to the second principle of godly character which is ***THE SOURCE OF POWER***.

**S** o often Paul attributes his spiritual strength and accomplishments to the Lord’s power (2 Corin.3:5; Col. 1:29; Phil.4:13). Our source of power is in the risen Christ! It is only as we abide in Christ (Jn.15), behold Him in His Word (2 Corinth. 3:18), and depend upon Him in prayer (Ps.25:4) that we are enabled to draw from Him the power essential for a godly life. (pg.50-55)

**C** onclusively we can say that though the power for godly character comes from Christ, we

**H** ave the responsibility for developing and displaying that character. This third principle is

**A** bout ***RESPONISBILITY AND DEPENDENCE***. We learned from Phil. 2:12-13 that we are actively

**R** esponsible to obey God’s commands and totally dependent upon Him to work in us to do so.

**A** lthough we need to learn Scripture’s teaching for this dual principle, we also need to seek a

**C** lear balance from them for how we are to both ***PUT OFF AND PUT ON*** godly character traits.

**T** ime spent in Eph. 4 and Col. 3 is one way to help us in our application of this fourth principle.

**E** ncompassed in the fifth & sixth principles of godly character; we learn that not only is there a

**R**  esponsibility for us to exhibit a ***BALANCED GROWTH*** of all the traits of godly character but also the reality that our spiritual ***GROWTH IS PROGRESSIVE*** and never finished(Phil.3:12-14)! Growth in godly character is not only progressive and always unfinished, it is absolutely necessary for spiritual survival. (pg.’s 55-64)

“Every day that we are not practicing godliness we are being conformed to the world of ungodliness around us. Granted, our practice of godliness is imperfect and falls far short of the biblical standard. Let us, nevertheless, press on to know Christ and to be like Him. (pg.64)

Remember, the Holy Spirit of God who dwells in you is in charge of your growth in godly character; He is your teacher and competent coach. (pg.65)

***“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20-21NASB)***

Pressing onward and looking upward!

Christyn