



IN PURSUIT OF GODLINESS

SERMON OUTLINE

BY DR. TONY EVANS

MESSAGE ONE: THE MEANING OF GODLINESS

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 6:3-11 (NASB)

³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message on **The Meaning of Godliness** is to instruct believers in how to achieve their full potential as individuals who are living lives of godliness to the fullest, seeking after God with all their hearts, and striving to fill their lives with more of Him in everything they do.

INTRODUCTION:

As Christians, we have been assigned a task. First Timothy 4:8 says, "For bodily discipline is only a little profit but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." Paul says our assignment is to pursue godliness, because it is profitable both for the life we now live and the life we will live forever as believers.

This means we need to understand clearly what godliness is and what it is not. It is possible to have a false kind of godliness because Paul warned Timothy about people who "[hold to] a form of godliness, although they have

denied its power; Avoid such men as these" (2 Timothy 3:5). It is crucial that we understand the difference between true godliness and its mere "form." The Greek word for "form" means a shape, a silhouette, or an outline, not the full substance.

When you see a person's shadow, you are seeing only their silhouette. What this means for the issue of godliness is that it's possible to look the part of a godly person without having any reality. How do you know if you're looking at the shadow instead of the real thing? Because the Bible says that false godliness has no spiritual power attached to it. It's like putting on a Superman outfit but not being able to fly. Someone who is impersonating Superman has the form power and of flight, and the attire of power and of flight, but without the accompanying power to pull off what the form declares can be done, the form is useless. The person wearing this outfit had better not be jumping off any buildings.

This form of godliness without real power is called religion. Religion gives the impression of something related to God that's real. You can look religious, you can use religious vocabulary, and you can carry a Bible, and yet still be devoid of God's power. Many of us know what it is like to go to church for years and not be changed; to be in the "vicinity" of God and not have the power to make us more like Him, which is more godly. The location of church, in and of itself, is not sufficient for the purpose. Godliness is always associated with power.

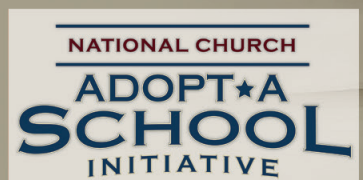
SERMON POINTS:

1. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT GODLINESS IS NOT.

It is possible to have all the outward trappings of godliness with no inner reality.

- For many people, church is God's donut shop—a sweet place with no substance.
- True godliness has His power attached to it.

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Religion by itself can provide us with these outward forms while not providing any power.

- Many religious people fall into this trap.
- Godliness is not an event you attend and leave unchanged.

2. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT GODLINESS IS A LIFESTYLE THAT CONSISTENTLY REFLECTS GOD'S CHARACTER.

Living in the light of His presence puts you on the road to true godliness.

- The godly person is obsessed with God's presence.
- A godly person is consistently evaluating things from God's perspective.

Godliness requires that you agree with God in everything He says.

- Challenging God means you have set yourself up as your own idol.
- The Bible says that God is always true even if it makes everyone else a liar (Romans 3:4).

Godliness requires a prior decision that God's Word is true, period.

- Scripture must overrule our ideas and opinions.
- The devil is many people's professor, teaching them the "doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1).

3. WE NEED TO REALIZE THAT THERE ARE ENEMIES OF GODLINESS.

Worldliness is the devil's tool to combat true godliness (2 Timothy 2:16).

- This world's system is firmly under the devil's control.
- Worldliness is a mindset that leaves God out of the equation.

Christians cannot breathe the "air" of worldliness and still be Godly.

- The world is an alien environment for the Christian.

- We have all we need to thrive in an environment of godliness (2 Peter 1:3).
- God has given us new desires and appetites.
- The godly person is one who is "starving" for God.
- This hunger is one confirmation of our salvation.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

THE DONUT SHOP: Lots of people like to go to the donut shop because everything in there is sweet. Everything tastes so good. But no matter how often you go to the donut shop, you're probably not better off healthwise for being there. In fact, the more often you go, the worse off you will be because there is no nutritional value in donuts. For many people, church is God's donut shop. They want to hear a sweet song, a sweet word, everything sprinkled with sugar—but no real spiritual substance. That's having a form of godliness while denying its power.

AM/FM RADIO: I listen to only two stations on my car radio, one AM and one FM. Depending on what I want to hear at any given time, I flip back and forth between the stations using the button on my dashboard. There are two spiritual stations the Christian can listen to. There is the heavenly station that tunes us into God and an earthly station that disconnects us from God. Far too many Christians spend far too much time listening to the world's station during the week. They flip to the God station on Sunday, but as soon as church is over they flip back and listen to the world's station.

HIGHWAY DRIVING: If I'm driving down the highway and a policeman pulls up beside me, I'm forced to drive in the light of his presence. His presence affects my driving. My foot goes off of the accelerator and left toward the brake. If I am going faster than him, but still within the speed limit, I won't pass him because I am affected by his presence. Once I know he is there, it changes my driving habits. However, if he drives off, and I am no longer in the light of his presence, I can go back to my same old sinful ways. The reason I can go back to my sinful lifestyle of driving

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over the speed limit is that I am no longer driving in the light of his presence. The moment I see that he left me and I can dismiss him from my mind, my lifestyle changes. When it came to driving, I had become a sinful man. However, if the policeman showed up again, I got holy again. The reason I would get holy is because his presence would've shown up. That's the effect of living and acting with an awareness of someone's presence.

COLLEGE DEGREES: People who have a master's degree sometimes want to go and earn their doctoral degree because a Ph.D. is considered the top of the line in a particular field. But there are also financial benefits to earning a doctorate, and most people who go to all that work don't do it just to have the title after their name. Their value in the marketplace is enhanced, or should be, when they earn a doctorate. Well, in the same way pursuing godliness has great benefits to it. That's what Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:6.

SERMON LINES:

This message will introduce the biblical concept of godliness as the true, lifelong pursuit and assignment for Christians.

This message will also help you distinguish between true godliness and the worldly "form of godliness" that may have all the outward trappings but none of the inward reality.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"Too many people are not experiencing more of God because they don't live in His presence—they only visit His presence. As long as you are visiting, you can leave."

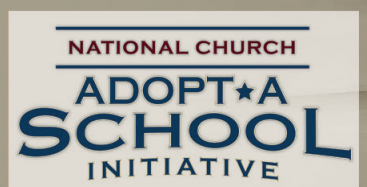
"Religion can give the *impression* of something related to God that's not real. You can look religious, wear religious clothes, use religious vocabulary, and even carry a religious book, the Bible. You can hang out with religious people, and yet there can be no power."

"Once you say, 'I don't think God's right,' you have judged God. If you judge God, you have become your own god, and another god is an idol."

"You don't have to be a criminal to be worldly. All you have to do is leave God out of the equation and you just became worldly."

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MESSAGE TWO: THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 6:3-11 (NASB)

³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness.

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message on **The Mystery of Godliness** is to compare the Law of the Old Testament or covenant with the grace brought to us by Jesus Christ in the New Testament or covenant, and to contrast how people attained godliness under the Old with how we can attain godliness today under the New.

INTRODUCTION:

Mere external religion without true godliness is like having a well-done-looking hamburger on the outside that is raw on the inside. It looks like it's ready, but nothing is cooked inside. God's goal for His people is to pursue godliness. We have defined godliness as a lifestyle that is consistent with the character of God. It is the opposite of worldliness, which is a lifestyle that's inconsistent with the character of God.

Paul told Timothy, the pastor of the church in Ephesus, to teach his people how believers are to conduct themselves as part of the household, the family, of God. Paul also said he

wanted Timothy to explain "the mystery of godliness," which was a doctrine that everyone should agree with because it is the truth of God. This truth is common, meaning it belongs to every Christian and is shared among all Christians. Paul also called this mystery "great," which lets us know this is not some minor, inconsequential matter.

In the Bible, a mystery refers to something concealed in the Old Testament that's revealed in the New Testament. Paul says there is a mystery about godliness that was unclear in the Old Testament that now has been made clear in the New Testament. This is the case with many truths that are revealed only in the New Testament, because in the Old Testament we didn't get the whole story. The Old Testament is critical and foundational to our faith, but it was incomplete in terms of God's full redemptive plan. That's called progressive revelation.

We see this because the Bible was not written as one book at one time by one person to cover all things. It was written by about forty different authors over about fifteen hundred years to tell the whole story. When it comes to the mystery of how people can be made right with God and live godly lives, the Old Testament told only the first part of the story. So this mystery of godliness that was a shadow in the Old Testament came to full light in the New when Jesus Christ came as God in the flesh.

In order to understand this mystery, you have to understand that a shift occurred when God moved from the Old Testament to the New Testament. If you do not understand the shift, you won't understand the mystery.

The book of Hebrews (8:13) says that when God introduced His New Covenant of grace in Jesus Christ, He made the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, obsolete. This means if you're living in the Old Testament, that is, trying to please God by what you do and don't do, you're living under something that has been made obsolete because of something better that has come along.

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SERMON POINTS:

1. JESUS CHRIST IS THE EMBODIMENT OF GRACE.

When Jesus appeared, grace appeared.

- John 1:17: "The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."
- It's not that grace didn't exist in the Old Testament, but when Jesus came, He revealed God's grace to all men (Titus 2:11).

Since the grace of God has appeared to us, we are no longer under law.

- According to Romans 6:14, law could never save anyone.
- What we needed was a sinless Savior, who came in the person of Christ.

2. THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE MYSTERY OF GOD.

True godliness is no longer found in a written code like the Mosaic Law.

- Godliness is forever linked to the person of Jesus Christ.
- The mystery of godliness is Christ indwelling you.

Since godliness is linked to Jesus Christ, our assignment is to become more like Him.

- This is possible because God's command to us is to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).
- The job of the Holy Spirit is to make the indwelling Christ expand within us so that we are becoming more godly.

3. GOD MADE A NEW COVENANT WITH US IN JESUS CHRIST.

As we saw above, this New Covenant of grace makes the Old Covenant of law obsolete.

- The mystery of the New Covenant is that we are rightly related to God by grace (Hebrews 8:6,10).
- This is in stark contrast to the strict performance

standards of the Mosaic Law.

The Old Covenant said, "Do, do." The New Covenant says, "Done!" in Jesus Christ.

- Jesus is alone in His uniqueness.
- Therefore, He alone is qualified to be our Savior.
- When Jesus appeared, God appeared (Titus 2:11).
- We are not to frustrate grace by going back to law (Romans 6:14; Galatians 2:21).
- Jesus paid it all (John 19:30)!
- Our calling is to grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18).

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

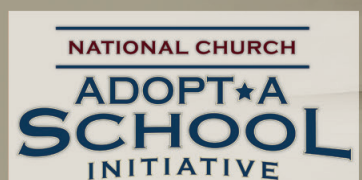
THE FOOTBALL: In football, the ball runs the entire multibillion-dollar show. Everything that happens on the field is tied to this ball. The players are paid millions of dollars to fight over the possession of the ball. People by the hundreds of thousands pile into the stadiums or watch television to see these players fight over the football. It's all about the ball. Take the ball out of the football game, and there is no game. Take Jesus out of the mystery of godliness, and there is no godliness.

WASHING MACHINES: Many years ago, our ancestors washed their clothes on a wooden washboard. Every time they did it, they had to roll up their sleeves and apply "elbow grease," scrubbing hard because they were trying to make something clean that was dirty. Then along came washing machines. They have the same goal as the washboard, but something is different because now there is a new power at work making clean what was dirty.

The Old Covenant was elbow grease in terms of trying to make sinners clean before God. It was people trying to clean up their mess by their own effort. The New Covenant is the washing machine that does the same thing by a new power that is apart from our own effort.

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THE AUCTION: There was once a father who lost his beloved son, and then later the father himself died. He was very wealthy and had stipulated in his will that all of his expensive possessions were to be auctioned off. The auctioneer came and the sale began. "The first piece we're going to bring out is a picture of the man's son," the auctioneer said, showing an old picture of the man's son who had died. "Do I have a bid?"

Well, nobody bid on it because the buyers didn't come for that. They came for some of the expensive art pieces and artifacts, so nobody was bidding on the picture. But then from the back of the room an old man stepped forward and said, "Sir, I was the servant of the man who died, and if nobody will take the picture of the boy, I want to know if I can have it." The auctioneer said, "One more time. Is there anyone who will bid on the picture of the son?" Nobody bid on it. He then said, "Sir, you may have the picture." To everyone's shock, the auctioneer then picked up his gavel, banged it down, and said, "The auction is over."

Everybody looked around and said, "What?! You haven't brought out any of the expensive pieces that are supposed to be sold. How can the auction be over?" The auctioneer replied, "The father's will says that the auction was to begin with the picture of his son, and whoever took that got everything else in his estate. He valued his son so highly that he stipulated that whoever took his son's picture would inherit his entire estate."

Sometimes we are like those buyers at the estate auction. We're going around looking for everything else to buy, but God is there saying, "I have come to give you life and to give it to you more abundantly in My Son. If you have My Son, you have eternal life and all the riches that go with it."

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND HISTORY AND CULTURE:

MYSTERY: The Bible's definition of a mystery is far different than its meaning in everyday language. We think of a mystery as a puzzle to be put together, a riddle to be solved or a knot to be untied. But a biblical mystery is none of these; instead, it is a truth that was previously hidden or not understood that God has now revealed and explained. Jesus called the truths of His kingdom a mystery because the full

understanding of the kingdom had not been made known to God's people before Jesus came and explained it.

CHRIST'S TWO NATURES: Jesus Christ is the revelation of God in human form. In theology, we call it the hypostatic union which means two natures in one person, unmixed forever.

OLD TESTAMENT LAW: The Bible says that by the works of the law nobody is justified before God (Romans 6:14). The Old Testament Law was the obsolete covenant. It can only tell you the problem, it could not fix it. There were 613, and to break one was to break all of them.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION: This is the biblical doctrine that accounts for the way God revealed Himself and gave His people His truth through the Bible in stages instead of all at once. God gave people the information He wanted them to have for the period in which they were living. That information was sufficient for them then, but He didn't reveal the whole story at once as they weren't ready for the whole story yet.

SERMON LINES:

This message explains the wonderful truth of the mystery of godliness that is embodied uniquely in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

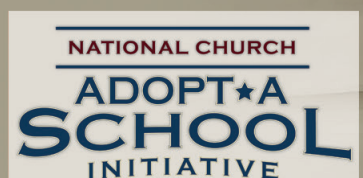
QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"Reading the Old Testament is like reading the first part of a book. You get some good information and part of the plot, but you don't know how the story ends or where the plot is going because you haven't heard the whole story yet."

"God has taken only one 'selfie' to show the world, and it is Jesus Christ."

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MESSAGE THREE: THE MEANS TO GODLINESS

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 4:4-8 (NASB)

⁴For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; ⁵for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. ⁶In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. ⁷But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message on **The Means to Godliness** is to stress the importance of exercising our spiritual lives the way some people exercise their bodies to get in shape, and to explain the benefits of disciplining ourselves spiritually and abiding in the presence of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION:

Everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior has been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. You have been transferred from a place of spiritual impoverishment to a place of spiritual riches. You have been removed from the kingdom of Satan and have been seated at the right hand of Jesus Christ in heavenly places in the spiritual realm. All of us know the struggle that it is to leave the worldly life behind and partake of the new spiritual realities afforded to us. In fact, we all know what it is to bring the old life into the new reality.

Today, we have Jesus within us. The goal of this reality is the production of godliness in the life of God's children. The whole point of the salvation experience is to make us godly men and women. We've defined godliness as a lifestyle consistent with the character of God, and godlessness is a lifestyle inconsistent with the character of God. Godliness does not mean perfection, but it does mean consistency. It means that it becomes normative for us to pursue godliness, and to recognize when we are not godly.

Paul says in 1 Timothy 4 that if you want to be godly, you must discipline yourself. The Greek word for discipline is our word "gymnasium." You go to a gym to work out and get in shape—not to create muscles, but to build the muscles you already have. The gym is designed to develop the physical attributes you already possess. The reality is that a lot of times you don't want to work out, but your health is more important than your feelings. So you must make a priority decision. If you are spiritually flabby, the soul is out of shape. How do you know you're out of shape? If ungodliness rules, it is because you are out of shape.

One thing that is true about physical exercise is that there's a big difference between intending to do it and actually doing it. We wake up intending to go to the gym, but the thought of that extra fifteen minutes in bed overrules our desire to get in shape. Your workout regimen for godliness has to go beyond good intentions. It is going to require a decision to engage in a workout program to get rid of the flab in your soul.

Unfortunately, most Christians are satisfied with one weekly "workout" on Sunday morning. But if they only work out spiritually once a week and then the rest of the week do the opposite, they wasted their once-a-week workout session. What most of us are doing is going to a spiritual workout session on Sunday and then going to the donut shop on Monday, canceling out whatever workout routine we did on Sunday, turning it into merely a religious exercise. Godliness is much more than that.

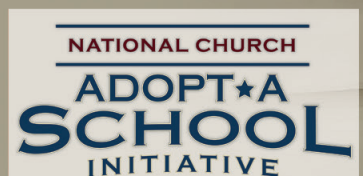
SERMON POINTS:

1. YOU MUST USE YOUR "MEMBERSHIP" IN CHRIST TO DEVELOP GODLINESS.

It's possible to have a membership without using the benefits of that membership.

- When you accepted Jesus Christ, you got a membership that gave you access to

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His spiritual gymnasium for the purpose of exercising godliness.

- This workout is not to create godliness, but to develop the godliness you already possess by virtue of your salvation (2 Peter 1:3).
- Even though you're converted, your soul is living in the flesh, which still produces ungodly thinking, appetites and actions that need cleansing.
- The reason so many Christians stay defeated for so long is that their souls are out of shape.

Spiritual fitness needs to take priority over physical fitness.

- Physical exercise is profitable for a little while, but godliness is profitable for now and for eternity.
- If you're working your body out more than you're working your soul out, you have your priorities mixed up.
- Bodily exercise may affect the quality of your life, but it will not affect the quantity. That is, you will still die at God's appointed time.

2. EXERCISING GODLINESS MEANS PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF JESUS.

The gym you need to attend to develop your godliness muscles is Jesus' gym.

- Jesus is the source of all godliness
- Jesus' indwelling presence in us is the secret of godliness (Colossians 1:27).

The more time you spend exercising godliness, the more you will see changes.

- When you exercise godliness, your spiritual muscles will begin to grow.
- Another benefit is that the "clothes" of the old ungodly ways won't fit anymore.
- If you want to grow more, get a "workout partner;" help someone else grow in godliness and you will grow (1 Timothy 4:11).

3. YOU CANNOT HAVE GOD'S BLESSINGS WITHOUT CULTIVATING GODLINESS.

Too many Christians come to church primarily to get a blessing.

- The problem is that people want to be blessed, but they don't equally want to be godly.
- There's nothing wrong with wanting to be blessed, but when we disconnect blessings from godliness we're asking God for something He's not free to give.
- Godliness is the foundation of blessing.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

GOD'S PHARMACY: The way the Trinity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit works can be illustrated by the workings of a pharmacy. God is the manufacturer who has produced all the medication we need to cure the ungodliness within us. Jesus is the doctor, the Great Physician, who knows what's wrong and knows what to prescribe from God's pharmacy to bring about the healing of the malady of ungodliness. But we also need a pharmacist to fill the doctor's prescription so we can apply the medicine to heal the malady. That's the work of the Holy Spirit, to deliver what Jesus has prescribed. Jesus said if we abide in Him and His Word abides in us, we will experience the healing He has to offer. When Jesus calls in the prescription and the pharmacist fills it, that prescription has within it the power we need to get well. But the power in the prescription is only realized in me when I take the medicine that was prescribed.

SMOG: We are told that Beijing, China, has such a major smog problem that during the day it looks like night. The smog is so thick in the city that they put up big screens like those in Times Square in New York so people can see a picture of the sun rising. The sun rises, but the people in Beijing can't see it because of all the junk in the air. We have so much junk in the air that we don't see the SON rising; we don't see Jesus rising as the centerpiece of life. He's been camouflaged by the smog of ungodliness—by

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our old ways of thinking and acting. The answer is to clear up the smog so our view of the Son becomes clear.

THE LONE RANGER: Many of us grew up watching the television series *The Lone Ranger*. We all admired Silver, the Lone Ranger's beautiful horse. We also learned early on how the Lone Ranger got Silver. He was a Texas Ranger who got ambushed with other Rangers and left for dead. But he was saved by Tonto, and while the Lone Ranger was recovering in a canyon, he saw Silver, a wild stallion. The Lone Ranger roped Silver and tried to ride him, but kept getting bucked off. But he rode Silver until the horse was tamed and came to understand that he had a new master.

If you really want to be godly, give God the opportunity to ride your back; don't buck Him off. Pray, "Ride me, King Jesus, ride me in this situation, in this crisis, on this job, with my money, until I come under Your lordship and become useful to You."

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND HISTORY AND CULTURE:

The Greek word for discipline is the word from which we get our English word "gymnasium." Since it means discipline, we have come to associate it with physical fitness, but in the Bible, this word is used for spiritual discipline.

SERMON LINES:

This message will explain the surpassing value of exercising ourselves toward godliness over simply using all of our efforts to improve our physical bodies.

This message will also call Christians to the higher standard of pursuing godliness for spiritual gain, to their benefit and God's glory.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

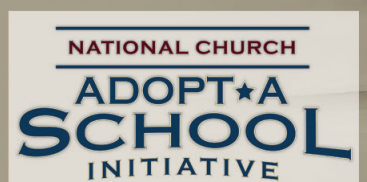
"You need to spend more time in the soul gym than in the body gym."

"Jesus is the dispenser of godliness, and Jesus is in you."

"Remember, the workout isn't to make you godly; it's to develop the godliness you already have. Like in the body you already have a heart and muscles, you're working out something that already exists when you exercise godliness."

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IN PURSUIT OF GODLINESS

SERMON OUTLINE

BY DR. TONY EVANS

MESSAGE FOUR: THE MOTIVATION FOR GODLINESS

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 6:3-19 (NASB)

³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. ¹⁷Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message on **The Motivation for Godliness** is to illustrate the material and spiritual blessings that God has in store for those who are faithful to pursue a lifestyle of godliness, and to demonstrate how material blessings and spiritual blessings can work in conjunction with each other to bring about the fullness of life indeed.

INTRODUCTION:

Godliness is a lifestyle that is consistent with the character of God. Godliness does not mean perfection, but it does mean growth in consistency where we are both desirous of and functioning in a way that reflects who God is. Your soul is begging for godliness. It's begging to be filled with more of God, and if the soul is not being filled with godliness, you wind up with a starving soul. It's a big problem because that is the one thing above all other things that interrupts our move toward godliness. That is the one thing that will hinder, limit, distort and deny our desire to pursue godliness, and Paul tells Timothy to make this point clear.

There is great gain in godliness, but only under God's conditions. Whenever you see people using religion solely for financial gain, you will also see prosperity theology. These are the people who go to church just to get the blessings. They use a camouflage of godliness for the financial benefit that will accrue to them. That's called materialism.

Money itself is not the problem; loving it and longing for it above anything else is the problem. Loving and longing for money will put a stop to your move toward godliness, so Paul spends the entire sixth chapter of 1 Timothy dealing with this subject. How do you know if you are a materialist, a lover of money? You know it when your desire for physical things has a greater priority in your life than your desire for spiritual things.

And as we know, the problem with loving and longing for money is that you are never satisfied, no matter how much money you have. In contrast, Hebrews 13:5-6 says the contented man or woman is the one who knows that God

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is acting on his or her behalf. One of the main reasons the spiritual is subject to the material in so many Christians' lives is that they suffer from a lack of contentment. Contentment means inner sufficiency in spite of external circumstances. The opposite is an all-consuming desire to get rich that Paul says will plunge anyone who takes that route into all kinds of pain and suffering.

SERMON POINTS:

1. THE BIBLE SAYS GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT BRINGS GREAT GAIN.

There is a great "profit margin" to godly living, but the profit is spiritual, not material.

- If you want to enjoy the high profit margin of godliness, a marriage needs to occur between your pursuit of godliness and contentment in your life.
- Lack of contentment will stifle godliness, but the presence of contentment with the pursuit of godliness will give you a great profit margin (Hebrews 13:5-6).
- The problem with trying to find contentment in material wealth is that it never satisfies (Ecclesiastes 5:10).
- A great prayer to pray for contentment is found in Proverbs 30:8-9.

The problem is that too many people try to use godliness for greedy material gain.

- This attitude says, "Let me be more religious so God will give me more money."
- People like this are simply using godliness as a camouflage for greed.
- Money itself is not the problem—loving it and longing for it is the problem.
- Lack of contentment will stifle godliness, but the presence of contentment with the pursuit of godliness will give you a great profit margin.

Here are some ways you can tell if you are a lover of money:

- If you spend more time complaining about what you don't have than giving thanks for what you do have.
- If your financial life is going up and your spiritual life is going down.
- If you compromise spiritual principles to gain a profit.
- If you are praying more for the growth of your cash than for the growth of your character.
- If you treat rich people better than you treat people without money.
- If you rob God of His tithes and offerings to pocket all you get for yourself.

2. IF YOU ARE RICH IN MONEY, YOU SHOULD EVEN BE RICHER IN SERVICE.

The more your material worth goes up, the more your service to the Lord should go up.

- The reason there's so much misery in the church, and the kingdom of God can't advance, is because so many rich people aren't generous.
- Too many of us want to beg off by claiming we aren't rich, but by any standard, almost all believers in this culture can be considered rich.

The problem for many of us as Christians is that we have confused wants with needs.

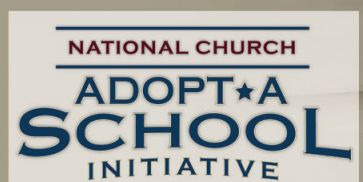
- God has promised to richly supply all of our needs (Philippians 4:19).
- Before we can claim this promise, we need to learn the lesson that precedes this promise (Philippians 4:11-18).

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

THE CORROSIVE EFFECTS OF GREED: A man went to his pastor one day and said, "Pastor, I'm depressed." The pastor asked him what was wrong. "Well," he said, "last year my aunt died and left me thirty thousand dollars. The

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year before that, my uncle died and left me fifty thousand dollars." His pastor said, "So why are you depressed?" The man replied, "Because this year, nobody died." That's the kind of thinking we can fall into when we become gripped by greed.

THE BUSINESSMAN AND THE FISHERMAN: A big-time New York businessman wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle for a while, so he traveled to a little town in Mexico and went walking on the beach. He met a man who was having a siesta in the middle of the day and asked him what he did. "I'm a fisherman," the man replied. "Are you off today?" the businessman asked. "No, I went out fishing this morning and caught my allotment for today, so I'm just kind of chilling right now."

The businessman said, "Wait, you just caught your allotment for today?" The fisherman said, "Yes, and then I'll go back out tomorrow and catch my allotment for tomorrow." The businessman said, "I do investments in New York, and based on what you told me today, if you would double your workload you could have a greater profit. And if you did that long enough, you could buy additional boats and build your own cannery, and all the other fishermen would have to come to you. And when your cannery got big enough, I could connect you in New York with people who would expand your market share. Then you could go public with your new business."

The fisherman said, "And then what would I do?" The businessman said, "Well, then you could relax on the beach and chill." The fisherman said, "Well, that's what I'm doing right now!"

LOST CAT: A woman who had a cat her husband hated went on a trip one time and told her husband to take care of her cat. But she was going to be away for two weeks, and this cat was driving her husband nuts. He couldn't take it anymore, so he took the cat down to the shipyard and put it on a boat that was getting ready to leave. He went back home, and when his wife came back the next week she said, "Where's my cat?" He said, "The cat went away."

She said, "We have to find him!" He said, "Certainly dear, let's go look."

So they went all around, and of course couldn't find the cat. The man's wife said, "You have to find my cat. I love my cat!" Now this man loved his wife very much and so he said, "I'll tell you what, dear. I'll put an ad in the paper, and if anybody finds this cat, I'm going to give that person five thousand dollars because I love you that much."

One of the guy's friends saw the ad and said, "Man, I just saw the ad you put in the paper for the cat. Five thousand dollars for a cat?" He said, "Yes." The friend said, "Why would you give a five-thousand-dollar reward for a cat?" He replied, "It's simple. When you know what I know, the investment isn't too big." When you know about your future, and what God has in store for you in eternity, then giving Him service should change how you operate.

SERMON LINES:

This message will help your audience face the hard but necessary truth of how easy it is even for believers to fall into the trap of greed—and even worse, of trying to use godliness for material gain.

This message will also call Christians to the higher standard of pursuing godliness for spiritual gain, to their benefit and God's glory.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"Godliness, when done right, brings great gain."

"God never wants your riches to compete with your pursuit of godliness."

"Anybody who's interested in making a profit ought to be interested in godliness, because with it comes a high profit margin and a great gain."

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