

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Pursue Good-Devotedness

By Dan Trygg

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to good-devotedness.” Titus 1:1

“But have nothing to do with irreverent and silly myths. Rather, train yourself toward good-devotedness, for, the training of the body has a limited benefit, but good-devotedness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” 1 Timothy 4:7,8

“If anyone teaches other doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the teaching that promotes good-devotedness, <sup>4</sup> he is conceited, understanding nothing, but having a sick interest in disputes and arguments over words. From these come envy, quarreling, slanders, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant disagreement among men whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth, who imagine that good-devotedness is a way to material gain. <sup>6</sup> But good-devotedness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. <sup>9</sup> But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. <sup>11</sup> Now you, man of God, run from these things; but pursue righteousness, good-devotedness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.” 1 Timothy 6:3-11

I have taken the liberty of translating the word “godliness” as “good-devotedness”, because I think it more accurately conveys the meaning of the original word. In the NT, the word, “godliness” is used 15 times (Acts 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7,8; 6:3,5,6,11; 2 Tim. 3:5; Tit. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:3,6,7; 3:11), while the adjective “godly” occurs three times (Acts 10:2,7; 2 Pet. 2:9) and the adverb “godly” occurs twice (2 Tim. 3:12; Tit. 2:12). The interesting thing is that the word “god” does not occur as part of any of these words. You would think that a term like “godliness” would have God in there somewhere, but it does *NOT*. The word, “godliness” is a compound word from the adverb “good, or well” (Gk. – ‘eu’) and the word for “devotion” or “worship” (Gk. – ‘sebomai’). So, a better translation would be “well-devoted”, or “good-devoted-ness”. The prefix “eu” is used in Acts 15:29 (“...you will do well.”); Ephesians 6:3 (“...that it may be well with you.”); Mark 14:7 (“...you may do well to them [the poor]”); and Matthew 25:21 (“Well done!” – the word “done” is not there. A more accurate rendering would be “Good!”). It is used as a prefix for many words: “good-news”, “well-pleasing”, “well-born”, “thought-it-good”, “good-work”, “of-good-cheer”, etc. The root word, “sebomai” occurs in Matthew 15:9 (“they worship Me”), Acts 16:14, 18:7 (“a worshiper of God), 18:13 (“to worship God”), Acts 13:43, 17:4,17 (“God-fearing” – Note, the word “God” does not even occur in these phrases! These are just “reverent” or “devout” people.).

The negated form “godlessness” occurs six times (Rom. 1:18; 11:26; 2 Tim. 2:12; Jud. 1:15,18). The noun form, “ungodly” occurs nine times (Rom. 4:5; 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:5,6; 3:7; Jud. 1:4,15). “Godlessness” refers to someone with no devotion toward God, ...someone who is either misguided by worshiping other gods, or *someone who gives no thought or concern toward God – “un-devoted-ness”*.

Another compound word, which is actually built from the word for “god” and the word for “devotion” occurs on two more occasions (John 9:31; 1 Tim. 2:10). Literally, this would be rendered as “God-devoted”.

Unfortunately, today the words, “godly” or “godliness” tend to sound more like a measurement of a person’s righteousness, ...like a certain level of right behavior. At least, that is how these English words come across to me, and others have reported that they felt the same way. It was a surprise to me to discover that the real thrust of the word was *not* on behavior, at all. *It was all about the orientation of the heart.*

Someone who was “well-devoted” or had “good-devoted-ness” was a person with a proper reverence and focus on God. He or she was someone who was focused on God as their Source and the One they served and worshiped. This was reflected by how they approached and lived out their life.

**The Bible clearly points us back to our focus, our “roots”. If our hearts are well-devoted to God, the behaviors and outworking of that orientation will show in our lives.**

**What does it mean to be well-devoted?** The Bible does not tell us specifics, because it is an attitude of the heart, BUT if your heart is well-focused on knowing God, and living out your life to honor Him, then it would seem that you would be doing things that would help you to know Him better. If you weren’t, it would seem like you would fall under the “un-devoted” category.

**Cornelius**, in Acts 10 was called a “good-devoted” man, one reverencing God with all his house, doing many merciful-acts (translated as ‘giving alms’, but possibly entailing much more than that) and urgently-seeking God in prayer

through everything.” It is important to understand that the spiritual disciplines and expressions of his faith came out from his “good-devoted heart”. They did not make him “good-devoted”.

It is possible to do all those spiritual disciplines for the wrong motives, ... to have a heart that is *not* well-devoted toward God, at all. You could be arrogant and prideful, for example, and think that these activities *make you righteous*, ...or *better than* others who don’t do them as much as you do, as the Pharisees did (e.g., Lk. 18:9-14). Or, you could simply be attending church, giving money, or reading your Bible *out of a sense of duty, fear and obligation*.

This word is most often used by the apostle Paul, especially in the pastoral epistles, where he is instructing and reminding Timothy how to be an effective leader. He tells us we ought to live our lives in good-devotedness and fitting-behavior (1 Tim. 2:2).

**(1.) We can pray for God to produce that good-devotedness in ourselves and others (2:1).**

**(2.) We ought to train, exercise or discipline ourselves toward good-devotedness (4:7,8).** This means *this is a goal to pursue, and we can do something to promote or develop this orientation toward God.*

**(3.) Our good-devotedness-toward-God should affect how we treat and care for others (5:4).** *If we have a proper heart attitude toward God, it should spill over into how we treat one another.* These two realms are not mutually exclusive. Healthy devotion to God does not preclude healthy devotion to one another. In fact, devotion to God should produce a concern in our hearts for one another that will be expressed in action.

**(4.) One of the ways we are to examine a different doctrine that may come to our attention is whether or not it measures up to the sound teaching that is according to good-devotedness (6:3).** If a teaching draws people away from a warm-hearted devotion to God, then it is not promoting the core of what God is truly looking for from us. Some divisive people will try to promote a form of “good-devotedness” as a means to get wealthy. The obvious question here is what is the *real* focus of this life of religious activity: Is it truly God Himself, or is it the hope of wealth that is driving this devotion? **The real profit that comes from healthy good-devotedness has to do with inner-contentment (6:5,6).** Good-devotedness is one of those qualities Paul tells us to pursue (6:11).

**(5.) Healthy devotion toward God will be effective in changing lives and bringing power from God for living.** Paul warned Timothy that people will come having what appears to be an outward form of good-devotedness, but who have denied or disregarded the effective-power of it. We are to avoid such people (2 Tim. 3:5).

**(6.) Healthy-devotion will offend those who do not understand it.** We can expect that if we desire to live with good-devotedness that **others will be offended by our focus on God, and will persecute us (3:12).**

**(7.) Good-devotion of the heart is a result, or outcome, of a clear perception of reality.** To Titus, Paul summed up his calling as a slave of Christ, a sent one according to the recognition of truth that leads to good-devotedness (Tit. 1:1). *A healthy orientation to God is the result of repentance, ...a change of perception of who God is, and what He requires of us.* We still have a choice to acknowledge and respond to this new awareness, but without a new perception of reality, we would not even recognize the need to change.

**(8.) The grace of God will lead us to a good-devoted heart.** Paul wrote to Titus that “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, instructing us to deny un-devotedness and worldly desires, so that we might live righteously and with good-devotedness in this present age (2:12). Again, **God is looking for this proper heart-orientation toward Him. God’s grace will teach us good-devotion.**

**(9.) God has given us all things of His divine power to produce life and good-devotedness (2 Pet. 1:3).** God has given us *power* to motivate and support this proper orientation of the heart toward Him.

**(10.) Good-devotedness is also one of the ingredients we are to “add” to our faith, if we want to move onto maturity and to become fruitful in our spiritual lives (2 Peter 1:6,7).** Since this world is temporal, and will ultimately be destroyed, Peter challenges us, “...what sort of people is it necessary for you to become, habitually-conducting yourself in holiness and good-devotedness?” (3:11).

From this survey, you can see that **there is a healthy or good devotedness of our hearts that is crucial to our daily walk, our spiritual maturation and the effectiveness of our faith.** This is something that does not necessarily happen automatically, but which we can pray for, pursue and learn. **Out from a healthy good-devotedness will come the desire to do whatever it takes to learn more of God, to draw near to Him, and to want to serve Him in whatever ways He would ask of us.**

“...pursue righteousness, good-devoted-ness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.” – 1 Timothy 6:11