

Living as an Overcomer – Tony Evans
Pursuing a Godly Life - Chapter 11

1. In 1 Samuel 15:22, Samuel says, “*What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.*”(NLT) In Hosea 6:6, God says, “*I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.*” (NLT) The Hebrew nation was missing the mark. They thought that God wanted the burnt offerings but what God wanted was their and our obedience and love. He wanted a personal relationship with them.
2. Evans uses an example of a college writing assignment in which he received an “F” because he did the wrong assignment. It was a good paper but on the wrong topic. Most of the churches that we looked at in Revelation 2 and 3 did the same thing. They were focusing on the wrong things.
3. In 1 Timothy 6:11, Paul tells Timothy and us, “*Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.*” (NLT) Living as a Christian, we are to be in pursuit of a “godly life”. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we are told, “*So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*” A godly life is one that works to be more and more like Jesus.

Evans says, “You and I have been saved for eternity so that we can develop and live out godly lives on earth.” He defines ‘godliness’ as “a lifestyle that’s consistent, both desirous and functionally, with the reflection of God Himself. Godliness is the hallmark of the Christian life, and your personal spiritual power, contentment, and satisfaction.”

4. 1 Timothy 4:8-10 says, “*8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 9 This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. 10 That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.*” In our Christian life, we should be striving for ‘godliness’. Our soul should be longing to be more like Jesus. Our soul is designed to reflect God. If we are not reflecting Him like the crystal sea in Revelation 4, then our soul should be telling us so. Evans says, “A soul that lacks godliness is a hungry soul. It’s a starving soul.”
5. Paul told Timothy in verse 9 that the necessity of living a godly life is so important that it “*deserves full acceptance*”. It isn’t something that we should do, it is something that we must do.

6. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. These verses give some insight into what people will be like as Paul says, "*In the last days*". To me, these sound like people in our world today.
7. In verse 5, Paul says "*holding to a form of godliness*" (NASB) or the NLT says, "*They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly.*" We saw this in some of the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. They held to their own idea of godliness. Godliness is something that you do all the time and not just on Sunday.
8. Evans uses the idea of wearing a Superman costume. It is not the costume that makes you Superman. The costume is just an outward appearance. In the same way, acting godly in public doesn't make you godly. Godliness resides in your heart.
9. Tony Evans defines religion as "man's attempt to convince God through activity in order to get him to be favorable to you." A person can seem religious on the outside and not be devoted to God on the inside.
10. Throughout His time on earth, Jesus encountered numerous religious people, such as the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew 23:26-27 records Jesus saying to them, "27 *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*" He called them "whitewashed tombs". They appeared freshly painted on the outside but it was only skin deep. The inside was still wicked.
11. Evans says, "Spiritual maturity, also known as godliness, comes through intimacy with God." Being in the church every time that it is open does not affect what is inside your heart. You have heard Pastor Brian say numerous times, "Preaching from the pulpit, singing in the choir, serving on church boards, . . . will not save you."
12. In Matthew 6:5-6, Jesus rebukes the Jewish religious leaders regarding praying out loud so that everyone can see and hear them. When praying corporately, I used to worry about making a mistake in front of others. Your audience doesn't change when you pray privately versus corporately. You are praying to God through Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit. Others just get to listen in. The Holy Spirit perfects the communication with God.

"For many people, the church is God's donut shop. They come to hear a sweet song. They want to hear a sweet sermon. They enjoy the sweet atmosphere and seeing everyone dressed up all

sweet with their Sunday-sweet smiles. But when there is no true connection to the living God and it's all about the form of religion, they leave without any spiritual maturity at all. You can have the look without its reality. You can have the paraphernalia without power. You can have the form of spirituality without true kingdom authority.” (Evans)

13. Evans uses the difference between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians. The magicians could imitate Moses' miracles but Moses had the true relationship with God. Both were able to change their staffs into snakes but as it says, in Exodus 7:12, *“But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.”* You can appear to be a Christian but you will not have the power that comes with it.
14. The power to be an overcomer only comes from true godliness. The old “duck test” doesn't hold true for Christians. “If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck.” You can do everything in your power to look like a Christian, you still don't have the power of a Christian.
15. Do you remember Philip's encounter with the sorcerer in Acts 8:9-24? The sorcerer wanted to have Philip's power to heal and offered him money to have it. In verse 21, Philip told the sorcerer that, *“You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God.”*

GODLINESS IS A LIFESTYLE

16. This is going to sound strange but godliness is much like dieting. You can fast for a short time or starve yourself to achieve your desired weight but unless you make a lifestyle change in the way you eat, you will put the pounds back on. We can have godly moments in our life and push to look godly but unless we make it our lifestyle, it will not become permanent.
17. Years ago when I was teaching junior high Sunday School, the students were complaining that Northridge was having a “Random Acts of Kindness” Day. They didn't get it. The hope was that the students would see that being kind to others can change them and you and maybe the students would want to make a lifestyle change and be kind all the time. When you make the lifestyle change then the behavior becomes natural.
18. Do others see God in you? That is what godliness is. We always say that “God is love.” Can they say “John is godly.”? Is it a natural behavior or attribute that you show all the time?

19. I know people that wear “WWJD” bracelets to remind them to be godly. Jesus was godly and behaving like Jesus is our goal. Unfortunately, we have a “sin nature” in us that is contrary to godliness. Paul talks about it in his letter to the Galatian church in Galatians 5:17-25. He even lists what acts are and are not godly. He calls them “fruits of the spirit” and “acts of the flesh”. The fruits of the spirit are things that are WWJD.
20. Godliness assumes that you agree with God on the inside. Consider this, God is always right. Do you ever find yourself disagreeing with God’s will for your life? If you do, this is not godly behavior. If you find yourself saying, “I don’t think that God is right on this one.” Then you are elevating yourself to a god. I often say that “There is only one God and it is not me” to remind me that it is not about me, but it is all about Him. He created everything and I have created nothing. Even my discoveries as a scientist, He already knew.
21. In the last chapter, we learned that Romans 8:28 says, “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” I don’t know God’s purpose for why things work out the way they do. I rarely know my own plan, let alone God’s plan. It is best to trust Him and accept it.
22. When you think that you know more than God then that puts you at or above God’s level. This is a form of idolatry where you are your own god.
23. Idolatry is on the side of ungodliness. Paul calls this the “doctrine of demons”. Read 1 Timothy 4:1-5.
24. We learned in our study of Satan that Satan and his demons are experts at trying to get us to alter our thinking or doctrines. Consider in the garden where Satan asked Eve, “*For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.*” (Genesis 3:5) To us today, Satan is saying something similar. “Go ahead. Leave God out of this. There is no since praying about this. Take control of your own destiny.”
25. You need to make God your first step in every decision or plan. Remember God is all-powerful and all-knowing and you are not. Take it to God in prayer to make sure of which direction you should go.

“Legalism provides those in power with a way of controlling, manipulating, and even extorting the lives of those who fall under their care. Godliness does not mean living a checklist-perfect life. It means living in the light of the presence of God to such a degree that your heart beats in tune with His. Your thoughts reflect His. Your choices honor His character. There is a consciousness of God’s presence within you when you live a godly life that affects you. You

don't need to force it or read a list of rules in order to keep it. Your life will reflect the love of God when you make Him your priority." (Evans)

26. What does Jesus tell us are the two most important commandments? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. Love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:37-39)

27. Since godliness is being like God and "*God is love.*" (1 John 4:8). Love is one of the attributes of God, it is His very nature. A few verses later in 1 John 4:19, John writes "*We love because he first loved us*". We show our godliness if we love God and others.

"You are to love God and love others. Loving God means passionately pursuing His glory. When you're so closely aligned with God's presence, love is the way you function. Love shows up in your thoughts. Love shows up in your words. Love shows up in your choices. Love shows up in your relationships. Love shows up in how you view and spend time with God. Too many people spend time with God only during the visiting hours on Sunday or for a few minutes each morning. But those who pursue godliness live in His presence." (Evans)

28. Godliness is holiness. 1 Peter 1:16 says "*Be holy, because I am holy.*" Peter is quoting numerous verses quoting God in Leviticus. This is a command from God but God wants us to be holy because we love Him. Just as a child reflects his/her parents, then we are to reflect God.

29. Read Isaiah 55:6-9. God is speaking to the Israelites through Isaiah. It would not be long before God allows them to be captured. They were as far away from God as possible. They were ungodly people. It is a direction that I see the U.S. headed. When I was young, the odd ones were the ones who didn't go to church and now it is the opposite.

30. As Christians, our thoughts should be of God. When we have trials and troubles then we should go to Him first because He is at the front of our minds. In these verses in Isaiah 55, God tells them that "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts.*" This is not because of God but because of us. The Israelites were ungodly and their thoughts were about anything but God. They went to Him out of desperation.

31. Living as the world lives in the opposite of godly. Our children use the argument "All my friends are doing it, so why can't I?" This is the opposite of godliness, it is worldliness. "Times have changed, get with it." This is also a worldly statement. God is immutable or unchangeable. The world is ever changing.

32. 2 Timothy 2:16 says, “*avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness*”. There is nothing more worldly than social media. Yes, there are some good things about social media but Evans calls it “Satan’s tool for worldwide gaslighting”.
33. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary says gaslighting is “psychological manipulation of a person usually over an extended period of time that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories and typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one’s emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator.”
34. Consider this past election, by the time it was over we had no idea what the candidates stood for. If we listened to Facebook posts, mainstream news media and the candidates themselves, we would not have voted at all. We had to just turn it off or tune it out. If you listened you would have been scared of all of the candidates. It was all, “*worldly and empty chatter*”. Hopefully, before you voted, you prayed first.
35. We are living in a time as it says in Judges 21:25, where “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” In the history of Israel, a king was judged based on whether or not, “*He did what was right in the sight of the Lord.*”
36. “Worldliness is any system headed by Satan that leaves God out. A person does not need to be a criminal to be worldly. Worldliness is the opposite of godliness, in that it is living a life apart from God’s perspective.” If you are not praying then you are not seeking God’s perspective. If you don’t want to know God’s perspective on something then you are not living godly.
37. There are a lot of churches in the world today that try to merge godliness and worldliness. I gave you the information about the United Methodist Churches becoming welcoming and affirming. Churches must hold to biblical values. The Bible has to be the only source because it is the Word of God.
38. James 1:5-8 says, “*5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.*” More and more people, pastors and churches are becoming double-minded. They are trying to live in the world and they are living of the world to some degree.

39. If it is contrary to the Word of God, then it is worldly. You cannot be double-minded or a fence sitter. You have to be all God to be godly. Bringing any amount of the world into your church will make it worldly. Just like false teaching that Paul was talking about in Galatians 5:9, *“This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough!”* Bringing worldly things into the church can spread through the whole church making it ungodly.

“When God’s people leave God out yet still try to suck in the spiritual authority or the kingdom power they need in order to overcome, they’re only ushering in death cycles in their life. Whether it be the death of a dream, a relationship, a career, or of anything else, trying to survive spiritually using worldliness as your oxygen will destroy you. You were made for so much more.” (Evans)

40. John 10:10 says, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* In order to be an overcomer, you have to strive for godliness. As we said in a previous chapter, we have to claim the power of God to overcome Satan and the world. Our ungodliness gives Satan the victory.
41. Evans says, “If you are a Christian, God is your environment. He supplies your power. He supplies what you need to overcome. He supplies your everything.” You need to be dependent on God and not self-reliant or reliant on the world. As the old hymn says, “Without Him I could do nothing, without Him I’d surely fail.” You cannot be an overcomer without Him.
42. When you claimed Jesus as your Savior, you were given all that you need to overcome Satan and the world. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”*

Spurgeon said, “Divine power! What stupendous issues are grasped in that term, divine power! It was this which digged the deep foundations of the earth and sea! Divine power, it is this which guides the marches of the stars of heaven! Divine power! it is this which holds up the pillars of the universe, and which one day shall shake them, and hurry all things back to their native nothingness.”

43. Sometimes I get so used to saying that the Holy Spirit lives in me that I don’t think about what it means. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of God. Paul had to remind himself that the spirit of God is the spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead, the one who created everything. I have also said numerous times, don’t put human limitations on our God. His power is infinite.

“When we accepted Jesus Christ for our salvation, the Holy Spirit fertilized our human spirit. He quickened our spirit and made us alive spiritually. The problem is that the devil seeks to abort our spiritual conception. Satan seeks to stop our spiritual maturity from progressing. And in many cases, he’s been successful. But that’s not because believers lack what they need to grow and develop. It’s because they have been enticed, confused, deceived, distressed, or distracted away from the pursuit of godliness.” (Evans)

44. The question that you have to ask yourself, “How badly do you want to it?” Evans says that one of the differences between a growing believer and a stagnant one is appetite. I always think of end to football season. Usually in the bowl games both teams are good enough to win the game but it comes down to hunger and focus. This applies to Christians. Daily we have to ask ourselves, “Are we focused on God?” and “Are we hungry to overcome?”
45. Do you think as the Apostle Paul did, when he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*

“God wants to know how bad you want Him. How bad you want access to His spiritual authority. How bad you want to overcome that thing, person, drama, toxicity, behavior, or whatever else is keeping you down. Your desire will show up in your willingness to deny worldly gains and focus on your spiritual walk with Jesus Christ.” (Evans)

46. 1 Timothy 6:6 says, *“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”* There is benefit to pursuing godliness. When we looked at the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Jesus told each church where they were deficient and told them how to become an overcomer. Their path to getting rid of their deficiencies involved the pursuit of godliness. Our path to overcoming Satan and the world also includes the pursuit of godliness.
47. God told the Israelite exiles in Jeremiah 29:13, *“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”* This is a big part of godliness.