Summation and Outline of Jerry Bridges’ *The Practice of Godliness*

CHAPTER 1 — VALUE FOR ALL THINGS (1 Tim. 4:8)

- **Devotion in Action**: Enoch (Gen. 5:21-24)
- **Focused on God** — in three areas (the fear and love of God and the desire for God)

- Key thought: “The godly person is moral, benevolent, and zealous because of his devotion to God. And his life takes on a dimension that reflects the very stamp of God.” (p. 20)

CHAPTER 2 — DEVOTION TO GOD (Rev. 15:4)

- **The God-fearing Christian** fears God because he has a correct concept of God’s character, he has a pervasive sense of God’s presence, and a constant awareness of his obligation to God.
- **Gripped by God’s love** means *no* failure can cause us to doubt God’s love for us.
- **A thirst for God** is the culmination of godly fear and understanding God’s love.

- Key thought: “The practice of godliness is first of all the cultivation of a relationship with God, and from this the cultivation of a life that is pleasing to God. Our concept of God and our relationship with Him determine our conduct.” (p. 23)

CHAPTER 3 — TRAIN YOURSELF TO BE GODLY (1 Tim. 4:7)

- **Principles for training**: personal responsibility, keeping growth as the objective; maintaining the minimums.
  - The cost of commitment
  - Learning from a skilled teacher
  - Practice, and more practice
  - Using the word of God
- **The nature of training**

- Key thought: “It is possible to be very orthodox in one’s doctrine and very upright in one’s behavior and still not be godly. Many people are orthodox and upright, but they are not devoted to God; they are devoted to their orthodoxy and their standards of moral conduct.” (p. 45)

CHAPTER 4 — SEEKING A DEEPER DEVOTION (Ps. 119:10)

- Praying for growth
- Meditating on God
- Worshipping God
• Fellowship with God
• The ultimate test (obedience)
• A deeper longing

Key thought: “…we can build godlike character only upon the foundation of a wholehearted devotion to God. God must be the very focal point of our lives if we wish to have godly character and conduct.” (p. 67; And that must be the object of our “devotions” to make it happen.)

CHAPTER 5 — TAKING ON GOD’S CHARACTER (Col. 3:12)

• The right motive: “Devotion to God is the only acceptable motive for actions that are pleasing to God.”
• The source of power: Christ
• Responsibility and dependence: “Though the power for godly character comes from Christ, the responsibility for developing and displaying that character is ours.”
• Put off (bad character) and put on (godly character)
• Balanced growth
• Growth is progressive
• Form reasonable expectations

Key thought: “In which direction are we growing?…Every day we are training ourselves in one direction or the other by the thoughts we think, the words we say, the actions we take, the deeds we do.” (p. 83)

CHAPTER 6 — HUMILITY (Luke 18:14)

• Humility before God (recognizing God’s greatness and our lowliness)
• Trembling at his word
• Here by the grace of God
• Submission, service, and honor
• Practice humility

Key thought: “Humility opens the way to all other godly character traits. It is the soil in which the other traits of the fruit of the Spirit grow.” (p. 91)

CHAPTER 7 — CONTENTMENT (1 Tim. 6:6)

• Contentment with possessions (note esp. pp. 110-112)
• Contentment with position
• Paul’s secret of contentment: God’s sufficient grace

Key thought: “The very first temptation in the history of mankind was the temptation to be
discontent….Discontent is one of the most satanic of all sins, and to indulge in it is to rebel against God just as Satan did.” (pp. 106-7)

CHAPTER 8 — THANKFULNESS (Ps. 100:4-5)

• **Honoring God** (with thanksgiving)
• **Purposes of thanksgiving**: to acknowledge his goodness and honor him; to humble ourselves, stimulate our faith and promote contentment.
• **Cultivating a thankful heart**

• Key thought: “Thankfulness to God is a recognition that God in his goodness and faithfulness has provided for us and cared for us, both physically and spiritually. It is a recognition that we are totally dependent upon him; that all that we are and have comes from God.” (p. 123)

CHAPTER 9 — JOY (Rom. 14:17)

• **Stumbling blocks**: sin, misplaced confidence, discipline from God, trials.
• **Stepping stones**: confession of sin, trust in God, an eternal perspective, giving thanks in everything.
• **The fruits of joy**: God is pleased and the believer is strengthened.

• Key thoughts:
  ✓ “The purpose of joy is to glorify God by demonstrating to an unbelieving world that our loving and faithful heavenly Father cares for us and provides for us all that we need.” (p. 141)
  ✓ “To be joyless is to dishonor God and to deny his love and his control over our lives. It is practical atheism. To be joyful is to experience the power of the Holy Spirit within us, and to say to a watching world, ‘Our God reigns.’ ” (p. 146)

CHAPTER 10 — HOLINESS (1 Jn. 1:5)

• Convictions: knowledge of the truth
• A commitment to obedience
• The discipline of (daily) choices
• Dependence on the Spirit
• A God-centered desire

• Key thoughts:
  ✓ “Most Christians seem content not to sin very much, but John’s goal was that we not sin at all. Every sin, no matter how small it may seem to us, is an affront to God’s authority, a disregard for his law, a spurning of his love.” (p. 149.)
  ✓ “…so often when we sin we are more vexed at the lowering of our self-esteem than we
are grieved at God’s dishonor. We are irritated at our lack of self-control in subjecting ourselves to some unworthy habit. We are unable to stand the disappointment of seeing ourselves fail. God does not honor these self-centered desires. This is one reason we do not experience more of his enabling power in our day-to-day struggles with so-called besetting sins.” (p. 158.)

CHAPTER 11 — SELF-CONTROL (Prov. 25:28)

• **Honor God with your body** by guarding against gluttony, laziness and sexual immorality and impurity.
• **Take captive every thought**
• **Curbing our emotions**
• **Breaking the chains of self-indulgence** begins with sound judgment and the extends to the control of the mind and then our actions.

• Key thought: “Self-control is the exercise of inner strength under the direction of sound judgment that enables us to do, think, and say the things that are pleasing to God.” (p. 164)

CHAPTER 12 — FAITHFULNESS (Prov. 20:6)

• Absolute honesty
• Utter dependability
• Unswerving loyalty
• Meeting God’s requirement

• Key thought: “If we are careful to be honest in the little things, we will certainly be careful to be honest in the more important things of life.” (p. 182)

CHAPTER 13 — PEACE (Rom. 12:18)

• Peace with God
• Personal peace
• Peace with men

• Key thought: “Because peace is a fruit of the Spirit, we are dependent upon the Spirit’s work in our lives to produce the desire and the means to pursue peace. But we are also responsible to use the means he has given us and to take all practical steps to attain both peace within and peace with others.” (p. 201)

CHAPTER 14 — PATIENCE (Col. 3:12-13)

• **Suffering mistreatment** should not result in bitterness or resentment, but in patience.
• Responding to the provocation will be marked with slowness in the patient person.
• Tolerating shortcomings is a mark of humble patience.
• Waiting on God is essential to developing a patient life.
• Persevering through adversity means we not only endure the difficulty, but we move forward in spite of the difficulty.

• Key thought: “Only as we fear God will we submit to the trials he sends or allows. And only as we deeply apprehend his love for us in Christ will we find the courage to bear up under them. Trials always change our relationship with God. Either they drive us to him, or they drive us away from him. The extent of our fear of him and our awareness of his love for us determine in which direction we will move.” (p. 217)

CHAPTER 15 — GENTLENESS (Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12)

• The gentleness of Christ is our model.
• Treating others gently is our goal.
• Treating others considerately is one part of the Spirit’s fruit.
• Seeking a gentle spirit should be our desire.

• Key thought: “Gentleness is stooping down to help someone. God continually stoops down to help us, and he wants us to do the same — to be sensitive to the rights and feelings of others.” (p. 221)

CHAPTER 16 — KINDNESS AND GOODNESS (Gal. 6:10)

• God’s unfailing kindness
• Created to do good
  ✓ Doing good at work
  ✓ Doing good at home
  ✓ Doing good to all people
• Watching for opportunities

• Key thought: “Don’t look for the spectacular; few people ever have the opportunity to pull a victim from the wreckage of a flaming automobile. All of us have the opportunity to administer the kind or encouraging word, to do the little, perhaps unseen, deed that makes life more pleasant for someone else.” (p. 243)

CHAPTER 17— LOVE (Col. 3:14)

• God is love
• Love gives, whatever the cost
• Love sacrifices to forgive
• Love reaches out
• Growing in love

• Key thought: “Devotion to God is the ultimate motivation for Christian character, but it is also true that love for our brother is the more proximate motivation for the exercise of Christian graces among one another.” (p. 246)

CHAPTER 18 — REACHING THE GOAL (2 Tim. 4:7)

• Paul’s motivation (Phil. 3:12-14)
• Christ’s objective for us (Titus 2:14)
• The desire for God’s prize (Rom. 6:23)

• Key thought: “We have considered many of the character traits of the godly person. Here, though, are two over-arching traits that clearly distinguish the godly person. His attention is focused on Christ’s objective for him, and his eye is fixed on heaven. He is God-centered in his devotion, and he strives to be Godlike in his character.” (p. 269)