

“MOTIVES” – Pulling Back Your Curtain for an Honest Look at “Why?”

“Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” If you are old enough, you may recall the famous line from the *Wizard of Oz*. The man behind the curtain, pulling all the special effects levers and speaking into a distortion mic pretending to be the wizard, was exposed. His motive became clear. He was a little old man who was no one special, from nowhere special, who wanted to be just that...**special**. His motive was to be someone important.

MOTIVE: *reason or cause for doing something; can be associated with action or inaction.*

Most of us have or had motives in our lives that ran the spectrum from *why: I go to college or not, I major in X, the jobs I take, I get married, have children, have pets or not,* the list goes on.

Motives may be born of our hearts and/or minds—some visceral and others contemplative. They arise from feelings or thoughts for doing something that results in pleasure or avoids pain, for ourselves or others. Perhaps the most simple way to express our motives is this:

Motives express why we do what we do when we do it.

1) Examining Our Motives?

I run the risk of being accused as judgmental in the following discussion of our motives because I am going to suggest right and wrong motives of the average person like you or me. Most people would agree on what we could put in the **right** motives

bucket. They come from hearts and minds of people that have good intentions for helping us or others accomplish things or get to places in life that do what was stated above: *realize pleasure and avoid pain*. We could put most motives that come to mind in one of those two buckets.

I think we can learn more about ourselves and others when we study, what I am going to refer to as, **wrong** motives. I label them as such because of the *bad intentions* on the front end or pain and *hurtful results* on the back end. Three stand out from my years of ministry to men and women from all walks of life, regardless of zip code. I have been personally helped with my own motives by observing them and their effects coupled with my studies in the Word on each.

Wrong Motives

A) Motivated by Fear. Fear can be a good motivator because it can help protect us from all sorts of maladies. The first example was demonstrated by the first man, our father Adam.

(Adam) said, I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” Genesis 3: 10

Adam's fear had him cowering in the bushes, hiding from God. Bad decision.

Next up is Father Abraham. He was full of fear the Egyptians would kill him to get Sarah his wife, so he told her to say she was his sister. That is fear. He actually did that twice.

“I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. “Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.”
Genesis 12: 12-13

These are two great examples of how being motivated by fear can cripple, paralyze, or lead us to make bad decisions.

B) Opinion of self. Everyone needs a healthy self-esteem. But taken to extremes, we see the world through how decisions or paths taken affect only ourselves. We become self-absorbed—the center of our universes. Our motivation comes from what pleases us or avoids pain which is “normal”, but not at the exclusion of others and the world in which we live.

“...I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think...” from Romans 12: 3

James called out the Jewish Christians of his day with scathing words of rebuke.

“You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” James 4: 2-3

C) Opinions of others. Our motivation is to figure out what pleases others and causes them to like or say nice things about us. Not only our motivation, in and for life, but our self-esteem and sense of worth are tied to others—who they say or tell us we are. Many social media addicts fall into this bucket.

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.”
Luke 6: 26

(Jesus speaking) *“I do not receive glory from men,”* John 5: 41

“People-pleasing” is never a good motivator. You soon find you cannot please everyone and that leads to greater levels of frustration—for some depression. The converse is also

true. Expending your energy to get people to like or approve you can also lead or keep you in a bad place.

D) Past Failures. This is what I referred to in my last book¹ as a “prison without bars.” People motivated by negative events in their pasts or things people said to them in the past that hurt or caused them to fail have sentenced themselves to repeat it, remain stuck in it, or make bad decisions based on it. The nation of Israel was an example of an entire people group going down the wrong path. The prophet Isaiah called gave them good advice.

“Do not call to mind the former things or ponder things of the past.” Isaiah 43: 18

Sins like bitterness, envy, jealousy, even hate are too easily born in the hearts of those whose motivation brings to the present issues from the past.

2) **Motives of God (the Holy Trinity)**

- **Relationship.** God our Father desires a perfect Father-child relationship because people are the only aspect of His creation “created in His image”.

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule...God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them...” Genesis 1: 26-28a

- God the Son – Jesus, our Savior and Lord (Christ = Messiah or Anointed One) said He came to call sinners to repentance and save us from our sins. That is His perfect work of redemption.

*“...for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit...and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will **save His people from their sins.**”* Matthew 1: 20-21

“From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 4: 17

“You know (Jesus) appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.” 1 John 3: 5

- God the Holy Spirit –His work in our lives is *reforming* us to make us more like Jesus.

“the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” John 14: 26

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” John 16: 13

3) Re-Thinking & Re-Aligning My Motives as a Biblical Christian

What does this mean? First, it means I allow the Holy Spirit to pull back my curtain to examine my heart and mind and reveal the true motives that drive me—not those I say or pretend. Even though I am already in every sense just because of Who He is, I allow myself to be naked before God—completely exposed as I have never done before. I found a great place to begin is to cry out the words great and humbled King David did before the Lord.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.” Psalm 139: 23-24

Now let’s examine our *wrong* motives in light of what Scriptures teaches and allow the Holy Spirit to tell us exactly what we need to change. He alone has the power to effect such change in the heart of a truly contrite, repentant heart.

A) Motivated by FAITH not fear.

“And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? “Do you still have no faith?” They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who, then, is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him.”

Mark 4: 39-41

It took the disciples of Jesus a long time with Him to finally get it. So be patient with yourself as He is patient with you. But allow your motivation to become this. That He can calm any storm in your life and rebuke any enemies who stand between you and His will for your life!

B) Christ – my all in all. I must learn it is not about me My motivation becomes “my utmost for His highest”—to lay down my life, take up my cross daily, and follow Him.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2: 20

Further, I am motivated to love, look, and live more like Jesus daily until He returns or takes me Home. That motivates me to pray and study His Word. Only then can the Holy Spirit shine the light on Jesus’ attributes—holy, pure, righteous, loving unconditionally, forgiving unceasingly—that make me weep, nauseous, uncomfortable, and unworthy when He turns the spotlight on such a life as mine. The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy that,

“The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith.” 1 Timothy 1: 5

C) Motivated by What God Thinks – not the world. If you

are in Christ, He died for you to save you from your sins. You are a blood-bought son or daughter of the most high God. In one sense a brother or sister to Jesus Christ our Messiah since He is the Son of God. You have been adopted into His family and no one or demon can steal you away. "The world will hate you because it hates Me," Jesus told His disciples. To that we say, "So what!"

"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5: 11-12

The Apostle Paul gave us these powerful words you need to commit to memory.

"For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."
Galatians 1: 10

"Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." Galatians 4:7

D) Motivated by my freedom in Christ that includes breaking with my past. These verses tell us all we need to, not just know, but own!

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:3

"Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say goodbye to those at my home." But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9: 61-62

*"Therefore, there is now **no condemnation for those who***

are in Christ Jesus" Romans 8: 1

Finally, I noticed in my study, and how the Holy Spirit laid this out to me, the ***motives*** of the Holy Trinity were completely focused on us. Doesn't that teach us something? Shouldn't our motives in return be completely focused on God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and let our lives flow from there? I think you know that answer.

For Christ's sake,

Walter