

WHY AM I NOT PROPERLY MOTIVATED

By Lee Moses

A Christian understands what is right and what is wrong. He understands the magnitude of the commitment he made when he committed his life to Christ in obedience to the Gospel. He wants to serve God in all aspects of his life, and longs for the day when he can praise God before His throne in heaven. However, despite all his proper desires and intentions, a child of God may still fall far short of accomplishing what he is capable of accomplishing for his Father in heaven and for the kingdom of his Lord. Such a man or woman may wonder, "Why am I not properly motivated?" There are other facets to which one must properly attend before he can be properly motivated.

Proper Faith: Faith needs to be based upon the correct criteria. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17); therefore, faith received any other way than from hearing the word of God is not true Biblical faith. If one's sole reason for continuing outwardly to serve Christ is because those in his family were Christians, he does not have Biblical faith-he has what some aptly call a "second-hand religion." A man or woman's faith must be his own, for he will not be judged based upon what his parents have done, but upon what he himself has done (Ezekiel 18:20; 2 Corinthians 5:10). If one lacks his own Biblical faith, he does not have "the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1). The original word for "substance" holds the concept of "that which stands under," so faith is that which stands under the things for which a Christian hopes. Hope is defined as "desire plus expectation"-The Christian earnestly desires and expects to be rewarded at the end of his life for living faithfully in Christ. One without true Biblical faith does not have that hope; he either does not have the desire or does not have the expectation of a final reward. A child of God without hope is robbed of his motivation to endure the trials of this life in service to God. "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience ["steadfastness," ASV margin] wait for it" (Romans 8:25). One's faith must be internalized throughout in order that he may be properly motivated.

Proper Understanding: There are certain things one must understand before he can be saved (Matthew 13:15). There are also things a Christian must understand if he is to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). The word of God provides strength and comfort, but it must be properly understood to have its power. A failure to understand the nature of God will deprive a Christian of proper motivation. God is worthy of the Christian's best service, the understanding of which will contribute greatly to the motivation needed by a Christian. One must understand the dual nature of God-"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). An understanding of the severity of God is legitimate motivation to serve Him. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that men are to "fear Him" (Deuteronomy 6:13, 24; Psalm 33:8; Ecclesiastes 8:12; 12:13; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 14:7; et al.). God is infinitely powerful, and has our eternal fate in His hands. Having the fear of God, and the desire to avoid His wrath, can save us from doing that which separates us from God (Ephesians 5:5-7; Jude 23). However, God is not only severe, He also possesses a goodness which transcends any ever seen in man (Luke 18:19). He is not a tyrant or a bully, but One Who will use His great power only for good. If one is serving God only because he is fearful of Him, that person will not "serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2), but "grudgingly, or of necessity" (2 Corinthians 9:7). One must also understand what God will or will not do for him. Some believe that once they become Christians, all the problems in their lives will be

immediately solved. Upon their realization that they still have many problems, they oftentimes conclude that God is at fault. However, God never promised that a Christian would have no problems in life. The Christian will still struggle with sin and a multitude of trials (1 John 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:12). Nonetheless, God provides an abundance of help — through His word we are able to avoid sin and to have perfect direction for our lives (Psalm 119:11; 2 Peter 1:3).

One must also have a proper understanding of himself. Some Christians set for themselves unrealistic expectations, such as living sinlessly perfect lives. While every Christian purposes in his mind to give up sin, making every effort to avoid sin, he should not be overly hard upon himself for sin after he has confessed to God and received forgiveness. Such an occasion is a time of joy, not sorrow. It is also acceptable to have doubts at times. Job and the various writers of the Psalms spoke of doubts they had about God, and later had those doubts answered. If one has a proper understanding of God, such doubts will not last terribly long.

Proper Love: Proper love is essential to proper motivation. One must be possessed with a great love for the Lord, and "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). How could one not love such a great Being, Who provided for mankind the amazing means of salvation unto eternal life, although man rightfully deserved eternal damnation? (Romans 6:23). If one loves God, he will also love all Christians, with a great desire to serve them as well as God (1 John 4:20; 2 Corinthians 5:13-15; 1 Peter 1:22). If one loves God, he will love what God loves—the souls of men (1 Timothy 2:4). He will labor to see souls saved from their lost state of sin. One will not be properly motivated if one's labor is not truly a "labor of love" (1 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 6:10).

Proper Emphasis: The Christian should regularly examine himself, asking, "What is taking priority in my life?" God should always come first, with no close second. If one is truly to serve God, he cannot be serving anything or anyone else that would detract from that service (Luke 16:13). So many allow themselves to be robbed of spirituality by spending hours watching television and significantly less poring over the word of God. Many have made material things their god over the Lord. Many believe it is acceptable to spend the occasional Lord's Day morning or evening out on the lake instead of worshipping God. Even though one may involve himself in more noble activities, if God is not holding the preeminence in one's life, that individual will never be properly motivated.

Proper Actions: It is generally understood that attitude affects action (Proverbs 4:23). But action also affects attitude. David spoke of the wicked man who had a gross misconception of God because of that man's own wicked deeds: "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it" (Psalm 10:11). Jesus said, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light" (John 3:20). Those who act wickedly will avoid the truth and make themselves believe lies, hardening their consciences in the process. Doing that which God commands will also affect one's attitude: "Now the end of the commandment is charity [love, American Standard Version] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5). When one is doing God's will, he will be blessed with a healthy attitude, having many of the attributes previously mentioned as necessary to proper motivation. One should resolve to begin a pattern of work for the Lord, doing as much of which he is capable. It will amaze some how much more fulfilled they will feel if they are busily engaged in the Lord's work. It will take motivation in other areas to begin to work, but that will lead to an increase in motivation. Contrariwise, when one is not accomplishing what he is capable of doing, this can cause him to become greatly discouraged; thereby robbing him of even more motivation.

God has provided mankind with all the motivation needed to serve Him, and so much more. A Christian need only to lay hold of that motivation given in the precious assurances of His word. By applying himself to God's word, he will be able to obtain the proper faith, understanding, love, emphasis, and actions needed in order to be properly motivated.