

The Motives of Men

Series: Motives Matter

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The NT is filled with “because” statements and many of them reveal the motivation behind the action. Think of “motive” as motion. What puts us into motion? My roommate in college, Bob Chisholm, signed his letters “Because of a cross.” It was to remind him why he did what he did. It was the cross that motivated him. Think of motivation like wind. What is the wind in your sails?

Isaiah 55:8-9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.’”

Consider Colossians 2:20-23, 20 Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: 21 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? 22 These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

“The elemental forces of this world” are the earthly influences that inform our motives and can become the motivations for what we do in this life. We must be aware of these to recognize the difference between His thoughts and our thoughts.

Let’s look at some examples of worldly motives:

John 12:42-50, 42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 **for they loved human praise more than praise from God.** 44 Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. 45 The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. 47 “If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; **the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.** 49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I

have spoken. 50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

- Even someone who seems to be pursuing Jesus can have a blocking motive revealed.
- First, there was fear, fear of being different, odd, excluded, cancelled, or even weird. In September 2018, a Christian from Beijing Zion Church was dismissed by his company due to his religious beliefs. According to a staff member in the company, the police put pressure on the management, demanding that it fire the believer and remove his name from the company’s roster lest the company’s performance gets penalized for having the Christian’s information on its books.
- Second, Jesus made sure everyone knew exactly what their motive is: they love praise from men more than praise from God.
- Third, notice that Jesus says it is the word that will judge in the last day. Compare this to Heb.4:12 12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Matthew 14:12 “Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife.”

- Arrests should be based on law and order. The motive should be justice.
- In this case the motive is Herodias resisting the word of God.

John 8:31-38 31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” 33 They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” 34 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.”

- Notice how these people push back on what Jesus is teaching? They just can’t seem to say that Jesus is right and speaks the truth. They are arguing when they should be listening and accepting His words.
- Jesus rightly points out that the reason they will not accept Him, even wanting to kill him to silence Him, is because they do not have room for His word in their hearts. Why? Because their hearts are too full of other things.

Matthew 19:3-8, 3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” 4 “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ 5 and said, **‘For this reason** a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” 7 “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” 8 Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives **because your hearts were hard**. But it was not this way from the beginning.

- God has his reason (motive) for man leaving father and mother. His motive is to create an inseparable bond between a man and a woman. Slide fifteen This bond mirrors His bond with us. (Christ and the Church)
- Man’s motive for breaking this bond is hardness of heart. To put it bluntly some just don’t care what God’s purposes are in marriage. They simply want their own way.

Man’s motives are normally selfish. That is why it is so important to die to self. Jesus said, Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—**yes, even their own life**—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

You can wholesale change your motives with one decision. Decide to live for Jesus in all you do and let that decision motivate every aspect of your life.