

Checking Your Motives

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of motivation in the work of God and warns against the dangers of false motivation, encouraging listeners to be motivated by a desire to please God and to cultivate humility and a sense of duty.

Duration: 37:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 17:7, Philippians 2:3

Topics: "Motives"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of integrity and commitment to truth in the preaching of the word of God. He refers to a difficult passage in Luke 17, which talks about the relationship between a servant and his master. The speaker emphasizes the significance of motivation in carrying out God's commands and warns against setting overly ambitious goals that can lead to relying on one's own efforts instead of relying on God. He also cautions against having vested interests and biases that can hinder the work of God. The speaker shares personal experiences of listening to sermons and highlights the importance of being open to receiving messages from God even through seemingly boring or unconventional sources.

Transcript

Lord, we do cry to you that we may take the steps of faith necessary to stay on the cutting edge of what you're always doing. Just strengthen us as we look into your word together. We would plead with you, O God, to have mercy on us.

We so often wander away, we so often fail to get the whole picture and obey the whole commandment. Keep us from any form of deception, Lord. We don't want to be deceived about ourselves, about others, about the situation.

Help us now in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Can you turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of Luke? I'd like to share something that is just so much upon my heart.

I read a lot of Christian magazines. I may be addicted to them. I hope not.

But I do find it so important in my kind of ministry to try to know what's going on in the body of Christ and what are other people... Sometimes as I read some of the magazines, especially certain magazines, I find

it very, very... because I find an invasion of a lack of integrity among God's people. I realize afresh how difficult it is to find truth. I hope none of you are naive enough to believe that if you read it in print, it is the truth.

Now, a lot of times, of course, you could be reading something that's not true, but it's not that relevant. But it's still important. It may not be that relevant.

Yesterday, a few days ago, I got a copy of George Sweeney's... He was the president of Moody Bible Institute and now the chancellor's newest book on commitment to excellency. And there's a whole chapter in which I am the main illustration. There's nothing negative except that we've taken one further step from the truth in the history of OM.

It used to be that while we were students, we went to Mexico. We met at Maryville College and we launched out from there to Mexico. But now it's taken a further step.

This is a new book that he's just put out. And we left for Mexico after we graduated. And in some ways, it's trivia, though it's amazing what the next step will be.

It will be even more interesting. And I feel there's such a need for integrity, stronger commitment to truth, total war against exaggeration, and other things that are tied into that. I'd like to look at that this morning.

In Luke 17, verse 7, we have one of the most, I think, most difficult passages in the Gospel of Luke. Especially in the day and age in which we live. For which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, When he is come from the field, go and sit down, eat.

And will not rather say unto him, Make ready. That with which I may sup, gird thyself, and serve me. Till I have eaten, and drunk, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink.

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So ye also, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done that which was our duty to do.

Now the core of what I want to share is actually about motivation. Though I start off with some points about false motivation and the danger of false motivation, try to tie that into integrity and honesty, I want to try to end with some positive things that motivate us. And one of those positive things, though we don't always think of it, is duty.

And that if some of the things we're doing day by day, we're doing it as duty, we don't feel very, uh, get up and go about it. We may be struggling. We may not even understand why in the world we're doing it.

And I surely question at times why in the world we're doing it. As we do it unto the Lord, that is valid motivation. And that passage indicates, of course, also the importance of motivation.

Now, Patrick Johnson's article on the price, what it's going to cost to evangelize the world, and I've given that to most of you this morning. I'm so thrilled you see that reprinted in Herald of His Coming. It is just one of the better articles tied in with goals and aims.

I believe there are enormous pitfalls in setting mega-high goals. My experience in following people who set goals that sometimes are too high is that that may not be wrong, depends on how they say it, but that in attempting then to carry out those goals, it is very easy to get in the flesh. O.M. has done it.

I have done it. Because, in fact, God allows us as human beings to make a lot, and when we think of some of the goals that certain Christian leaders have made and some of the things they've said, it's overwhelming. I feel exaggeration, that there's almost a subtle wave of dishonesty that is flowing around now because we're so hyped about reaching the whole world by the year 2000.

That's why Patrick Johnson's article was such a balance. It's not a total answer to that, but it provides some of the balance because whenever we start setting out high goals, number one, we've got to examine our motives. Why are we setting these goals? What is this about? What are some of the false motives that we can get into when we're setting goals, when we're even serving the Lord, staying up late into the night working, we're going the extra hour here, we're using the weekend for hard work for the Lord, when perhaps, if we're honest, there's other things we would prefer to do.

God is concerned about motive. One of the very heartbeats of OM in its earliest history was an emphasis on motive. Now, we may have gotten extreme.

In fact, it was William McDonald who wrote to me in some of my strong message and thoughts about motivation and being properly motivated. He sent me quite a strong letter urging me not to get too introspective about motive, looking too much. Exactly why am I doing this? Why am I working so hard? Why am I praying on into the night? Why have I been fasting for the last two days? Whatever else it may be, and I thank him for that letter, but I believe that it is possible to have a strong emphasis on being motivated properly in the work of God.

Some of us remember the Tozer quotation of being motivated from within and from above. Powerful. And one of the reasons Tozer became probably, for at least a while in OM, the most popular writer is that he is ruthless against false motivation.

He's ruthless against the sins of the disposition. God is concerned about the inner man. It's not personally the outward actions.

We know they're linked, but God is concerned about the inner man. I just finished reading, except I haven't gotten to the last chapter. A fellow traveling with me desperately wanted this book, and I kept reading and reading.

I gave it to him just before he went to the airplane, and I missed the last chapter of that book, Inside Out. And I'm told that's the key chapter, so I'll probably never get there until I can get that last chapter. What's some of the false motivation we need to beware of? I've listed as first the praise of men.

And one of my old references that I used to preach from so much is John 5, 44. How can ye believe who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only? We're going to touch on pride as number two, but I think one of the most subtle battles we will all face, and we have to find a balance with our idealism, is that the ego and our humanity and pride will definitely try to get some credit for what is happening in the work of God. It is very complex in our society because we have so many mechanisms in our society that honor people, that we give thanks to people for what they do, and we should do that.

Flattery, according to one man of God, is more difficult to handle than criticism. Maybe not flattery as much as just positive, good praise. There is scope for that.

Flattery is a sin if you have, I believe, the right definition of it. But thanking people, honest compliments, is definitely biblical. Some Christians went very, very extreme on this thing of praise of men.

We were influenced a little by that. They would not even put their name on the book. When they wrote a book, they would not put their name on the book.

It didn't work. Their initials became bywords in those denominations. Everybody knew what CHM meant.

It's just amazing how any good thinking comes out. I've wrestled with it all my life. I'm still wrestling with it.

In the name of becoming more balanced, more down to earth, not shooting mice, majoring on majors, I don't want to throw away basics. I think it is a basic that we should not seek the praise of men. No matter how difficult we find that, surely that will be a struggle for us.

Some of you have arrived on this. You never, ever, in any subtle way, seek the praise of men. That is certainly unusual.

It's interesting that in this verse, that believing God, trusting God for great things, seems to be hindered if we are craving, seeking the honor one of another. I don't know if any of you have read the Bernard Fromky books. I'd be happy to send you some free.

I think we still have some around. He may be written off as extreme. Many people have never even heard of him.

But, he just felt so strongly that the average Christian was not God-centered in their thinking, in their planning, in their praying. So, he came out with these strong books about being God-conscious. Watchman Nee had some of that.

Many of these great writers touch on that. So, let us beware of working for the praise of men. Let us, at the same time, understand we live in a real world.

We're going to have to know how to handle compliments as well as criticism, both of which can trigger off a problem in that area. It's very difficult sometimes to speak here on this little team because we have a number of people who are in their first year or second year. Then, we have this amazing group of people who have been around for 20 years.

This is no game to preach to people who have been in OM for 20 years because the last thing I want to do is waste your time or repeat things that you already know. But, I just say it in all honesty. I am very, very... You hear me sometimes speak about money on a practical level.

That's hitting us every day. The spiritual life of OM and the OMer and the church and his aid in seeing the finance come in. I don't think you can separate the two.

I believe often the lack of finance and problems with finance, and I say this and taught this again yesterday, is linked with spiritual integrity. It's linked with the fruit of the spirit. As people get so heated up over so many issues, instead of the fruit of the spirit being manifest, the works of the flesh get manifest.

Sometimes, it's very sad to read some of the memos that go around this movement. As someone who, in the past, I don't think you've seen any more, and I certainly wouldn't repent of anything I've put in print that is not pleasing to God or not with love, I really believe that sometimes we drop these things into the post

without praying. Is this communicating the full truth? Have I left something positive out? We need to humble ourselves as a movement.

Do we think we're a bunch of missionary, great missionary hotshots that are going to take the world for Christ without the rest of the body of Christ? I mean, that's pure deception. Our sins are many. Our sins are many.

We need to humble ourselves, and we need to keep learning. And if we go to a meeting, and the man is speaking, and four things he says we feel are superficial, we already knew that, we need at that moment to be incredibly careful, because the fifth thing he says may be something in which we are in a disaster zone, and the Lord is just testing our patience. I probably listen to as many sermons as anybody around, because I'm a tapeaholic.

It's better than playing a tapeworm. And some of these tapes are so boring. Really, this is another boring one that someone sent me.

The other day. And yet, if I'm tuned into the Spirit, He often says something to me through a boring tape. Some of the most exciting tapes I have, I named the preacher, I think, the one immediately, some of the material is just off the wall.

It's just not true. The message is exciting. And my head just gets going.

But I feel a significant problem. The second area where we have to battle with motivation is pride. Let us never, ever think that we have arrived in any area.

The Word of God says, Take heed, lest ye fall. There's a couple of areas, forgive my deception, where I, in evaluating myself, felt at one time I was really doing fairly well. Just as the thought came to my mind, I thought, take heed, lest ye fall.

Now, praise God, I hope we do grow in strength and maturity in different areas. One older prayer partner of mine, years ago, this goes back 30 years, never forget me, he had just arrived in sinless perfection. He had not sinned for 30 days.

The guy was 75 years of age. So, obviously, he was not having any great struggles with lust anymore. Now, I'm not sure, that's always true at 75, because I interviewed a man at 75, and, excuse me, I'm taking a tape, but to get into when you're 60 or 70, I'm not convinced it's just shield of faith, strength against the fiery darts of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, Tozer brought this out in a tape I just listened to. It was just brilliant. And he pointed out, these guys aren't getting the victory in this area.

They aren't being tempted anymore in that area. It's not an issue for them. They don't have enough energy to get into that particular sin.

It was brilliant, the way he put it, and I can't repeat it. Pride is very, very subtle, and our strongest area, if we're not to discern it, I know that's great, lacking it today, to see how much ego-tryptism gets into Christian groups. And that's the reason, one of the reasons there's so much division.

There are actually Christian groups attacking each other. And if you get as many letters as I do from these different Christian groups, and the one-upmanship, then it becomes especially a problem when you get

more actively into what some people call development. Now, for those of you who are new, development is not linked with your morning exercise program, in which you're attempting to develop your body.

Many years ago, I haven't got great expectations that I'm going to develop in that area, but we're talking about, in most cases, when people talk about development, they're talking about fundraising. Please turn the cassette over now and continue listening at this point on track two. Do not fast-wind the recorder in either direction.

In most cases, you can get into different definitions from there. Biblical development, I think, could cover much more than fundraising. Because you're concerned about people's spiritual life, you're concerned about teaching about finance, you're concerned about the whole work of God.

So it's not necessarily wrong. But as we move forward in this area, if we want to see some of this finance, we have got to convince them that what we're doing is good, it's producing results, it's worthy of their investment. And we've been doing that ever since the beginning of the world.

We've just used a different, more low-profile approach, and not always, because old messages aren't forsaking all, used to bring inheritances right out of the pocket. Most of you heard the story of the prayer meeting in Moody, where when I arrived back to my bedroom, \$4,000 laying on the bed. And that's when a dollar was a dollar.

So we can't say, back in those days, it was all low-profile, quiet little clichés. But generally speaking, we were laid back, and definitely the present-day strategy had practiced that teaching in the Philippians of esteeming others better than ourselves. It's hard, we will fail, but we've got to aim at that.

Another man's victory is our victory. If you're for the mission, as their ship is now in Europe, they see great results, better results than us. If we hear reports about what God is doing through them, we should rejoice in that, rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

There is a sense where the battle against false motivation is so great that only the ruthless, only those so hungry for God that nothing else ultimately counts will ever find that kind of true motivation. And may we somehow incorporate it. It's interesting how many great men of God have decided that they would have an itinerant ministry, and have separated themselves from individual churches, have separated themselves from other organizations, not always completely.

And that's something I've been wrestling with. I tend to feel that sometimes when we separate ourselves from the body, and we're not mingled in with the day-by-day workings of the church, we're only moving around preaching, teaching, shouting to people, that we get into unreality. Sometimes, away from here, in a sense, my spiritual family, the people who really know me best, I can get into unreality quicker than when I'm back here.

There's something very real about coming back here. Part of it is quite unpleasant, but it is real. It is where light is, and I want it.

Though I may want to run away from it, I want it. I want to be in the body. I want to be closely involved with God's people.

Dear Brother Harry Foster, and I think it's appropriate to mention his name, just a little week or so ago, went to be with the Lord. He's a godly man. He was a true friend of O.M. He was an editor of Toward the

Mark magazine for many years.

It's interesting. He gave a message. He's only preached a few times to O.M. He gave a message 25 or more years ago, very far still, and it still sticks in my mind.

I'm sure we've all had that experience. His message was linked with the fact that when we are working close together, as we are on this team, and as many of you are with your churches, we will. We will rub each other.

We will hurt each other, and we will want to run away from it. Here's a godly man. He's been a missionary for many years.

We were all just little new people sitting there and experiencing the rubbing together, wanting to run away from it. Surely most of us have all... You don't need to be dishonest about that. You don't need to be dishonest if you've never wanted to run away from this team, if you're just so in love with Bromley and London and for the sake of balance.

But I believe it's normal. We hurt each other. We greet against each other.

He brought out in that message that that is one of God's greatest ways to produce great likeness. Watch when he brings that out in his amazing book, Release of the Spirit. I still think that is such a great book.

A man of some great respect working with us in Italy. I guess if you could mix it with other books. Keep the balance.

It's still a beautiful book. Thirdly, in handling our motivation, we need to watch out for vested interests. How do I explain that, especially if someone doesn't know English as their first language? If I have some money in this particular person, he doesn't have any fire insurance, I'm probably going to be more concerned about his house if it burns down, right? Than if Joe blow down the street, who I actually don't particularly like.

I wish he would move to like everybody, right? If his house burns down. Now that may be a poor illustration. Vested interests brings chaos into the work of God.

Another example. In India, somebody gets into a house because they're in that ministry. Then disunity comes.

They don't want to be in that ministry anymore, but they want to stay in that house. So they play along and stay in the ministry. Their heart's not in the ministry.

Their mind's not in the ministry. They're not even attacking the ministry, but they're still in the organization because the organization is providing them. A pastor stays with a particular church because of a fear that he will not get another church and he will therefore be without bread on the table.

And one of the things where we can be very naive in OM is how much motivation comes in when it comes to the bread on the table factor. And there are people who leave OM with our lovely naiveness and they discover only one problem after they leave OM. One main problem.

Just to get money to live on. And it's an area where we know in OM we can be spoiled because despite some suffering, generally we've got the money. And it's easy to presume, it is easy to presume that that

will always be there.

And we've all gone through the various arguments on both sides of that controversy and I don't think it's worth getting into. We haven't got time this morning, but beware of allowing your motivation to be too hinged to vested interests. Number four, of course, motivation that comes just from the love of money, motivation that comes from just selfishness.

Then I talked, or lots of talk, and our time is gone, motivation that comes from fear, fear to move out, fear to take risks. We can also get into false motivation overreacting to that or overreacting to any of these things. And then there's the motivation that comes from resentment, from revenge.

Revenge, that's just part and parcel of our society. You follow it in the mafia in Italy. You follow what's going on in Italy with the mafia.

It just overwhelms me. And now there's this one man down there, I'm sure there are others, who's just taken the whole mafia on. The chances of him being dead are probably nine out of ten within the next few months.

Revenge is such a major factor in our society that we can't stand against any, any subtle form of revenge. It can come in the expression in our minds that we may not verbalize, oh, I told him so. And the mentality, well, let him stew in his own, we warn someone not to do it, they do it, they get in that problem, so we pull back.

We've done our part, we've already warned him. Let him, let him, let him stew a bit. Serves him right.

You ever say that? Serves him right. Bitterness, revenge, resentment, a subtle form of false motivation is sometimes the effort to prove ourselves. In the world today, to say that we're never going to be under the pressure of proving ourselves is ridiculous.

If you get a new job after you leave here, you're going to have to prove yourself, or you might get fired. So, I don't think we should get extreme on that, but I think we have to search our hearts and make sure that's not the bottom line of our motivation, and when it becomes too dominant, we've got to repent of it. If we desire to please another person so that we can carry on a particular ministry, or we can fulfill one of our goals, and there's nothing wrong with setting goals, and goal setting will bring in easily the sense that we need to prove ourselves.

As we search our hearts, we need to be aware, as William McDonald said, of just looking too long, too hard. And, of course, I've listed last year to gain salvation. That may not be a problem for most people.

There's still a lot of salvation by work. It's not a minor point. Even some teaching on the Lordship of Christ, and I hope I haven't ever done that, but a man can give the wrong impression that you're saved by being a disciple and trying to bear fruit to prove that you're saved.

The whole thing can get very, very interesting. We are saved by grace and faith. Repentance, I believe, must be there, but the person repentant may not be pronouncing the right cliché.

He may not be overly aware that some super-huge repentance is going on, and certainly after that, he will be a baby Christian, and all of his life, he will have to grow and become stronger. The fact that he has a great failure certainly doesn't immediately indicate that he's not saved. As we seek for right motivation, we

know that the love of Christ constrains us.

That surely is one of the greatest motivations. Just love for God. I love you, God.

I'm going to do this because I love you. That doesn't mean we turn off our brain. We have to analyze.

We have to make decisions. There is scope in the kingdom for protest. There's scope in the kingdom for constructive criticism.

There's scope for negotiation. We're not clones. We're not computers.

We're not to be manipulated, but there also must be that ability to say, Lord, this is a job I don't particularly want to do, but as unto you, I do it. Motivation out of gratitude. Often, one of the great motivators in my life is just gratitude to God for what he's done.

Sometimes it's gratitude to other people. Love for other people. Desire to encourage them.

Desire to help them. This is good. Our motivation is not just one thing.

There's a big argument going on in some places. Is it the lostness of men? I've written that here as well. The thought of people going to hell.

This is driving us to rescue men in our evangelistic work. It disturbs some people. Or is it the love of Christ? I've had specific letters about this.

Surely it's false. Surely if we believe that people are lost and going to hell without Christ, we are going to be motivated by that. If we are not motivated by that, we must examine our hearts no matter how dull we may be.

We can repent of it. The Lord understands how hard it is to maintain motivation for the lost, to maintain motivation and love for the same people you look at on the high street, 25 or 30 years in a row. He knows everything about us.

We don't have to fake it. We don't have to fake it. I was deeply touched through Gary's message.

As I came in on Tuesday night, even though I only heard a few minutes of it, the immediate reaction was, how do I maintain expectation when I've been praying for the same thing 34 years, Lord? And I had my defenses up, ready to give the Lord a real argument. It's in last seconds because I know that I must maintain that spirit of expectation no matter how much failure I experience, brokenness over the Muslim world, the lack of to get to me so that I lose my motivation, I lose my spirit of expectation, I lose my zeal, my faith and all that keeps me going day by day. So motivation, proper motivation can come in many, many different ways.

I've often said to thousands of people, I'm a natural fact slider. If God doesn't meet me every day through a book, a tape, a friend, an exhortation, a walk in the woods, a word, prayer, something from the news, I can give you 30 things that motivate me in the course of the day. In my whole Christian life, in which I haven't had some degree of motivation to serve Him, to go forward no matter how hard it's been.

And I know some of you listening to this tape, you're really up against it. You may not be physically well, there may be problems, you've got problems back home, your support's not coming in, and you're really in

the midst of the battle. And I would just plead with you, don't give up.

Keep dealing with sin. Keep repenting of wrong attitudes. Keep developing and looking for new ways to stay motivated.

Be sure you're finding a balance in terms of your human factor and your divine factor. And surely everyone's heard me speak on that subject over these past years. Godly goals, biblical goals, great goals are important, and it is possible to have integrity, reality, and honesty, and still have great goals, but to me, the key is we're going to have to repent many times, even in our prayer lives, and not really have real spiritual courage.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you, Lord, that no matter what happens with you, that we have to keep repenting. We have to keep dealing with subtle forms of motivation.

We have to keep dealing with wrong attitudes toward you, toward our loved ones, toward ourselves, toward our own family. That, Lord Jesus, as our movement becomes bigger, and we see more finances, bigger Indian programs, that we may be bigger people. For we don't want to be in a big work as a bunch of spirits.

Renew us to move forward with a motivation that comes from above and from within, and that has been cleansed by your precious blood, that has been exposed to the heavy assortmentship of your word.

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