

Holiness: Motivations to Obey

Hello Church, open to (Eph 4)

- Prayer
- Eph 4:17-5:2

This is our 4th week (studying Eph 4) talking about **holiness**... trying to answer the question, *How do we live holy?* (Last week) if you remember, we saw, to live holy we must continue to “put off the old self & put on the new self.” –**Keep repenting & believing, keep turning away from sin & turning back to Jesus.** (If we keep doing that, we will grow in holiness). ---Which is very helpful teaching, BUT ... then we ask the question, “**What (specifically) do we put off & put on?**” So (v.25-end) it gets way more practical, showing (specifically) what to put off & put on...

- put off **lying** ... put on truth speaking
- put off **laziness/ stealing** ... put on hard work & generosity
- put off **bitterness/ anger** ... put on forgiveness
- put off **destructive words** ... put on gracious words.

So I'm reading all of this, asking “*How does it all fit together? what should we see here?*” B/c obviously...

- We need to (**stop** lying, stop stealing, stop being lazy, stop being bitter & unforgiving) we know that.
- We need to (**start** speaking truthful gracious words, start forgiving & being generous & loving) we know that.

But pretty much every religion would agree those behaviors are bad & the others are good, so...

Q) Is the Bible just preaching morality (like every other religion?) –No, that's not what's happening.

Now... it is true that...

- **God** has ALL authority could just say, “*I'm God, I made you out of dust, do what I say or to dust you shall return”* –he could say that.
- As a **parent** I have authority to just say to my kids, “*Obey my commands b/c I'm your dad, no questions, just do it*” I have the authority to do that, but I want my kids hearts, I want them to want to obey me, I want them to see my commands are for their own good.

God isn't like the Father who tells his child “*Don't lie*” and the child asks, “*Why?*” And the dad says, “*Because I'm Your Dad and I said so*” –He could say that, but he chooses to speak differently...

(In this passage) God gives us _____ commands. But these aren't just blunt raw commands. God doesn't just tell us to stop doing bad things & start doing good things, he gets up under those behaviors & gives us **motivations**

- **WHY** we should stop doing bad things
- **WHY** we should start doing good things

So I'm reading this passage and start seeing motivation after motivation, and the next thing I know I see 12 motivations for obedience. 12 reasons why we should put off & put on. And then it became very obvious...

motivations really matter when it comes to practical holiness. ---So let's talk about **motivations**.

Ex: Actually, the 1st sermon I ever preach was about **motivations**. It was in this little country church of about 80 senior citizens out in East Milton), it was on “The **Motive** you give a Sinner to Repent” –that was probably the most unhelpful sermon I ever preached, so I will try to do a little better today with this sermon on motivation.

Now, **Q) What do we mean by Motivations?**

- Motivations are what compels us to action, those things that drives us to do what we do.
- Motivation is what makes people do what they do
- Motivation is why some people succeed while others fail

Q) Why are some Christians able to live more holy than other Christians?----A) motivation.

- Q) What's the difference between the guy that wakes up at 4 in the morning to go on his jog while it's still dark outside? And the guy that lays in bed till 11 in the morning hitting snooze 10x? ---**Motivation**.

- Q) What's the difference between the employee who gets to work and does the bare minimum to keep his job and not get in trouble, and the employee who goes over and above to be the best at what they do and get that promotion? –**Motivation**
- Q) What's the difference between the really disciplined Christian who spends quality time in prayer & the Word everyday, and the Christian who maybe (1x or 2x) a week touches their Bible? –**Motivation**

If you're motivated enough, you can do almost anything. –(You can go from laziness to working hard, from lying to speaking the truth, being bitterness/anger to forgiveness & giving grace.) ---But you need are the right motivations

I'm sure (if we were honest) we'd all admit the reason we aren't more holy is ...b/c we don't want to be. (I said a few weeks ago & I'll say again) ----**You are as holy as you want to be** ---(2x)

Q) What's slowing down your growth in holiness? ----(For most of us) probably just lack of motivation or you don't have the right motivations.

And listen... what I'm talking about **isn't** just some Christian teaching, this **is** true in all of life.

Ex: (In college) I'm sure some of you studied this, or those who lead businesses or organizations all have to deal with this. The experts say, "*there are 2 types of motivations: Intrinsic & Extrinsic motivation.*"

- Some people are motivated by more **internal** (or intrinsic) things, honor, respect, praise and approval and recognition, to make it to a certain level or influence or authority.
- Others are more motivated by (**external** or extrinsic) things, like promotions, pay raises, bonuses and benefits. Basically, money.
- Some employees will perform better if you give them **more money**.
- Some employees will perform better if you give them (praise/recognition/increased influence & authority)

And many people (if they're honest) "*I'd like **both***"

Many experts say "*you can never just use one type of motivation to motivate all employees, everyone is different and so we need to learn to give different motivations b/c people are different.*" God does the same with us

- He doesn't just give **1 motivation** to obey him.
- He gives **100's**

And listen... motivations aren't just something **we** operate on (as humans) **God** is motivated by certain things (In Ephesians)... God tells us what His ultimate motivations is for **saving us**...

- Eph 1:5 "*he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, (here's the motivation) "to the praise of his glorious grace."* What motivated God to save us was to display the glory of his grace.
- Eph 1:11 "*In him we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will **to the praise of his glory**.*" He saved us that we might praise his glory! So that we'd glorify him. Then it says in (v.14) he gave us the Holy Spirit **so that** we would praise his glory!
- Eph 2:8-9 "*by grace you have been saved through faith, this is not of your own doing it as a gift of God not a result of works, **so that no one may boast**.*" Why does he not want us to boast? -B/c he wants ALL glory!!!
 - God's motivation in saving us, **isn't** to show off how amazing we are as objects he would choose
 - God's ultimate motivation for saving us **is** to show off the glory of his grace toward under serving sinners who will voluntarily (from the heart) praise him forever.

God works off motives... and he wants **us** to learn to work off motivates also...

(**Matt 6:1**), Jesus says, "*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.*"

- He's NOT saying "*Be righteous*"
- He's saying "*Be righteous for the right reasons.*"
- NO other religion says anything like this, "*they just say, do the right thing*" ...but
- The Bible says, "*Do the right thing for the right reasons*"

Q) Why can't God just be happy that somebody is rep'n him, and doing good stuff?

Q) Why does it matter if they're doing it for right reasons? ---B/c righteousness (to God) is only righteous if the reason you're doing it is right. (Ex: So you have the **Mormons** who raise obedient kids, are good upstanding citizens, try to obey commands in the Bible) but *why? What's their motive?* –They're trying to earn their salvation. ---which means... “*Even their good works are filthy rags*” –b/c their motive is corrupt.

(2 Cor 9:7) “*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*” –(God says) “*I don't just want your money, I want your heart that loves giving your money*”

(Matt 10:39) Jesus says, “*lose your life*” –that's a heavy command, But what is the motive he gives? “*lose your life, and you will find it*” -----God *isn't* a killjoy...

- He doesn't just say “*lose your life*” so you'll be miserable.
- He says “*lose your life so that ...you can find life* (true abundant life)!”

Q) Why stop living for “ME”?!

Q) Why not make my life about me?

Q) Why should I lose myself?

Q) What's the motivation for such crazy behavior? --it's the only way to find life!

See... every Bible teacher gives people motives to obey... the question is... Are they the right motives?

- There is so much Bible teaching out there, motivating people with the **wrong** motives. “*Give your money so that God will bless you and give you more money, Do good because you're a good person, and good people do good things, do good and you feel good about yourself and people will think highly of you.*”
- Many legalistic churches are motivating people with **fear & guilt**, “*you better be at church every week or God will be mad at you, you might not go to heaven. Look what Jesus did for you, he died for you, you better pay him back for what he did for you, don't let Jesus down after all he did for you.*”

That's motivating with unbiblical fear & guilt.

(In this passage) we're given **5 motivations for obedience** ---5 *right* motivations for obedience.

1. God Motivates obedience by reminding us of our new identity

- (Eph 4:25) he makes this assumption about us, he says, “*Therefore, having put away falsehood*” –that's an assumption. He's assuming, *if you're a Christian, you've put off falsehood* “*having put away falsehood*” is (past tense action with a present tense continuous action).
 - If you're a person who has repented of sin, you're a person who continues to repent of sin.
 - If you've repented for sin, you will continue to repent. –(That's Paul's assumption about Christians)
 - He's NOT saying, “*You really should repent of your sin guys*”
 - He's assuming this has happened & will continue to happen.

So ...it's not only possible that a Christian will live holy, it's guaranteed. How? because (v.24) says we've been supernaturally “*recreated in righteousness & holiness.*” (Eph 2:10) “*We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works*” –that's who we are. ---So we may NOT always **feel** holy, but we **are** holy.

Repentance isn't **easy** for us, but it's **natural**. What's unnatural to a Christian is continuing to live a lifestyle of unrepentant sin, that's unnatural for a Christian, we can do it for a very short time.

- **Ex:** I can **eat rotten food** out of our refrigerator and fill my stomach with it for, it will go in my mouth and into my stomach like normal good food, but it's not long before I'm over the toilet vomiting it up. That's a graphic example, but it's accurate. That's how sin is for a Christian, we can eat it, but we can't stomach it for long, it doesn't sit well, it's only a short matter of time and we're throwing it back up.
- **Ex: The prodigal son** once he remembered the grace of His Father & came to his senses, he realized he was eating w/ pigs, and he spit that food out and ran home. Christians can't continue eating the sin of the world w/out realizing ‘*I'm eating garbage*’ –and we spit it out & run back to the Father and dine with him, and taste again that the Lord is good.

So ...when he gives us ...**this list of “do's & “don'ts”** ---he's giving us things that really motivate us.

Now, (for a non-Christian) these things he's about to say, really won't be motivations, they're just not desires, they're not appealing, not something most people want to do, not motivating, but (for a Christian) these motivations are actually motivating. ---Now, let's keep going...

- (v.25) "Let each of you speak the truth, **for** (or **because**, here's the motive) "*we are members of one another*"
 - He doesn't say, "*Speak the truth, b/c God wants you to do that (individually)*", NO, it's bigger than that.
 - He says, "*Speak the truth, b/c we are members of one another*"—meaning, (your words affect the whole body, your words represent the whole church.)

I said this a few weeks ago...

- **My** obedience (or disobedience) ...affects **you**
- **Our** obedience (or disobedience) ...affects **me**

(1 Cor) says, "*We are members of one another, if one member suffers all suffer together, if one is honored, all rejoice together*"

Ex: We saw that (this week) w/ the **Whitefords** regarding the Adoption process, one family rejoiced, and the whole church rejoiced together.

Us being connected (as one body)—must—affect—our—decisions. This is hard to understand for individualistic American's, but we need to create a category (in our minds) for **corporate holiness**.

- "*I'm making my decision whether I go to church today, b/c I'm part of the body.*"—rather than...
- "*I'm NOT going to church b/c I had a hard weekend, or I don't feel like it*"

To think corporately is to... "*put others needs & interests above your own*"

- NOT What do I want to do?
- What has God called us to do?

Do you know how many times I wouldn't have gone to **City Group** if I was only thinking about ME? ...but we all have to learn to think corporately, "*I'll serve this way b/c its best for the body, I'll play in band, run sound, work nursery, because I'm a member of this body*"

2. God Motivates obedience with the ability to help the needy

(v.28) "*Stop stealing & start working hard with your own hands, so that* (here's the motive) **so that**... *you will have something to share with those in need.*" -----Q) What's the motivation?

- He doesn't say, "*Stop stealing or you're going to get arrested, your breaking 8th commandment*"
- He says, "*Don't steal, but learn to work hard*" (Why?) "*so that you will have something to share with those in need.*"

Q) Why is that the motivation? ... (b/c) that's something Christians want to do! Remember in (Gal 2) Paul's getting ready to go do some mission work w/ Barnabas and the church says, "*Please don't neglect to share with the poor*" Paul says, "*that's the very thing I'm eager to do!*" That's the desire of ALL Christians,

- sometimes we fall into the sin of stinginess
- sometimes we turn back to selfishness & greed

BUT... the desire to share is in all Christians. B/c God taught us that in the gospel, we've personally experienced God sharing with us our BIGGEST need. He gave us his Son. So it's NOT hard for us to want to give to help others in need.

- God doesn't motivate them saying, "*Stop stealing & start working hard, so you can build bigger barns and increase all your own personal earthly comforts*"
- God doesn't motivate them saying, "*Quit stealing & start working so you can save up & get that nice fat retirement.* ---NO!!!
- God motivates Christians by saying, "*Stop stealing & start working hard so that you have something to share with those in need.*"

That's a strong motivation for Christians --- (Don't just think of giving to homeless people, everybody's minds always go to stuff like that). The immediate context here is **the church**. We see in (Acts 2 & 4) says, "*people were selling their possessions and giving to each other in the church and there were no needy persons among them.*" --- (they were too poor to just give their money, most of them didn't have any money, so they started selling things

so they could help each other.) ---**Ex:** We've been so blessed by people in this church helping us over & over throughout the years, we've heard many testimonies, "*we had this medical bill or we lost our job, our car broke down and we couldn't afford to fix it, I wanted to go on this mission trip, but needed some help praying for it*" and someone in the church randomly meets the need.

Q) Why should Christians be good at this? --B/c we know we're just stewards of God's money. Our money isn't really our money, it's God's. (He owns all things, and he has lent some of his money to us for his purposes --'to share with those in need')

- This is **NOT** talking about **our normal giving to the church** (tithes & offerings) there are lots of other verses that talk about giving to the church *to advance the mission of the gospel, paying those leaders who labor in preaching and teaching*, (there's scripture for all that, that's Biblical, you're faithful in that).
- This verse is different, it's saying, we need to have **extra money** (outside of *what we need for ourselves* or *give to the church*) money to help those we come across who are in need.

Ex: Pri & I, always try to have some money set aside as we feel led to give to those in the church (or other believers we know) that we feel led to give to give to, which means... we need to be wise w/ our money & not get in debt or spend foolishly, b/c then we have nothing to give to others.

- There's always people (in this church) *who need a car fixed*, or *medical bill paid*, those *going out of the mission field*, trying to *adopt a child*. (I'm NOT talking about those who won't work, and want handouts) but **real needs**. --- (Our first priority is *them*, and then *others outside the church*) that need our help.

And the more we do this... the more we find, '*it really is better to give than receive*'

3. God Motivates obedience with ability to give grace

(Next week) I want to get into my last 3pts so I won't say much about them today. ---But look at (v.29) "*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that...it may give grace to those who hear.*"

Q) Why should we NOT speak corrupt? Or "bad"?

Q) Why not tear down with our words?

B/c ...our words are **gifts** to use to *build up & give grace*. ---**Ex:** There's a couple (in this church) experiencing major changes in their marriage (I think, largely) due to the fact that... *the wife decided to use her words to build up her husband & give him a lot of grace*. ---Giving grace is very very very powerful. It will change people.

- (Prov) says, *with our words we can build up our home*,
- (Prov) says, *with our words we can tear it down* (w/ complaining, nagging, criticizing.)

But we'll talk about that more (next week)... I just want to point out... God appeals to **our desire to give grace** and says, "*you can use your words to give grace*"

Now, let me preface these last 2 by saying... There are **primary motivations & secondary motivations**

I'll explain **secondary motives** like this...

- Some of you grew up being very compliant, very ready to obey. Your heart was "*I want to do what's right.*" you probably got spanked maybe 4x (in your life).
- Some of you got spanked 4x in most afternoons. ---That was me.

My default position was always... weigh out the consequences. I'd be like, "*Man, if I do this, I'm going to get spanked or grounded, ok, let's go, I won't get caught.*" And I'd love to say that stubbornness was gone, but it's still in me sometimes used for good, others times not. ---So let's just say, (over the years) I've received a good amount of **loving discipline from the Lord**. --- (Heb) "*the Lord disciplines those he loves so we can share in his holiness.*" So (a secondary motive) is saying... "*I'm not going to commit this sin because I don't want to experience the Lord's discipline*" --(that's a secondary motive) I should avoid sin b/c I don't want to receive the discipline of the Lord; that's fine (at times) to let that be your motivation for obedience, but I don't want to live off that motive, I want to live off primary motives. ---I'll give 2 quick examples of **primary motives** (from my life this week with my family).

- Wednesday night, Judah had been sick Priscila stayed home while I went to CG, and she called me a few times saying “*I’m concerned about Judah, something is wrong*” (and he’s our 3rd so I’m like “*He’s fine, I’m sure it’s nothing*” on your 3rd child, you stop getting freaked out about every little thing) so when I get home from City Group she was sleeping with Judah, so I was doing some other things, and about two hours later I walk in the bedroom and Judah’s laying on Priscila and his little eyes are open and he’s just looking at the wall struggling to breathe, immediately I turn on the light and I’m like “*some things not right with you to wake up Priscila.*” And I’m like “*I’m taking him to the emergency room right now!*” (which is out of character for me) but I could tell something was wrong. ---Now, here’s what was not in my mind (at that moment)
 - I wasn’t thinking... “*this is just what a good dad to do*”
 - I wasn’t thinking... “*if I go to the emergency room at 11 o’clock at night I won’t sleep tonight*”
 - I wasn’t thinking... “*what if it’s nothing and we have to spend money on bills*”

Now, sometimes those things are legitimate motives, but they aren’t primary, and in that moment they didn’t even come to mind. I was being motivated by a primary motive –**love for my son**. (In that moment) I’m driving to the hospital, and I’m just praying & thinking about my son (that’s it) –we want to love off primary motives.

- This coming week is **Mine & Pri, 9yr anniversary**, so we did a date on Friday, and then yesterday we had this Canoe trip planned, and I hadn’t prepared well for this sermon (b/c of our crazy week in the ER), so I was trying to decide, *Do I work?* or *Do I canoe with my wife?* –Yesterday morning, I’m trying to make that decision, so I *picked Canoeing with my wife.* Q) What was **my motive** for picking that?
 - It wasn’t... “*I need to be a good husband and this is what good husbands do*”
 - It wasn’t... “*I don’t want Priscila to be mad at me*” (my wife is gracious & understands)

My motive for picking a date with my wife was... **I love my wife**, and I just wanted to spend time with her.

- **Love** is a primary motive.
- **God’s glory** is a primary motive... The Bible says, “*Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God*” –(that should be our ultimate motive for ALL actions). –at least that’s the goal.

---I’ll give you (very quickly) 2 more primary motives (from this text) then we’re done.

4. God Motivates obedience with increased Enjoyment of Christ’s presence & power

I don’t have time to build this one out, (but I think we’d all agree) when we sin & **grieve the Spirit** we lose something of the presence & power of God in our life. ---All Christians should know what I mean by that. What a loss, what a sacrifice, choosing sin at the cost of losing something of the nearness & closeness of Christ presence & power in our life. ---(v.30) “*we are sealed with the Spirit for the day of redemption*” –so we know

- We CAN’T... *lose our salvation* or *loose the Spirit*, but...
- We CAN... *grieve* him, we CAN *distance ourselves* from the enjoyment of His presence.

J.I Packer said, “*you can walk out of step with the Spirit*”. The Holy Spirit is a Person; you can grieve him. You can distance yourself from the nearness of presence. -----I can tell you this...

- There’s a major difference in how I experience Jesus’ presence (*when I’m NOT taking holiness serious*). He still loves me, but there’s a distance that’s felt.
- There’s a closeness & joy & nearness that’s better than life itself, (*when holiness is taken seriously*) and I’m walking in step with the Spirit and avoiding all sin, NOT grieving the Spirit. ---it’s not the same.

And the only point I’m trying to make is... **that’s a primary motive for obedience.**

(To be really honest) **this has become my biggest motivation for –holiness.** I still fall for the lie that something else is better than Jesus, but more & more I’m beginning to believe... *the nearness of Jesus* is better than *whatever sin promises.* ---When you begin to realize *sin is the lesser pleasure & Christ is the greater enduring pleasure.*... you’ve found a very very powerful motive for obedience.

Choosing Jesus isn’t sacrificing pleasures & joy, it’s realizing (like David) “*In his presence there is fullness of joy & at his right hand are pleasures forever more.*” I want to take holiness serious.... so–(I can experience that)

5. God Motivates with the gospel

Probably the greatest motive (other than God himself) is **–the gospel**. -----Let me be clear...

- NEVER do we obey... **so that** God will save us. That's NEVER a motivation the Bible gives.

God saves us. Jesus earns our salvation (as we trust His death) we receive His perfect obedience to God as if we perfectly obeyed God ourselves. ----So... **our motive** just becomes love & gratitude.

- We aren't trying to earn back his love
- We are imitating his love
- We are reflecting his love ...b/c we're thankful.

Q) What's the motive to forgive those who sin against us?

(v.32) **Christ has forgiven us**. We have NO right to withhold forgiveness if we've been forgiven of ALL our sin. (We keep sinning against God everyday & he keeps cleansing us from all of it & removing it from us) so we keep giving that same kind of forgiveness to others who sin against us.

Q) What's the motive to love others? –(Eph 5:1-2) **Christ loved us and gave himself for us**.

Paul says this in (2 Cor 5:14) "*the love of Christ controls us*" –OR... "*the love of Christ motivates us*"

Listen guys... (at the end of the day) **the gospel** is always the *ultimate* motivation for our obedience.

- Jesus has treated me this way ...**therefore**, I will treat others this way
- Jesus has forgiven me like this ...**so**, I will forgive others
- Jesus has loved me this way ...**so**, I will love others like that

So, Yes...

- We should obey b/c **God has told us to obey**, but (even more)
- We should obey b/c **God's given us many reasons** why obeying Him is a very good thing for us.

So...

- Why obey? –b/c we've been 'recreated in righteousness & holiness', (that's our desire) We've been remade to "*put off sin & put on holiness*"
- Why give generously?–b/c we really desire to... help those who are in need
- Why carefully use our words? –b/c we want to... build up & give grace
- Why NOT sin? –b/c we fear the discipline of the Lord
- Why NOT sin? –b/c we treasure the presence & power of Jesus (in our lives)
- Why forgive & love others? –b/c... we've been forgiven & loved by Christ

These are right motivations for obedience. And they should be (for us) ...**very compelling motivations to obey**.

Let's pray