

Establishing The Proper Motives In Serving God

God cares about the heart of the person who attempts to serve Him; not just the actions that are accomplished (Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18). Certainly, there are a wide variety of improper motives that an individual may have as to why he/she tries to serve God. These include pleasing other people, seeking financial gain, being praised by people, fame, soothing the conscience, trying to compensate for past mistakes, etc. Therefore, let's consider some proper motivations in serving God that are approved by the Scriptures.

1) Fear. Sin (which is the violation of God's law) separates us from the holy God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23). God has promised that there will be a day when you will stand before Jesus Christ in judgment to give an account for everything you have done on this earth (2 Corinthians 5:10). If you have not lived to please and serve God, this will be a terrible day – as you will be sentenced to spend an eternity in Hell (Matthew 25:41; Galatians 6:7-8). This place is described in Revelation 21:8, Mark 9:47-48, Matthew 25:30, etc. So, fear of God's wrath should motivate service to God. Picture standing before Jesus in Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15). If you have not lived to please and serve God so that your name is found in the Lamb's Book of Life, this will be a terrifying day (Hebrews 10:30-31)! Because He has told you about these things, you must determine to work out your salvation with fear and trembling by constantly remembering the eternal implications of your actions on this earth (Philippians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11; Mark 8:34-38; 9:43-48).

2) Love. God does not want to see any person experience such eternal suffering (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). God has proven this by sending Jesus to be the sacrifice for sin (John 3:16; Romans

5:6-11)! Plus, Jesus willingly chose to leave Heaven, come to earth, and suffer to fulfill the Father's eternal plan of redemption (2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-8). The only thing that would cause God and Jesus to do this is love (John 15:13; 1 John 4:9-10). So, love for God should motivate service to God. While godly fear should motivate us to serve God whenever we are living in sin (as we fear the judgment to come), fear should also be overcome by love as we take advantage of the opportunity to be saved (1 John 4:16-19)! Though fear of disobeying God should serve as a deterrent to disobedience, our motivation in service needs to go deeper than being motivated by fear alone. For, we should grow into service that is motivated by deep appreciation and love for all the ways God has shown His love for us (especially in His sacrifice of Jesus, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 2:20). Appreciating His love should result in us loving and serving Him (Matthew 22:36-40)!

3) Glory. The opportunity to serve God is the opportunity to use your life to glorify Him. In fact, as you consider the great love God has demonstrated for you, you should desire to live your life to the glory of the God who has saved you (Luke 5:24-26; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31). Throughout your life, then, you must look for ways to bring glory to God and live so that others will see your good works and desire to bring glory to God as well (Matthew 5:14-16)! Then, those who live to glorify God in their lives will also receive glory from God on the day Jesus Christ returns from Heaven. Even though your service to Him may result in suffering now, you should anchor your hope firmly in the glory that is to be revealed in you at this time (Romans 8:16-18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 1 Peter 1:3-5)! So, a desire to glorify God and be glorified by Him should motivate service to God. Only when your motivation is so purely focused on God's glory will He then give

glory to you when He comes again. In fact, when Jesus comes, He will both receive and give glory (2 Thessalonians 1:5-12; Romans 2:6-10). As we serve God throughout our lives, then, we eagerly persevere as we wait for this future glory God has promised to us (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58)!

4) Purpose. You must soberly consider how you will spend your years on this earth. For, even if you gain and experience everything you could desire, it does not last (Matthew 6:19; 1 Timothy 6:7). This is frequently pictured throughout the book of Ecclesiastes (2:9-11). Thankfully, God has something much greater in mind for your life than earthly things (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)! Rather than storing up treasures on earth that don't last, Jesus urged storing up treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:20). So, fulfilling your true purpose should motivate service to God. As the book of Ecclesiastes often demonstrates, your physical accomplishments and legacies will leave you with a tremendous void and fail to impact others in a truly meaningful way. However, by living to serve God, you will live in a way that will result in eternal blessings for you (as we have seen) and you will have a positive impact on others for generations, by playing a role in helping others come to glorify and serve God in their lives (Matthew 5:16; 2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 11:4)!

Having the proper motivation in serving God will unlock the kind of life devoted to service God desires. For, as long as your motivation is either improper or incomplete, it will always get in your way of serving God as you should. Establishing these motivations (and any other relevant motivation from the Scriptures) will result in you striving to excel in God's service and doing such for His glory!

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What are some key lessons learned from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correction: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this teaching to be trained in righteousness and equipped for every good work?