

Motivation and the Growth Plan

Intro

Tonight we are going to begin putting together our growth plan for the year. We are going to consider things that God wants us to “do”. But I want to make sure that we have a proper context for understanding why we do what we do as Christians.

What is our motivation for spending time in God’s Word and in prayer?

What is our motivation for dealing with sin in our lives?

What is our motivation for sharing the gospel with others?

We have to first understand who we are before we will properly understand what we are to do.

It’s been said this way, “You don’t become a Christian by doing good things, you do good things because you are a Christian.”

I. What makes you a Christian?

A. It is more than just knowing the right stuff.

James 2:19: the demons believe there is a God. Satan and the demons know Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 2:23-24). But they aren’t Christians

B. It’s not what you **do** that makes you a Christian. Christians read their Bible and pray, they obey God and do good works, but so do lots of religious people who are not Christians.

If it was just about exercising these disciplines, then the Pharisees would have been all set.

If you are a Christian you will do those things as evidence of your salvation, but they don’t save you.(Rom. 1:5 “obedience that comes from faith” James 2:17)

C. It’s not what you do, but it’s what **Christ has done** that makes it possible for you to be a Christian.

Titus 3:5-7 “He saved us, not because of the righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

D. Our responsibility is to repent: acknowledge our sin and need of a Savior, and put our faith in Christ alone for salvation (Acts 20:21).

II. What Does It Mean to Be A Christian?

A. A Christian is one who has entered into a relationship with God through trusting in Christ alone. (John 17:3)

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” It is all about relationship.

B. But what is necessary for a meaningful relationship?

- 1) What if I told you that your mom loves you; you believe it, you know it's true, and that's where it ends? Would you have a meaningful relationship with your mom? Let's say you never talk to your mom, that you only know stuff about your mom that others have told you. Would you call that a good relationship?
- 2) Coming to church and hearing preaching and teaching from God's Word is important. Reading books others have written about God's Word can be helpful. But none of those are substitutes for personally communicating with God, especially having Him talk to you through personal Bible study.
- 3) Two-way personal communication is important in every relationship. In our relationship with God, that is prayer (we talk to God), and Bible study (He talks to us).

III. Our Motivation For Wanting to Spend Time with God

- A. Some people say, "I believe Jesus died for me. I'm not a bad person. I'm honest, I work hard, I do good. So what's the big deal if I don't have much of a relationship with God?"

B. Illustration of a mother and her son

There once was a single mom, raising her son all by herself. She worked two jobs, long hours, and made tremendous sacrifices for her sons, so she could provide for him what he needed. She even helped him make it through college with no debt, so he could use his gifts and talents productively. In return, he is a hard working, good, moral, nice kind of guy.

But, after he graduates from college, he never goes to see his mom. He very seldom even calls her. He is a good guy, but he doesn't try to maintain a relationship with his mom at all.

What would you say about a guy like that?

His mom sacrificed her whole life to provide for her son. He's not a bad guy. He works hard. He's honest. He just doesn't make any time for his mom.

We would conclude that isn't right. He is ungrateful and selfish.

- C. Could that be an illustration of your life with Christ? He sacrificed His life for you, so you could get what you needed - your sins forgiven. Christ did this because He loves you and wants to have a relationship with you. You're a good guy. You don't do bad stuff. But you don't spend time with Christ.

D. So why do you want to spend time with God? So what's the point of the spiritual disciplines?

1. We spend time with God not as a way to earn brownie points with God.

2. We spend time with God not as a way to pay Him back for what He did for us.

3. We spend time with God not because we **have to** but because we **want to**. Because His love for us expressed at the cross so overwhelms us that we want to spend time with Him. We are so full of gratitude for what He's done that we want to obey Him.

4. It is not that spending time with God makes you a Christian, wanting to spend time with God is an evidence that you are a Christian.

E. Why do we obey God?

1. Is it because if we don't He will send us to hell? No

2. 1 John 5:3 "This is love for God: to obey His commands: And His commands are not burdensome."

3. We obey God because we love God, because we want to please Him.

IV. Why are they called disciplines if it is something that I want to do?

A. Because they are hard. They require work on our part

B. it's not always easy to obey God.

C. it's not always easy to live a godly life.

D. it's not easy to have a close relationship with someone. It takes time and work.

E. We have a role to play in this process.

1. We need to learn to say "no" to our sinful desires that war within us. We need to put them off. (Eph. 4:22).

2. That is where faith comes in. Do you believe that following God is better than following the ways to of the world?

3. Sometimes we know it in our heads but our flesh is crying out something else. What do you do at that moment?

a. That is where faith comes in. What does faith say?

b. Faith believes that in Christ we can have victory.

We can say "no" to sin. We can say "no" to good things that would draw us away from God.

We can say “yes” to putting on what is right and doing what is right.

(Eph. 4:24)

1 John 5:4-5 “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

c. We need to learn to exercise faith. It is not enough to just believe but we need to act on that belief. That is what faith is. Faith is believing what God says and acting upon it. By faith we see with new eyes and see and with an eternal perspective. We can walk in a new way.

V. So where do we start?

A. In the growth plan, we have identified three areas of growth, all dealing with relationships: Relationship with God, Relationship with self, Relationship with others.

B. The first thing you need to do is assess where you are in each of these areas.

1. Relationship with God

a. Do you even have a relationship with God?
How do you know? What evidence do you see in your life?

b. Are you consistently spending time in God’s Word? Prayer?
c. What would be a logical next step to help you grow in this area?

2. Relationship with Self

This has to do with thoughts, actions, habits that you need to put off and replace with what is right to become more like Christ.

a. What self-talk do I need to change and remind myself what God says is true about me?

b. What thoughts, actions, habits do I need to put off?
c. What new thoughts, actions, habits do I need to start practicing?

3. Relationship with others

This has to deal with serving others and sharing the gospel with others.

a. Do I care more about myself or others?
b. In what ways do I demonstrate that I care about others?
C. Who am I praying for and seeking to share the gospel with?
b. What people in my life can I be an encouragement?

Conclusion

You don't do good things to become a Christian, you do things because you are a Christian. Practicing the spiritual disciplines does not make you a Christian but it is evidence that you are a Christian.

God desires for you to grow and become more and more like Christ so that you can have a greater and greater influence in this world for God's glory. Is that your desire?

If so, then I want to challenge you to take the growth plan seriously and consider what are the next steps that you need to take to grow in your relationship with God, Yourself, and Others.