

Prophetic Insights

Do Your Predispositions Block Christ-like Motivations?

April 28, 2014

*“All a man’s ways seem
innocent to him, but
motives are weighed by the LORD”*

(Proverbs 16:2).

*“For the word of God is living 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”*

(Hebrews 4:12).

Motive: the underlying reason or conviction for WHY you do something. It’s the headwaters of your character.

Our present society, including the lives of most Christians, is so busy with day to day responsibilities that most can’t get beyond thoughts of tomorrow’s schedule—and few ever consider WHY they’re living this way. Not even Christians search their hearts to identify and reveal their inner motives to people close to them, nor do they extend loving interest to discern the motives of people around them. In fact, few are aware of what makes their own family members “tick”! And while family and friends may openly discuss *facts* or *opinions* with each other like a news reporter does, most people have a real aversion to mutually sharing their innermost motivations.

Whether it’s due to our human sin nature or to emotional wounds from our past or to fear of rejection because of what others might think of us, people in general don’t readily disclose WHY they do things. They just *don’t want* their motives questioned or probed.

As a result Christendom abounds with what’s called “**flat relationships.**” Each person who is in their lives seems to

hold the same shallow level of interest and commitment. But if you don’t reflect deeply enough about your own motivations and responsibility to others close to you, you can’t explain WHY a specific person is significant to you. Nor can you respond appropriately with the devotion and meaningful interaction they deserve from you.

People who don’t know their own motivations in their relationship with others tend to take these individuals for granted. They speak about their family members with the same level of emotion as when discussing something they’ve gotten off the Internet—they’re *flat!*

Within many families lies a crack in their emotional connectedness because discussions that focus on motivations are non-existent. Parents and children alike are fearful to tell each other their heartfelt feelings about one another. No doubt you recognize how many parents cite their child(ren)’s *achievements* rather than their growth in *character qualities* which represent their inner motives. So the kids grow up looking for *recognition*; they’re motivated by external stimulus rather than by internal character.

We live in a society that doesn’t reflect on personal motivations, nor do we probe the motives which propel others. Our conversations revolve around the ‘whats’ in life, but we don’t take interest in ‘WHY’ people do their ‘whats.’ Emotionless surface conversations produce emotionally starved people. Without the personal reflection that surfaces your motivations regarding others, they feel taken for granted by you. And this flat disregard is the primary reason many wives are divorcing their husbands.

A personal note: The two of us have found it increasingly difficult to come alongside to help others in this “techno-dependent” culture. Addiction to “smart phones” and all the “out-there” information has pretty much terminated *heartfelt* face to face communication. For example, for a number of years we’d invested our hearts in helping a young couple work through ongoing estrangement with their parents. Finally, after weeks of pouring ourselves out with the parents, we all got together for a dinner that was intended to expressively reunite them.

Sadly for us, despite years of painful separation there was *no meaningful conversation* between the older and younger couples—no inquiries of changes in their lives or ways to alter their previous pattern. We’d hardly sat down when the young wife started raving about a CD her pastor had made which she insisted we all listen to. Then after the meal her husband brought out an iPad so we could all participate in a game. We left there disheartened, realizing we couldn’t help them.

It’s become painfully obvious that shallow relationships are all this society can tolerate. It grieves us to hear that the closest “friends” so many have are people on Facebook they haven’t seen for years. Two individuals walk together on the sidewalk or at the mall with cell phones in their ears or playing video games, each oblivious of the other. Parents text or chat on cell phones in the car while their children focus on their own techno games in the backseat. What wasted opportunities to interact purposefully!

Addiction to devices whether at home or in other people’s company has robbed so many of *awareness* of others and interest in what drives them. People can limit their self-revelation to whatever they want others to know about them on the Internet, but inside they’re all alone.

“Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart and with ALL your soul and with ALL your strength and with ALL your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

You may think this command is telling you *what* you must do. But nothing could be further from our Lord’s intent. First, His command to *love* Him is aimed at your heart. He’s centering on the preciousness in which you cherish your Lord above everything else—it’s something you can feel. He’s far, far more interested in your heart motive—your motivation toward Him and toward others—than in your actions! Out of the *ferocity of your heart* will flow loving actions which benefit the receiver.

Our Lord Jesus wants you to pinpoint “WHY” you would keep His commands and serve Him. It should be a trusting obedience which flows out of grateful love. Without love as the foundation to your motivation toward Him and then toward others, anything you do is worthless to Him (1Corinthians 13:1-3).

Our Lord intertwines love and obedience for all who would be His: *“Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him”* (John 14:21). Love (*WHY* you do) is the basis to keeping His commands (*the WHATS* that guide you).

“Whoever trusts in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this He meant the Spirit, Whom those who trusted in Him... receive...” (John 7:39).

Living water is on the move following the course set by the streambed. A person who is born of His Spirit has Him within

themselves. They are “living water” as He guides and empowers their actions, attitudes, and choices. There are two things you are responsible for *IF* you want to be living water:

1. You must trust that to *love Him* and to *love others*—which is the “Greatest Commandment” encompassing ALL the laws and prophetic words of Scripture—is His call and command for your life as one of His own.
- 2. You need to purposefully make loving Him and loving others your *way of life*. To do this your motivations toward your Lord and other people must be scrutinized for ‘WHY’ you love them or fail to love them. This requires reflection and/or discussion with others who deeply care about your spiritual walk.

When you earnestly reflect on your WHYS (for example, that your life may please your Father), it’s then that the Spirit of our Lord produces the ongoing fruit of love in you (Galatians 5:22). He transforms your inner motivations and empowers you *to love* in ways only He could fan into flame. And when you continue to reflect and “*take captive every thought [motivations included] to make them obedient to Christ*” (2Corinthians 10:5), the Spirit of Jesus within you changes your inner motives. He instills in you the *why* which then motivates all your *whats*.

No one can conjure up the sacrificial, yielded-to-the-Spirit love His Word calls for, a love that’s not based on human effort or self will. You can’t *love your Lord* unless loving Him becomes your number one priority and you trust His Spirit to give you a love that surpasses all others. How our hearts should overflow with thanks for the gracious Source to the love our Lord has made clear that we practice:

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves

has been born of God and knows God” (1John 4:7).

Wonderful evidence that you’re born again, born of the Spirit (John 3:5), is that you can experience the love of our Lord *for you* as well as be a vessel *through whom* the love of our Lord flows. Without His love, a “Christian” may engage in any number of religious activities and services and feel good about themselves. They may exercise kindness to each other in word and deed. But in our Lord’s eyes, without the *love of the Spirit* empowering them to respond in obedient trust, they aren’t loving the way His Word calls for. Our Father isn’t glorified when people say, “What a good person *you* are!” rather than seeing our Lord at work *through you*.

The love which only the Spirit of our Lord can give is a love that prompts action to obey Father’s will and bring Him praise. His love as our prime motivation is what differentiates us who belong to our Lord from the self-serving in religious systems who gratify their own interests.

Whoring Motives — Spiritual Adultery

Most of the people we’ve ministered to over the years wouldn’t see themselves as whores. A whore sells what God has restricted to a loving expression of covenant union with her husband. In other words she, like women who fornicate or commit adultery, toss away the intimacy God ordained to be *precious* to both her and her husband.

Many within Christendom, both men and women, act like a whore as they squander through worldly or immoral motives the *preciousness* of their love-based relationship with their Lord. They willingly flatten their relationship with God because they don’t reflect on His

Word and earnestly scrutinize their own motivations in light of His commands. The Word of God penetrates the hidden crevices of your sinful thoughts and motives which produce sinful actions:

“For the word of God is living 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” (Hebrews 4:12).

Knowing biblical facts versus reflecting on your own motives in light of His commands isn't the same thing. Without earnest reflection, you compromise your walk with Lord Jesus. In scriptural terms you “whore after” idols (or “prostitute” yourself or “play the harlot”), whether with temporal values, worldly security, or with whatever entices your lust. God referred to ancient Israel in terms of whoredom, not because they denied they'd been chosen by Him, but because they were devoted to “other gods.” They committed *spiritual adultery*. (See Deuteronomy 29:18-20.)

Our God is a *jealous* God (Deuteronomy 4:24). He doesn't allow His people to take on “lovers.” If your love for Him lacks the pure devotion He calls for, then you may be practicing “Christian whoredom” by which your *sinful predisposition* blocks obedience to His Word.

Predisposition: a habitual sinful attitude or inclination to act contrary to God's commands.

- **A predisposition to relationships you value more than Jesus**

When you truly know and appreciate in your heart the love of our Father to send His Son to die so you could be redeemed, can your response be anything less than the *highest love*—greater even

than the natural love you have for your own family members? That love is the grace through which His Spirit empowers us as His own to demonstrate.

“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37; see also Luke 14:26).

- Do you think our Lord is commanding too much of you to prioritize Him before all others in your life?
- List five things you value most in your life. _____
- How do they line up with our Lord's priorities as commanded in His Word? Are any of your priorities actually *sin* according to His Word?
- **A predisposition to disobey**

Out of love for them God commanded Adam and Eve to not eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). But Satan tailor-made a deception to lure Eve into disobedience, thereby severing the intimacy she and Adam had enjoyed with God. In assuring Eve that by eating the fruit she'd be like God in knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5), the devil was counting on her *predisposition* to want to rise above being Adam's wife, his suitable helper. She wanted to be *like God*. Exercising independence in her decision (after all, Adam was close by), she then convinced her husband to disobey God too.

The consequences of their violation of God's command weren't limited to their eviction from the Garden. ALL men henceforth would have to toil painfully for their provision. ALL women who gave birth would do so in pain *and* ALL married women would desire to rule their husbands. In fact, how many wives today pursue divorce in frustration because they can't get their

husband to respond or act the way they want or expect him to?

Another illustration. King Saul was commanded by God to destroy all the Amalekites he'd conquered (1Samuel 15:3). But his *predisposition* was fear of others (1Samuel 15:24). As a result he lost his Kingdom. And years later it was an Amalekite, Haman, who tried to incite King Ahasuerus to annihilate the Jewish people (see the Book of Esther).

You can count on this: ***When you give in to your sinful predisposition to disobey God, others will be hurt.***

- Our Lord Jesus turned away those who asked to follow Him but had a predisposition to pursue their own inclinations (e.g., Luke 9:57-62; 18:18-23). Below, list any predispositions in your own life. For example, these could be emotional hindrances such as certain people you don't want to disappoint; relationships you fear losing if you obey God's Word; or anything you would resist doing or any place you'd resist going if God told you to.

- **Predisposed to gather wealth, material goods, worldly power**

In Luke 18:18-23 Jesus is approached by a very religious man of power and wealth who just couldn't give these up to follow Him. Today the pursuit of financial security and the things money can buy is destroying the faith of many. Blind to the spiritual whoredom they've succumbed to, they're blending their spiritual expectations with their fleshly desires—and that's *spiritual adultery* in God's sight:

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds

of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1Timothy 6:10).

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3; also Proverbs 28:11; Ecclesiastes 5:12).

The life that comes from *loving* the prestige, power, and possessions wealth produces not only leads you away from obedient trust in our Lord and intimacy with Him. It's also a life that's pierced with grief—most often loneliness and stress. To suppress the dull deadness of worldly motivations, lovers of money scramble for activities they think will make them happy, and grow ever more dissatisfied with the emptiness of their relationships. They're emotionally hollow because they've prostituted themselves by making the things of this world more important than loving God and keeping His commands out of their love for Him.

- Where do the effort and time to accumulate finances fit into *your* priorities?
- Have you shipwrecked your life by compromising it with worldly goals and values? Have you found that you have no testimony to our Lord answering your prayers because you're pursuing pleasure and self-gratification?
- If your prayers are not being answered, have you reflected on WHY God isn't responding?

- **Predisposed to immorality**

In our sex-saturated society the temptation to cross the line into immorality surrounds every one of us. But that line is an important boundary to our Lord! When you are born again through the Holy Spirit even your *body* is a part of

Christ—and He intends for you to keep it holy (1Corinthians 6:20). That’s why physical adultery as well as spiritual adultery are so heinous in our Father’s sight. In the midst of your spiritual union with the Holy Spirit, when you fornicate you’re sinning against your own body which Jesus purchased with His blood: *“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body”* (1Corinthians 6:18).

Physical union through intercourse outside the covenant of marriage, whether by adultery or fornication, produces lasting repercussions which ONLY repentance and the power of our Lord Jesus can heal.

The unabashed pursuit of immorality in this nation is a curse that can be traced back to enslavement of other human beings by the dominant white culture. Let us explain:

Among many tribal peoples in the Africa of two centuries ago, males often practiced polygamy, and extra-marital sex was an accepted way of life. So when the “Christian” white slave owner took a black man’s wife or daughter for sex, we would consider the woman stripped of her dignity. But the practice of multiple partners for both enslaved men and women had been carried over from their ancestral roots.

As the formerly enslaved became “Christianized” by the churched culture, sexual relationships outside of marriage still remained socially accepted. And since because of rampant racism relatively few men of color were able to find employment to provide for a family, women became the household providers and leaders. And whatever babies were birthed by the younger unmarried women were incorporated into the matriarchal home.

Recently a black woman psychiatrist on PBS TV pointed out that many black girls today have been raised with an understanding that intercourse outside marriage is an acceptable choice. The mindset behind that framework, she indicated, is this: “If *I* don’t give a man what he wants, another woman will.”

We certainly don’t cite this to denigrate African Americans. Rather, we’re proposing that the fornication and adultery by white “Christian” slave owners, as well as the failure of Christianity at large to instill sexual purity, have now resulted in unrestrained sensuality and sexual immorality that are consuming our land. And those *within* the church establishment, according to Barna Research, are just as unchaste as those outside.

- Whether you’re a man or a woman, were you a virgin when you married?
- What emotional hindrances to intimacy are currently impeding your marriage now for having been immoral earlier?
- How has your immorality affected your emotional expression during intercourse with your spouse?

Predisposed to perceived outcomes

At the conclusion of our workbook, *Demolishing Strongholds*, we include a poem, *Step By Step*, which has strongly influenced our own lives. One stanza stands out as critical for those who obey our Lord because they love Him so much:

One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see;
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Our Lord gives His children only one step of guidance at a time. That’s out of His merciful love for us! If you’re looking for the whole plan to be laid out for you, or if

you have some perceived desired outcome for your actions, STOP! HE is your loving Master and He knows precisely how much information you need. Besides, your frustration will also make you vulnerable to becoming angry toward God.

One step is far enough for anyone's faith to see. Take that one step before you seek the next step on the journey. Belonging to Jesus and living with Him as your beloved Lord requires you to be **obedience-based**, not **outcome-based**. An obedience-based follower has the loving trust in our Lord that a child has, to willingly seek just one step at a time without concern where that step ultimately leads.

Outcome-based Christians are treading a shaky pathway that can lead to spiritual death through a heart of unbelief and doubt in God if He doesn't meet their desired outcomes and expectations (see the warning in Hebrews 3:12-14). And tragically, their devotion to our Lord can dry up when they don't limit themselves to His one step of faith.

Christians who are predisposed toward a particular desired outcome often envision several more steps of where His Spirit might lead them. In fact they tend to take leaps rather than steps. And when they think they know where He *may* be leading them, they anticipate the pathway and get ahead of Him. But what they see as a straight line to reach their perceived goal may instead involve a right turn from our Lord—and they miss it. Then they're filled with confusion, irritation, frustration, and even a cold distrust of our Lord for failing to meet their false expectations.

But we can also assure you that when you love our Lord with the rich trust He calls for and live in one-step-at-a-time obedient trust, you don't always experience one happy event after another! Patient endurance requires "stretching" time to mature.

- In the early years of our walk with Jesus we met a deacon whom our Lord had told to "remain in this congregation until I send *My man* to shepherd the flock." Over the course of time his "conservative" friends turned against him as he remained true to our Lord. But this faithful servant remained in the congregation for *20 years*, prayerfully waiting, until a man who lovingly upheld God's Word arrived.

- While we were administrating and teaching at a retreat center the Holy Spirit told us to attend a congregation where the people called themselves the "FROZEN CHOSEN." He purposed that we reveal to them what lives lived under the Lordship of His Spirit looked like. For *five difficult years* we fellowshiped among the most spiritually and emotionally frigid people you could meet. The Spirit finally released us after the elders agreed that our Spirit-led way of life was scripturally important—but they refused it for themselves.

- Are you an outcome- or obedience-based person? How do those who know you describe you? Do you have to have all your "ducks in order" before you act?
- Be honest with yourself. Do you truly *experience* our Lord in your daily life—His love and His guidance?

Concluding Thoughts

We've written this Insight hoping it will prompt you to deeply reflect on your own motivations. At the same time we encourage you to openly and lovingly question the motivations of those you care about in the faith. As you *collectively* expose the "whys" behind your actions, the Spirit of our Lord can then align your motivations with His. It's crucial that you scrutinize any predispositions your sin nature doesn't want exposed. And, transparency is essential as you take your motivations captive so they can become those of your Lord Jesus.