



June, 2000

Looking back over the last few years of this newsletter I've come to an obvious conclusion—I like seasons and I LOVE Summer. The goodness and provision of God seems to permeate the air at this time of the year. Just feeling the warmth of the sun and seeing everything start growing is revitalizing.

This week I was out in the yard trying out my patent weed extractor. You can't dig up very many taproots without realizing there's competition in the plant world as intense as anything corporate America ever dreamed up.

A taproot is not an accident. It's a beachhead from which foliage will try to suffocate the surrounding vegetation, which was there already and generally has the real property rights. That's where I come in, me and my patent tool!

This month I've been giving some thought to our hearts and why we tend to do what we do. Over the years I've come to find that God is very concerned not only with what we do but why we're doing it!

Our heart is like the soil of our garden and actions are what springs out of it. Our harvest will depend on two things, the condition of the ground and what we allow to become planted there. God searches and tries the heart and wants to know what's in it. He's a heart God. So that brings us to our big question this month,

Why do we do what we do?

There are a lot of motivations for anything. One is the leading and prompting of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes this is conscious leading, other times it's just doing what we know is the right thing. Today I'm going to try and wash my car.

The main reason has nothing to do with the pile of indifferent metal in my driveway. It's that I know the face I present to this world ultimately reflects on what they will think of the Spirit of God working through me. I want them to see a man careful and diligent with what he has. If they give me a measure of spiritual input into their lives, I want them to feel I will give them

the same conscientious attention they see the car getting.

I've heard of counselors who will not talk to women about depression unless their ironing is up to date. When I iron a stack of shirts I'm telling myself I have value, that someone cares about how I look, and that I myself am personally worth taking time for. We need to send such messages to ourselves, to others, and to God.

Love is the motivation

Ultimately the motivation needs to be love. We spend time with one another because we love our friends and we love to spend the time. We come to church because we love God, we love the people of God, and we love what happens during a worship service, so we love to come. Just try to keep me away!

I read my Bible every day because I love God, love His Word, and I've discovered it's living and powerful and through that Living Word I do meet the Living God. Just try to keep me out of it!

Prayer is a little more difficult but hey, I'm making progress. Like the ironing, it's something I feel great about once it's done but it takes discipline and a little grit to get started. So I give it that extra motivation to begin and the truth is I do like it but it's work and will probably always be. That initial motivation seems to be a common condition of life, and explains why cars have batteries.

It's in areas like this that we get into some of the dangerous traits. How do we motivate ourselves to do what we ought? We know we should, and we know we'll enjoy it once we get started and we want the good things the activity will provide for us. How do we make it happen? Are there wrong ways?

Guilt is bad motivation.

One of the poorest motivators both in terms of effectiveness and value before God is guilt. This is unfortunate, because a good share of Christendom knows no other motivation. Preachers fall into this trap. The people aren't doing what they should, so pour it on. One thing the renewal did a few years ago was to refresh

Romans 8:1 to us, *There is therefore now no condemnation to those that be in Christ Jesus...*

Another renewal Scripture that was absolutely liberating was Philippians 2:13, *For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.* Do you mean to say that my feelings could actually be for good things, and that it was possible to want to do what God wanted me to?

If ever there was a taproot in the Body of Christ it is false, floating guilt and its attendant evil, condemnation. The blood of Christ paid for every sin. The guilt is gone! Believe it! We are free!

Average Christians have been so beat down and conditioned by guilt they feel naked and exposed without it. When the devil walks up to our table and sets down a steaming bowl of condemnation, some of us even start to pray—for a bigger spoon! The correct answer is, *No thank you!*

Guilt motivation opens one up to other forms of manipulation. I only owe two kinds of debt, one to those whom I've incurred it and the other is to God, who gave me everything. He may lead me to pay part of my debt to Him on someone else's behalf but that's for Him to decide, not them.

There needs to be better glue holding our groups together. People will say concerning TORCH, Well I *should* come.... That's great, but only if you really want to. People tell me, I *should* do something with you. Come on, if you want to be friends, let's be friends but don't make me into some religious obligation. I don't need that and I'm sure you don't either. Love doesn't need an excuse and shouldn't demand very many apologies.

This was Jesus' secret of ministry. Even though he came to found a church he really wasn't there to found a church. He just came to make friends. He expected people to obey Him because they loved Him. And how they did love Him! *We love him because He first loved us.* See you in church?

Activities

Hey, before I say anything else about what we are doing this month let me ask something, have you seen our picture in the new church

directory? I'm not sure I've seen anything that delighted me so much all month. For my money it was the best group photo on the two page spread. It may be the best group photo in the entire book. Don't mind me, I'm prejudiced.

As I looked at that I felt something stir in my heart. *Prayer did that!* Whose prayer—mine, someone else's, team effort? I don't know. But one of the prayers we have had for the last few years is for God to begin to call our group out of the shadows and minister to our reputation within the church, to show others that here is something worth belonging to.

That picture represents part of an answer to that prayer. You can't buy that kind of publicity. Well, you can try, but you usually don't get what you pay for. Thank you Lord. Thanks to everyone who has been praying for the group. And please keep praying.

Promise Keepers will be a potluck this month. Hang on to your \$5 but bring something really good to eat.

Prayer will be on the 12th again. I know we won't be ready for another directory for a while, but there are other areas to seek God for. Let's just be there.

Speaking of prayer, we have a day coming up July 2nd when TORCH gets to participate in the "Pray Portland" radio show. That involves live prayer on the 1290 station KKSL. The bad side is that we have to be at the station ready to go by 6AM. Interested? Call Gary @ xxx-xxxx.

We are setting aside two possible days to go thrift shopping and yard sale-ing this month. The official one is on the 3rd where we will meet at Elmer's on Sandy and fortify ourselves for the expedition. The one on the 10th is a maybe, call Gary for final confirmation of that.

Have a great month! GAH

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