

A Love Response



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *1 John 4:18, 19; Rom. 3:19, 20; John 15:13; Rom. 5:6-8; John 6:28, 29.*

Memory Text: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (*John 14:15*).

Key Thought: We should work to win souls to Christ; the question we need to ask ourselves is, What motivates us to do just that?

Although our memory text is most often considered to refer to the Ten Commandments, there are other commandments, as well, not the least being “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (*Matt. 28:19, 20, NKJV*).

Our motivation for witnessing and evangelism should be primarily God's grace to us and not a sense of guilt, mere obligation, or debt. One doesn't need to be a behavioral psychologist to know that pretty much everything we do as humans is in response to something. This is true also of our involvement in witnessing and evangelism. We can discover our motivation simply by asking why we do what we do. Why do we become involved in the church's witnessing and evangelistic strategies? Or indeed, why *don't* we?

This week we will explore the right motivation for getting involved in the Lord's work and also expose the dangers of working with the wrong motivations, such as obligation, guilt, or shame. We will explore why evangelism and witnessing should be our love response to God's gift of salvation to us.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 9.*

Motivated by Love

Have you ever wondered why often it seems difficult to motivate people to make long-term commitments in church projects? Perhaps the answer can be found as we think of some other situations where a very high degree of motivation and commitment are evident. What is it that motivates a parent to donate a kidney to save the life of his or her child? Why do moms and dads spend a small fortune to provide the best possible education for their children? Are these things done because the parents would feel guilty if they didn't? Do they think that they owe their children these things? Of course not.

While parents do have a sense of responsibility for the welfare of their children, love is surely the major motivating force. They do what they do because they love. We cannot spell this out enough times: *we do things for God because we love Him and because we know He loves us.*

Read 1 John 4:18, 19. What do these verses mean? Write out their meaning in your own words.

Our love for God must be rooted in His love for us. God existed before we did, and He has loved us supremely from the creation of humankind. Love can come only as a result of, and in response to, love. Obedience to the great gospel commission for any other reason than the fact that we love is all but fruitless. This is why spiritual preparation is vital as we seek to become involved in witnessing and evangelism.

Our love for God and our willingness to work with Him in the saving of souls is dependent upon our knowing Him. It is not usual that we love people whom we don't know. Therefore, it is vital that to obey God out of love, we must know Him personally.

What do the following texts reveal about love for God and the motivation to obey Him and work for Him? Josh. 22:5, Luke 7:41–43, John 14:23, 2 Cor. 5:12–18.

Love and obedience are inseparable as long as they occur in that order. True love for God will always result in obedience to His revealed will, but obedience will not necessarily lead to love (although it can). If we want people to work for Jesus, we must help them to create a loving connection with Him.

How much does your love for God motivate what you do? Does it motivate you at all? What does your answer say about your relationship with Him and what needs to change?

Not by Guilt

Over the centuries guilt has been used to motivate people to action. Evangelism leaders have often reminded us that God has given us responsibility and that we must use our God-given talents and gifts. We are told that God or the church is depending on us. If God has done so much to save us, how can we remain evangelistically inactive? All these attempts to call us to action, delivered, no doubt, with the best intentions, subtly appeal to our sense of guilt and indebtedness to God. Motivation always seems to become counterproductive when we remove the emphasis from what God has done and place it onto what we must do.

Read Romans 3:19, 20. What did the apostle Paul mean when he said the whole world is guilty before God? What’s his point?

The way that Paul uses the word *guilty* in this passage communicates the sense of accountability. He has already stated in Romans 3:10 that “‘there is none righteous, no, not one’ ” (NKJV), and in verse 19 he confirms that the law makes “all the world” guilty before God.

The law’s function has often been likened to a mirror that reveals our sinful condition but which cannot provide the cleansing soap and water. Looking into God’s law, we become aware of our sinfulness and are driven to the Savior to receive His free pardon and cleansing.

After we come to Christ, we are no longer motivated by guilt, because the guilt has been washed away, covered by the righteousness of Jesus. We stand in Him, perfect and guiltless and forgiven. Yes, we are sinners, but we have been forgiven, our guilt has been atoned for; now—based on the salvation that is ours through Christ—we are motivated to witness to others about that which Christ has done for us.

Read James 2:10. What is the main point that James is trying to make? How would you explain this verse to a new believer?

The fact that an offense on one point makes one guilty of defying the God who commanded the whole law underscores the futility of the attempt to gain favor in God’s sight through law keeping. Law breaking, even to a small degree, reveals an underlying desire to do our own will rather than God’s.

While acknowledging your wrongs you have to surrender them to Jesus, claiming His righteousness, His forgiveness, His grace, regardless of how unworthy you are. And lest you be mistaken, you are unworthy, more than you could imagine. If not, the salvation offered to you wouldn’t be from grace but from a debt God owes you (see Rom. 4:1–4), and do you really think that God owes you anything?

Motivated to Serve

What would you think of someone who constantly and loudly declared that he or she was motivated and yet attempted nothing? What about someone who claimed to be dedicated yet never revealed to what, or to whom, he or she was dedicated? As we have seen, love is a most powerful motivator; but to only declare our love, even our love for God, means nothing unless we act on that love. In other words, we expect love to be revealed through actions. In this sense love is an active word as it reveals itself through loving actions.

Read John 15:13 and Romans 5:6–8. What do these verses reveal to us about Jesus' love as manifested in His actions? How are we to take the principles revealed here and manifest them in our own lives?

What a wonderful Savior is He who deliberately and willingly gave His life because of His great love for us. Here is the ultimate example of where the one who loves is compelled to act for those who are loved. What if Jesus had pledged His love for us and remained in heaven? What if He had declared His love but made no promises to us or provisions for us?

Read John 14:21. What does this verse tell us about love in action, on the part of both Jesus and us?

We are not just talking about love here; we are talking about a loving relationship. In any loving relationship our motivation is to please the one who is the object of our love. Jesus' decisive saving act on our behalf was motivated only by His love for a race that had broken its connectedness to God. Anything that we do for God that does not come from a similar motive suggests that we do not really understand what it is to have a love relationship with God. God doesn't want us to be involved in witnessing and evangelism because we think we owe Him. Rather, He desires our connectedness to Him be such that it compels us to do the things that please Him and to be in tune with things that matter to Him. God wants us to love Him so much that we will reach out to the people whom He loves.

How can we be sure that we do things for God with the right motivation? Can we be a blessing to others even if we are wrongly motivated in our action? If so, in what way? Are right actions for the wrong reason good actions anyway? Whatever your answer, bring it to class on Sabbath and discuss.

The Legalism Trap

There's an English expression that says, "There is no such thing as a free lunch"—the idea that if you receive something free, it really isn't free because somewhere, somehow, sometime, you will have to pay or repay. The theory that nothing is ever really free has subtly infiltrated Christian thinking to the extent that many try to be deserving of God's salvation through obedience to His will.

Legalism in the Christian vocabulary describes the attitude of those who believe that their obedience to God will somehow cause Him to justify them in His sight. Of course, although God's grace does not negate His expectation of obedience, salvation is based solely on this grace and nothing else, certainly nothing else that we could do.

What do the following texts reveal about the misunderstanding of salvation so prevalent in the minds of many? In what ways can we, ourselves, get caught up in that same kind of thinking? Why is it so easy, in fact, to do so?

Rom. 10:1–4 _____

Rom. 11:5, 6 _____

Gal. 2:16 _____

A legalistic religion causes the individual to focus upon personal performance (and often on the performance of others) rather than on the gospel commission. Legalistic attitudes can lead to pride and arrogance on the part of those who are so blind that they actually deem themselves holy enough to be saved. Or, just as bad, legalistic attitudes can lead to discouragement and despair for those who realize just how far they are from the divine standard. Either way, it's a trap that needs to be avoided, especially by a church such as ours where obedience to law is so central to our understanding of what the gospel is all about.

Read John 6:28, 29. How does Jesus reveal the truth of salvation by faith in these verses? What, though, does it mean to believe in "him whom he hath sent"? How should that belief be manifested in our lives? How well do you manifest that belief, especially when no one is looking?

Free to Be a Slave

The Bible makes it clear that we were once slaves to sin, but through Christ we have been released (*Rom. 6:6*), set free (*Gal. 5:1*), delivered (*1 Thess. 1:10*), adopted (*Rom. 8:15*), and born again (*1 Pet. 1:23*).

The effective worker for God is the one who has given the past to Him and has accepted His power to work in the present and the future. In other words, those who have been delivered by Christ are able to be His slaves. If we don't understand this truth, it may seem strange that deliverance leads to slavery, but it is as true as the sayings, "To be spiritually filled we must continually empty ourselves" and "The way to victory is constant surrender."

Read **Philippians 1:1, James 1:1, and 2 Peter 1:1. What did Paul, Timothy, James, and Simon Peter mean when they announced themselves the bondservants of God and Jesus Christ? How are we to understand these ideas for ourselves?**

Usually bondservants, or slaves, would be owned by and compelled to work under a master. To work for the Master in the Christian sense is a totally voluntary choice. God loves us too much to force our will. When Timothy, James, and Simon Peter used these words, they were indicating their entire identification with Christ and His cause. They were declaring their unreserved service to Him as their Lord. They were renouncing their self-importance so that others would focus only upon Jesus. In this picture of slavery we see dedicated followers pledging their loyalty and devotion through selfless service.

Read **John 8:34–36. What do these verses tell us about slavery to sin and the way to freedom?**

Jesus' hearers knew full well that slaves had no security. They could be sold at the whim of the master, while the son of the master was always secure in the household. Here Jesus uses the contemporary slave situation to impart a vital spiritual truth. If the Son of God makes you spiritually free from slavery to sin, you will be free indeed. It would be unusual for literal freed slaves to voluntarily place themselves back in bondage, but, spiritually, this is what happens when we are freed from the slavery to sin and become slaves of Christ (*Rom. 6:17, 18*). If we are free from the things that make us focus upon ourselves, we are free to consider others and what we have that can benefit them. Herein lies the key to a life of service.

Further Study: Keeping on Track.

Just as any good motor vehicle will ultimately break down as a result of a lack of regular maintenance, so many good and worthwhile church ministries have fallen by the wayside because of a lack of regular intentional maintenance.

To keep your ministry healthy and on track, consider the following maintenance checklist:

1. Maintain your personal connection. Remind yourself often that you are in a partnership ministry with the Lord.

2. Maintain your personal vision. Do you still sense the importance of your ministry? Are your goals as clear and as strong as they were when you became involved in this ministry?

3. Maintain your communication. Regular reporting is important to continued support. People are busy, and they need to be reminded of how this ministry is going and also of how they can become involved.

4. Maintain your enthusiasm. It is a true saying that “Nothing breeds enthusiasm like enthusiasm.” Show your continued excitement about your ministry, and others will become excited too.

5. Maintain your focus. Don’t get sidetracked with other duties or programs that will prevent you from spending the time and energy that your current ministry needs to survive and grow.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** In class, go over your answer to Tuesday’s final question.
- 2** What insights does the following quotation give into the relationship between love for God and service for Him? “The watchful Christian is a working Christian, seeking zealously to do all in his power for the advancement of the gospel. As love for his Redeemer increases, so also does love for his fellow men.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 261.
- 3** “Those who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life. His love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads men to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of those with whom they associate. Christian workers who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 550, 551. In class, share your own personal experiences of God’s love and how you have come to know it for yourself.

But Now I See

Dilip Tapu had lost his sight, and his future looked grim. His parents had taken him to many doctors in northeastern India, but no one could help him to regain his sight. His parents found a special school for the blind where Dilip could learn Braille. But soon after he enrolled, the school closed, crushing the family's hope of an education for their son.

With nothing else to do, Dilip hung around with the street children and soon became addicted to chewing tobacco. Often he stole his mother's rice and sold it to buy tobacco. He discovered he could earn a few rupees by singing popular songs in the streets and on the trains, but when his money was stolen one day, he returned home defeated. He was 10 years old.

A man offered to help the boy but only took him home and forced him to work for a little food. Dilip escaped and returned home. His mother told him that she had found a school where he could study. "Your life will be better," she assured him. Dilip didn't want to leave home again, but he obeyed.

He arrived at his new school and heard children singing. He didn't recognize the songs they sang, but he liked the music. However, Dilip soon realized that his new school was operated by Christians, and he was prejudiced against Christians. He resisted his teachers' attempts to introduce him to the Savior and even tried to be expelled from the school by writing something bad about a teacher. But instead of becoming angry, the teacher forgave him and spoke kindly to him.

Slowly Dilip realized that these Christians were different from others he had known. He apologized to the teacher he had wronged, and she in turn led him to accept Jesus into his heart. But when Dilip's friends and family learned that he had become a Christian, they scolded and mocked him. In spite of his new faith, Dilip struggled with cravings for tobacco. He prayed fervently for deliverance, but it took many months before the craving for tobacco left him.

When he completed high school, Dilip wanted to continue his studies. His parents had no money, so he worked as a literature evangelist for three years to save enough to start college. Dilip continues his studies at Spicer Memorial College, where he is preparing to become a pastor.

"I thank God for the Adventist school where I met my Savior," he said. "Through this school my life was changed. Now I want to share God's love with others."

Seventh-day Adventist schools throughout India and around the world are making a world of difference to young people. Thank you for supporting Christian education through your mission offerings.

DILIP TAPU *continues his studies at Spicer Memorial College in India.*