

Motives...?
Wk 1: You and God

Have you ever heard the phrase, "What Motivates You?" Have you ever attempted to answer that? For most of us it depends on the activity or issue. If I were to ask you "what motivates you to do school?" Your answer would more than likely be different than if I asked you the question, "what motivates you to hang out with your friends?" They are different answers because they are different issues.

With that in mind we all have motives, things that drive us to make decisions, pushing and pulling in a variety of directions. As we begin this new series what I want to challenge to you to think about is the motives that each of us has in our relationships. Let me give you a real general example. Most of us understand that there are two major types of people; givers and takers. What do you think the major motive in a "giver" is....? Giving right? The giver's motive is to give. Give time, talent, energy, finances whatever it takes to accomplish the mission or task. Keep in mind that a person who appears to give, is not necessarily a giver because their motive may be in gaining something, that's not really a giver. They are a taker. Takers are in relationships for themselves. They aren't in to give at all, but only to get. We all fall into one of these two categories from time to time, but they are both questions of motive. What are you really in the relationship for you; how you feel, what you want, what you can gain? Or are you in the relationship to give; for the benefit of someone else. Now will we gain something when we give, absolutely! But that can't be the purpose.

Tonight we are going to look at the motives we have in our relationship with God. We're going to look at two types of motives. Givers and takers, could you be somewhere in between. Definitely, but is that where you want to be? After a while we can't stay where we are and follow God. We're either going to make decisions that push us closer to God, or pull us further away from God.

The early church in the NT was pretty different than the church of today. Not completely different, but there some were different motives and different ways of doing things. This is not to say that one is right or wrong, but just to say that they were definitely different in a lot of ways. Let me give you an example. We all know that the bible teaches that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead after 3 days. Following that He was around for about 40 days and appeared to many people, over 500 the scripture tells us. Following those days, Christ ascends into heaven and gives the disciples instructions...

Ac 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. Ac 1:4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. Ac 1:5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Ac 1:6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Ac 1:7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. Ac 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Ac 1:9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. Ac 1:10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. Ac 1:11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Following this, the H.S. descends, Peter (one of the disciples) preaches, and over 3000 come to know Christ in one day. The first church then forms, let me give you a picture of what it looked like...

Ac 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Ac 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders

and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ^{Ac 2:44} All the believers were together and had everything in common. ^{Ac 2:45} Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ^{Ac 2:46} Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ^{Ac 2:47} praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

There are a few things I want you to see in this passage about their motives. The first is that they were "devoted". In other words the teaching they received, the community they belonged to, the celebration of the Lords Supper, and communication with God, were all major commitments in their lives. What are the major commitments in your life? The reason I ask is because the major commitments of givers are always about God and others, the major commitments of takers is all about themselves. Look what scripture says right after it states what these people were devoted too. "All the believers were together and had everything in common". The motive that these believers had in their relationship with God was a giving motive, the motive that these believers had among each other was a giving motive. We know that it was actually a giving motive, that it went beyond the mere appearance of a giving motive is found at the end of verse 46 and into verse 47,

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

There was sincerity in their hearts for each other and for God. They had a giving motive.

A few chapters go on in the book of Acts and we see much of the same. Acts 5, something changes though. There is a couple who have the motives of the taker attempting to appear as givers. Some of you guys know this passage, but for those of you who don't here's the back ground. At the end of chapter four we see believers selling their property and bringing the income to the apostles for use in the church. Remember they were givers. This was becoming the norm and as you might be able to imagine it was becoming the popular thing to do. Everyone wanted in on the action. So in Acts 5, this couple sells their property and brings the income before the apostles for use in the church. It may have gone something like this...

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I know it's a pretty funny depiction, but the truth is God takes our motives seriously. Let's look a little more in depth at what happened...

^{Ac 5:1} Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ^{Ac 5:2} With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. ^{Ac 5:3} Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ^{Ac 5:4} Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." ^{Ac 5:5} When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ^{Ac 5:6} Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. ^{Ac 5:7} About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ^{Ac 5:8} Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." ^{Ac 5:9} Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." ^{Ac 5:10} At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ^{Ac 5:11} Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events

Here are a couple things I want to point, the first is this. Make no mistake about it Ananias and Sapphira were takers. Their motive wasn't that of a giver, but they wanted people to have that impression. Some of us do that pretty often. We act one way to gain something, when in reality we're not that person at all. A second thing I want to point out is this, they had no respect for God, His will, His Word, or His purposes. That's the thing with takers, they care first and foremost about themselves. They're selfish people. The last thing I want to show is that Ananias and Sapphira had a plan in place. They were in it together and it appears to be premeditated. Takers put their energy and effort into gaining things for themselves. They'll go to great lengths to gain what they want to take.

So here's the two questions for each of us, which one are we. Are we givers or takers? Are we those who are devoted to the things which are most important, the things of God? Are we wanting and willing to give or is our first goal us? Are we takers who want to appear as something we aren't for personal gain? Do our lives portray a respect for God, where we live day in and day out for God or are we trying to find ways to cut corners?

The point is this, if you're a giver. Then good, keep giving and watch how God will use you for His kingdom. Chances are at some point you'll be tempted to become a taker. Stand strong and remember what Christ has given for you. If you're a taker and you have the courage to admit it, then I would really challenge you to look for opportunities to really give. Give to God first, your time, your effort, maybe even your finances you have some. Give to others. It starts with a recognition of who you are versus who you are called to be. As Christians we are called to be like Christ who gave himself for us. Once you recognize it, then you make the decision. Do I want to continue to be like this or do I want to change. If you decide that you want to change then prayerfully consider ways in which you can give. If you need examples the bible provides some awesome examples and ways of giving. If you don't know where to start, come talk with me or one of the youth leaders and we can point you in the right direction.

One more thing as we close tonight, does anyone know what manipulation is...? Manipulation is sort of like deceptively tricking someone to get what you want (example). It's a technique that takers use a lot. Some of us learn it from our parents, some of us it comes naturally. Either way it's a temptation we all deal with. The reason I bring it up is because I see it a lot and I'm not sure if you get this or not, but the things we do and the way we act usually translates into our relationship with God. Be aware of that, guard your heart against it and make wise decisions that will allow you to be the giver God has called you to be.

Suggested Discussion Concepts:

1. What do you think Ananias and Sapphira did wrong? *It wasn't that they kept the money for themselves it was that they attempted to make it look like they didn't.*
2. What are some things and ways we take and give? *Move beyond stuff to time, emotions, commitments, etc*
3. List some general characteristics of givers and takers? Which one do you have the most of?