

# Why?

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I'd like to start today by asking a very simple question, and for those that like titles for messages, this question will also serve that purpose as well: Why?

If it be something you do, something you believe, a way you act or react to any given situation or circumstance, how often do we stop and ask ourselves the question: Why?

Again, it's a simple question, but what I'd like to explore today is why asking why, why questioning our motivations, is extremely important specifically in the context of our Christian walk. We often quote 1 Peter 3:15, the idea of having a ready answer, as a reason, a "why" if you will, for studying the scripture as an academic pursuit, and that's not invalid, there's nothing wrong with that, but I think it's interesting what Peter says in total in this passage:

**1 Peter 3:15.** *Honor Christ and let him be the Lord of your life ... (CEV)*

Hold onto this as we are going to spend time today talking more about the source of the answers to why questions.

*15) ... Always be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope. (CEV)*

A ready answer, then, isn't necessarily a point of technical reasoning, dogma, law, or history, though again not wrong, but it's about a more personal and internal concept, it's about (as Peter puts it here) your hope. As we go forward we are going to visit this concept again in more detail, so hold onto this, but again, the question we are posing today is: Why?

Now I know for me personally, there's a certain comfort and peace in the routine, the mundane, and the predicable, but the trap I easily fall into is letting mindlessness set in. It's the idea of going through the motions or settling on what I know or believe without asking this all important, very simple question: Why.

Now for the more mundane things in life the argument could be made that the amount of mental effort and energy required to ask this question and derive some sort of profound response isn't worth it, and I would completely agree with that. But the trap we have to be aware of is falling into a pattern of mindlessness.

We are all very familiar with the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, and I'm sure you can recall the master's response to the good and faithful servants, those that had given the master a return on his investment: *...you were faithful over few things, I will make you ruler over many things.* The principle we can extract from this is if we are mindful of

what may seem to be insignificant, that habit, that behavior, that perspective will carry forward into the more significant aspects of our lives, and not just now, but it's a function of character, so this is something that will carry forward into eternity. As a relevant side note in Matthew 25, do you remember the wicked, lazy servant's response when asked to account for his talent? He said in part, "I was afraid." That's going to be important, so hold onto that thought, we're going to spend some time talking about that a little bit later.

And speaking of more significant aspects of our lives, I personally can't think of another experience that has more consistently had the question of why bubble to the surface than that of being a parent. It's a bit of a cliché, but not only is it true, when it comes to what we believe (parents), "why?" can be an amazing exercise in putting our assumptions to the test. I know in my experience, we've had times where we'll be at the dinner table as a family and my wife and I will be having a conversation about something church related, and we have this language, this vernacular around it and we have these things that we kind of assume to be the case, or understand to be assumed, and one of the kids will look at us quizzically and say, "Why do we say that?" or "Why do we believe that?" or "What does that mean?" And sometimes I find myself blurting out a "stock" answer, and then doing a double-take. Huh – that's interesting. Or there have been times sometimes I'll look at my wife and say "That's a really great question, why do we do that, why do we say that, why do we believe that?" These questions have led to some great discussions, Bible studies, and has even forced me to confront some things in my life that perhaps needed to be confronted, and changed some of my views on what I assumed to be "assumable". Not a safe position to be in.

So let's dig into where the answers to why questions can come from. Modern psychology has quantified what are referred to as incentive theories, or theories as to why people do or believe what they do or believe, and there are two forces of motivation in the human experience, referred to as extrinsic and intrinsic motivators.

Extrinsic motivators are those that come from outside ourselves. By way of examples, perhaps you work in sales, and you know that if you exceed your quarterly quota, you will receive a bonus. So that's an extrinsic motivator to work hard and exceed that quota. Kids, perhaps it's a dollar for every "A" on a report card. For me, perhaps it's a cold beer after a hard day's work in the yard. While valuable, further study has soundly proven that these motivators, these external actions or rewards, have limited impact, especially if improperly applied, made unattainable, or if motivations change and the motivator doesn't change along with it.

In concept we see the example of Ancient Israel focusing on being extrinsically-motivated, and what subsequently resulted.

**Romans 9:31.** *But Israel, going after a law of righteousness, did not get it.  
32) Why? Because they were not searching for it by faith, but by works. (BBE)*

Ancient Israel did not get it (as it's phrased here in verse 31), they didn't attain or even understand, because they were motivated by, their reward was, and was sought from, an extrinsic source, an output of works, for physical, extrinsic rewards. And we know what those are, they are outlined in Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

Where faith comes in, and what really speaks to the heart and truly motivates us is our intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is what drives us from within. It's what we value, what we hold as priority in our lives, and what speaks to our personality and belief system. Powerful examples would perhaps be individuals who have pursued careers in public education, or in the medical profession like nurses. Both of these professions often require significant investments in training, long, hard hours, high pressure and stress, and relatively low compensation. Individuals in those careers often view their career as a calling. It's not about the money. It's not about the position. It's about helping others succeed. It's about healing. It's about growing. Those are the rewards. Those are the motivations for what they do.

This intrinsic motivation is the secret sauce, if you will, to sustaining belief and behavior, but one can't give intrinsic motivation to another. The best anyone can do is to foster another's exploration of what motivates them, and provide opportunities for them to exploit those motivators. So my objective here today isn't to motivate you per se, rather it's to explore what motivates you, share what I've learned should be (as Christians) our underlying motivation, and perhaps some ways for all of us to explore and exploit these motivations.

If we take an honest assessment of what intrinsically motivates much of what human beings believe and do, we'd find it stems from a pretty consistent genesis, for which history is chocked full of examples, and that is fear. We mentioned this earlier in the context of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, the response of the wicked and lazy servant: "I was afraid." That's what motivated his behavior. Fear is arguably one of the most powerful intrinsic motivators, and is one that frequently defines our actions and thoughts from the time we can have, well, actions and thoughts.

So the questions becomes: Why do we fear? There are a number of theories as to how fear works in people and these theories come from people way smarter than me, and I am not a psychologist, but I'd like to share with you how I see fear working at least in my mind. First, there's Tom Beohm, and Tom Beohm has a set of goals, ambitions, value, priorities, even needs. Then there's the meeting of these objectives, and what consumes my life's experience is living in the tension between these two, between what I need/want/desire, and actually attaining these things.

In between there might be a chasm, might be a brick wall, might be 100 light-years of distance, or an arm-reach away, but that's not as important as my attitude or perspective toward the objective, and the path to attaining that objective. If my mind is consumed with attaining these objectives because I feel entitled to them, and I feel that traversing the gap is a risk that is out of my control, that equals fear to me. Perhaps I

am entitled to some of these things, namely things like breathing, but if risk is introduced, say I'm underwater, then fear sets in.

Our fears are rarely concerns for the immediate physiological needs in our lives, but even if they are, it's all about perspective. Again, I use the terms entitlement, being consumed with attaining, being out of control or being in control and when you think of these things, whose interests are at the forefront? It's fear, and I'm kind of distilling it way down to its basic element here. Is fear a self-centered perspective? Now that may seem pretty harsh, and I'm excluding here pathologically-sourced fears or phobias as a result of disease or dysfunction, but I'd like to do a little Biblical case study of this in action, and while it may not be readily apparent, if we take a couple steps back from these accounts and think about them, fear; again that acute focus on self-interest due to risk or losing control, putting one's personal interests in front of somebody else's, or in front of God's interests or perspectives in a matter, is worth considering.

**Matthew 16:21.** *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.*

22) *Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."*

23) *But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; (and this is the key here) for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." (Christ is identifying here, perspective, mindset. Not on God's interests, man's interests.)*

24) *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."*

25) *For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*

So let's dive into this example. Verse 22 tells us that Peter took Christ aside and rebuked Him. I don't know about you, but the word "rebuke" is not a word I use every day. But notice how the NLT renders verse 22:

*22) But Peter took Him aside and began to reprimand Him for saying such things." (NLT)*

Reprimand to me is a more familiar word than rebuke, but generally it has a negative connotation, much like how we view the word discipline. In Thayer's Greek Definitions the first definition of the Greek word rendered rebuke or reprimand here is *to show honour to, to honour*.

That puts an interesting twist on the situation, doesn't it? Again parents, do you reprimand your children? Of course you do. Why? We reprimand, we teach, we instruct because we want them to learn and grow and make wise choices down the road, It's the Proverbs 22:6 principal. So what is Peter's perspective here? Tough love perhaps? Maybe. One could even make the argument that Peter followed the spirit of

what Christ said and is recorded for us later in Matthew 18, and “went to his brother” with his concern. But was this really tough love, or fear masquerading as love? I think the answer comes in Christ’s response, so let’s dig into that. In verse 23, Christ calls out who is at the heart of the matter, and that is Satan himself, the originator of “I’m not getting what I think I deserve.” We know this from Isaiah 14, and Ezekiel 28. And what does Christ refer to Satan as here? He describes him very specifically. The New King James Version translates it as the familiar “offense”, (get behind me Satan, you are an offense to me) but the New American Standard translates it as “a stumbling block,” the New Living Translation translates it as “a dangerous trap.”

We are going to explore this in more detail towards the end of our time today, but Christ was able to see past this masquerade and see the true source of Peter’s chiding; the why of Peter’s response.

A key element to the nature of stumbling blocks is that they are designed to take advantage of someone in a vulnerable position. The fundamental reference scripture for this is back in Leviticus 19:14, where God commands the children of Israel not to put a stumbling block before the blind. What we see here is that Satan was attempting to trip Christ up, much like he did after Christ fasted for 40 days (recorded in the fourth chapters of both Matthew and Luke), at a point of vulnerability (we’ll see how vulnerable here in just a moment).

The added barb here was that again this was masked as an expression of outgoing concern, again if we look at that word rebuke as *to honor*, from one of the people that was closest to Christ, one of His own disciples. Also notice here the instruction Christ pulls out of this entire experience. We’re going to slowly reread verses 24 and 25:

*24) Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, ...*

That word deny in the Greek means *no connection, to lose sight of*. Hold on to that. We’re going to explore another Greek word later that ties very closely with this. But the question is: Where’s the focus? In denying one’s self, how do we do this? How do we view the risk in doing this? Again, all these elements that contribute to fear.

*24b) and take of his cross and follow me.  
25) For whoever wishes*

In the Greek, the word wishes is: *intends, resolves to, determines*, again it’s the focus. The focus is on saving your own life and that’s going to motivate your behavior.

*25b) ... to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life ...*

Again, we talk about this concept of fear, one of the elements was control; losing control. Are we ready to lose control and lose our life? We’re going to tie all these pieces together as we go along.

*25 continued) loses his life for My sake will find it.*

In the context of our case study that we're doing here, even after this event Peter continued to struggle, to deny himself and lose his life. It would appear that fear, sourced by Satan's influence, motivated his response, not only here, but in other situations as well. Matthew 26: 69-75.

**Matthew 26:69.** *Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean."*

*70) But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about."*

*71) When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."*

*72) And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man."*

*73) A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away."*

*74) Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed.*

*75) And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (NKJV)*

So we have here the, by the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established principle in action, with the third set of witnesses nailing him: "for even the way you talk gives you away." Even when absolutely cornered with the truth, Peter was unable to surrender to the truth. Why? He was observing what was going on. He knew how this was going to end because Christ had just told him, and Christ even told Peter that he was going to deny him. So Peter had all the data, he had all the facts, he had all the information and yet still had this response. Was fear motivating his behavior?

The struggle for Peter didn't end here. Paul recounted the experience in Galatians 2. We're going to explore here what motivated Peter's actions.

**Galatians 2:11.** *Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;*

*12) for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, (why?) fearing those who were of the circumcision. (NKJV)*

His behavior was motivated out of fear.

*13) And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. (NKJV)*

I'm not picking on Peter. I used Peter for our little case study because I think we can find encouragement in Peter's example. How? He was one of the disciples, one of the

twelve. Yet he was subject to human nature. He was subject to Satan's influence. Yet Christ still loved him, and worked with him. And Peter still has a very high position in God's coming kingdom. So then we can look at this and take heart from Peter's example, and know that we can still be loved and supported even though we slip up from time to time. I want to talk more about this as we go along.

I'd like to go back to Christ's example that we alluded to while discussing His exchange with Peter in Matthew 16. I mentioned Satan attempting to exploit Christ's vulnerability regarding his upcoming death, and scripture clearly shows us how vulnerable Christ was at the time immediately leading up to that event.

**Luke 22:41.** *And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray,  
42) saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."  
43) Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.  
44) And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.*

I think it is interesting to note that this account is flanked by Christ instructing his disciples to be praying that they not "fall into temptation" (verses 40 and 46). We've heard this situation (the stresses, the sweat as drops of blood) explained as Christ bearing the burden of the sins of all of mankind in one moment in time. The tremendous pressure of what He was enduring was spiritually and physical crushing for Him. Gethsemane means "oil press", a place where the olives were crushed for their oil. This is why I feel the flanking admonitions regarding temptation are so telling. Christ knew that He had the authority to short-circuit the events that were about to take place and He later says so and as it is recorded in Matthew 26:53.

What is instructive here in what Christ went through and is recorded is that both in word and physically He expressed a very understandable reaction to what was about to be a very, very traumatic experience, but He didn't fall into temptation. He did not succumb to fear. What makes this amazing is how in the end He responded. He acknowledged that He would really rather not do this. Christ wasn't a masochist. He didn't want to be tortured to death. So what did He do? He took His concerns to the Father in a very open and candid manner. This, brethren, is a transformative step to shifting our intrinsic motivation away from fear, and that is to bring our concerns, bring our fears to the Father.

We will continue to explore this further as we go along here, but for now the point I wanted to call out goes all the way back to where we started today with that very simple question: Why? Why are we doing; why are we saying; why are we believing what we do and say and believe? If it is out of fear? And if it is, then we need to start by owning it, acknowledging our present realities, accepting that it is possible to do, act, react, and hold to beliefs totally out of fear.

condone I'm not saying we it, but the first step to fixing a problem is to actually acknowledge that the problem exists in the first place. And notice what happens in verse 43.

**Luke 22:43.** *“Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.”*

God provided for Christ, and He will provide for us, what's needed. This will be vital to keep in mind as we move forward here in this topic. No matter what situation or circumstance we find ourselves in, if we invite God, we invite Jesus Christ to be a part of it, we will be given exactly what we need exactly when we need it. That doesn't always mean a miraculous removal of “the cup” to use Christ's words here; more often than not that doesn't happen, (I think we can speak to that from our own personal experiences) but that's for good reason. The character we build, the faith and trust and reliance on God as our shield and our strength is far, far more valuable than being spared in the end what will amount to be transient. Right? We look back a thousand, two thousand, five thousand years, in the future we look back to this time – transient, temporary discomfort. In the grand scheme of things, not that big of a deal.

So, we've talked about fear as an intrinsic motivator for behavior and a very, very powerful one at that. But, to use Paul's words of 1 Corinthians 12:31, let's explore a more excellent way, again, in the words of the apostle Paul found in Eph 4:1-2

**Ephesians 4:1.** *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,  
2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,*

Bold, underline, italics the last two little words of verse 2: in love. Paul says here that our actions, what we do, he terms is as our walk, our patience, gentleness, tolerance, all these things should be done out of one singular motivation, one driving force, and that is love.

So the question becomes: Do we do what we do, even good things like being tolerant and gentle, because of love? Is it possible to do these things for the wrong reasons and the wrong motivations? Can (for example) we be tolerant because we fear conflict, not because we are interested in expressing love to the other person involved, even if that means “kicking up” a little dust, which isn't always a bad thing in a relationship, again, if the intrinsic motivation, that very simple question of “why am I doing” is love?

Skip down to verse 11 here in Ephesians 4:

*11) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,  
12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*

It's pretty clear in scripture the "what" we are supposed to do, and we see here the varying degrees of application of the "what," but the point is that God has put everyone into the body to fill a specific role. No one is dead weight. No one is expendable. Yes, there are tares in the church, clouds without water, and wolves in sheep's clothing, but I'm not speaking of organizations of men, but the functioning body parts of the very body of Jesus Christ.

Consider for moment the creatures that God has made in this world, and how well each one is constructed for its role and the environment it exists in. We'll take a look at a couple of examples here real quick. The crafting of a hummingbird, which catches tiny insects in-flight, and sips nectar from flowers, with its lightning-fast metabolism (fastest of any animal), ability to hold a stable position in the air even with a cross-wind blowing furiously and rain pouring down, they can hold this very position in the air. They've actually taken slow motion photography of hummingbirds in the rain and it's amazing that while in flight, they actually shake the water off like a wet dog. Image that – just incredible craftsmanship and engineering for this animal to perform its function. And when not flying and eating the ability to basically go into hibernation every night, dropping metabolic functions as much as 90% - it kind of sort of dies every night and then comes back to life again and continues on. Amazing. Let's take a look at the cheetah. It is perfectly crafted for catching gazelle in the hunt, with its acute vision, large nasal passages for greater air intake, it's long, flexible spine. I didn't know this – large cats do not, they have a fixed rigid spine. Cheetahs are actually flexible. And long, powerful hind legs, longer than its front legs so it has that speed and agility. Each of these creatures are perfectly constructed for the role in the ecosystem that it plays.

A hummingbird could do not do what a cheetah does, and visa-versa. In the spirit of Matthew 6, if God puts so much care and detail into a hummingbird, the little teeny tiny creature, how much more the body, the bride of his very Son, His own children. I don't think we can underestimate that brethren.

Reading on here,

*13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

This is the end result. Becoming perfected as Christ is perfect. As the Father is perfect. How does that happen? Reading on.

*14) As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;*

How could any of us be deceived by these things? Perhaps we can find the answer in what it mean to "no longer...be children"? We know that kids can be afraid of a lot; the dark, new environments, strangers, changes to routine to name a few. They are very

susceptible to suggestion and influence because they don't have the experience. They're not grownups. This is frankly what makes child abuse such a heinous crime; it's taking advantage of a position of authority and power and influence in a relationship in which the abused is easily swayed by fearmongering. Spiritually, in the context of the body of Christ we can combat this potential for abuse by doing what it say in verse 15.

*15) but speaking the truth in love (it has to be both true and out of our outgoing care and concern), we are to grow up (yes, we are not to stay children, that's part of this process) in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.*

John 14:6 and Romans 8:39 tell us that Christ is both truth and love, so if we're growing in these attributes, we are by extension growing in Christ.

*16) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies (every joint, we all have a part to play), according to the proper working of each individual part (we each are responsible for our contribution), causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself (our intrinsic motivation?) in love.*

So growth, edification, building up, becoming more like Christ, all these things done in love. Let's take a look at a very familiar passage in this context; looking at it through the lens of our motivations. Again, we're looking at this through the question of: Why?

**1 Corinthians 13:1.** *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

*2) If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*

*3) And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*

In the context of the modern church era, we have been so focused on prophesy, on knowledge or the outward activities, the emphasis of preaching the gospel to the world, but have we really stopped to examine our intrinsic motivation. Have we stopped to ask the why? Perhaps we have asked the why, but the answer has been "this is what you are supposed to do if we want to [fill in the blank]" – and I can think again in my own context of growing up in the church, it was to be on the ushering crew, go to church summer camp, go to Ambassador College, these are the steps you gotta take; these are the hoops you gotta jump through. Perhaps it's to be a deacon, you want to be an elder, you want to be respected, you want to be relevant in the greater church, in the greater Christian world or "if I don't others will think I'm not a team player or I'm not righteous, or I'm not/converted, or I'll be labeled a heretic or face the modern equivalent of being kicked out of the synagogue. Risk of losing what we feel we are entitled to. Risk of loss. All of these reactions motivated out of fear.

So, how do we know then that an action is motivated out of love? Continuing on here in verse 4:

- 4) *Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,*
- 5) *does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,*
- 6) *does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;*
- 7) *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

So what we have here is a list of the fruits of love in action. Yes, we have the actual output of an activity, but these are traits that speak to the true source, the health of the source, and the underlying power of our actions and motivations.

In a sermon given on June 24th, 2017 entitled Don't Follow Your Heart, James Smyda made a great point about judging by fruits. That is actually a process that takes time. Unless you happen to catch a tree at just the right time, and the fruit at just the right point in the maturation process, you really don't know for sure what the end result will be because you're catching it in the process. Along similar lines, a fruit tree can grow tall, can have beautiful branches and leaves, become wide and lush and strong, but if it doesn't ever produce any fruit, if there is no yield, is it doing what it was created to do? It might be a tree, it might be a wonderful tree, but what makes it an apple tree or peach tree or fig tree isn't the fact that it's a tree, it is the fruit it produces.

Human beings are very capable of doing good things. There are a lot of very talented, smart, giving, wise people in this world, but that doesn't mean that love underpins what they do. Many of the greatest intellects have been some of the most insufferable, arrogant, difficult human beings who have ever walked this planet. But brethren, we are called to be a living sacrifice as it says in Romans 12:1 and as Christ demonstrated in His life and His very literal sacrifice, our job is to give, to share and serve out of love in faith with the earnest expectation that (and this is key) God's efforts through us (think: losing our lives for true life) will be of benefit. We're going to continue to explore this towards the end. But that's tough, isn't it? It absolutely is.

In the context of Christ's final hours on this earth, He said,

**John 15:12.** *"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*

*13) Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.  
(NKJV)*

Again, it's being that living sacrifice that is the essence of love, which Christ, in this context which we just read, was about to demonstrate in a very real way to his disciple, not only then but it echoes through time. We have this example for us today and Christ continues to be our Intercessor. Tough? Sure. Hold onto this as we are going to come back to Christ's conversation here in just a bit.

So we've seen that love should be, as a Christian, our primary intrinsic motivator for what we say and what we do. We've seen the characteristics that will be manifest if love

is the motivation. So how does this happen? How can we move to answering the question we started with today; that why question from fear to outgoing care and concern rooted from within?

I've already talked about a couple of the steps involved, those being owning the fact that we do have fear, that we don't always act out of love, and involving God in confession of these shortcomings. At this point, I do want to call out a caveat to this fear concept, and to explain turn with me to Ecclesiastes 12:13. As I was going through this and putting it together, this question kind of hit me and I thought maybe I should take a second to kind of talk about this.

We're all familiar with the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon recounting his experiences in living life to the fullest, if you will. And at the end of the day when all is said and done, we read his conclusion to the matter.

***Ecclesiastes 12:13.*** *The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.*

The fear of God is outside of the scope of what we are talking about today, but I wanted to take a few minutes to talk about it. Because I don't want to send a message that all fear is bad. We are instructed here and it's very, very clear, that we are to fear God, but this fear has a couple of key considerations. These are just a few to keep in mind.

First is that the fear of God is not a paralyzing fear. Yes, reverence; yes, awe, crippling, no. By way of example, I'll just refer to it, is in Joshua 5, where Joshua comes face-to-face with a Man (capital M) with a sword, He's identified as the commander of the armies of the Lord, and Joshua's response was "I am at your command, you tell me what to do." Yes, he bowed down and took off his sandals, but he was also ready to take action. We can think of the fear of God as being the power to step out on faith.

Second, fear is not the end-all, let's notice this:

***Psalms 111:10.*** *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. (NKJV)*

The fear of the Lord is where it begins. The NLT translates the first part of this verse as *The fear of the Lord is the foundation of true wisdom.* So ask yourself: If a building were just a foundation, it wouldn't be much of a building, would it? Maybe a great basketball court, but it's not a building.

Again a bit of digression to acknowledge that there is a fear that we are to have that is paramount to our spiritual health, But of everything and everyone else, to be motivated intrinsically by love means we have to let fear go. We won't turn back to it, but the example of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane really, again highlights this in action. Again, Christ acknowledges to His Father that He wouldn't really rather not have to face

that torturous death, but then what does He say? “Not my will, but yours...” – He lets it go. He puts it into the Father’s hands.

Another example of this comes again from a passage we talked about earlier back in Matthew 16 where Christ instructs that in order for us to have true life, if we desire Him and desire to have a relationship with Him, we have to let go of ourselves. We have to let go of our sinful nature. We have to let go of our carnality. We have to let go of fear. We have to lose our life; shift our perspective, focus, our intrinsic motivation. And we have to do this to gain, and we will gain, eternal life.

***Psalm 55:22.*** *Our LORD, we belong to you. We tell you what worries us, and you won't let us fall. (CEV)*

The question for us is: Do we believe that God won't let us fall? As long we are holding onto our human nature, we're holding on to fear, we are holding onto that control, we are inhibited from being able to live life out of the right motivation. 1 John 4, we'll read verse 18. You cannot talk about fear and love and not turn to 1 John 4:18. No surprise scriptures today. Certainly a lot of very familiar ones, but hoping that we're getting maybe a slightly different perspective on some of these things.

***1 John 4:18.*** *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.*

I'd like to read the first part of verse 18 here from the Amplified Bible:

***1 John 4:18.*** *There is no fear in love [dread does not exist], but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror! (AMP)*

The Greek word translated in most translations as “cast” here, from Thayers, means *to throw or let go of a thing* (and this is really key) *without caring where it falls*. Not keeping track. It's not putting on the shelf to come back to because it is a crutch or safety net. No, it is letting it go and you have no idea where it's going. It is lost and gone forever, letting to go without concern for where it goes, but knowing that our lives are in the hands of our Creator who is the paragon of love.

Being motivated by love means letting go, but in turn also means something else potentially much more damaging to our pride and ego. For the sake of time we won't go through it, as we are all familiar with the parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:30-35. Remember that parable was given in the context of answering the question about loving a neighbor, about what really matters in terms of motivations and actions. We know how Samaritans were viewed by the Jews at the time, that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho itself was fraught with peril and plagued with robbers (hence the parable wasn't outside the realm of possibility), and that the Samaritan gave of his own resources (time, money, transportation) at his own peril, risk, and inconvenience.

The point here yourself vulnerable. The Samaritan had numerous, and frankly, legitimate reasons to not stop. But being moved out of outgoing concern for a fellow human being, expressing that perfect love we see casts out or lets go without worrying about what you're going to lose or what you're going to suffer, it lets go of fear.

Making ourselves vulnerable is not only counter to our human nature, but we have been conditioned, both in the context of society as well as (sadly) in the church, to keep up appearance. We build up and defend these walls around ourselves and between one another. And brethren, this is a tragedy, as the one place where we should all feel safe, where we should be allowed to be genuine, to be authentic with one another is in our relationships with one another in the body of Christ. The apostle John gives us some sobering instruction in this regard:

**1John 4:20.** *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? (NKJV)*

The word "hates" here in the Greek means *to persecute, or love less*. Sound familiar? How much infighting, how much lovelessness exists, how damaged are our relationships within the church? How much of this damage has been done with the wrong motivations; damage done because of selfishness, pride, fear?

We can't say we love God and not love our brother. It's not possible. We get that here from verse 20 of 1 John 4. And this really brings us around to the questions that we started with: If the why of what we believe and practice is not motivated out of love, then we're not demonstrating love to one another, and if we're not demonstrating love to one another, we can't accurately claim that we love God.

But, there's good news. We have the opportunity and the power to change this. How do we do this?

**John 15:15.** *No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (NKJV)*

What makes this possible (we're talking about the power to change) is that we have a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been made privy to a more intimate knowledge and relationship with the Almighty God. We talked about being part of the body in the context of Ephesians 4, but this is more than just being a cog in the machine. They made us, and Jesus gave us the ultimate personal example of what it means to be motivated by love in coming to this world as a flesh human being, as a servant, and giving His life. Talk about being vulnerable. As a human being, Christ was subject to temptations, pain, hunger, thirst, frustration, anger, the whole range of the human experience, yet without sinning, without falling short, without losing sight of the reason, the goal, His why. We're going to take a little snapshot of what was in Christ's mind during this timeframe in John 13:3.

**John 13:3.** *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,*

This is the insider's view into what was going on in Christ's mind during this timeframe. Christ knew and reflected on three things: (1) He had been given authority, He was empowered, (2) He knew where His true source of power and authority was from, and (3) He knew that in the end He would be reunited with the Father.

Let's take these concepts and apply them to ourselves. Have we not been empowered? Have we not been invited into a relationship with that source of empowerment? And don't we have the knowledge of what our destiny is, and the plan of salvation that God and Jesus Christ have been working out? Understanding these concepts should, brethren, make us unstoppable. Think of Romans 8:31: *If God is for us, who can be against us?* God is very much for us.

And what is this empowerment of which I speak?

**2 Timothy 1:6.** *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

*7) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (NKJV)*

We have God's spirit, given to us through the laying on of hands, which gives us the strength, the self-control, and the undergirding of love as our intrinsic motivation to act. As verse 6 tells us here, we have to stir up or as it says in the Amplified Bible *fan the flames, keep burning*, this power in order for it to be useful, but the point is, brethren, we have it.

So how can we act out of love? We have a personal relationship as the Bride of Christ, as children of the God family, and have an understanding of what that means and what our part to play is through the power of the holy spirit within us. Being mindful of what we believe, what we do, and what underpins them is a practice. It's very easy, especially as time is moving forward and much of what we do with technology is making our lives pretty easy, pretty automated, and it's easy for us to follow suit, and live our lives on auto-pilot, or auto-responder. Even if the "what" is good or noble, if the "why" isn't, we have to ask this question: Are we truly showing love to one another? Are we showing love to God?

The human experience is fraught with beliefs and actions motivated out of fear, and that fear (which has come from Satan's influence since the dawn of time) is rooted in pride, rooted in selfishness, rooted in putting our own interests in front of others. But we can combat that, and be motivated in word and deed in love by coming to terms with the reality of our human condition, by bringing our fears and shortcomings to our Father who cares for us, understands what we are going through, putting our fears into His hands, letting it go and taking the next steps out of faith knowing that we are weak and

vulnerable in the flesh, but we have this relationship. We have knowledge and both of these through the most awesome power in the universe, the very spirit of God, with these pieces put together, we can act out of love. Love can be the principle intrinsic motivator in our lives.

So, brethren: Why? As time progresses and we are perfected in Christ's image, may the answer to that question be equally as straightforward and equally as clear: love.