



A Spiritual Encouragement Message

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Motivated

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Trying to motivate someone to do good can be a challenge. As the father of four (soon to be five) children I am constantly trying to implement techniques that will motivate them to do good. That is to not do those things that are detrimental and to act in ways that are pleasing to the Lord. I have found that what motivates them are the same things that motivate me! What about you, what motivates you to do good?

The Apostle Paul was in a similar situation with his child in the faith, Timothy. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to serve the body, specifically to instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, pay attention to myths, and endless genealogies (1Timothy 1:3, 1:18-19). Timothy was left in Ephesus to do this good, but challenging work. He was left to rebuke, correct, and tell people to stop doing things. Sound like fun? With such a challenging ministry at hand, it is not a surprise to find that Timothy grew weary of his task and was not successfully fulfilling his mission. In Paul's second letter to Timothy we find a tired, weary, and ashamed disciple of Christ that needed to be motivated to do good (2Timothy 1:5-8).

As we consider ways to get motivated and motivate others to do good, let us open up Paul's second letter to Timothy, which is an inspired text that provides solutions to this ongoing challenge. Here are a few motivational techniques that I have gleaned from its pages.

Examples Motivate: Timothy had great examples of faith in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. The apostle Paul wanted Timothy to draw inspiration from these two godly women (2Tim. 1:5, 3:10-15). If we are sluggish in our faith, we too would be wise to reflect on the godly examples we have in our lives. The lives of our godly grandparents, parents, or Christian siblings can be a remarkable source of spiritual energy when we are feeling low.

Wrath Motivates: As a child the belt or a stick was a painful reminder of the consequences of not doing good. I can still hear the ominous sound of the belt rapidly going through my dad's pant loops. I vividly recall the journey to break off a stick to be spanked with from the tree in the front yard of my grandmother's house, a task she gave me when I chose not to do good. Punishment was not fun, and it motivated me to do good! We shouldn't be surprised that even as adults, we can be motivated by consequences. Paul motivates Timothy by reminding him that disobedience ends in hardships and condemnation (2Tim. 2:5, 16-18, 3:1-9, 4:1). Like Timothy, we can be motivated and motivate others by remembering the wrath that comes upon those that are disobedient.

Rewards Motivate: Who doesn't love payday? We go to work, punch our time card, and put in our labor

for the reward we receive as a result. That beautiful paycheck at the end of a tough week is so sweet. I remember getting two of my children to stop fighting for two weeks (YES! TWO WEEKS!) by offering them a reward if they were able to succeed. With Timothy down and discouraged, Paul motivated him by reminding him of the reward he was going to receive if he did good (2Timothy 4:5-8). The crown of righteousness is waiting to be awarded by our God to those who finish the course, keep the faith, and fulfill His purpose on earth. The reward that God will give to His faithful children can pull us out of discouragement and inspire us to do good.

We are going through a period that has been very disorientating for most of us. The huge changes that we have endured the past six months have left many of us in a place like our brother Timothy. Many of us have grown weary and need a shot in the arm, some inspiration, and some motivation to do good. I encourage all of us to pick up Paul's second letter to Timothy and while you are reading it reflect on how Paul's motivation to Timothy to do good can inspire you as well.