



Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church

Lesson 17: The Motivations of Discipleship

INTRODUCTION

1. What are things people do to find motivation in life? _____

MAIN IDEA

Why should we seek to obey God and grow in holiness? What are the right reasons for trying to grow as Christians and helping others do the same? We should grow as Christians and help others do the same because of who God is, what He has done for us in Christ, and who He has made us in Christ.

DIGGING IN

In Colossians 3, the apostle Paul lays out a vision for growing as disciples of Jesus that is based upon a rich diversity of motivations.

Colossians 3:1–13

1. What does Paul command us to do in verse 1? On what basis does Paul command us to do this (v. 1)? _____

2. Paul is saying that although we were spiritually dead, we have now been raised to life with Christ, and now we are seated with Christ in heaven. How should this make us want to grow as a disciple of Jesus?

3. How is this motivation for discipleship different from a “just do it” approach, where we seek to obey God out of a bare sense of obligation? _____

4. What does Paul command us to do in verse 2? On what grounds does Paul command us to do this (vv. 3–4)? _____

5. In verse 3, Paul says that, if you're a Christian, you've died. You've died to your old self. You've died to sin. You've died to the power of this world which once held you captive. How should the fact that you've died to sin encourage you to pursue holiness? _____

6. In verse 4, Paul reminds us that when Christ appears, we will also appear with Him in glory.
- a) Think about a difficult task you've completed that had a specific goal in mind, like a race or a project on a deadline. Now imagine if the outcome of that task you're striving for is perfectly sure and will certainly happen. How would that affect your effort in the present? _____

- b) In a similar way, how should the certain hope of being glorified with Christ fuel your efforts to grow in Christ now? _____

In sum, the first four verses of this passage motivate our growth in godliness by reminding us of our death to sin and new life in Christ (vv. 1–3), and the certain hope of future glory with Christ (v. 4).

7. What does Paul say to “put to death” in verse 5? What does it mean to “put to death” a certain behavior or attitude? _____

8. What does Paul say “is coming” in verse 6? Why? _____

It's clear from Paul's teaching about God's wrath that one reason we should obey Christ is because God will punish sin.

- First, we should obey Christ in order to demonstrate the genuineness of our faith. Jesus says that everyone who loves Him does what He commands (John 14:15). If we do not obey Jesus's commands, we do not belong to Him, which means that we are facing God's wrath.
- Second, God's wrath against sin should motivate us to flee from it and to pursue righteousness because God's wrath reveals what sin really is: treason against God that deserves to be punished. Thus, meditating on God's hatred of sin should cause us to hate it too.

9. What does Paul command us to “put away,” in verse 8? What does he command us not to do in verse 9? What reason does he give for why we shouldn’t do these things (vv. 9–10)? _____

10. What does Paul say about God’s attitude and actions toward us in verses 12–13? What does he tell us to do in light of these things in those verses? _____

In this study, we’ve seen that God gives us a rich variety of motivations to spur us on to grow in godliness and help others do the same:

- Our death to sin and new life in Christ (vv. 1–3).
- Our certain hope of glory with Christ (v. 4).
- The fact that God hates sin and will punish sin (v. 6).
- Our new nature in Christ (vv. 9–10).
- God’s electing love for us (v. 12).
- God’s forgiveness of our sins (v. 13).

11. Are any of these truths new to you? If all of them are familiar, are there ones that you haven’t considered before as motivations to grow in godliness?

12. What are some ways you can use the truths in this passage to spur on your own and others’ growth in godliness? How can you practically reshape your heart’s motivations?

13. In light of this passage, what do you think are some wrong motivations for growing in godliness? Do you personally struggle with any of these?¹

¹ Bobby Jamieson, *Growing One Another: Discipleship in the Church*, ed. Mark Dever, 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 23–26.