

Habit, Duty, or Love?

Introduction, and confession:

For much of my life, even as a Christian, I struggled as a “people pleaser.” God has given me insight and power to set me free from that. However, it still occasionally rears its evil head. Recently during my morning prayer time, God convicted me that at times, I connect with Him deeply, and with love and gratitude to Him and for Him. But, there are times however that I pray out of habit, or out of a sense of duty. I then asked God to continue to change my heart to be committed to always look at the **motive** for my prayers, and my actions.

The following are things I have listed that we often do as followers of Jesus Christ.

(Consider checking the things you also enjoy doing to deepen your walk with Jesus)

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to church | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorize Bible verses | <input type="checkbox"/> Get together with other Christians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray to and meditate on God | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to Christian music | <input type="checkbox"/> Love and serve others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read and study the Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> Read Christian literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Tell others about Jesus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |

Now let's look deeper into our Christian life at the reasons that we do the things we do.

There are at least three main reasons we do what we do as Christians in our daily lives.

Briefly discuss the following with their definitions, followed by some associated Bible passages:

- 1) **Habit** - (a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition.... an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly, or completely involuntary - Merriam-Webster Dictionary)
 - 1) 1 Timothy 5:13 describes people who are in the habit of being idle, gossips and busybodies.
 - 2) Hebrews 10:22-25 describes some who are in the habit of not getting together with others to encourage and spur others on towards love and good deeds.
 - 3) Note that habits, good or bad, move us to “automatic” behavior, lacking much thought.
- 2) **Duty** - (moral or legal obligation - Merriam-Webster Dictionary)
 - 1) Psalms 78:5-8 describes the duty to teach our children about God, His laws and commandments, that they would put their trust in Him and not forget His deeds.
 - 2) Luke 17:7-10 reminds us that a servant deserves no special thanks for merely carrying out his duty.
 - 3) Note that duty is generally good, but it is done because it is required or expected, and may come with consequences if it is not fulfilled.
- 3) **Love** - (doing what is the ‘good will’ of another; what is in the other person’s best interest, regardless of feelings or personal gain. It is a choice based on what is good and right in the site of God)
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a describes a wonderful description of godly love; “agape” love. It does not depend on feelings but is that which seeks the good of others, even those who have wronged us. It also does not mean liking, enabling or encouraging wrongs done by others.
 - 2) 1 John 3:18 reminds us that God’s love results in actions with truth, not just words.

Read the following verses and describe what is being taught and how it may pertain to motive:

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| • 1 Samuel 15:24 | • John 6:26 | • Matthew 22:37 |
| • 1 Samuel 16:7 | • Matthew 6:5-7 | • Galatians 1:10 |
| • John 5:39-40 | • Matthew 15:8-9 | • Ephesians 2:8-9 |

This brings us to some questions that apply to our own hearts:

- ◆ What is the motive behind each of the behaviors you have checked above?
- ◆ Consider placing an “H” (for habit), “D” (for duty) or “L” (for love) next to the behaviors that best describes your general motives for doing them.
- ◆ God knows our hearts (Romans 8:27). So be honest and don’t worry (1 Peter 5:7) if your motives are sometimes based on habits, or out of duty.
- ◆ Pray to God that you grow in your love for Him (Deuteronomy 6:5), your faith in Him (Mark 11:22-24), your knowledge of Him (2 Peter 1:2), and your gratitude to Him (Colossians 3:16) so that the motives behind you choices are done more and more out of love, and less and less out of habit or duty.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
(Deuteronomy 6:5)