

Worship Focuses our Wavering Hearts

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[0 : 0 0] how often do you do the right thing? Often? Maybe not often enough? What even is the right thing, you might be asking? So do we know what the right thing is? How often do we do it? Is it for life insurance? But the real question is why? Why do we do what is right? Why do we do the things that we think is the right things to do? What really motivates us? What even perhaps is it an advert that sways us to live for something that we really believe in? Or is it because someone else told us that that was the right thing to do? What is our motivation in life? I've got some funny adverts up here that might be examples of things that people are like, yeah, I'm going to live for that.

And if you have the first one, it's the Bulmers advert. So there's an advert that's basically saying we're told to eat apples. An apple a day keeps the dentist away. And so there the advert is advertising Bulmers. It's saying, well, we have apples, so drink our cider because that's a good thing to do. So you'll be fine. And there's another advert with a tiny little baby and a mother holding her child. And it's a Coca-Cola advert saying, start them young because they're going to have a guaranteed happiness if you start them on Coke really early. I don't know, you might be swayed to go with that. Who knows? Or maybe there's something else that really motivates you, that really gets you up in the morning. This, I believe, is our last series on worship and worship transforming our lives. This is about transforming our wavering hearts. But just to recap, we're talking about worship. That's it. There's the Bulmers advert. Very persuasive. We're talking about worship being our whole lives, not just what we do on a Sunday, but what we do every day, what gets us up in the morning, how we choose to live our life.

And Revelation is an interesting book because it is full of symbolism and kind of strange things we don't really understand, maybe crazy monsters with lots of arms. So I thought I'd kind of help us illustrate a little bit about what this bit of Revelation is talking about because there was something that really struck me when I was reading it. Right at the beginning, it says about Christ being holding these seven stars and walking among these seven golden lampstands. Who knows what that's about? But as I was reading up about it, because I don't claim to be the person who knows everything about Revelation, I was really struck because this guy, Morris, was talking about it being about Christ being right in the center of the churches. So these different lampstands representing the churches, which were letters that St. John was writing to through Jesus. And he's saying, I'm in the midst and I really care about what's going on. I'm really intimately and concerned about everything that goes on in your life. And so he's there, he's in our midst. And I think that's something for us to just be reminded on today as I carry on talking, that Christ is in our midst. He cares really deeply. So as we think about what motivates us, let's be reminded of that as well. And this passage in Revelation carries on talking to the church in Ephesus. And it's commending them for the good things that they're doing. It's saying, well done, you're recognizing when there are people talking and they're really not talking about what they should be. And you're saying that's not right and getting rid of them. And that's a good thing. Well done. Commending them for it. But then he's also criticizing them for it, which seems strange. You're kind of doing the right thing, but then it turns out maybe it's the wrong thing. It's hard to know. Why are they being criticized for seemingly doing the right thing? Well, it's what motivates them. It's what are their motives behind it. What their motives become their stumbling block. You know, for us, sometimes it can feel really good when we get praised for doing things. And perhaps it's because actually it bigs us up quite a lot. Or sometimes it feels really great if you know that you're a little bit better than someone else because you know that you're doing really well because they're not. I don't know.

Maybe it's just me. I've got some examples of different things that we might do. And there may be different motivations behind why we might do them. So for example, picking up rubbish from the street. Are we doing it to make someone's life easier so they don't have to do it so often?

[5 : 24] Or perhaps we're doing it to be recognized and to be seen to be doing a really good thing. Or maybe having people over for dinner. Is it because you love giving and love sharing what you have?

Or maybe because you're hoping for an invite as well at some point. Or maybe complimenting someone at work because they've done a really good thing and they deserve a compliment. Or is it actually because you're hoping for that job promotion eventually? You might say, you're looking great today. It's hard to see what other people's motivations are, but we can look at our own motivations. We can look at what gets us up in the morning. And actually, we know that God knows what our motivations are. He sees straight into our hearts. He's right in the midst of us and he cares. So going back to the passage, the reason why they were being rebuked for seemingly doing the right thing was because Jesus was saying, you've forgotten the whole point.

You've forgotten why we asked you to do these things. Haven't you remembered your first love? What was that first thing when you first found out about me? That fact that God loves you and he came down to earth so that you could know him, so that you could love him too. This is what you're created to do. It says you have forsaken your first love. Come on, guys. You've forgotten the whole point.

The very thing, all of our actions, all of our thoughts, our words should come from knowing God's love and wanting to portray that onto others, wanting to demonstrate that. Knowing God's love invigorates us.

It makes us want to do more for the right reasons, for the right motives. Jesus was asked at some point early on when he was walking the earth, what are the greatest of the commandments? There are so many.

[7 : 32] What are the greatest ones? And we probably all know it. He says, love the Lord with everything, with your heart, your soul, your mind, your strength. Love God. And also, love your neighbor.

Love those around you. This is what God calls us to do because he first loved us. That is our first love. So could that be our motivation? Could that be what gets us up in the morning?

If our motivation is selfish, looking for that promotion or I don't know whatever, then it's dead. It's not going anywhere. If our motivation comes from human praises, that's going to soon perish.

But if our motivation comes from knowing God's love, comes from knowing that he first loved us, then as we spend time with him in worship, in what we do, in our actions, in our thoughts, then we're going to get more of a glimpse of that first love.

Then that's going to help us keep going, keep being motivated. I've got a person to talk to you about, a lady that I met a few years ago called Kasoni.

[8 : 53] And she grew up in Sambura, I think there's a picture of her, which is North Kenya. She lived in a tribe with her family.

And the tribe that she lived in had certain rituals and things that would help confirm that you are becoming a woman.

Some things that perhaps our culture wouldn't quite understand. She was beginning, she was about eight, she was beginning to grow up and her friends and her family were talking about this thing, this initiation which is going to see her into womanhood.

So she started getting excited about it. But when she found out what it was, FGM, she wasn't so sure that that was the right thing to be doing. She didn't know anyone else, she didn't know God at that point.

But she knew that this wasn't right. So something within her, perhaps the spirit at work, moved her to actually run away from her family, from her village. And she ended up meeting a family who were Christians and who told her about Jesus.

[10 : 08] Who told her the life that she can live knowing Jesus, knowing that she is accepted and valued and loved, just as she is.

And so as she grew to know the Lord, she grew to know God's love. She wanted to demonstrate this to everyone that she met. So she learned more about health care and went into schools and taught mums and taught especially other girls who were also thinking of running away from FGM. And this became her life, her motivation, her goal to show God's love to others, which did cost her a lot. As we come to God, our Heavenly Father, as we worship Him in adoration, and we're completely overwhelmed by His love for us, then He shows us His love for the world.

We're given that motive to live. But the thing is, it's not always easy. We've heard a bit of Val's story, there are kind of good times and there are bad times.

And we can keep on trying to do the right thing because we know God loves us. And sometimes it doesn't always work out. Or we kind of think, why are we here? But actually, there's that reminder that Jesus is with us, in the middle, in the midst of us.

[11 : 42] And He deeply cares. He calls us to come with Him. So as sometimes these things aren't always easy, when we know that we're living for God's love, He equips us and gives us the courage that we need.

When we come back to Him, when we worship Him, when we don't know what the words are to say, He gives us the strength to carry on. For Kasone, it cost her a lot.

It cost her her family, her community. But she knew that this was the right thing to do. And every year they go back there and give the family a goat as a kind of peace offering, which actually might seem a bit odd, but in that culture is a pretty big thing.

They continue to show love to that family who rejects her completely daily. But she still chooses to love them and to do what God is calling her to do.

So I really hope perhaps that might be a motivation for us to know that in the hard times when we perhaps feel that we're not quite sure where we're going, hope seems lost or motivations are just in the wrong rut, we can remember that our Heavenly Father is here in our midst and cares deeply about us to keep going, to keep persevering, so we can keep coming to Him and praising and worshipping Him, because that's what we were created to do.

[13 : 17] So as I close, I would love to encourage you, perhaps if you are feeling a bit wavering today or a bit stuck in a rut, then please do ask for prayer or grab someone and pray that you would be reminded of that first love again, that you would be reminded of what it is that really motivates us, that that God who completely loves us, who brings Himself to earth to let us know Him intimately, cares for each hour of our lives, hopes that we might live our lives for Him.