

**YA' GOTTA' WANNA'
Deuteronomy 4:29**

INTRODUCTION:

Our theme for 2010 is FIT FOR LIFE and we have divided that theme into four units: Motivation, Diet, Exercise and Lifestyle. Today, we are going to begin to explore the theme of motivation. But before we get too deep into the study, perhaps I should define "motivation".

A young, smart aleck cowboy was riding his horse one day and saw an old man on a mule. The young cowboy decided to have a little fun, so he drew his 6-shooter and told the old man to get off the mule and dance! He said to the old man, "Have you ever danced?" Then he began to empty his revolver near the feet of the old man, laughing while he danced!

After a few minutes, the cowboy ran out of bullets! The old man wiped his brow, then slowly reached into his belongings and pulled out a loaded shotgun. He points the shotgun at the young cowboy and said, "Young man, have you ever kissed a mule?" The young cowboy looked cross-eyed down the barrel of the shotgun and said, "No, but I've always wanted to!"

That, my friends, is motivation!

If you have ever made a New Year's resolution to get fit, you know that it takes more than a good resolution for you to get in shape. You need motivation. It is also true that the more motivated you are, the more likely you are to be successful.

It will not surprise you to know that the same is true in your quest for spiritual fitness. It is possible to become spiritually fit. You can do it. You can become fit, as measured by the example of Jesus, but you have to be motivated. You've really got to want to.

After the Hebrew people left Egypt on their exodus to the Promised Land, the LORD led them to the Jordan River at the border of the Land of Canaan. Even though the LORD had promised them that He would deliver this land into their hands, the people were afraid and shrunk back from possessing their land of promise. So, as punishment, God required them to wander as homeless nomads for forty years until that entire generation of adults had died off.

After forty years, Moses led the LORD'S chosen people back to the Jordan River; back to the margin of Canaan. There, Moses addressed the people for the purpose of motivating them to be spiritually fit for the task of

possessing the land and settling it as a colony for the LORD. Within that motivational speech, Moses said to the Hebrews:

...If...you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.

So let me say again: It is possible to become spiritually fit. You can do it. You can become fit, as measured by the example of Jesus, but you have to be motivated. You've really got to want to.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MOTIVATION

The word "motivation" comes from the root, "motive" and motive derives from the Latin word "*motus*" meaning "to move". Literally, motivation is what moves you.

Can I tell you a tractor story? Last week, some of you noticed my Allis sitting on the parking strip on the south side of the youth parsonage. I had moved it out of the carport so that we could carry Christmas decorations in and out of the basement of the youth parsonage. (I'd hate for any of those storage boxes to get scratched by my tractor, you know!)

On Saturday afternoon, after we were finished undecorating the church, I got ready to move the Allis back into the carport and while it would start, it wouldn't move. To make a long cold story short, there was moisture in the transmission and the water had frozen so that the transmission oil was a solid block of black ice.

Sunday afternoon, I built a charcoal fire under the Allis and within a few hours, the transmission had thawed enough that I could move the tractor. I started the engine, put the tractor in gear and moved it about 23 inches and the tractor died. I got off and cranked it and cranked it and cranked it and couldn't get it running again. So I checked and, sure enough, it was out of gas. This is not the first time I've run that tractor out of gas! It's kind of a funny thing but even back in 1936, it took fuel to power the tractor.

Someone has said that motivation is the fuel that empowers a person to meet his goals, his wants and his needs. In the same way that you cannot drive very far without fuel, you cannot go very far in life without motivation.

Benjamin Franklin said that motivation is when your dreams put on work clothes. Until there is motivation, dreams are only wishes, wants, notions, whims. With motivation, what you desire can become a reality. Motivation matters. Motivation is the stimulus for action and without motivation there will be no action. Without motivation nothing will get done.

I suspect that I didn't need to tell you that motivation really is that important. But it might be beneficial to consider the sources of our motivation.

II. THE SOURCES OF MOTIVATION

Essentially, motivation can derive from two different sources. Sometimes we are motivated by external incentives and sometimes by internal incentives.

If, after the holidays, you felt bloated, sluggish and lethargic, that might be a motivation to exercise and lose weight. If your clothes got a little tight over the last few days, that might be a motivation to start a diet. (Or it might be a motivation to buy a new wardrobe.) If you feel guilty about the cheese ball that was supposed to be a gift to someone else and it became a gift to your hips, that guilt might be a motivation to curb your appetite. Those are internal motivations for action. The incentive for action comes from inside yourself.

On the other hand, if you went to the bank and the teller looked you up and down and asked when your baby is due, and you aren't pregnant, that might motivate you to tone up your midsection and that would be an external motivation. If the last time you stepped on the scales at Wal-Mart, the digitized voice scolded, "one at a time, please" that would be an external motivation to drop some weight. If they had to use a wide-angle lens to take your driver's license photo that might be an external motivation to start making some changes in your life.

We can be moved to action by both internal incentives and by external forces. And there is nothing wrong with either. Internal and external reasons are both legitimate grounds for doing what needs to be done.

God uses both sources of motivation to move us to be fit for life.

- Internally, we are compelled to obedience to the Lord by love. Externally, we are compelled to obedience by the hope of heaven.
- Internally, we are constrained from sin by the guilt and shame we feel when we disobey. Externally, we are constrained from sin by the certainty of Judgment and the fear of hell.
- Internally, we are drawn to church attendance because we sense that this is what the Lord wants of us. Externally, we are drawn because the sermons are just so darned good.

Both internal and external motivations are of value. But I will say that if someone or something else moves you to act, then someone or something else can steal your motivation. When the drive comes from within, it is less apt to be taken from you.

III. THE SUSTAINING OF MOTIVATION

If you have ever made a New Year's resolution, you will know that getting motivated is easy. Staying motivated is difficult. Mark Twain said that it was easy to quit smoking; he had done it hundreds of times.

I've started diets hundreds of times. I've begun exercise programs hundreds of times. I've set out to read through the Bible in a year...well, let's see, how old am I...let's just say numerous times.

Motivation to begin is easy. But the motivation to finish is difficult. Yet that is the key to success. A Japanese proverb says that when you have completed 95% of your journey, you are halfway there. Maybe, but sometimes I find that when I've completed 95% of the job, I'm still only halfway done. Half of the job is just getting it finished.

Any jobs around your home that you started, got them far enough along that you could get by and intended to complete when you could get around to it? I'll wager that some of those are still not done. We need to sustain our drive until we've reached our goal.

The same is true in spiritual fitness. The roles of most churches are full of the names of people who joined the church with every intention of being active disciples of Jesus but who have stopped by the wayside, short of their goal. They used to attend. They used to be active. They used to pray. They used to tithe. They used to invite others. They used to serve in some role or capacity. They used to...but they don't.

Gold medals are not given to those who start fast. Blue ribbons are not given to those who begin a project. The Super Bowl trophy doesn't go to the teams that win the first game of the year but to the one that wins the last game of the season.

And the Crown of Life is reserved for those who are faithful unto death. Paul's testimony to Timothy about his own discipleship is,

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

The battle had been fought. The race had been finished. He had been faithful. So the prize was to be his. His motivation had sustained him through to the end.

Our theme, FIT FOR LIFE, speaks to the need to become spiritually fit so we can really live life. It also speaks to the need to become spiritually fit so we can inherit eternal life. But do not miss the fact that it speaks to the

need to be fit all the way to the end of our lives. As I said last week, the goal is not to be spiritually fit for a moment, spiritually fit for a month or spiritually fit for a year or more. The goal is to be spiritually fit for life. And that requires sustained motivation.

It was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who wrote, "*The essential thing 'in heaven and earth' is. . . that there should be a long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living.*" Now I do not agree with everything that Nietzsche wrote but it would be hard to quarrel with that. Essentially, spiritual fitness requires a long obedience in the same direction.

So what sustains a person's motivation through good times and bad? What causes a disciple of Jesus to maintain a long obedience in the same direction? What drives someone to resist temptation and be fit for life?

On the one hand, it is the certain knowledge that spiritual fitness will be rewarded with eternal life. And on the other hand, it is the certain knowledge that the One who loves us most, most loves for us to be like Him.

CONCLUSION:

So may I be so brash as to ask what motivates you? Why are you here today?

The November 2, 2009 *Chicago Tribune* reported that at Lighthouse Church of All Nations in Alsip, the congregation can get more than just prayer at the Sunday worship services. If a lucky – or “blessed and highly favored” – churchgoer is in the right seat, he can also receive a cash prize. At each of the three Sunday services, the Rev. Dan Willis pulls a number of one seat from a bag and the worshiper in that seat wins a cash prize. The church gives away \$1,000 each Sunday, Willis said.

I guess that is a motivation to attend church but it won't make a person fit for life. That requires something higher, something nobler to allure your sight and your life for the rest of your life.

INVITATION: #566 – “*I Am Resolved*”