

Renew Series Week 3 Devotions

Our devotions this week, written by Grace Alexander, are going to help us connect with God and help us understand how important it is to be motivated. On Sunday we learnt that motivation is about knowing why we do what we do, what keeps us moving forward and what hinders progress so we can think and act like champions.

Day 1: Who Am I Motivated By?

Read: *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24). "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'* (Matthew 25:40)

Reflect: Trying to motivate yourself to do things can be hard, especially some things. It isn't always what you feel like doing or your first choice in activity, and so you can't count on your own feelings or willingness to motivate you. What if, however, you were asked to do those very things that frustrate or bore you for Jesus? Colossians 3:23-24 above, says that WHATEVER we do we should do it with ALL our heart, as if we were doing it for the Lord. Would you be willing to take out the rubbish, clean up the mess the dog made, or make the new person feel welcome if you were asked by God Himself?

Learn: Matthew 25:40 says that whatever we do for even the lowliest person, we do for God. That should be motivation enough! We are told in Colossians 3:23-24 not to think of ourselves as working for human masters but to think of each task as done for the Lord- an opportunity to give Him glory and even when nobody sees, to love Him and bring Him joy as we choose an attitude of willingness to serve Him in everything!

Do: Think back on the last week and the tedious tasks you have had to push yourself to do. Ask God to show you how you can train your brain to see Him as your motivation and recipient of your labour and sacrifices. Train your brain to see every task as an opportunity to serve God and not just an earthly authority.

Pray: Father, thank You that You can motivate me as You reveal to me that ALL that I do can be an act of worship as I serve You and not simply the earthly authorities around me. Thank You that it makes it so worth it as I serve You through even the smallest task for the lowliest person if my heart is set upon working for You. Amen.

Day 2: Am I Internally or Externally Motivated?

Read: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

Reflect: To be motivated internally means to have a willingness and determination to do something yourself because you understand the importance or necessity of getting it done. If you are externally motivated it means that you need someone standing over you, telling what you need to do, and why you have to do it. As I'm sure you've guessed, it is better to be internally motivated because then you are able to take responsibility yourself. I want to take it one step further though... The verse above talks about not leaning on our own understanding but rather submitting to God in all our ways. This means that as we submit our plans to God and to His endless wisdom and knowledge, He can guide us on the path that He has for us, the paths He has made straight for us.

Learn: To lean means to rest on something for support, but this verse tells us not to find support from our own understanding but rather yield our plans, ideas, hopes, dreams, desires to the God who's mapped our paths. In this way our internal motivation is safe guarded by an inspiring, creative God who dwells inside of us.

Do: Draw or imagine a path, the path of your life, and see God's fingerprint over it, guiding you as many responsibilities and tasks come into your life and grow and change. You are never alone as you learn wisdom and how to motivate yourself to do these things without being told by an external authority.

Pray: Lord, please teach me how to motivate myself internally to do things I have to do. May I never strive to do them in my strength and wisdom though, but always be open to Your leading and guiding. Thank You for partnership with You. Amen.

Day 3: Am I Negatively or Positively Motivated?

Read: *Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else.* (Galatians 6:4)

Reflect: When I was younger, my perception of a competitive person was always someone who would fight to win no matter the cost, even if it was at the expense of someone else's emotional, physical, or mental well-being. I had encountered this type of competitiveness and hated it; but that side of competition is only the negative competition of someone who is motivated by a desire to beat others and promote themselves no matter what. A positively motivated person though, is one that is motivated to be the best that they can be and achieve the best that they can achieve- their competition is against themselves and they are inspired and pushed further by the abilities of others.

Learn: We are to strive TOGETHER - I bring my best, you bring your best, each of us pushing on all levels to achieve the best that we can with a mutual desire for our competitors to do the same; knowing that their success is not our failure but rather an inspiration to push yourself to a new level, simply to grow in yourself, not break someone else down. Galatians 6:4 speaks about how we should test our own actions and take pride simply in ourselves, not what we notice as we compare or measure ourselves against those around us.

Do: Write yourself a note which says, "Their victory is not my failure but an inspiration to partner with even more of God's creativity through me!" Stick it in a place you will see it every day, like in your cupboard or by your bathroom mirror, and remember that as you encounter others it is an opportunity to sprinkle a little bit of your flavour into their lives and allow them do the same so that you can both become richer.

Pray: Father, help me to strive WITH those around me so that we can both become better. May I see their success as my inspiration, not my failure, and celebrate the abilities and creativity You have placed within me! Help me to compete and be motivated positively and so be an example and a testimony of Your hand in my life. Amen.

Day 4: The Secret to Motivation #1: Know Your Why

Read: *I can do all this through him who gives me strength.* (Philippians 4:13)

Reflect: Why do you do what you do? What gets you out of bed in the morning? I sometimes have those mornings where it doesn't matter if the sun is shining or not, my day just feels grey... It's like there's a weight in your heart that pulls you down. This is usually when my heart is miss-focused on other things,

things out of my control, things worrying me, or is discontented with where it is. I hate waking up feeling that way and fighting all morning to uplift my heart! As I focus my heart on Jesus, all He is taking me through, His faithfulness, and the excitement of life with Him I immediately feel different! As I open my eyes in the morning, a song fills my head and I can't wait to get up and start the day. I find my strength and courage, I find my purpose, hidden within God as I dig deeper into more of Him.

Learn: Knowing why we do something is extremely important! When we know why we do something, our purpose, we feel secure and confident to move forward with what we are doing because we have then given it meaning. If we don't know why we do what we do we lack momentum to do it, it feels purposeless... When doing an intense exercise class, just going through the motions causes you to quickly become exhausted and overwhelmed at all you still have to do. But when you remind yourself of why you're doing all these exercises, the healthy body, muscles, and tone you've envisioned for yourself, a fresh determination fills you and you finish strong because you did it with purpose and determination to win and beat what was set before you.

Do: As you wake up each morning this week, decide that you are going to win the day! The obstacles and challenges, everything that is set before you, choose to overcome them with the strength of God within you. Ask God to put a song on your heart each morning as you rise and sing it out, because HIS joy is our strength. (Psalm 28:7; Nehemiah 8:10)

Pray: Lord, give me reason to rise with joy each morning, a song and a lightness within my heart. May I find my strength and purpose in You, and determine to win each day and walk in the victories You have prepared for me. Show me my why and the purpose in all I do! Amen.

Day 5: The Secret to Motivation #2: Set Your Goals

Read: *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 3:14)

Reflect: I don't know about you, but I work much better if I have set myself some goals to achieve. If I haven't set myself a list of things I am aiming to do I end up wandering around, stressing about how much I have to do, but lacking the structure to know or organize myself to do any of it. However, if I sit down and calmly write up a list of things I have to do each week, organizing them into most urgent and things that can wait, I can relax because I have a plan and a set of goals I can follow and stick to to achieve all I need to do in the week. Without structure and having goals I can aim for I lack momentum and motivation, but if I know where to aim, it becomes easy to achieve my goals.

Learn: In archery the target is clearly marked out- the bull's eye. You place the arrow in your bow, position your fingers and pull the bowstring back. Then, carefully, you position your bow in such a way that the arrow will be released through the air and, hopefully, hit the bull's eye. 'Fwoomp!' You have hit the target that was set. Without the bull's eye to aim for, arrows would be flying everywhere and you would be in danger. Your arrows would fly into the mass of other uncontrolled arrows, shot into the open, with no target for them to aim for or reach- a waste. With goals or targets you can be motivated to achieve something, your arrows and effort has purpose, a target to aim for, a goal to reach.

Do: When you start to feel stressed or overwhelmed by things you have to do, sit down and calmly list all the things you have to do. Prioritise from most important things to things that can wait and choose a time that you are going to do each of the things you need to get done. Lists are amazing, give them a try ;-)

Pray: Lord, show me reasonable goals I can set myself so that I can achieve all that needs to be done. Motivate me as I set these targets, to aim and do my best to achieve them. Help me to aim not only for my daily goals, but also to daily, aim for the goal of a life closer and more intimate with You. Thank You that

You never leave my side and help me to accomplish the goals I set and those You set before me. You are my strength, Amen.

Day 6: The Secret to Motivation #3: Clarify Your Vision

Read: *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:2). For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)*

Reflect: What is the vision that you have for your life? What would you like to be remembered for as people look back on your life/ high school years? Those are quite big questions, ones I don't think we often think about. We think very much in the present, what satisfies us now, what we want now, who we want to be now, but life is more than just now. Much more! Who you mould yourself into now and train yourself to be, forms a lot of your default mindsets and behaviour later on. I have heard many adults saying how they wish they had never got involved with stuff in the first place, or stopped unhealthy thought patterns while they were still young, before it all got covered up and buried under all the busyness, because now they have so much more to sift through to remove the bad they allowed in while they were young.

Learn: If you are distracted and your vision of the path of your life is fuzzy, then the results you will get will be fuzzy also. However, if your mind is focused and you have clear vision for the path you want your life to take and God is leading you on, then your results will also be clear. On a horse they sometimes attach something called blinders to their bridle. Blinders are small squares of firm leather which blocks the peripheral vision of the horse so that he does not become distracted or panicked by what's around him, but rather stays focused on the path ahead and where he is headed. His vision is clear and so his results are clear. The verse in 1 Corinthians speaks about how now our knowledge and perspective is limited and only once we reach heaven will we understand fully, and in Colossians 3:2 it tells us to keep our minds on things above. We do not know it all here, we cannot see far enough into the future to plan and envision our life and who we want to be remembered as, but God can. Fix your mind on things above and ask God to clarify your vision, reveal His secrets, and lead you with His all-knowing heart that sees the bigger picture.

Do: If you haven't written out your yearbook entry, write out what and who you would like to be remembered as after you finish high school. Post it on the group and use that to motivate you to become the person you want to be known for.

Pray: Lord, help me to envision who I want to be to those around me, show me the young man/young woman You have for me to be. Inspire and motivate me to become the person I want to be known for, and give me the strength I need to make the necessary changes. Amen.

Day 7: Where Do I Find Strength And Courage?

Read: *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)*

Reflect: Isn't this verse beautiful! Read it again... Do you ever go through times when you are tired of being strong? I know I've felt like that before, and I remember reading a verse like this one in one of those times. My head was fussing and moaning about having to always be strong and then I read a verse like this where it tells me yet again to be strong. I started moaning to God saying, "Lord, I'm feeling down and alone, too weak to be the strong one again, and here You've given me a verse that tells me to be strong!" Father, ever patient, whispered across my heart to keep quiet and find His heart in the verse He had shown me. As I looked, I saw that He didn't leave it at 'Be strong and courageous' but rather goes on to promise that the

Lord our God will be with us wherever we go. No room for fear or discouragement, because wherever you go, GOD goes with you!

Learn: If we truly GET that God's presence not only resides within us but lives and moves and walks with us daily, our perspective and feelings would greatly change. BECAUSE the presence of God goes with us wherever we go we can be strong and courageous. Strength and courage cannot be born out of our strength but out of our surety in Christ and the knowledge that we never walk alone. When you need motivation, look to God, ever beside you, for the strength and courage you need, and remember that what you do is never done in vain because as a Christian you don't work for earthly masters, but in serving them, work and serve a living, present God and bring Him glory in the way you work and motivate yourself.

Read: *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.* (Corinthians 15:58)

Do: Write a list of areas where you feel weak, discouraged, or afraid and hand them over to God, asking Him to make Himself present in those areas as the strength that you need, peace in place of fear, joy where you were discouraged, and fulfillment in the areas of lack in your heart and life. Watch for Him to move in your life and be expectant for Him to fill the places you have asked Him to.

Pray: Lord, thank you that as we practice motivating ourselves internally and in a positive way that You are with us, leading and guiding our steps and preparing our path. Teach us motivation in You and may we know You as the God who fulfills all our needs to overflowing, better than anything else would ever fill them. We love You Lord, Amen.