

What's My Motivation?

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Several years ago I watched a spoof of the world famous explorer, Jacques Cousteau. The actor was standing next to a river in which salmon were fighting to swim upstream, where they would lay their eggs and die. He turned to the camera, and in a very fake French accent, asked “Why do they do what they do?”

Have you ever asked that about someone who was obviously struggling to accomplish something that to you seemed irrelevant, unnecessary, meaningless, or just plain stupid?

Have you ever asked that question of *yourself*—“why do I do what I do”—about your work, parenting, ministry, or life in general? Why are you doing what you're doing? Why are you *not* doing something else? If you could do anything, would you be doing what you're doing right now?

In other words, what motivates you?

I recently watched a hilarious video of a dad who, with his two sons watching, attempted to eat canned fish that apparently reeked—all for some sort of challenge. Gagging, literally throwing up, he kept trying until he couldn't do it anymore. I immediately showed it to my wife, Janie, who laughed—but then asked, in her trademark, female logical way, “WHY? Why is he doing this?”

My answer? Because he's a man. We're men. And sometimes we do stupid stuff.

But we also do noble stuff, courageous stuff, sacrificial stuff, amazing stuff. Why? Because we're men.

What motivates us? **There are two basic kinds of motivation:** **extrinsic**, where we expect some sort of reward or payoff if we do what we're being asked or challenged to do, and **intrinsic**, where we do something because we are driven by some internal force.

At Man in the Mirror, we are driven by our four core values: love, excellence, vision, and resilience. These are the intrinsic motivations that move us to act and call us to a higher place.

Love. We are driven not just by our love for God and by *His* sacrificial love, but also by a love for others—and their need to experience that love of God and His eternal purpose for their lives.

Excellence. We are driven by a desire to be excellent, because if we're truly doing what we do for God, it deserves to be done with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. God so loved that He gave His very best—and so then should we.

Vision. I like this definition of vision: *a clear mental image of a preferred future*. It implies an un-preferred present, and it challenges us to pray for and work toward something better. For us as a ministry, it's a future marked by millions of men who have been transformed by Christ through discipleship. For me on a personal level, vision means not only examining where I am currently and what might have gotten me to this place, but also where—and what kind of man—I want to be. It motivates me to move from my here to what I perceive to be God's *there*.

Resilience. This journey doesn't happen overnight. It calls me to discipleship and discipline over time with the goal in mind. One phrase of scripture that I've been taking a closer look at lately has two simple words following a challenge or command—"so that":

that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, SO THAT Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—SO THAT you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, SO THAT you may be filled with all the fullness of God. [Ephesians 3:16-19](#)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God SO THAT at the proper time he may exalt you... [1 Peter 5:6](#)

Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, SO THAT all may see your progress. [1 Timothy 4:15](#)

All of these have one overriding *intrinsic* motivation: to be the man of God that He wants me to be, calls me to be, and—thankfully—empowers me to be.

What has been your primary motivation lately? Are you driven by your love for God—and others? By vision? By excellence? By resilience?

Have you been driven by your own set of values and beliefs? Or by a desire for approval, recognition, or some other sort of extrinsic reward? Are you having trouble mustering up any motivation at all?

Try these two exercises:

Fill in these blanks, being mindful about what has been motivating you in the key areas of your life. The key area, such as vocation, parenting, or serving, should make up the first blank line. (Examples: I work hard in my job so that _____. I participate in my small group so that _____. I am married so that _____.)

I _____ so that _____.

Next, think about what you've been giving your time and attention to recently. Now put that in the first blank line.

I spend time _____ so
that _____.

What's the value of these exercises? Life moves quickly, sweeping us up along with it if we don't stop long enough to consider the deeper questions behind why we do what we do.

Commit today to taking time to reflect and examine what's motivating you. Otherwise, you might find yourself feeling like nothing more than the

salmon struggling to swim upstream to die, while others wonder, “Why do they do what they do?”

Work to be certain that what you are doing has a valid SO THAT—so that your life has purpose.

THE BIG IDEA: *Your life and what you do with it matters. Be motivated by a worthy “so that” that brings honor to Christ.*