

How to stay motivated

You will only be successful to the degree to which you remain motivated to complete your assignment. Many people are failing today, not because they lack skill or smartness; many are failing due to lack of motivation. They no longer have the drive or the energy to complete assignments. Many of us come into the year with great aspirations but at some point, we lose motivation. We see gyms full of people and we know they make a lot of money by hooking people into contracts at the start of the year. It's not uncommon to see many people out running on New Year's Day, but are they still there after two months? Many years ago, I preached a message called "Living Beyond Good Intentions" because I realised that the majority of us start with good intentions; we create wonderful goals, but few have mastered the art of following through and sustaining their success. To be effective in life, we need to master the art of staying motivated. What was last year like for you? Did you stay motivated in all aspects of your life or did things change along the way? In this message I will share with you some tools from both the science and the theology of motivation so that you can stay motivated this year.

What is motivation?

Motivation is a cognitive persistence. It's the drive, tendency or desire to undertake or complete a task, expand effort and do a quality job.

Movēre (Latin): "To move" or "to set in motion."

In Greek it is *Parakinisi* - It refers to "**someone who is encouraged or compelled to act**". Some of the synonyms bring out this meaning:

- "Inspired" or "filled with creative energy or purpose."
- "Determined" or "resolved to achieve something."
- "Mobilized" or "driven into action."
- "Encouraged" or "supported to take action."

Thus, motivation literally means the force or reason that "moves" someone to take action, both physically and psychologically.

What do we need to do in order to stay motivated?

1. In order to stay motivated, understand what your drivers are.

Philippians 1:15-18 "It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice."

John 6:26-27 "Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.'"

Many followed Jesus out of a desire for physical provision rather than spiritual truth. How long do you think it was before they got demotivated in their pursuit? When their hunger problem was sorted; consumerism. Why are you seeking God this year? Why are you coming to church this year?

What do you think was the driving force behind David's confrontation with Goliath? David's unique motivation based on the fear of the Lord was what propelled and motivated him to act.

*1 Samuel 17:26 "David asked the men standing near him, 'What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised **Philistine** that he should defy the armies of the living God?'"*

Some common strong motivators are: achieving results, being valued and made to feel important, being included and accepted by an admired group, competing - getting ahead of others, gaining influence and status, earning more money, and opportunities to do things you like. Most people are motivated when their goals are appropriately challenging. Are your goals audacious enough to motivate you? I remember my running coach telling me that my personality type needed a challenge otherwise I probably won't be motivated to do something that's too easy. Sometimes, according to motivation theories like Clayton Alderfer's, these can be categorised into **ERG – Existence Needs, Relatedness Needs and Growth Needs**.

Study what keeps you doing what you do. If it is a God-honouring source, He will sustain you in it. You can have two people doing the same thing and getting similar results, but the difference is in the underlying driving force. This often determines the longevity of their success. Money can be a motivator, but only if you value more money and perceive a strong relationship between your effort and reward. Motivation can stem from satisfaction in doing a good job or from recognition by others for our efforts. When individuals become consumed by the need for recognition, it can become shattering when their boss changes and they have someone who views them differently. If you only go to gym to lose weight, what happens when the weight is lost? If you only run to train for a marathon, what happens when the marathon is complete? This is why I now focus more on process goals than outcome goals. A lot of teams have started doing this too. **Be careful of setting goals that are based on someone else's reaction to you that you cannot determine.**

2. In order to stay motivated, understand what demotivates you and guard against it.

Do you know what tends to what demotivates you? Have you studied yourself? Is it other voices, temporary setbacks, low self-esteem resulting in you second guessing yourself. Think of a time when you were greatly motivated and then it changed. What changed? Was it external circumstances or did your mind start playing tricks on you? **Outlined below are some things causing demotivating environments:**

1. Company politics 2. Unclear expectations 3. Unnecessary rules 4. Unproductive meetings 5. Internal competition 6. Withholding information 7. Criticism 8. Tolerating poor performance 9. Unfairness and under-utilised capability.

Can you identify with any of these? If so, what can you do to stop them from demotivating you?

You can only do this, if your self-awareness is high. This is why motivation is a subset of emotional intelligence. There are things I know about myself that help me to keep motivated. As a result, I have some life hacks that I use. For example, I make commitments to people because I don't want to let them down. One of my values is being reliable. With my first marriage book, I knew that I didn't have the discipline to write it, but I would stay motivated if I promised the people after the retreat that I would give them a chapter a week. This made the exercise meaningful for me. I would have been demotivated writing and writing to no one. It's the same with the book I have just done for premarital life, Before You Tie the Knot. I had to have a couple as Guinea pigs to take through the process. I respect them and was not going to drop them, so the

book came out of the material I gave them for homework and the various lessons we covered. Create life hacks that help you to stay motivated especially with things you have to do that you don't always enjoy. This ranges from health routines and check-ups to serving others. We get tired of certain things especially things we don't enjoy doing but have to do. Recently my wife baked some chocolate brownies and offered them to us on the family group. I was quick to respond by saying, "Thank you, but I will have to pass on this one for health reasons." I said that for accountability. I know I have to keep my word. If I don't say that, I might renege on my commitment.

What are your demotivation patterns e.g. someone's opinion. Anyone in particular? Temporary setback, second guessing yourself. Lack of financial reward e.g. "they didn't pay me, so they don't value me," but how does God see it?

3. In order to stay motivated, make sure you are fully persuaded about what you are doing.

Being convinced of something helps you to remain motivated. Make sure you don't enter a new year double minded about the will of God. If you are double minded, you don't pray strong faith filled prayers and you are easily distracted from your purpose. Do you believe in what you are doing? Are you doing it for the right reasons. When you are fully persuaded about what you are pursuing you learn how to reject rejection. I am fully persuaded that having a permanent site of our own, with a building and ministry base is God's will for us. I am fully aware of the research that shows that this is a game changer for churches. This keeps me motivated.

Make sure you are fully persuaded with regards to God's character and nature in the context of what you are doing. Do you believe that God is for you not against you? We stay motivated when we know that God completes what he has begun. Are you convinced that God rewards you and sees what you do in the background? If not, you will lose motivation.

Are you fully persuaded with regards to your new identity in Christ? Aligning new habits with one's identity and self-perception can be a strong motivator. Thinking of oneself as a "runner" to motivate consistent exercise, viewing oneself as a "learner" to foster a habit of reading, or identifying as a "financially responsible" person to encourage saving. The key is, you have to be fully persuaded that this is you. Your self-concept will determine your behaviour.

4. In order to stay motivated, understand the science behind it.

- a. Expectancy: person's perceived likelihood that their efforts will enable them to successfully attain their performance goals.**
- b. Instrumentality: is the perceived likelihood that performance will be followed by a particular outcome.**
- c. Valence: is the value the outcome holds for the person contemplating it.**

I see this with immigrants who come to South Africa. There are many who are cynical about the process so there is low instrumentality which demotivates them. "Even if I work hard there is nothing for me here. They will choose their people." On the other hand, there are others who believe that if you work hard you will be rewarded for it at some point. This affects motivation levels significantly. We saw this mind set amongst immigrants in the USA. Sometimes the consequences of low instrumentality can be that people get involved in crime. They have given up on the system. You no longer believe the system can reward you fairly for hard work. For motivation to be high, expectancy, instrumentalities, and total valence of all outcomes must all be high. A person will not be highly motivated if any of the following conditions exist:

- He believes he can't perform well enough to achieve the positive outcomes (high instrumentality but low expectancy)

- He knows he can do the job. He is certain what the ultimate outcomes will be (a promotion or transfer). However, he does not want those outcomes or he believes other, negative outcomes outweigh the positive (high expectancy and high instrumentality but low valence).
- He knows he can do the job. He wants several important outcomes (a favourable performance review, a raise, and a promotion). But he believes that no matter how well he performs, the outcomes will not be forthcoming (high expectancy and positive valences but low instrumentality).

Therefore, to increase motivation we need to:

- **increase expectancies**
- **identify positively valent outcomes**
- **make performance instrumental toward positive outcome (Cause and effect)**

5. In order to stay motivated, ensure that your spirit is always dominant over your flesh.

Matthew 26:4 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The disciples had asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. They desired to grow in prayer after seeing him being effective in this department. But alas, when the time came for it, they struggled. This is a motivation issue and Jesus diagnosed the root cause. They did not stay motivated to pray because they were weak spirited. Your flesh becomes stronger than your spirit when you feed it whilst starving your spirit. How do you get your spirit to be dominant? How do you become strong spirited? How do you keep the Good Shepherd being the dominant voice in your life? **Make it your goal this year to strengthen your spirit.** The Bible makes it clear that this is possible.

Ephesians 3:16-17 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

2 Corinthians 4:16 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

We are called to be radical about getting God's word into our hearts. Feed on it more than other things. *Joshua 1:8 "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*

6. In order to stay motivated, manage your expectations.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (NIV): "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

Look at the scripture on dealing with setbacks. You are in good company. Hold on to the fact that you can experience God in the wilderness. **"Delay is not denial."** **"A setback is a setup for a comeback."**

"Detours still lead to destiny." **"Postponed, not cancelled."** **"Not now doesn't mean never."**

"Preparation comes before promotion." There are doors I am trusting for God to open, but I know it's not going to be plain sailing. I already knew that when you are trying to build a church you can have challenges with the municipality. When we go through life naively thinking that God's will is always easy and has no obstacles, we become demotivated and disillusioned very quickly. **When people say to me, they have failed, I like to ask them how they are measuring success. Why are you calling it failure?** We see this often when players bounce back with a new coach e.g. What would have happened if Amad Diallo had given up because he was often on the bench with his previous coach?

What time frame do you have for your dream to become a reality? What's the basis for this? Who sets this deadline?

7. In order to stay motivated, learn how to bounce back.

When you are down, do you know how to remotivate yourself? There will be those times when you are down. It happens to all of us. It's part of life. The key is to learn what to do in those times. Often, we don't develop these skills if our theology makes no room for setbacks. For example, David found strength in the Lord. *1 Samuel 30:6 "David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God."*

Psalm 18:2 "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." Where do you go? **Pre-decide now where you will go when you are discouraged this year. We always go somewhere.** Is Jesus your fortress? Is He your strong tower? Some places strengthen the flesh whilst others strengthen the spirit. Are there some people who encourage you using the gift of encouragement? My children know that they are guaranteed encouragement if they ask either of their parents for feedback on certain matters. If it's to do with their physique they tend to go to their mother. If it is to do with their progress in sport they might come to me. We avoid people who tell us not to give up our day job. Make the decision that this year you will run to the Lord. *Isaiah 40:29-31 "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint."*

One of the common denominators of successful people is that they stay passionate and motivated despite obstacles. This is grit, tenacity and resilience. Essentially, it's to do with the science of motivation. Often, they know how to stay motivated. **One of the things that helps me to bounce back is not being too rigid. I understand that the big picture can still be accomplished regardless of tactical changes.**

I have learnt to go where the life is. In 2020 we developed an online learning platform because in person meetings had stopped due to lockdown. That platform has now become an opportunity for passive income. What looked like a setback became a blessing. This only happens when we positively frame our world. Great organisations that also have longevity seem to be able to reinvent themselves. I will give you a business example but apply this in your own life. Look at Coca-Cola's growth strategy. It was great to visit the Coca-Cola world in Atlanta and see the company's history. Subsequently I learnt that they study markets and see what is being consumed, then they buy those companies. They could have died feeling sorry for themselves that the world is now more health conscious and shifting to healthier options. This strategy aligns with the company's goal to become a total beverage company, offering a wide range of choices to meet diverse consumer needs. This diversification strategy is evident in the company's acquisition of brands like Innocent Drinks in 2013, known for their natural and healthy product offerings. It's a UK-based company, which specializes in smoothies and juices made from 100% natural ingredients. They had also bought Glacéau (Vitaminwater, Smartwater) in 2007. This acquisition included Vitaminwater, a functional beverage, and Smartwater, a premium bottled water brand. These products appeal to health-conscious consumers. **Some of you are demotivated right now because you are too rigid. Go where the life is and stay motivated.** Another good example of agility in strategy is what Indra Nooyi and others did with PepsiCo where it became more about moments of consumption. I was coaching a CEO who used to work for PepsiCo and is still very inspired by how Indra Nooyi led that company. This is agility in business. In South Africa PepsiCo owns White Star(Maize Meal), Weet-Bix, SASKO, Simba, Liqui Fruit, Bokomo (Oats etc), Lay's etc. Aquafina, Mountain Dew and Mirinda are all PepsiCo. If you are not agile your business can die very quickly. It's not just about growth, it's about survival. Look what happened to Nokia when they failed to innovate and adapt to the latest trends quick enough e.g. touch screen technology, smartphone capabilities, apps on phones etc. I remember coaching someone from Nokia years ago who would express her frustrations with the lack of innovation despite the ability to refine their engineering so well. Another example is Blockbuster. Blockbuster was once the leading video rental chain, with thousands of locations worldwide. Despite having

opportunities to buy Netflix, they did not recognize the changing landscape of home entertainment. They could have transitioned to streaming and subscriptions. **Are you demotivated because you are rigidly sticking to old ways?** BlackBerry failed to adapt to the touch-screen smartphone trend and the growing app ecosystem established by iOS and Android. The company did not respond quickly enough to the demands of consumers who wanted more versatile devices, leading to a sharp decline in market share. On the positive side, BlackBerry has now shifted its business model to concentrate on software development, cybersecurity, and enterprise solutions. If we want to stay motivated as a church, we need to understand contemporary society and not be emotionally attached to things that don't matter. Keep the main thing the main thing whilst adapting. This can apply to methods of discipline, parenting styles, holiday destinations and other family related things.

Reflection Questions

1. Personal Motivation Drivers: What are the key factors or drivers that motivate you to take action in your life? Are these aligned with your values and long-term goals?
2. Past Experiences: Reflecting on last year, were there moments when you lost motivation? What specific events or patterns contributed to this, and how did you respond?
3. Demotivators: What are the most common factors or circumstances that tend to demotivate you? How can you proactively guard against these influences?
4. Goal Alignment: Are the goals you have set for yourself this year appropriately challenging and personally meaningful? How do these goals reflect your purpose or calling?
5. Sustained Effort: What systems, habits, or life hacks can you implement to maintain motivation in tasks that you find challenging or mundane?
6. Self-Persuasion: Are you fully persuaded about the value and purpose of what you are doing? If not, what steps can you take to clarify your beliefs and build confidence in your mission?
7. Mindset for Setbacks: How do you typically respond to setbacks or discouragement? What strategies can you develop to bounce back and stay focused on your goals?
8. Spiritual Strength: How can you strengthen your spirit to ensure it remains dominant over your flesh? What practices, such as prayer, Bible meditation, or fellowship, can help you maintain this balance?
9. Expectation Management: Are your expectations for achieving your goals realistic? How do you handle delays or challenges that arise along the way?
10. Source of Encouragement: Who or what serves as your source of encouragement when you face challenges? How can you intentionally cultivate these sources to sustain your motivation?