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# NET SAFETY RESOURCES

## WHERE'S THE MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE? FAITH AND HOPE IN THE INFORMATION AGE

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# WHERE'S THE MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE? FAITH AND HOPE IN THE INFORMATION AGE

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 of eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will  
walk and not be faint. - Isaiah 40:30-31

Perhaps you are thinking: I'm sorry, but I just don't have the willpower or the strength to change my online habits. I'm guilty, but exhausted. Where does the strength for change come from? I'm not inspired enough. No matter how hard I try, I slip. My passion for virtue is just not where it needs to be. Is there any hope?

The answer is a resounding YES. Hear these words of encouragement, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." Here's another, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"<sup>1</sup> The key question for each of us is: Where are we placing our hope for the future?

Contrary to conventional wisdom, consistent victory in this cyber battle at a personal or corporate level will not come simply by implementing better security and privacy checklists (although they help), carefully adhering to laws, corporate policies, processes and procedures (although I urge compliance), or learning how the bad guys deceive so we can build better defenses (although wisdom is vital). What's needed first of all are changed hearts and minds. Cultural change must happen one person at a time, and personal change requires an examination of values. This paper will explore how to motivate lasting positive change from a Christian perspective.

Many books have been written on motivating change. Worldwide conferences get us "fired up" and oftentimes rekindle "the eye of the tiger"—at least temporarily. Books and seminars on personal growth are available from experts like Anthony Robbins, whose website<sup>2</sup> offers DVDs and CDs with "Your path to an extraordinary life." Simply click on the area of life to "find your balance" in career, physical, emotional, financial, family, or spiritual areas. It's all about a new mindset and his videos promise to show you how.

Ed Brodow, another motivational expert, offers a book and an interactive seminar to help in "Beating the Success Trap."<sup>3</sup> Ed's answer: "Ten secrets for reclaiming your personal power." He also suggests new methods to overcome fear and find more satisfaction at work.



Tried those? Looking for a something different? Just keep watching infomercials on TV. New techniques seem to emerge daily to assure us that happiness will come once we use their system to make money, stay fit, eat right, or start a business. Testimonials show “successful” people telling their rags to riches stories inside luxurious houses or beside tropical swimming pools.

## Motivated by Fear: Or Not?

On the other end of the spectrum, fear can be a powerful motivator in all areas of life, including cyberspace. Healthy fears can provide God-given protection, like when my three-year-old daughter learns to fear the stove after she burns herself, or my teenage daughter take action because she fears online predators. But fear can also prompt undesirable actions or unwarranted inaction. Some people are so afraid of ID Theft in cyberspace that they give up before they even start. Their fear could be overcome through training and taking certain precautions, while others don't exhibit any online fear.

A major premise to this article is that if you engage in sinful patterns, if you act with poor judgment online, if you don't avoid certain e-traps, bad things will happen. Many in society calls this moral pragmatism, and making the case is fairly easy, given thousands of annual news headlines

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regarding the negative consequences that results from Internet trespasses. This truth is also articulated in Proverbs 5:22: “The evil deeds of the wicked man ensnare him, the cords of his sin hold him fast.”

Most acceptable use policies at work contain a list of “do's and don'ts” that employees abide by for fear of losing their jobs or being disciplined. Parents and kids avoid certain websites because they're afraid of the worst consequences such as viruses, ID theft, or child predators. We buy computer software and hardware to protect and defend our business or family. We purchase life insurance, just in case.

Although the fear motivator can be useful, the security industry has long recognized the limitations of what is called often “Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt (FUD)” in sustaining meaningful change in employees and businesses conduct. The argument is that people need a positive motivation to change and not just a list of reasons not to do something. In fact, the very fact that some cyber activity is “taboo” is often a motivator to “experiment.” Many articles have been written proclaiming the need for less FUD and more Return on Security Investment (ROSI).<sup>4</sup> Others, such as Andrew Juquith, insist we must replace the nonstop crisis response with a systematic approach with better metrics to measure effectiveness.<sup>5</sup>



Through years of research and study, experts in organizational change have uncovered some fascinating trends regarding what works and what doesn't. Consider this quote:

Many people might assume that the way to bring about change is to advocate their position vigorously while showing others why or how their assumptions are flawed. This example of linear thinking encourages change agents to respond to resistance with greater and greater force. It is counterintuitive to people operating from these assumptions that schismogenetic processes limit the effectiveness of their advocacy. Indeed, the greater the force they use to advocate a shift in values, the more they mobilize forces determined to retain existing values. An argument for change creates an escalating conflict in which the existing culture has an established, strong position.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, Dr. Wirth recommends a ten-step change process which include such items as consciousness raising, self-reevaluation, making a personal commitment to the ability to change and follow through, employing new behaviors that can substitute for the undesirable behavior, reinforcing internal and external rewards, and providing emotional and moral support through a sounding board of friendships.<sup>7</sup>

## Motivated by Attention: Imitation in Cyberspace

Millions of people who want to experience something that's amusing or different turn to YouTube.com or their competitors. You're bound to see something that makes you laugh, cry, or gets your attention in some way. At first we had "America's Funniest Home Videos" on TV, and now huge sections of society are motivated by getting noticed and outdoing the last video clip on YouTube.

Thanks to today's media world, not only do we watch sports heroes and movie stars as never before, we also want to be the next "American Idol." If imitation is the highest form of flattery, the Internet has become the ultimate altar of praise to mankind. Of course this global platform can be used for good or bad, but many websites urge us to admire, not imitate.

A few years ago, 12-year-old Scott Buckle accidentally killed himself as he tried to imitate the character of Johnny Depp in the Hollywood blockbuster, *Pirates of the Caribbean*. According to *BBC*, Scott apparently hanged himself as he copied a scene in which Depp's character escapes the noose.

Granted, this sounds like an extreme example, but the fact remains that imitation is usually detrimental to individuals of any age. There is documentary evidence that links imitation with depression, anxiety, and a drop in self-esteem.<sup>8</sup>



Nevertheless, we are motivated by the lives and actions of others. Our society loves to dress as the movie stars dress. We buy the shoes worn by our favorite sports stars. We cheer for our alma mater whether they win or not. A popular approach in business, sports, and other areas of life is to imitate success by asking who's doing (whatever activity) the best. We want the same results. How did they get where they did? We constantly watch the actions and methods of others. What character traits set them apart? What mistakes did they make? How did they overcome?

## Motivated by the Words of Others

Words are powerful as well. We watch political debates to see which candidate best articulates our values, and we vote for those who do. We read magazines and watch programs with financial experts who advise us where to invest. At home and the office, we are motivated directly or indirectly by the words of those around us.

One of the most popular Christian motivators today is Joel Osteen. His book, *Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential*, has sold millions of copies and climbed to the top of the New York Times Bestseller list. Osteen offers hundreds of uplifting stories that motivate greatness and a new, positive attitude and vision for life by applying scripture.

On one occasion, Osteen called a familiar pizza restaurant and politely gave the lady his phone number—only to be snarled at, rebuked and told to keep quiet until she was ready for his phone number. How did he respond?

I could hardly believe that someone working with the public could be so cantankerous and rude. My initial instinct was to respond, "Listen, lady! I'll give you my phone number whenever I feel like it [...]" My mind instantly considered ordering about twenty or thirty pizzas and sending them to the wrong addresses [...] But in this case, I made a decision that I was going to overcome evil with good. I recognized that the woman was just having a bad day [...] I decided I was going to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. I took her on as a personal mission project.<sup>9</sup>

Joel began to compliment her work, praise the restaurant's food and delivery, and offer her as many creative compliments as possible. Joel concluded, "By the time I got through, she not only took my phone number, she threw in some hot wings and sodas and coupons for more pizza! [...] That pizza was a small matter, but it was a giant opportunity for me to share God's kindness with a woman who needed it."

Christians can also gain inspiration and practical benefit from examining the successes and failures of those who have gone before us. Many Roman Catholics are inspired by the words and life of the Pope or a former pontiff or saint. Young people around the world have been motivated by wearing bracelets inscribed with the letters "WWJD" reminding them to ask the question, "What Would Jesus Do?"



The Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians to “imitate me.”<sup>10</sup> The Apostle John wrote, “Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good.”<sup>11</sup> Hebrews 6:12 exhorts us, “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

## Motivation Challenge 1: Examine Biblical Integrity

While there are many admirable Old Testament characters that can motivate us through their model of perseverance in the midst of difficult trials, the life of Job offers perhaps best case study of integrity. Anyone who has suffered through a serious illness can identify with Job’s struggles and benefit from his experiences. God declared that Job was “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”<sup>12</sup> Even after he was tested and lost his family, wealth, and honor, he “maintained his integrity.”<sup>13</sup>

The Book of Job can motivate by establishing basic Biblical truths which ground a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian worldview:

1. **God is in control, and God is good.** He has a plan for our good. He loves us so much that he sent his Son to die for us.
2. **Satan exists and has a plan to tempt and harm you.** He wants to separate you from God and destroy your life.
3. **We will suffer.** People get sick and die, and jobs (and fortunes) are lost. He allows Satan to test and tempt us, but not beyond our ability to resist.<sup>14</sup>
4. **Our reactions make a difference—tell our story.** Job got up, tore his robe (in utter grief), shaved his head (lost all personal glory), and fell down to worship (in total submission).<sup>15</sup> Job also resisted his wife’s temptation: “Curse God and die.” Job responded, “Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?” Job did not sin by what he said.”<sup>16</sup>

Charles (Chuck) Swindoll wrote a book on Job 17, which also draws from his wealth of personal experience as a pastor, to answer many of life’s complex and difficult questions. One example he covers: How can we identify and respond to bad counsel? Friends may mean well, but there are many traps with adopting others’ advice. We see Job’s advisors:

- » Jump to conclusions
- » Make wrong assumptions about the past
- » Make unfair accusations (shame-based counseling—opposite of grace)



- » Give simplistic answers, not thinking through ramifications
- » Misquote/misuse God's word—sometimes the hardest situations (biggest guilt trips) can come from Christian friends
- » Often make matters worse

According to Swindol, Job's three "comforting" friends each offer answers to his problems from a different perspective:

- » Eliphaz bases his words on experience ("I have observed." Job 4:8).
- » Bildad bases his words on tradition ("Ask former generations..." Job 8:8-10).
- » Zophar bases his words on assumptions ("If you put away sin..." Job 11:14-20).

In the end, we learn that, despite their advice being Biblically-based and sounding good, all of Job's friends are wrong. Cyberspace also offers an abundance of advice—usually too much. Many pain-filled sojourners spend long hours in chat rooms discussing problems, but fail to consider the source of the answers. Is "popular wisdom" really wise?

## The Gospel in Job

For those who are looking for virtuous guidelines to live by, Job 31 begins with the famous statement, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl." This chapter also offers us one of the best checklists for righteous behavior in the Bible. Jesus later reconfirms Job's radical standard in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>18</sup>

However, the majority don't want to set up Job's righteous behavior as the model to follow. Both Job's life and Jesus' standard seem impossible to follow. In the end, Job even failed and was rebuked by God. So how does this "hopeless" example bring help and hope?

Dr. Timothy Keller points out that Job recognized his need for an advocate, to plead his case in heaven.<sup>19</sup> In his sermon series on Hebrews,<sup>20</sup> Keller points back to Job and elaborates on the parallels between Job's situation and our present situation in modern America.

Only fools go into court today without an advocate, without counsel that understands the rules and who can represent our case before the judge. Furthermore, our fate is totally dependent upon how talented our lawyer is. If our defense counsel is good, we're good. If they lose, we lose. We are totally reliant upon their ability to represent us.

Dr. Keller explains that not only does Christ represent his sincere followers before heaven's throne room as our high priest, he has the audacity to demand justice not mercy from God on our behalf. How? Jesus is not only our advocate, but also our



Redeemer, the sacrificed lamb who paid the penalty for our sin. Yes, we are guilty of sin, but we are made righteous because of Christ's loving sacrifice. A crime can only be punished once.

Jesus told the woman caught in the act of adultery, "Neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin."<sup>21</sup> He declares the same good news to us when we ask for forgiveness and put our faith in him. Contrary to conventional wisdom, a genuine understanding of this good news will motivate right living and not more sin.

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Job recognized his ultimate need. In the famous text that inspired Handel's Messiah, Job professes, "I know my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. After my skin has been destroyed, yet in the flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me."<sup>22</sup> We learn where Job placed his faith from this text. Our vital question is this: what are we trusting in?

## Motivation Challenge 2: Determining True Values by Evaluating Your Treasure

Secular experts express our deepest desires in terms of values. Brian Dean's Anxiety Culture website<sup>23</sup> is packed with witty examples on how we need to understand value-systems. "We're motivated to pursue what we value. If you consciously choose your own values, 'true' motivation follows. If values are imposed on you (e.g. by corporate/state authority) or unconsciously absorbed (via the media), 'false' motivation results."<sup>24</sup> Dean goes on to contend that most people are fooled into acting quickly based upon limited availability of items or fear of missing out.

However you describe it, this perspective on values is not new. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."<sup>25</sup> Not only do we all have professed values and beliefs, but over time we can see what someone really values by watching how they spend their time and money. The marketplace of ideas is full of answers that motivate change in the short-term. And yet, Christ also warned, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them."<sup>26</sup>

What do we truly value? How do we know? The first key is to honestly assess where we are placing our treasure. While it is easy and popular to outwardly profess that our top priorities are "God and family," the Internet often exposes the truth. We go online to seek new thrills, new stuff (that requires money), and new relevance (power over friends or coworkers). Our search can become a never-ending process—there's



always more online. Despite trying with all our might, we constantly discover the truth behind the prophet Jeremiah's words, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"<sup>27</sup>

Thomas Chalmers, the great 19<sup>th</sup> Century Presbyterian pastor, offers a clear explanation of how the human heart works. Everyone is serving some "treasure." This "reigning affection of the mind" can never be destroyed in us, only replaced by some other treasure.

It is thus, that the boy ceases, at length, to be the slave of his appetite, but it is because a manlier taste has now brought it into subordination—and that the youth ceases to idolize pleasure, but it is because the idol of wealth has become the stronger and gotten the ascendancy and that even the love of money ceases to have the mastery over the heart of many a thriving citizen, but it is because drawn into, the whirl of city politics, another affection has been wrought into his moral system, and he is now lorded over by the love of power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or other, this is unconquerable. Its adhesion to that in which it has fastened the preference of its regards cannot willingly be overcome by the rendering away of a simple separation. It can be done only by the application of something else, to which it may feel the adhesion of a still stronger and more powerful preference.<sup>28</sup>

Chalmers goes on to say that if the human heart does not have "something to lay hold of" the pain to the human mind would be just as great as hunger is to the human system. He also describes how many constantly seek "pleasurable sensations" to the point where they get the "disease of ennui" or world-weariness leading to depression. The next verse in Jeremiah lays down the ultimate test: "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."<sup>29</sup>

Chalmers' sermon may be old, but his words are taking on a new online significance. Enter the Internet to provide a never-ending list of "affections of the mind." Never before in history have so many worldwide possibilities been made available to the masses. If you think you have distractions today, you'd better fasten your safety belts, because the new options that will become available in cyberspace over the next two decades will make today's Internet look like the dark ages.

We're heading for three-dimensional virtual reality that is fast, cheap, and widely available. Even well-meaning Christians will be infatuated by cool distractions that may become dangerous. I'm not saying that all of these entertaining experiences will be sinful in and of themselves. The challenge will be to accurately assess where we place our treasure and thus our hearts.



Isn't an obsession with fun already occurring online? Yes, to some extent, but as the influence of cyberspace accelerates into all areas of life, there will be even more competition for our hearts. These temptations will test our integrity even further.

## Motivation Challenge 3: Building Strength Through Adversity

Even if we clearly understand the challenges, cyber temptations continue. The Internet offers unrelenting, pervasive opportunity to explore the good and the bad in life. We simply desire the wrong things in cyberspace, so we end up in the wrong places. So how can Chalmers words help us surf the net in ways that exemplify Christian values in the long run?

In the simplest terms, God must be the author of a new work, or it won't last. Allow me to briefly explain how God transformed my outlook and my desires.

Late one Friday afternoon, I got a phone call from my doctor's office. They said that the ultrasound confirmed a "tumor." They would be immediately referring me to a urologist. My doctor said that he thought there was a 90%+ probability that this was cancer.

I was crushed. I spent my 38<sup>th</sup> birthday fearing the worst. I went up to my bedroom and cried out to God. I felt like I was dying the entire the night. I felt sick, tired, and overwhelmed. My emotions started hitting me in waves. What about my family? What's going to happen to my girls? What will happen to my great new job on the e-Michigan project? All my plans were dashed. Time moved too slow.

A few days later, my sister Martha called from West Virginia. During that tear-filled conversation, Martha read me Psalm 118:17-18: "I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done. The Lord has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death." These verses were to become the "battle cry" for my life.

The night before surgery, many elders and pastors came to our house. Following God's word in James 5, Pastor Chris Brauns led a time where several us of confessed our sins to each other prior to praying.

The next morning, I checked into the hospital. My wife Priscilla later told me, "About an hour into the surgery, the doctor came out and told me that he had removed the tumor, and that it was in fact cancer. There were two possible types of cancer, and you had the one that was less desirable. We would have more information after all the test results and pathology were back in a week."

She later told our church, "For the first time I saw that Dan had a problem he couldn't solve, a problem that was bigger than he was. And it was hard. I saw him afraid and in a position of need. But I also saw new positive qualities. I saw him hungry for God's Word. He needed to hear from God. I also saw his priorities become crystal



clear. He wanted to live in order to shepherd our family, to lead us and care for us.”

Although my physical recovery went very well after surgery, the next week was the hardest of my life. The pain I could bear, but I had cancer. Had it spread to my lymph nodes or other organs? Would I live? Even in the best case, my life plans were down the drain. I wouldn't get the promotion. Forget our plans for overseas adoption.

I didn't sleep well. I had “little” pains all over my body and I was worried that I was in stage 2 or 3. The cancer is in my lungs, it's in my brain. It's so hard to trust God!

A week later, we arrived at our doctor's office at about 8:30 a.m. After being escorted to one of the waiting rooms, my urologist came in with an intern. He smiled widely and said, “Hi kids. I have some good news for you. The pathologists searched and searched the tumor, but could not find one cell of cancer. The tumor was not cancer, it was benign.” He went on to say that this only happens less than once in every 100 tumors of this kind. He thought it was likely that it had been cancer at one time. When I asked him had this ever happened to any of his patients in the past, he said, “No, but I've read about it.” He had never seen this before in his several hundred operations in over 20 years. My doctor looked me the eyes and said, “You're a free man.”

I looked at him in stunned silence, before shouting, “PRAISE GOD.”

## What Changed?—Applying God's Grace

After reading that story, you may wonder what those events have to do with surfing the Net. In a word: everything. My love for God and family, my motivation for living, and even my perspective on work, all changed. I was a Christian before, but my understanding of the good news of the gospel changed. Through this trial God's word came alive as well as a new desire to get rid of tempting distractions. My outlook and desires changed. Let me be clear: I didn't earn this. I couldn't manipulate the situation. It was totally God's gift of grace.

For the rest of my life, I'll be working out the implications of this redemption. A new job, adopting two children, and a book are just a few of the blessings that have resulted. As my wife, kids, and coworkers will tell you, I still sin—regularly. But now I am an ambassador for Christ, working to redeem cyberspace and my part of the world.

The exciting thing is that my experience is not an isolated case. While God works differently in everyone's life, millions of people around the world have experienced a special outpouring of God's grace in their lives during suffering. Some find God through an illness, others through an unexpected death of a loved one. No matter how it happens, God intervenes in their lives.



After battling cancer in 2006, Pastor John Piper, the preaching pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, wrote an open letter that was widely circulated via the Internet entitled “Don’t Waste Your Cancer.”<sup>31</sup> I highly recommend studying this wisdom and giving this letter to anyone who is suffering from a serious illness. Here’s an excerpt:

You will waste your cancer if you do not believe it is designed for you by God.

You will waste your cancer if you believe it is a curse and not a gift.

You will waste your cancer if you seek comfort from your odds rather than from God.

You will waste your cancer if you refuse to think about death.

You will waste your cancer if you treat sin as casually as before.

You will waste your cancer if you fail to use it as a means of witness to the truth and glory of Christ.

Hebrews 12:10-12 says, “God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time; rather, it is painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

## Motivation Challenge 4: Motivated By Great Literature

God can work in an infinite number of other ways as well. Some develop a new vision for life by traveling the world and seeing God’s creation through new eyes. Many relatives in my extended family have changed during a ministry trip to a Third World country or inner city project. Whatever the method, a changed heart brings a new outlook and a transformed set of motivations for life. You can even experience God’s grace through reading great literature.

Changed lives are illustrated by allegories from great writers like J.R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. In the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Frodo and his friends Sam, Merry and Pippin return from their pain-filled journey to a besieged Shire, but now as much stronger and wiser hobbits from the ones that left.

Merry and Sam drew their swords also and rode up to support Pippin; but Frodo did not move. The ruffians gave back. Scaring Breeland peasants, and bullying bewildered hobbits, had been their work. Fearless hobbits with bright swords and grim faces were a great surprise. And there was a note in the voices of these newcomers that they had not heard before. It chilled them with fear.<sup>32</sup>



In C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, each of the children that visit Narnia is changed, but none more so than Eustace—a boy who was selfish, mean, and bitter at first. He is described this way at the beginning of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*: “There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it.”<sup>33</sup>

But after Eustace's life-changing adventure, Jill notices that Eustace has radically changed by the beginning of *The Silver Chair*: “It's not only me [...] Everyone's been saying so.”

These fictitious examples may seem out of place and childish, but they provide dramatic pictures of the power that grace can provide to change lives. If you've ever heard these words, “You're a free man (or woman),” you're foolish to stay the same. As Piper urges, don't waste this opportunity.

## Motivation Challenge 5: Motivated by Future Grace

After grateful hearts bring a renewed motivation and a new desire to live differently, how does this motivation help in the daily battles regarding what we do and don't do online? The Apostle Peter said, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Through these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”<sup>34</sup>

In his excellent book *Future Grace*<sup>35</sup>, John Piper addresses our need to battle sin by believing God's promises which offer so much more pleasure and happiness to our lives than the sin we commit. According to Piper, we sin because of the pleasure that sin offers us, so the key to destroying sin's power is to have “faith in future grace.” His ministry website contains this sample:

What is future grace? It is all that God promises to be for us from this second on. Saving faith means being confident and satisfied in this ever-arriving future grace. This is why saving faith is also sanctifying faith. The power of sin's promise is broken by the power of a superior satisfaction; namely, faith in future grace. Gratitude for past grace was never meant to empower future obedience. Tomorrow's crisis demands tomorrow's grace. And faith that future grace will be there is the victory that overcomes the world.<sup>36</sup>

While it is right to thank God for his goodness to us, Piper points out that gratitude can lead to pride if we have a view that we are paying God back by doing things for Him in exchange for his blessings. A better way to think is that “grace pays our debts to God which sin creates.”



Piper also states that our gratitude for redemptive history and our personal experiences of his grace, should motivate our faith in God's future grace. Piper challenges us to look forward to what God will continue to do. Another helpful analogy is that "You can't run a car on gratitude for yesterday's gas."

## The Standard: Righteousness, Not Just Morality or Ethics

I expect skeptics to object to this paper. Their question: Can't non-Christians and even the non-religious be moral and ethical? The answer is certainly yes. In fact, there are many non-Christians who act more ethical than professed Christians. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said it this way when preaching on I John 2:29-3:1:

Righteousness, then, is the thing that is essential to fellowship with God [...] There are plenty of people who are outside the Christian church today who deny the elements of the Christian faith, but who are quite moral and decent. They are quite good people, using the term "good" in its moral or philosophical connotation, but they do not conform to what the New Testament means by "righteous." "Righteous" means the quality, the kind of life that was lived by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>37</sup>

In all honesty, I don't have a list of new answers to motivate those who don't believe in God to act morally or ethically in cyberspace. As discussed earlier, some people are motivated by the fear of getting caught or going to jail or losing a valued relationship. Others may be trying to avoid discipline at work or other societal penalty. No doubt, many also adopt a pragmatic perspective in life which makes following the "current rules" the best path to reaching their goal of a promotion, a raise, or helping society in general. Using Chalmers' description, the affection of their heart could be just about anything. Even if you reject God, you can certainly benefit by acting morally and ethically.

But this article is primary for the Christian who wants to surf their values. Contrary to the secular belief that being a Christian equates to a large list of do's and don'ts, Martin Luther said, "Men are not made religious by performing certain actions which are externally good, but they must first have righteous principles, and then they will not fail to perform virtuous actions."<sup>38</sup>

The Christian hope is not in either action or performance. Regarding the Christian approach to righteousness, Dr. Keller said this:

The gospel brings us the confidence that anyone can be changed, that any enslaving habit can be overcome. But the "not yet" of our sin which remains in us and will never be eliminated until the fullness of the kingdom comes in. So we must avoid pat answers,



and we must not expect “quick fixes.” Unlike the moralists, we must be patient with slow growth or lapses and realize the complexity of change and growth in grace. Unlike the pragmatists and cynics, we must insist that miraculous change is possible.<sup>39</sup>

## Concluding Thoughts on Motivation

Everyone who connects to the Internet faces challenges to their values. Religious and non-religious alike can work together in society and agree on moral and ethical behaviors and encouraging compliance to acceptable behaviors on the Internet. Democratic institutions can be used to establish standards and codes of conduct for which are acceptable under various circumstances. Many faiths are coming together on this effort.

I have found that when I am actively fighting for good in cyberspace, it actually helps me to fight temptation at the same time. I’ve even heard members of my security staff say that if they were not fighting the bad guys, they would likely be a bad guy themselves. Wherever you are engaged in cyberspace, you can be a force for good—right now.

This paper identifies a different set of motivations for Christians. Rather than receiving our primary motivation from personal gain, power, or company benefit, Christians should act to glorify God through cyber actions. In response to all that God has done for us, we can have “faith in future grace.” We rest on God’s many promises, such as those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. When we make mistakes, we repent and trust in God’s promise of forgiveness and a new beginning.

In response to all that God has done for us, we can have “faith in future grace.”

Christians believe that God knows our thoughts and actions. He sees all. Someone once asked me, “Is God in cyberspace?” I answered by reading Psalm 139: 8-13:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me, and the light become night around me,”

Even darkness will not be dark to you; The night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb.



This knowledge doesn't just stop us from doing the wrong things and overcoming temptations—it motivates the right actions. God's grace frees us to be cyber ambassadors who benefit the local and global Internet community and society as a whole. Knowing it is the Lord who will reward us, with the only rewards that will ultimately matter.

John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, reportedly said, "Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that reared upon Samson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them we shall find a nest of honey within them."<sup>40</sup>

Rather than withdrawal from the Internet, we can boldly commit to move forward with an exciting new motivation.

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Net Safety Resources provides practical advice for Christians seeking to use the Internet with integrity. It was established in 2010 by Covenant Eyes and Dan Lohrmann.

White papers are available online at: <http://netsafetyresources.com/articles/>

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