

Going Through the Motions

Have you ever asked yourself?

- Where is the power of Jesus Christ in my life?
- Why am I not seeing the power of God at work in my life?
- Why is there still such a struggle with sin and an absence of joy and peace?
- Why does it feel like I am just going through the motions of Christianity without real life in Christ?

What does "going through the motions" mean?

EXAMPLE 1: A wise man brought a pen without ink for a lesson. For several seconds he "wrote" on a piece of paper but nothing appeared. He likened the pen to us and the ink to prayer. Trying to write without ink was merely "going through the motions". Likewise, trying to live a Christian life without prayer is just "going through the motions."

EXAMPLE 2: When Ananias and Saphira sold a possession of land but decided to keep back a part of the price it seems apparent that they wanted to be honored for their generosity as was Barnabas who had sold his land and brought the money to the apostles. Ananias and Saphira did not have to sell the land and they did not have to give, but their mistake was in bringing only a part of the price under the pretense of giving all. When Ananias presented his offering he was "going through the motions" and he immediately died when Peter revealed that he was lying to the Holy Ghost.

How do you know you are "going through the motions"?

- If you are not improving in your spiritual life.
- If you do things just to say you did them
- If you do things to appear something you are not?

How can you prevent just "going through the motions"? First of all we must recognize that without God we can do absolutely nothing. Secondly, a person must be absolutely honest and check his motives. Why do we do what we do? Is it for the praise of men? For position? Or is it to please Him? Following Jesus' teaching on secret giving, praying, and fasting would certainly prevent a lot of "going through the motions". Lastly, one must practice unfeigned love and faith. The word unfeigned means sincere and real and has the connotation of eliminating pretense.

If God were satisfied with religion and us going through religious exercises, it would not have been necessary to send Jesus to earth to die on a cross for our sins. The Pharisees had a great religious system in place, and God needed to look no further. However, God desires a relationship with us, and to have that, He first had to deal with our sin. Salvation is the beginning, not the end. If we are expecting to "have arrived" just because we are saved, we are wrong. That would be like me thinking that since I had a marriage ceremony, I don't need to cultivate closeness with my wife.

What if a friend told you he was just going through the motions in his marriage, and there was no joy and peace? You then would ask him some questions and soon realize that except for a few brief attempts, he had never made any significant effort to spend time with his wife and get to know her further. I'm confident you would tell him it was no wonder his marriage was empty and that if he wanted it to improve, he had better start investing in it.

Survey completed on the most productive leaders. They were not good at multitasking. They were not good at juggling a bunch of tasks. They did not have the best laptops and black berries to help them organize. They didn't have the best filing system. They did one thing at a time and fully invested themselves in it.

Is the power and reality of Jesus Christ alive in your life? If not, don't be satisfied with it remaining that way. That is no way to live. If you are not moving forward then you are moving backward. Jesus said "If you are not with me you are against me." That this kind of empty Christian walk leads to great discouragement

Going back, we said that the first part of your walk with Jesus is salvation? So are we saved? Yes! See 1 John 5:13 "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God."

James 4:8 "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded."

We need to take the next step toward Him. You've heard that we need to take the first step towards God. I say that is wrong. God took the first step. He dealt with our sin, He dealt with our salvation.

If you desire Jesus Christ to be real in your life, then obey what you read and the leadings of the Holy Spirit. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." John 14:21

James 4:4 "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

That is why James goes on to say that to draw near to God we need to put away this double-mindedness.

How does one evaluate whether he is double-minded? It isn't a matter of how much time we have spent in a church building, how religious we are, or even if we have been born again by the Spirit of God. Is it how many times we be a deacon? How many times we make the sign of the cross?

Titus 1:16 "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work."