

## **THE PRINCIPLE OF MOTIVATION**

As you learn, understand, and apply, the principle of motivation it will help you deal with every important decision of you life. Let us begin by discussing motives.

### **Our motives govern our actions**

During the final judgment, after our lives end, both the good and wicked will be judged by the same standards. In D&C 137: 9 and again in D&C 88:109 we learn that God will judge each one of us based upon two criteria:

- 1- Our works (what we did),
- 2- Our motives (why we did it)

Our works and our motives, when seen together, describe the kind of life we live.

### **How important are our motives?**

To emphasize the importance of motives in our lives, let's compare the behavior of two men, one of whom is famous, and the other notorious. Their names are Cain and Nephi. Cain killed Abel because Satan taught him to "*murder and get gain*" (Moses 5:29-31); and he exulted in his murderous deed. Nephi killed a man too; but we read that Nephi was repeatedly constrained by the Holy Spirit to kill Laban; but he resisted. He simply did not want to do it. It went against everything he had be taught. "But", he said: "*l...shrunk and would that I might not slay him*"; and only reluctantly, after realizing that his people would suffer terribly if he failed, and that the Lord had commanded him to do it, Nephi reluctantly consented to do the difficult deed. (1 Nep 4:7-18).

Now compare these situations. Each had killed a man, yet, for the very same act, Nephi was greatly *blessed*, while Cain was crushed under the weight of God's curse upon him. Why? Only their *motives* were different. Cain's motive was to get personal gain, while Nephi's motive was to please God, despite his own firm reservations. The act was the same, but the motives were opposites.

How important are motives then? A moment's thoughtful consideration reveals that our motives are at least as important as the things we do.

### **How understanding motives is helpful**

If it were possible to recognize our own motives, and discover the motives of others around us, we would better know who to help—or avoid—and the best way to do it. By learning the motives that are associated with each of the levels of living -- telestial, terrestrial, and celestial -- we discover a hidden key to insight and understanding.

### **One act at a time**

As we begin this discussion, we must realize that we can only use this principle to determine the level of one—single—act at a time. We can't bunch them together. We can't generalize. Each act that we perform is either telestial, terrestrial or celestial depending on the motive that urged us to do it. For example: I wrote this article. Why? What was my motive? You are reading what I wrote, why?

### **The three levels of living**

To begin with it may be helpful to illuminate the beliefs that world has about heaven

The General Populace	Members of the restored Church
◇ The good go to Heaven	◇ The pure in heart go to the Celestial Kingdom;
◇ The wicked go to Hell	◇ The honorable go to a level equal to their faith and works;
	◇ The wicked go to the Telestial Kingdom.

### **Our motives and how they effect our standing**

Every day each one of us does many things. Some of them may be based on human wisdom, or love and compassion; others may be based on logic, greed, or recognition. It is an interesting mix to say the least. It will be helpful to identify the motives that govern our actions. Let us begin by identifying the three levels of living that correspond with our lives hereafter—telestial, terrestrial and celestial.

As we begin to identify these levels of living for our use, it may be helpful to recognize that the motives that govern every individual, home or business can be placed on a continuum from worst to the best, that may be likened to the three degrees of glory:

#### **TELESTIAL LEVEL OF LIVING**

First let's look at the telestial level of living. The scriptures tell us that those who live on this level are *"liars, and sorcerers... adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie* (DC 76:103-106). They are selfish people who live lives of deceit and debauchery that lead to misery for others, and their own condemnation. Nephi teaches us that such men are motivated by four things (1 Nephi 22:23). They are:

- **Greed** - an obsession for the accumulation of money, including a compulsion to gather around them the 'things of the world'.
- **Power** - a fetish for leverage and control. The desire to manipulate others to their own ends,
- **Popularity** - A longing for recognition, praise, fame and glory.
- **The lusts of the flesh** - An obsessive appetite for lustful gratification.

Knowing this, we can readily see that **any act that we perform that is motivated by greed, power, popularity or the lusts of the flesh is a telestial act.**

Let me give you an example: When a friend of mine was made bishop, he felt sure that he could get a close friend of his, who lived just down the street, to become active in the Church; but the more he encouraged him the farther away he drew. Discouraged, the bishop gave up the effort.

To his surprise, the inactive brother and his wife requested an interview with the bishop just a week or two later. This was what they had to say: "Look Bishop, we'd like to go to the temple; but we know we haven't done the things that qualify us. Tithing, for

example, I haven't paid tithing for a long time." [As he said that, he peeled off a small pile of large bills before the bishop], "And fast offerings, I don't think I've ever paid fast offerings." [more currency was added] "And building fund? I've *never* paid building fund." [By this time, there was a *lot* of money sitting on the table].

The inactive brother continued: "Now, don't get me wrong, I'm smart enough to know that I can't buy my way into the temple. But if my wife and I become active in the Church and do everything that's expected of a good member of the Church for six months, will you give us a temple recommend?" If you were bishop, would you agree to that? Sure!

They did become active -- wonderfully active -- they were generous with their money, they served in callings with distinction, if there was anything to be done, they were there to do it. And yet, two years later, they dropped out of activity like a rock!

The bishop was perplexed by this turn of events and went to visit them. The brother turned to him and said: "I guess I owe you an explanation. As you already know, I'm a plumbing contractor. About two years ago the temple was being remodeled, and a lucrative plumbing contract came up for bid; but I couldn't bid on it because I didn't have a temple recommend. Well, I got my recommend, and I was awarded the bid; but now the job's done. I don't have to participate in the Church anymore!"

The ward members felt sure that this man qualified for the celestial kingdom. Did he? No! Because he was motivated by greed; therefore, all of the good things he did were void because his motive was telestial (see Moroni 7:6-10).

## TERRESTRIAL LEVEL OF LIVING

Most of us have experienced enough of the world to quickly identify the four desires that motivate a telestial person. Those are easy. The more difficult question is this: What motivates those who live on the terrestrial level to behave as they do?

But before we answer that, let's see what terrestrial people are like. Terrestrial people are honorable, they are honest, they are hardworking, and have a desire to make a difference in the world. Some of them are members of the Church who hold current temple recommends. They are good, but not quite good enough for the celestial kingdom. They teeter on the brink of deep disappointment; yet, most of them don't realize their predicament. Why, then, do men of this nature behave as they do? The answer is rooted in their way of thinking. The Lord said:

*"O the vainness...and the foolishness of men! When they are learned, they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not, and they shall perish." (2 Nephi 9:28).*

*"If [a man]...sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will...he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him." (DC 3:4)*

We learn from these scriptures that **those who live on a terrestrial level base their decisions on human logic and reason.** Decision making of this kind is also called *rational thinking*, which is the basis of *rationalization*.

The terrestrial person believes that he 'is the master of his fate' and—blinded by pride—he refuses to relinquish the control of his life to another—even to God. Through rationalization he arrives at decisions that are sometimes good, and sometimes evil. He may choose to excel; but often chooses to be less valiant instead, using his worldly logic to decide: “It’s not worth the effort”, or “It’s not that important”, or, “The bishop’s not doing it right”, thus becoming ineffective, and critical of his leaders and of Church policy. Such men fail to recognize their predicament. For they have refined rationalization to the point that they believe that even their darkest deeds—because they can be justified through rationalization—are, therefore, good.

As "natural" men and women, we experience attitudes and emotions that are different in quality from those we have if we are willing to live by the Spirit. We know when we are unhappy, but we probably do not know why. We are in a condition of self-inflicted misery, but we think we are the victims of circumstance of mistreatment by others, or of our own inability to "measure up."

People who are terrestrial and telectual live “without Christ in the world”; and, sadly, are described in the scriptures as “enemies of God.”

Robert L. Millet explains why:

*"The Book of Mormon tells us that "The natural man is an enemy to God" (Mosiah 3:19). ..."Simply stated, the natural man is the man who remains in his fallen condition; he has not experienced a [spiritual] rebirth. At the one end of the spectrum, the natural man [a man who lives on the telectual level of living]... may be one who...is carnal, sensual, and devilish...At the other end of the spectrum, the natural man [one who lives on the terrestrial level of living] may well be a "nice man", a moral and upright person" [who wants to do good, but does it on his own, without] the enlivening powers of the Holy Ghost."*

(Robert L. Millet, the Ensign, June 1992, p 8.)

Here is a case in point. It has to do with gossip. How often do we repeat the stories we hear about other people? What are our motives; and what are the results?

Think of the implications of this story told by Millie B. Farrimond, who wrote this story in her journal before her death. She was very successful in her work with the girls because the Lord had given her the power to look into their hearts and see their temptations and struggles. She said:

*"Among the gifts of the spirit which have been mine is the gift to dream true dreams...I have seen many things in them that have later come to pass...*

*"...This is the case of a very young girl. People misjudged her and a terrible scandal arose...there was much malicious gossip. "I was greatly troubled about the [gossip] I heard (not knowing whether she was guilty or innocent) ...then one night I dreamed I saw Satan. He had set a trap for this beautiful girl. I saw him standing there by his terrible trap; he had his eyes on the girl and was beckoning to her. She seemed not to see the danger and was about to enter the trap when all of a sudden she realized [her] mistake and turned and*

*ran away in the opposite direction. I saw Satan in his anger and disappointment...sending out a vicious bulldog after her. The dog overtook her and tore her into tiny bits. I could see those tiny particles flying in all directions, and yet the girl [still] stood there before me: I wondered at the meaning of it. Then I heard a voice say [this]: "The bulldog you see is Satan's most vicious tool. It is known as malicious gossip. What you saw him tear into tiny bits and scatter to the far winds [was] her reputation." I shall never forget the pain in my heart as I looked upon this girl stripped of her reputation which had been [as] much a part of her as her very body, and saw the look of helplessness and anguish in her face[;] yet...relief and joy...came to me to know that she was...innocent of the things she had been so harshly accused of."*

Having learned the truth, Sister Farrimond helped the girl safely through her trials.

Now please note this. After successfully resisting a terrible temptation, and feeling really good about herself, this young woman stood by in helpless anguish as her friends - many of them Church 'friends' and perhaps even Church leaders -- destroyed her reputation through malicious gossip. Those 'friends' had no idea that they were unwitting agents of Satan. In the dream Satan sent a dog to tear her apart; in real life he sent members of the Church to destroy her! Imagine! In his anger Satan used Church members to punish a girl for making a righteous choice!

Did these good-hearted Church-goers deliberately mean to destroy her? No. When they shunned her and told stories behind her back were they intentionally trying to 'tear her apart'? Of course not; but in their terrestrial way of thinking, they reasoned that when good people do bad things the right thing to do is to expose them -- and then shun them ("That'll teach 'em to be good!".) And all the while, Satan laughs with glee! He knows that he won this time. And because these terrestrial 'friends' were able to justify the gossip that unjustly destroyed a righteous girl's reputation, they were sure it was the right thing to do.

## THE CELESTIAL LEVEL OF LIVING

Now, how does that differ from those who live their lives on the celestial level of living? Celestial people are obviously honorable, honest, hardworking, and have the desire to make a difference in the world. They are active members of the Church who serve faithfully, and attend the temple. That description sounds a lot like the description of terrestrial people, doesn't it? What an interesting problem. It seems that terrestrial people do most of the same things that celestial people do, but because their motives are different, so are the outcomes. What makes the difference? Why are they held back? It will be interesting to discover the unique incentive that motivates those on the celestial level of living? The scriptures give us three clues:

*"...for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. ...[that] the Lord knoweth all things...wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will." (Words of Mormon 1:7)*

*"I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom;" (2 Nephi 28:30)*

*"...The natural man is an enemy to God...and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man..." (Mosiah 3:19)*

*Why is the natural man an enemy to God? An enemy is one who stands in opposition. In this case the "enemy" is opposing God's will; he operates outside the influence of the Holy Spirit. We are enemies to God when we do not seek to find out God's will and do it.*

The motive described by the scriptures above may be spoken in one sentence: **We live on a celestial level when we recognize, and are obedient to, the promptings of the Holy Spirit.** And so we can see that each act that is performed in obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit is a celestial act, and *only* those acts.

Let me give you an example:

*"There was a young boy from Idaho, fresh from the farm, and with little gospel training. His suit was a little extra-large, and one more neck could probably fit inside his shirt collar. Anyway, he was out on the first day of his mission -- and at his very first door -- when his senior companion told him: "It's your door Elder!" Petrified, the young man froze-up when a dignified woman answered the door. He couldn't get his mouth to work. And besides that he had no idea what he should say. After a long pause, the woman finally asked: "Did you want something boys? The senior companion didn't budge...just looked to the junior companion and nodded. Finally, inspiration hit! And with a burst of energy like a cork blowing out of a pop bottle, the junior companion said: "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." The woman opened the door wider and said: "What? That's profound. Where did you learn that?" The young missionary, taken aback, said: "it's in the bible .....somewhere.....I guess."*

*The woman immediately left the door only to return with her well-marked Bible in her hands. "Here", she said, "I'm a minister in my Church, and I'd like you to show me where that is in my Bible." The flustered young man took her Bible, flipped through it randomly and finally blurted: "I'm sorry! I don't know where it is. I don't know if it's even in the Bible or not. I'm just a young kid from Idaho, and I don't know hardly anything about this stuff. All I really know is that my family loves our Church, and we live it the best we can, and it's made us real happy. And I came out here at my own expense to tell you about it!"*

*The woman at the door opened it—widely now—and said: "Come in, young man, I want to hear what you've got to say." - Boyd K. packer -*

Those who recognize the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and are obedient to them, enjoy increasing revelation from God, are blessed with the pure love of Christ, and revel in the peace and joy that accompanies righteous living. Through these and other gifts that come through the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to do much good in the world.

The daily application of this principle may be explained as follows:

*"When faced with everyday problems, we can either accept or resist the Spirit. When we resist, we lose the promises of our Heavenly Father's plan and become*

*blind to the truths he would have us know. When we live at a telestial or terrestrial level [we] do not experience true love...compassion and peace of mind, and, in many instances we deny that celestial living is possible here on earth. Typically, we feel helpless or trapped by others or by our own weaknesses. Rather than meeting our challenges with confidence, we harbor despair. By resisting the Spirit, we become "natural" men and women, whom the scriptures describe as enemies to God. ... The "enemy to God" is one who chooses to resist the Spirit. Coming to the Lord in faith, submitting to the transforming power of his Spirit, does not mean being immediately perfect. Rather it means establishing a relationship with him that enables us to be made perfect over the period of a lifetime...in the end, we do not make ourselves perfect; but the Spirit can do it for us if we will only let it (Mosiah 3:19; 5:2.). Life is a continual growth process, and great joy can be gained from the process of becoming. One should not consider himself a "natural man or woman or as rejected by the Lord if he is continually seeking to do his best to follow the Spirit.*

(Teach Them Correct Principles, p 21).

Consider the celestial levels of thought and behavior taught by the Savior on the Sermon on the Mount as compared to the corresponding terrestrial and Telestial levels, as shown on the following chart:

Telestial	Terrestrial	Celestial
<i>Kill or accept killing</i> (Revelation 22:15)	<i>Thou shalt not kill</i> (Matthew 5:21; 3 Nephi 12:21)	<i>Totally avoid anger</i> ( Matthew 5:21-22; 3 Nephi 12:21-22)
<i>Commit or accept adultery</i> (D&C 76:103)	<i>Thou shalt not commit adultery</i> (Matthew 5:27; 3 Nephi 12:27)	<i>Avoid lust, and think pure thoughts continually</i> (Matthew 5:27-28; 3 Nephi 12:27-28)
<i>Hate anybody for any reason</i> (Matthew 5:22; 3 Nephi 12:22)	<i>Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy</i> (Matthew 5:43; 3 Nephi 12:43)	<i>Love everyone, no matter what they do to you</i> (Matthew 5:43-47; 3 Nephi 12:43-47)

It may be helpful to note that the highest level is of the heart and the Spirit, the middle level is of the intellect, and the lowest level is of the flesh.

### **Would you like to identify your own level of living?**

#### What motivates me?

- ◇ Am I driven by the lusts of the flesh: food, drink, sleep, sexual release? Are my energies spent in gathering material wealth or the things of the world? Do I need to be popular? Do I feel the need to always be in control?
- ◇ Do I make decisions intellectually? Do I seek satisfaction in intellectual pursuits and earthly successes?

- ◇ Am I always filled with love, and with an impelling desire to be the very best I can, and to help others reach their full potential, as guided by the Holy Spirit?

How does my communication reveal my motives?

- ◇ Am I picky, negative, accusing and blaming? Do I use gutter language?
- ◇ Do I remind people of the letter of the law; always explaining and defending my personal rights?
- ◇ Do I share my hopes, dreams, beliefs and commitments? Do I take a genuine interest in others?
- ◇ Do I tell the truth in love?

How does my behavior reveal my motives?

- ◇ Do I avoid responsibilities, when possible, and complain about my duties?
- ◇ Do I accept responsibility because I feel obligated to do so? Do I live by rules? Do I serve out of a sense of duty? Do I watch for others who fail to do their fair share, and criticize their slothfulness?
- ◇ Am I helpful? Do I seek ways to serve others, often going the second mile? Do I find joy in serving? (Teach Them Correct Principles)

*"When faced with everyday problems, we can either accept or resist the Spirit. When we resist, we lose the promises of our Heavenly Father's plan and become blind to the truths he would have us know. When we live at a Telesstial or terrestrial level [we] do not experience true love...compassion and peace of mind, and in many instances we deny that celestial living is possible here on earth. Typically, we feel helpless or trapped by others or by our own weaknesses. Rather than meeting our challenges with confidence, we harbor despair. By resisting the Spirit, we become "natural" men and women, whom the scriptures describe as enemies to God. (Teach Them Correct Principles, p 21).*

To sum it up, Harold B. Lee came to these conclusions after pondering Alma 41:7; D&C 88:20-24; Alma 34:34-35:

- Our place in the eternal worlds will be determined by which eternal laws we elect to obey while we live here on earth.
- We are all presently living either celestial laws that make us candidates for the celestial kingdom, terrestrial laws that make us candidates for the terrestrial kingdom, or telesstial laws that make us candidates for the telesstial kingdom.
- "The place we shall occupy in the eternal worlds will be will be determined by the obedience we yield to the laws of those various kingdoms during the time we have here in mortality upon the earth."

(Harold B. Lee, Conf. report, April 1947 pg. 45)

Because every moral decision you make is motivated by one of these levels of living; and because the decisions you make are your personal choice; you live in exactly the kind of body, home or business that you have chosen for yourself.



But there is a light at the end of the tunnel; because you chose what you now have, you can also choose do better. The solution to our problems always lies in our daily choices.

### **The moment of choice—moral agency**

Moment by moment we are being enticed by two distinctly different influences. We have all seen cartoons that show an ‘angel of light’ on one shoulder and a ‘dark angel’ on the other. We tend to laugh a little when we see them, because we have all experienced the Holy Spirit urging us to be good, and to bless others, while, at the same moment, the dark angel tempts us to do otherwise. The choice you make during each of these critical moments in time, is essential to your salvation; for by following the Holy Spirit we demonstrate our willingness to obey our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ; while any other course of action indicates that we wish to follow Satan instead.

The decision making process described above is called moral agency.

God is good. Through His tender mercies he allows us to change the choices we make and the path we follow at any moment. Our agency is still in play, this process of change is called repentance, and repentance is a wonderful thing!