

# What Is Our Motive For Christian Conduct?

**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** [NIV] *“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”*

**This is the conclusion that Solomon in his God-given wisdom made after examining and experiencing everything that life can offer us without God in our lives.**

**Ecclesiastes 4:4** [NIV] *“And I saw that all labour and all achievement spring from man’s envy of his neighbour. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”*

**This is a true but very hard fact to accept.**

**This motivation can also include our Christian conduct.**

**We do what we do and live the way we do to cause others to envy us.**

Or we act the way we do because we envy the way another person is admired for his Christian conduct!

The Greek moral philosopher Epictetus said that selfish personal interest was the motive behind all human conduct.

By way of illustration he pointed out that two dogs will romp together with every appearance of friendship until someone tosses one piece of meat to them. Their “friendship” only lasted as long as their interests coincided.

We should not condemn out of hand Epictetus for comparing our conduct with that of an animal.

**Proverbs 6:6-11** [NIV] *“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”*

**Jeremiah 8:7** [NIV] *“Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the LORD.”*

**God is not adverse to using the conduct of His created animals to teach us.**

**Luke 16:8** [NIV] *“The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.”*

**Christ tells us that there is some things people in the darkened society are wiser by human standards than those whom God has brought to the Light, by coming to know Jesus the Anointed One.**

**1 Corinthians 1:26-29** [NIV] *“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no-one may boast before him.”*

**The majority of people God has called at this time are those who are humble enough to acknowledge their need for God and His Wisdom.**

**The truth is, however hard it is to accept, that we are not basically good in our motives, for it is selfishness that is the basis of all our naturally motivated actions.**

This is not something we can shrug off, because our eternal welfare forbids us to be dishonest with reality.

**Romans 12:1 [NIV]** *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

**Putting our own interests before glorifying God through a life of sacrificial service for God is a sin towards God, not worshipping Him as God.**

Putting our own interests before those of other people is a sin towards society.

**Because we naturally choose what is of personal interest and beneficial to our personal physical welfare proves we are sinners.**

**When we consider relationships between people or nations as long as their interests do not conflict they can live alongside each other in relative peace.**

**As soon as there is a shift of interests due to economic structures then friends suddenly become enemies.**

**James 4:1-3 [NIV]** *“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. **You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”*

**All hostility between people or nations can be traced back to a clash of personal interest.**

Human society is built upon a balance of personal interests.

**We are so used to seeing everyone service their own ends that no other conduct is expected.**

**Jeremiah 17:9 [Amplified Bible]** *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly perverse and corrupt and severely mortally sick! Who can know it, perceive, understand or be acquainted with his own heart and mind?”*

**Mark 7:21-23 [NIV]** *“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean’.”*

**Every one of these natural outpourings of our human nature is self-centred and without any means of changing by external organisation.**

**Ephesians 4:20-24 [NIV]** *“You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. **You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**”*

**There is no cure for our natural selfish nature other than death and a new attitude of mind to replace it.**

**Matthew 13:15** [NIV] *“For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”*

**What has to happen is not a healing of the old selfish attitude of mind, but a completely renewed mind.**

**Romans 12:1-2** [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

**No longer can our mind conform to this world’s attitude, inward selfish motives, but a transformed mind is the starting point of a new life as a Christian.**

**God doesn’t try to alter our selfish nature by rules and regulations but asks us to kill off old nature and accept a new one from Him.**

**Romans 6:1-4, 8-14** [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? **Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**” ... “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, **count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”*

**The direction of our mind has reversed, from ourselves towards God, from serving ourselves to serving others.**

**Jesus Christ introduced this radically different motive for human conduct by introducing us to the cross.**

Jesus demonstrated the “love for others” centred mind, this selfless love in its fullest perfection by sacrificing His life for us on the cross.

**Philippians 2:3-11** [NIV] *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

**The cross is symbolic of a selfless, others-centred life, which should not end with Christ.**

**Matthew 20:28** [NIV] *“...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

**The motivation in Christ’s life was outward away from self.**

**Matthew 16:24-26** [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and **take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”**”*

The teaching in this scripture is too plain for us to miss.

**The self-interest motive in our conduct, though it is inherent in human nature, is still an evil and destructive thing.**

This type of motivation can only lead to tragic and everlasting loss.

**An outward directed love for others is the only motivated conduct that is acceptable to our Creator God.**

**Such loving motivated conduct is beyond human ability to generate, we receive it only through a close relationship with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send if we request Him to do so.**

Why this limited availability of such a loving motivation?

**Galatians 5:22-23** [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Such love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, an attribute that grows in us only as a result of our yielding to and an intimate union with the Holy Spirit.

**Galatians 5:24-26** [NIV] *“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”*

This loving relationship with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will cause the root of selfish motivation, envy, to wither and outward love become the motivating power for all our conduct.

**This change will not take place overnight.**

**Philippians 4:11-13** [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**”*

Even for that great Saint Paul it was something he had to learn over a period of time.

**It is time we all checked out our brand of Christianity against what the New Testament teaches.**

There is a real danger that we may overlook this radical new motive for human conduct and go on **serving our own interests under the disguise of godliness.**

**That is a mistake none of us can afford to make.**