

Date: July 26, 2009

Title: The Motions

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Scripture:

<sup>12</sup> I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. <sup>13</sup> Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, <sup>14</sup> where God is beckoning us onward— to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

<sup>15</sup> So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision— you'll see it yet! <sup>16</sup> Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it. Phil 3:7-16 (MSG)

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This is the last of the series I am doing concerning the popular culture as revealed to us through our popular music. The first song I did was Craig Morgan singing about how God must really love him. Last week I was looking at Michael Jackson's song called "Heal the World." This week I am dealing with a contemporary Christian Song by Mathew West entitled, "The Motions." Let's listen to this song now:

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## THE MOTIONS

By Matthew West

This might hurt, it's not safe  
But I know that I've gotta make a change  
I don't care if I break,  
At least I'll be feeling something  
'Cause just okay is not enough  
Help me fight through the nothingness of  
life

I don't wanna go through the motions  
I don't wanna go one more day  
without Your all consuming passion inside  
of me  
I don't wanna spend my whole life asking,  
"What if I had given everything,  
instead of going through the motions?"

No regrets, not this time  
I'm gonna let my heart defeat my mind  
Let Your love make me whole  
I think I'm finally feeling something  
'Cause just okay is not enough  
Help me fight through the nothingness of  
this life

'Cause I don't wanna go through the  
motions  
I don't wanna go one more day  
without Your all consuming passion inside  
of me  
I don't wanna spend my whole life asking,  
"What if I had given everything,  
instead of going through the motions?"

take me all the way (take me all the way)  
take me all the way ('cause I don't wanna  
go through the motions)  
take me all the way (I know I'm finally  
feeling something real)  
take me all the way

I don't wanna go through the motions  
I don't wanna go one more day  
without Your all consuming passion inside  
of me  
I don't wanna spend my whole life asking,  
"What if I had given everything,  
instead of going through the motions?"

I don't wanna go through the motions  
 I don't wanna go one more day  
 without Your all consuming passion inside  
 of me  
 I don't wanna spend my whole life asking,  
 "What if I had given everything,  
 instead of going through the motions?"

take me all the way (take me all the way)  
 take me all the way (I don't wanna go, I  
 don't wanna go)  
 take me all the way (through the motions)  
 take me all the way

I don't wanna go through the motions

I have to tell you that picking one song from the hundreds of Christian songs that are out there seemed like an overwhelming task so rather than make this decision on the basis of some great point I thought I should make, instead, I went to the billboard magazine top 50 chart and looked at contemporary Christian and Matthew West's song came up as number one. So I decided to use this song for my message.

I know it won't stay in the number one spot forever, but I first heard this song several months ago and I was surprised to find that it was still on the top of the charts. But then I thought about it a little more and decided that I shouldn't be surprised at all about this.

I realized that I shouldn't be surprised because so much of our lives seem to be about "the motions". We live in such a mechanized culture. For most of us our food, our clothing, our homes, and our transportation are created with amazing efficiency using assembly line techniques wherever possible. Nearly everything we buy is made either in a factory or uses industrialized principles to increase production and profits for the parent corporation. We human beings have become a necessary cog in our machine-like economic system of which most of us are an integral part. We have learned specialized skills in order to fill specialized niches so that we can make enough money to pay others to fill their specialized niches. And before long, it is no surprise that our lives begin to reflect the repetitive motions of the industrialized model that supplies so many of our needs and desires. You know what I am talking about don't you? I know that this is not true for all of you, but I bet you know what I mean. If your life does not mirror the repetitive motions of an assembly line machine doing the same thing over and over again, I bet you know of a friend or a relative whose life does.

Do any of you remember the 1993 movie, "Groundhog Day?" For those of you who haven't seen it, it is about an egocentric weatherman who is ordered to go cover the Groundhog Day ceremony in Punxsutawney,

Pennsylvania. Phil Connors, the character played by Bill Murray, does not want to go in the first place but then when a snow storm traps him in Punxsutawney he wakes up the next day only to find that it is not tomorrow it is once again, Groundhog Day. And this happens the next day and the next, and the next, and the next... Phil Connors is at first horrified to find that he is stuck in a sort of time warp with no way out, and then decides he can use this to his personal advantage. He robs a bank, wrecks a car plays tricks on women until even this gets boring. At some point he realizes that no matter what he is able to do to further his own self-centered interest, he's only going through meaningless motions; day after day after day.

There is one scene where he is drinking and talking with a bunch of guys in a bowling alley and he says, "What would you do if your life was just the same thing day after day and you knew that no matter what you did it didn't matter because tomorrow was going to be the same as the day before."

To which one of the men replies, "That about sums it up for me."

Unfortunately, that about sums it up for a lot of us. I believe that this is why Matthew West's song has been so popular for so long. I think that most of us find ourselves going through the motions for a large percentage of our lives because we tend to think that we don't have any other choice. Many of us feel trapped in our mundane lives and like Matthew West we cry out to God to help us fight through the nothingness of life; God, show us how to live lives that are filled with passion and purpose.

And, in the middle of this prayer we hear God say to us, "You are right to want more from your life. Go buy a fancy convertible, drive to the beach and go parasailing. Go ahead and risk your life savings in the commodities market, you only go around once you know."

Wait a minute, that doesn't sound like God talking. It sounds like the voice of the culture. It sounds like the voice that pretends to be God offering comfort, convenience, security, love, meaning and status to our lives.

And, inevitably, we are going to listen to that voice from time to time. We've all done it haven't we. We have all tried to find meaning in things of this world only to find that once again we are only going through the motions. And when we get to the inevitable end of any number of things of this world, we look back and think, "How could I have fallen for that?"

And still, there is this longing inside that calls us to live life that is filled with passion and purpose bigger than our own small lives. Pascal calls it a God-shaped hole inside each one of us that can only be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. And we can only fill this hole in our hearts when we let go of all the counterfeit desires of this world and follow Jesus Christ with every fiber of our being.

This is what Matthew West is singing about with such passion. (He's not crying out to drugs, or material wealth, or his wife and family, but to God, "take me all the way." Please God, ***I don't wanna go one more day without your all consuming passion inside of me!*** Mathew West cries this out to God and we cry this out to God and we cry out with him as we seek a life that is about more than going through the motions that our culture tells us will fill our lives with all we need.

Indeed, this is a tricky business; this life-risking passion-filled give-it-everything-you've-got way of life. This sort of life may not lead to leisurely days spent sipping mint juleps in Tahiti, though it's certainly not ruled out. This sort of life may not gain the respect that most of us want from our peers, especially if our peers value what our culture values. This sort of life might be dangerous.

Very often we take risks for God only to find that based on every earthly measure of success we can think of, we have failed. And we wonder if we misheard God or if we were fooled by the devil or we might question our own ability to do what God asked of us. Living fully for God can be confusing and it can be dangerous. And still we are asked to push forward as Paul wrote to the Philippians in the scripture for this morning; ***"I've got my eye on the goal, <sup>14</sup> where God is beckoning us onward— to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back."***

I heard Irwin McManus give a talk one time saying that we really need to live our Christian lives the way a rhinoceros charges at an intruder. See a rhino weighs in at about somewhere between 1 and a half tons to upwards of 5 tons. Their eyesight is so bad that they can't see anything further than about 75 ft. away and they run about 28 miles per hour. When rhinos decide to charge at something, they make a total commitment. And since their eyesight is so bad, they have to rely upon their sense of smell and

hearing to tell them that a charge is the right thing to do at that particular moment.

So imagine this two-ton animal running nearly thirty miles per hour that cannot see what it is running toward until a second and a half before it slams into it. When you run like that, with that sort of weight and that sort of speed, you had have to be totally committed to the charge. I agree with Irwin McManus that we are supposed to live our Christian lives like a running rhinoceros, but if we are going to live like a rhinoceros runs, we better know that what we are living for is right and just and good.

We better learn to hear the word of God correctly. We better do all we can to develop and nurture the relationship we have with the one who calls us to live life fully so that when we slam into life, we slam into it in such a way as to glorify God and not tarnish the image of God.

And then, there is one last point I would like to make. Earlier, I was speaking about how repetitive our lives can be; how factory like the motions of our lives can be. There are times when life calls for a rhino-like charge. But there are other times when the motions of life are simply repetitive and factory-like. This is where the passion for God and relationship with Jesus Christ can transform “The Motions” into a purpose-filled mission for God. For example, we all know of that really great teacher who teaches the same subject year after year but still continues to be passionate about his/her subject. Or the receptionist that continually greets people with a genuine smile no matter how many rude people try to rain on his/her parade. Or we know of homemakers who clean and cook and take care of the family’s needs day after day and never lose sight of God’s calling in their life.

Going through the motions can be so dull and boring. But we can live a life filled with passion and energy and commitment when **God** is filling us with that “all consuming passion.” We may believe we have a lot to lose, but when we live our lives for God what we have to gain will never be lost. The really great news is that we don’t have to simply go through the motions – we can live our lives for God! Amen.