Catalyst

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Right to the Limit

I know not everyone reading this is a driver, but see if you can relate to this. I know that when I am out driving, I try to push my car as fast as I think I can get away with, especially on the highway. When the speed limit is 35, I try to keep my speed around or under 40. When the speed limit is 55, I usually set my cruise at 61 or so. And when it is 65, I'm usually moving at 72 or 73. Lots of highways now have a 70 speed limit, so I go about 77 or whatever speed traffic is going around me.

I know that most police officers won't pull me over for going 38 in a 35 or 70 in a 65 zone. I'm not saying that it is right. I'm saying I know that there is a limit that I push, and at the sight of a trooper I slow down. That betrays the fact that I know it is wrong but I still try to push to the limit of being pulled over and ticketed. For the record, I have had two speeding tickets in my driving career.

I can also remember when I was in high school, I never really had much of a problem with my classes. I had really good grades and didn't have to work hard to get them. When I would get a tough assignment, I would think to myself, "What is the least amount of work I have to do to get a good grade?" In 10th grade History class, our tests were usually pretty long, and I just wanted to get it done as quickly as I could so I could work on a drawing or something else that I was actually interested in.

Far too often we try to push the limits of what we know we can get away with. We often live trying to see how much we can "get away with" without actually crossing the line and sinning. Should we really be flirting with sin and trying to get as close to the edge as possible? Or should we have a different focus?

King David was old and getting ready to hand over the kingdom to his son Solomon. As we was doing so, he said to him, "And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and a willing mind, for the Lord searches the heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever." In other words, God knows our heart an wants us to seek Him out.

Psalm 139 ends this way: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in a way everlasting." The writer is asking God to look into his heart and teach him the things that he needs to know to follow God. We should always be asking God to direct us in His ways because His ways are often not our ways.

Here's the thing...God doesn't just look at what we do, He looks at what we are thinking and why we do what we do.

Proverbs 16:2 says, "All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord." We like to fool ourselves into thinking that we are justified in the things that we do. We think that the line between something being ok and something being sinful is made by us, but it's not. God is the one that judges our actions and our hearts.

The Bible gives overwhelming support that our focus shouldn't be on pushing the limits, but rather on being committed to doing all things in a way that clearly glorifies God and draws us closer to Him in obedience. Some good questions that we should ask ourselves are:

1. How well are my actions pleasing God? (1 Corinthians 10:31)
2. How well are my actions drawing me closer to God? (James 4:8)

God is not pleased when our desire is to push to the edge of what we think is "okay"! He does not want us going in the direction that leads us away from Him. However, God is pleased when we make decisions that draw us closer to Him in obedience. Let us apply these principles to every aspect of our lives, so that in all we do, we will continually be pursuing God and living the right kind of life.

So, my examples of driving and back in high school were not pleasing to God. Remembering that I am still a sinner and not perfect, God is full of grace when we recognize that we are wrong and come back to Him in repentance. Our God is amazing like that!

So how does this apply to all areas of your life?
Home, school, out with friends, work, time with significant others, etc.?