

Initiative

vs. Idleness

Initiative is acting on the rhemas that God gives to us in His Word.

Definition

Initiative is expressed in two ways: by thoughts and by deeds. The Hebrew word *chashab* (translated *think*) defines the thinking phase of initiative. It means to “plan, calculate, invent, imagine.”

The Greek word most frequently used for *doing*, *poieo*, describes the action phase of initiative, meaning “to make, produce, execute, institute.”

Initiative is based on the faith of knowing God’s will through the *rhemas* of God’s Word and the works of carrying them out. Initiative that does not spring from faith is iniquity.

Why Is Initiative Important?

Initiative is foundational to all other qualities. It is the first quality that God used to demonstrate His love to us and the first quality that we must use in responding to His love. Initiative is seeing and doing what needs to be done before being asked to do it. Initiative is using the energy of God (grace) to achieve the will of God, as directed by the Spirit of God.

Before the world was founded, God took initiative to provide redemption for us. (See I Peter 1:18–20.) He also demonstrated

initiative by creating the heavens and the earth. (See Genesis 1:1.)

Initiative is required to carry out every other character quality, including gratefulness, forgiveness, punctuality, diligence, and joyfulness. It is also essential to fulfilling such commands of Scripture as “pray without ceasing,” “lay up treasures in heaven,” “do good unto all,” “maintain good works,” and “go ye into all the world.”

How Is Initiative Activated?

Initiative is activated by thoughts and words. Scripture teaches us that power for good or for evil is in our thoughts and words. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). “Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5). “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Proverbs 18:21). With our words, we can do the will of God or the work of Satan. Therefore, “by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:37).

When God formed the world, He generated creative energy by words. “The worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of



Initiative is carrying out the will of God by being in tune with the heart of God.

“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

—Psalm 40:8

Great leaders learn discernment for wise initiatives on the backside of the desert. (See Exodus 30.)



Idleness is the ground in which many forms of evil take root.

The hour of idleness is the hour of temptation.

“Satan is much more in earnest than we are—he buys up the opportunity while we are wondering how much it will cost.”

—Amy Carmichael



When Initiative Inspired the World

On February 22, 1899, the editor of a small newspaper wrote in a single hour an article that leaped like wildfire across the world. Over forty million copies have been printed in hundreds of languages.

What prompted the article? The initiative of Rowan, who delivered a message from President McKinley to General Garcia in the jungles of Cuba during the Spanish-American war.

The article is a plea for others to follow his example. "Rowan took the letter and did not ask, 'Where is he?' He simply did the job he was asked to do! . . . [If you make this request of a staff member]: 'Please look in the encyclopedia and make a brief memorandum for me concerning the life of Correggio,' . . . Will your man quietly say, . . . 'Yes, sir,' and go do the task?

"On your life he will not. He will look at you out of a fishy eye and ask . . . [a series of foolish] questions . . . This incapacity for independent action, . . . this unwillingness to cheerfully catch hold of a project . . . are the reasons why true Christianity does not gain its rightful victory over the world."

things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). The words of God are recorded in the creation account: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters" (Genesis 1:6). Eight times God spoke and creation resulted. (See Genesis 1.)

Words are also basic to the initiative of redemption. Jesus is the Living Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

God initiated our salvation through words, and we receive salvation by words. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9).

When Does Initiative Become Iniquity?

We can take initiative to do many good things; however, they may actually be works of iniquity. If we are to avoid iniquity, we must follow Christ's example and allow the Holy Spirit to produce in us the right initiatives and guide us in properly carrying them out.

It is the Holy Spirit Who gives us grace, which is the desire and power to do God's will. It is also the Holy Spirit Who guides us with Scriptural truths (*rhemas*). We can take initiative with any of these Scriptural *rhemas* and know that we are in the will of God. This is the promise of John 15:7-8: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide

in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

How Did David Illustrate Initiative?

David wrote in Psalm 37:4, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." In other words, He will place His desires within us. It is then important for us to check these desires with Scripture and confirm them with Biblical *rhemas*.

Scripture gives David the awesome title of being "a man after God's own heart." (See Acts 13:22.) Even as a young boy, David demonstrated amazing initiative. As a shepherd, he could have spent all his time merely sitting around watching the sheep. Instead, he took initiative to meditate and memorize the Law of God, to skillfully play the harp, and to accurately sling stones at the predators of his sheep. These initiatives made him a skilled shepherd and prepared him to lead the nation of Israel.

As king, he decided to build a temple for God. Notice how his initiative began with words. "The king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (II Samuel 7:2). Even though God pointed out that it was impossible for a house to contain Him and that David was unqualified to build it, He honored David's initiative by allowing David's son to build the Temple, and God made it a centerpiece of His dealings with Israel. (See II Samuel 7:6-17.)

How to Test Your Initiative

When our chief concerns are to glorify God in all that we do and to “do good unto all men,” especially those of the household of faith (see Galatians 6:10), we will be in a good position to establish proper initiatives.

If we have failed to take initiative, it would be important to examine one’s relationship with the Lord and His Spirit. If we have grieved Him by unconfessed sin, we will not hear His promptings. If we have heard them and failed to obey them, we have grieved Him by disobedience. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Biblical Examples of Initiative

1. Moses took initiative in delivering his people from bondage. His initial actions were not right, but God honored his goal and prepared him to fulfill that vision. (See Exodus 2–3.)
2. David demonstrated initiative while caring for his family’s sheep. During this time, he developed skills that he later used to lead the nation. (See I Samuel 17, Psalm 78:71–72.)
3. Naaman took initiative by coming to Elijah for healing. When he followed God’s instructions, he was healed. (See II Kings 5.)
4. Nehemiah took initiative to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. (See Nehemiah 1–2.)

5. The rich young ruler took initiative in coming to Jesus. (See Luke 18.)

Personal Evaluation

How much initiative do you have?

- Do you show initiative by rising early in the morning and seeking the Lord?
- Do you take initiative to seek direction for your life in God’s Word?
- Do you show initiative by memorizing and meditating on Scripture?
- Do you show initiative by asking forgiveness and being reconciled with your enemies?
- Do you display initiative by building and using a prayer list?
- Do you take initiative in setting aside times for fasting?
- Do you take initiative to honor the Lord’s Day?
- Do you participate in other initiatives to do good works?
- Do you take initiative in sharing the Gospel with others?
- Do you exemplify initiative by keeping your home and car in good repair?
- Do you take initiative to search out the fatherless and the widows in your church and neighborhood and discover their needs?
- Do you exercise initiative in learning how to write down the truths that God is teaching you?



The older **whistling swan** shows initiative by taking the lead in a flock’s “V” formation. As other swans follow the leader’s example and take turns breaking the wind, a flock is able to fly 30 percent farther than if each swan flew alone.



Initiative is a building block of virtue.

“Who can find a virtuous woman? . . . She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.”
—Proverbs 31:10, 27

“It is an erroneous notion that you have to wait for the call of God: see that you are in such a condition that you can realize it.”

—Oswald Chambers