

## Evergreen Baptist Church Men's Ministry

### Study Guide for Chapter 2 in *Hazards of Being a Man* "Manipulation"

For Tuesday, November 6, 2007, and Saturday\*, November 10, 2007

(\* Remember the New Saturday Start Time – 8:00 A.M. !!)

The following questions are designed to help you prepare for the Men's Meeting, even if you do not have the book.

1. Pastor Miller cites Webster's definition of manipulation: "to change by artful or unfair means so as to serve one's purpose." What examples have you seen of manipulation?
  
2. Think back to a time when your plans were not working out as you had hoped. How did you respond? How could you have manipulated things to try to more quickly achieve your goals? What would have happened if you had forced the result?
  
3. Abraham is used as this chapter's example of a man who tried to manipulate different situations in order to achieve a desired goal – the promise God gave him of an heir. (See Genesis 12-17.) Consider these other men who tried to rush ahead of God. Moses in Exodus 2:11-15. Peter in Matthew 26:51-54.
  - a. What did Moses do to manipulate his situation?
  
  - b. What were the results of his scheming to get God's work done in Moses' way?
  
  - c. How did Peter try change the situation in order to serve his purposes?
  
  - d. What were the results of his attempt to manipulate the scene in the Garden?
  
  - e. What do you learn from the examples of these two men?

4. What do you think of each these quotes from chapter 2? Do you agree or disagree with Pastor Miller, and why?

- a. “Men solve problems. We fix things. And when we’ve fixed something, we feel a great deal of satisfaction.”
- b. “We like to do it ourselves so that our level of personal satisfaction is maximized. Call us stubborn. Call us bullheaded. It all has to do with our need to control our lives without obstruction.”
- c. “The Bible teaches that God is in control of everything, including us. And a fine line exists between our control and our trust in our relationship with God.”
- d. “We try to fix the problem so that we benefit. Sometimes our efforts earn us a desired goal. Other times they enable us to escape pain.”
- e. “If we find ourselves going against God’s will as revealed in Scripture, we are certainly guilty of manipulation. We are taking matters into our own hands.”
- f. “[F]orcing our agenda or timing will usually result in damage – to us or to others. Resistance to our current course should give us pause to evaluate our life’s trajectory. Instead of blindly forcing our way through any resistance, we should proceed with caution and assess our surroundings for any possible damage.”
- g. “Replacing manipulation with trust does not necessarily imply the absence of effort.”
- h. “God is found in the journey as well as the destination. The waiting we’re experiencing may be exactly at the center of God’s will for us. We should resist the temptation to seize control and usurp His authority in our lives. We must trust.”
- i. “As men, our greatest temptation when God asks us to wait is to grab the steering wheel and drive. We want to be in control, and we will manipulate our circumstances to make it so. God’s agenda for us, on the other hand, is to trust Him while we wait. Waiting is not a passive activity; it’s hard work.”

5. While Pastor Miller did not include an example of a man in Scripture who did not push his way past the roadblocks in his own bullheaded attempt to make God's plans work out in his way, I would like to suggest the Apostle Paul in Acts 16:6-10 as a possibility.

- a. What had God called Paul to do? (See Romans 15:20. Actually, when you consider what Paul writes in Romans 15:14-29 and compare it to what he experienced in Acts 20-28 you have another example of the Apostle letting God accomplish His perfect plan in His ways. Paul even gives us his assessment of the results of letting things happen in God's timing in Philippians 1:12.)
- b. Why didn't Paul go to into Asia and Bithynia as he had planned while on this second missionary trip?
- c. How could Paul have manipulated this situation? How might he have been able to rationalize his fulfilling his plans in that way?
- d. How does Paul illustrate Pastor Miller's contention that when God asks us to wait He doesn't want us to be indifferent or sit around lazily?
- e. Pastor Miller also said that waiting is hard work. What hard work do you think that Paul went through while he waited for God's clear direction?
- f. If Paul had grabbed the steering wheel of his life and made a u-turn into Asia or Bithynia, what do you think some of the consequences might have been? What happened to Paul and others because he did not take over for God at this critical time?
- g. What can we learn from Paul's example of patiently waiting for the Lord rather than manipulating the situation?

6. The five action points at the end of this chapter are designed to give us a checklist of actions we need to take in order to refrain from trying to manipulate our circumstances. Prayerfully consider each one and respond to God's prompting in your life.

- a. "Confess your inclination to control your own life. .... Identify the areas you feel most compelled to control."

- b. “Assess your surroundings. ....See if there is evidence of damage” in areas such as your health, your family, your relationships, etc.
- c. “Remain sensitive to resistance. Pause...long enough to determine if the resistance is a man-made or God-made obstacle.”
- d. “Determine to wait instead of manipulate. We must wait until God gives us the green light to step on the accelerator. And there is a speed limit. Although a moving car is easier to steer, a speeding car can get out of control with even the slightest course correction.”
- e. Seek wise counsel. .... [F]ind someone who has spent much time in God’s waiting room! .... [H]e will have a richer perspective because of it and can encourage you and pray for you.”

7. The chapter ends with the assignment to memorize John 15:5: “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” How does this verse relate to the idea of learning to trust God and avoid taking control of the situation into our own hands? How will memorizing it help you to avoid the hazard of manipulation?