

Evergreen Baptist Church Men's Ministry

Study Guide for Chapter 4 in *Hazards of Being a Man* “Individualism”

For Tuesday, January 15, 2008, and Saturday*, January 19, 2008

(* 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. The chapter's title can be easily misunderstood. Usually the word individualism has positive connotations. When it is used to mean individual character, individuality, the importance of the individual and the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence, we applaud it. However, when it is taken to its extreme, when it represents the attitude that the interests of the individual take precedence over the interests of the social group, then it becomes dangerous. Why are men so prone to acting as if their decisions have no effect on others?

2. John Donne observed in 1624, “No man is an island, entire by itself.” What does this mean and how does it relate to the topic of this chapter? How does it relate to these Biblical passages? Exodus 20:5b-6; Deuteronomy 5:9b-10; 7:9; 1st Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 5:9; and Ephesians 4:16.

3. Achan is presented as an example of a man who thought that his actions would not affect anyone else. He was wrong. Re-read his story in Joshua chapter 7. Every man who is fooled into thinking he is “an island unto himself” is deluded. Another possible example of such a man is mentioned in 1st Corinthians 5.

- a. What was this man doing?
- b. How were his actions affecting the church in Corinth?
- c. What sort of impact might his behavior have had in the larger Corinthian community?
- d. While Achan and his family were sentenced to death for his crimes, what was the sentence that Paul passed on this wicked man?
- e. What does this event in Corinth so long ago teach you about how our decisions and actions impact those around us?

4. What is your reaction to these quotes from chapter 4? Do you agree or disagree with Pastor Miller's statement, and why?

- a. "Individualism means failing to recognize the effects that an individual's thoughts, actions, and choices have on others, for better or for worse. Individualism is an unhealthy independence and a blindness to the causes and effects that permeate our relationships."
- b. "We may never learn the full palate of consequences others face because of us, but we should live our lives with the awareness that others are, in fact, affected by our actions."
- c. "A TV commercial advertises, 'What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.' This has been echoed in a popular country music song that says, 'What happens down in Mexico, stays in Mexico.' Don't you believe it! An individual who thinks only of himself will not hesitate to sin, but an individual's sin affects more than just the individual, even if he isn't aware of the consequences."
- d. "The sins that we commit carry grave consequences. We probably cannot imagine half the devastation caused by our actions. One unidentified author put it this way:
Sin will take you farther than you'd ever thought you'd stray;
Sin will leave you so lost, you'll never find your way;
Sin will keep you longer than you ever thought you'd stay;
Sin will cost you more than you ever thought you'd pay!"
- e. "Our action and our inaction will bring about consequences for others..... The character of our actions will determine the type of consequences they will experience. And we don't wish merely to protect our loves ones from negative experiences but also to provide them with positive ones."
- f. "Throughout the Bible we see the effects of people's actions on their community. To raise community awareness among his readers, the Apostle Paul constantly exhorted them concerning behavior that affects 'one another.'"
- g. "Our actions may affect individuals directly. These are the easiest consequences to identify. And those actions will also have indirect influence on others; thus the consequences of our actions are compounded. For example, most parents are cognizant of the way their actions affect their children but fall short of considering the way their grandchildren will be affected because of the consequences suffered by their children. It takes practice to begin to see such compound consequences, but a trained eye can be developed. Doing so will add to our incentive to walk in obedience – if not for our sake, then for the sake of others we love."
- h. "Our goal is to raise awareness of the communities affected by our lives and then adjust our behavior accordingly. We need one another. We affect one another. We are affected by one another."

6. In the book of Philippians we have the example of a man who lived his life in such a way that it positively impacted many people. We aren't told much about him, but what we do read about him is a powerful example for us. Epaphroditus is mentioned in 2:25-30 and 4:10-20.

- a. How would you describe Epaphroditus?
- b. What things did he do?
- c. How did his work affect the Apostle Paul? The church in Philippi? The people of Rome?
- d. How is Epaphroditus a good example of a man who looked "out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others"? (2:4)

7. The chapter concludes with five more outstanding action points from Pastor Miller on how we can reconnect with people. Prayerfully consider each one as you examine this critical area in your life as a man desiring to live by God's priorities for him.

- a. "Identify the specific actions of someone that resulted in consequences (positive or negative) for you. ... Chances are the individual who hurt (or helped) you did not even recognize it at the time."
- b. "Acknowledge that your actions affect others. ... Begin to look for connections between your decisions and their consequences for others."
- c. "Specify at least three communities that your actions may damage or strengthen. ... If possible, try to name as many members of each community as you can."
- d. "Remain cognizant of the consequences of your actions on these communities. ... [O]ur communities are not isolated from one another. ... Someone we influence negatively, may, as a result, influence someone else negatively, thereby compounding the consequences of our actions."
- e. "Revisit those who have suffered because of your actions. If you can identify individuals who have suffered because of your poor choices, you owe it to them to take the initiative and accept responsibility for their pain. Seek to reconcile those damaged relationships."

8. This chapter also includes a memory verse assignment. "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all." (1st Thessalonians 5:15) How does this verse relate to staying aware that our actions affect others? How will it help you to avoid the hazard of individualism?