

Evergreen Baptist Church Men's Ministry

Study Guide for Chapter 12 in *Hazards of Being a Man* “Unchecked Motives”

For Tuesday, May 20, 2008, and Saturday, May 24, 2008
(Tuesday from 7:30-9:30 P.M.; Saturday from 8:00-10:00 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 opens the chapter with the account of a humbling experience that caused him to reevaluate his motives. When he found a copy of one of the books he authored on the discount shelf of a used book store near his church he had to ask himself why he had written it to begin with. Have you ever had a similar experience that caused you to double check your motives? Do you think that it is a common experience for men to take the time to carefully examine their own motives? Why or why not?

2. Jesus had His share of experience dealing with men with improper motivations for the things that they did. Read Matthew 6:1-7 & 16-21.

- a. What activities were these men involved in which Jesus calls into question? How are these actions usually viewed by most observers? Why?
- b. What did Christ find wrong in the activities of these men and why?
- c. What reward does Jesus say these men will receive? Why is that reward extremely appropriate for them?
- d. What reward should be the motivation for us when we engage in these same activities? How do we make sure that we are eligible for that reward?
- e. If you really believe the comment that “your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly,” how will that affect your motivations for the spiritual activities you engage in? How does this statement encourage you to check your motivations?
- f. Besides the egotistical motivation that Jesus described, what other improper motivations may there be in some men for these same spiritual activities?

- g. How can we make sure that when we practice these spiritual disciplines that we are doing it for all the right reasons?

3. Pastor Miller cites King Joash as a man with unchecked motives. His story is recorded in 2nd Chronicles 24:1-25. What good things did Joash do as king? But what was wrong with the motivation that was driving him to these accomplishments? What changed and how did it affect Joash? How did his later life show the shallowness of the motivation for all of the very good things he had done at the start of his reign? What consequences did Joash suffer as a result for his failures? For New Testament examples of men with proper, and improper, motivations for the same activity, read Acts 4:32-5:6.

- a. What spiritual activity did both Barnabas and Ananias engage in?
- b. Who had the proper motivation for his action? What was that motivation?
- c. What was the motivation of the other man?
- d. What were the consequences in the lives of both men as a result of their motives?
- e. How did the activities of these two men affect those who witnessed them?
- f. What did you learn from these two men that will help you to carefully examine the true motivation behind what you do?

4. What are your reactions to the following quotes from chapter 12? Do you agree or disagree with Pastor Miller's statements, and why or why not?

- a. "As we evaluate our sincerity, our motives must always be examined. We should constantly ask ourselves why we are doing what we are doing – whether good or bad."
- b. [After relating the fictional accounts a wayward college student, an adulterous pastor, and a Christian businessman who left his faith at home:] "What lead to such duplicity? In the presence of Christians and family, all three appeared to be walking with the Lord, but in their absence they all behaved differently. The answer isn't that we must always be in the company of mature Christians. The young man who went wild at college didn't leave home and suddenly contract a behavioral problem. The reality is that his motivation for self-restraint at home was flawed. There was something wrong with him before he packed his bags for college. The problem with the pastor wasn't that he occasionally

played the harlot; it was that his desire to do right was motivated by the critique of his congregation. The Christian businessman had a problem even when he was home with his family. He was obedient for the wrong reasons.”

- c. “Often men use the right words and do the right things when we are in public. We learn what are culturally acceptable speech and actions in our various circles, and we adapt to the environment we’re in at the moment. Like a chameleon, we know how to fit in when we are in public. But it’s a different story when we are alone.”
- d. “Most of us sin in solitude. But if we sin when we are alone, then perhaps our ‘obedience’ in the company of others should be otherwise explained. Was it to please God, who is always present, or to be acceptable to those who are temporarily present?”
- e. “While there is a place for positive peer pressure and accountability, if our behavior is upright around other *because* we are around others, then our true motivation for obedience is suspect. If our motivation is anything other than to please the Lord, then our behavior will dramatically change when our motivating influence is removed.”
- f. “The true motives that lie behind our words and actions are known only to us and God. And sometimes we may even be deceived, thinking we’re sincere when there’s a false motivation hiding beneath the surface.”
- g. “Three possible relationships exist between our sincerity and our deeds. First, we may do the right things for the right reasons. This is sincere obedience from a pure heart. Second, we may do the right actions with the wrong motives. For most Christian men, the right actions come earlier than our sincerity. Third, we may avoid doing the right things because we sense our motives are impure. In other words, we may do the wrong thing with the right motives. But our lack of sincerity should never be an excuse for disobedience.”
- h. “Restraining our behavior is often right, but what if we learn that restraint in a particular area is motivated by something other than our desire to please the Lord? Should we throw off restraint? Having impure motives for restraint is no reason to throw off restraint. Sometimes even impure motives encourage us to avoid sin. And sometimes obedience breeds sincerity (1st Peter 1:22).”
- i. “Doing all the right things is not necessarily a sufficient test of maturity. We must intentionally identify the primary influencers for our obedience, then instead of refusing to insincerely obey, we must ask the Lord to make our motivation as pure as our actions.

In other words, the solution to impure motives is not disobedience but prayerful obedience.”

5. Prayerfully consider how you can implement these five action points suggested by Pastor Miller in your life and evaluate how each one would assist you in avoiding the hazard of unchecked motives.

- a. “*Gauge your level of sincerity.* While some people are hypersensitive to their motives, most men are oblivious to them. Begin to ask yourself what drives you toward obedience.”
- b. “*Identify your driving motives.* If your motivation is the presence of [another] person in your life, then your behavior may radically change if he or she is no longer there.”
- c. “*Ask the Lord to purify your motives.* The Bible calls a man of impure motives ‘double-minded’ (James 4:8). Draw near to God and ask Him to change your heart. Pray with David: ‘Create for me a pure heart, O God! Renew a resolute spirit within me!’ (Psalm 51:10).”
- d. “*Don’t neglect obedience in the absence of sincerity.* Instead, follow through with obedient actions and pray that the sincere motives will follow. By not obeying, you may be guilty of double sin. You will find that the more you do for the Lord, the purer your motives will become.”
- e. “*Practice obedience in isolation.* Since most of us struggle to obey in the absence of others, become intentional about saying and doing the right things when you are alone. Recognize that the Lord is always present even then and obey your Master.”

6. The memory verse assigned by Pastor Miller at the end of this chapter is Ephesians 5:11-13. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.” How do these instructions from the Apostle Paul help you to avoid the hazard of unchecked motives in your life?