

Motives Matter

Monday, 5/17/10 – Read **John Matthew 6:1**

My Observations _____

A Question to Answer: This is a statement of principle that is illustrated in the following verses to verse 18. We are not to do our good deeds in order to be seen by people because if that is our motive then we receive what we want i.e. the applause of people. And if that is the case then we can expect nothing from God who is the real giver. This is a principle that we can apply to any of our good deeds. In what ways have you been more motivated by what people think rather than by what God thinks?

Tuesday, 5/18/10 – Read **Matthew 6:2**

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: This is Matthew’s first illustration of the principle stated in verse 1. Verse 2 tells us what we are not to do in reference to our helping people less fortunate than ourselves. If we make a big pretension about our contribution to the poor, then we receive exactly what we want i.e. the appreciation of people around us. One of the principles operating here is that we get exactly what we want. And that motive is important in whatever we are doing. How can we do our good deeds with the best of motives?

Wednesday, 5/19/10 – Read **Matthew 6:3-4**

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Today’s text shows us the correct way to give to the poor. It is hyperbole to say that our right hand cannot know what our left hand is doing, however the point being made is that we should not make a show of our generosity. Our motives then are to help the poor not to bring praise to ourselves. Thus, only God knows our goodwill and motives and therefore He is the one who rewards us. But that reward is not monetary but simply the praise of God for a good work well done. Do we consciously think in these terms when we are helping others?

Thursday, 5/20/10 – Read **Matthew 6:5**

My Observations: _____

A Thought to Think About: The second illustration about the principle is about prayer. Now most of us do not engage in prayer as described in this verse. However, Jews do still pray out loud and in public as one could see at the wailing wall in Jerusalem. But in this case, I think the motive is still most important as I would think most modern Jews there are sincere in their prayers. There are occasions when we do engage in public prayer and we need to be very careful that we are really praying to God and not trying to get a point across to the people who are listening. I think public prayer is a very difficult situation for anyone.

Friday, 5/21/10 – Read **Matthew 6:6**

My Observations: _____

A Thought to Think About: One would think from this verse that all prayer should be private. Most of our prayers are private and it is then that we really are talking with God and not trying to impress anyone. We are being honest with ourselves and with God. But there is a place for public prayer.

Jesus himself prayed publically at Lazarus' tomb. The other problem with public prayer has to do with the Lord's Prayer that we pray in our Sunday services. In this case we need to be sure that what we are saying is more than the words.

Saturday, 5/22/10 – Read **Matthew 6:16**

My Observations: _____

A Thought to Think About: This third illustration concerns fasting which is not a common element of our “good deeds” but it illustrates the principle of doing things for appearances’ sake and not for religious purposes. One could say that this person is being deceptive but the motive is correct. Fasting was to help us concentrate on our relationship with God. This is much the way many people treat the season of Lent. But to be proud of what you have given up misses the point. We should examine our motives for almost anything we do as we work in the church.

Sunday, 5/23/10 – Read **Matthew 6:17-18**

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: What are some of the good deeds (acts of righteousness or piety) that you engage in regularly? How does the fact that these sometimes of necessity have to be public affect what you do? How can we be sure that our motives are correct? Are we really trying to please God or are we kidding ourselves and just playing to the audience? Hypocrisy is all too common and is a terrible disease to be avoided even to the extent of being deceptive about what we are doing and why.

My Faith Journal, May 16, 2010

Motives Matter

What do I hear God saying to me today?

What action do I intend to take this week?

Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.

“Beware of doing your acts of righteousness in front of people
in order to be seen by them;
for then you have no reward from your Father in
heaven.

1)“So whenever you do acts of mercifulness,
do not sound a trumpet in front of you,
as indeed the hypocrites do in the synagogues
and in the lanes,
so that they may be glorified by people.
Amen I tell you, they have received their reward.

But when you are doing your acts of mercifulness,
do not let your left hand know what your right
hand is doing,
so that your acts of mercifulness may be in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret
will give back to you.

2)“And whenever you pray,
You will not be as the hypocrites;
for they love to pray having stood in the
synagogues
and in the corners
of the wide places.
so that they might appear to people.
Amen I tell you, they have received their reward

But whenever you pray,
go into your storeroom and
having closed your door
pray to your Father who is in secret; and
your Father the one seeing in secret
will give back to you.

3)“And whenever you fast,
do not be like the sad-faced hypocrites,
for they cause their faces to disappear
so that they may appear to people to be fasting.
Amen I tell you, they have received their reward

But when you are fasting,
smear oil on your head and
wash your face,
so that your fasting may be seen not by people
but by your Father who is in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret
will give back to you.