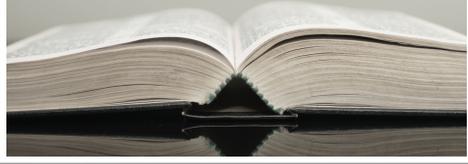


"The wicked man does deceptive  
work, But he who sows  
righteousness will have a sure  
reward."  
Proverbs 11:18 NKJV



## Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.  
Jacksonville, FL 32220

### Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Classes / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

[www.mariettacoc.com](http://www.mariettacoc.com)

### Pure Motives

What is our motivation for behavior? We ought to think about this regularly. The question forces us to dig through outward appearances and determine whether our "why" is what it ought to be. The heart is the seat of our motives, and out of the heart can come the evil that will defile and condemn (Matt 15:18-20). What makes a Christian is not just outward behavior, but a changed and renewed heart, which is critical to our walk with God. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

Jesus taught vital lessons about motives: "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matt 6:1-4).

If our righteousness is to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 5:20), we need to make sure that our motives for acting are honest. We are not in this for self-exaltation and show. Our motives need to be pure.

It is not uncommon to assume that others will act, react, and operate on the same basis that we do. If some are liars, they may assume the same of everyone else. If they operate “in the shadows,” they might assume the same of others. If they are the envious type, they may assume that others will also act out of envy. They may be suspicious of others because they themselves act accordingly.

I believe this is the mentality that underlies the teachers who meant to do Paul harm. Paul wrote, “To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. These preach out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment” (Phil 1:15-17).

These teachers preached out of envy and rivalry. They have selfish ambition and thought that their success in preaching would cause problems for Paul while he was imprisoned. How so? Possibly by thinking that Paul would act the same way they do. Paul might become envious out of his own selfish ambition and thereby suffer at the success of others. However, as is also common among those who have such bad motives, they misjudged Paul. Paul did not operate on the same basis they did. He was not envious and showed no such selfish ambition. Paul’s attitude was displayed through his humility, which included rejoicing that truth was being preached. These particular teachers were not said to be teaching error. Their problem was their motives. “What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice” (v. 18).

One of the reasons we need to root out evil motives in ourselves is because we will likely attribute the same evil motives to others. How we operate becomes, in our minds, how others also operate, and this does an injustice in our attitudes toward those we ought to be loving and serving. “Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:6-7).

Assume the best in others and perhaps that will also speak to pure motives in ourselves. If we have pure motives, we can start by assuming that others do as well. This does not mean everyone will have pure motives, but if we cannot start by giving the “benefit of the doubt,” then our own bitterness can get in the way of being able to develop healthy relationships and serve one another through love.

This is God’s wisdom, and may He help us develop motives that are first pure: “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (Jas 3:13-18).

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