

And what happens when we do see and understand some of our motives? Is insight going to help? Will insight alone change us?

We need Scripture to take us farther than we can take ourselves. Since motives are such an important part of life, we would expect God's Word to speak about them, and it certainly does. In fact, the entire Bible is a book about motivation.

It's All About the Heart

The key word is the *heart*. In Scripture, this is the source of all human motivation. The heart is the wellspring of life (Prov. 4:23), the root that determines whether the fruit of the tree will be good or bad (Jer. 17:5–8; Luke 6:43–45). It is our true self. Appearing nearly 1000 times in the Bible, *heart* can have a broad range of meaning, but at its core are our motivations. Simply put, the heart's root motivation is, "I WANT." "I want comfort, power, pleasure, control . . . for myself, against God." By nature, the heart is selfish. It wants what it wants when it wants it. It doesn't want God setting limits or providing direction. When changed by God himself, the heart's selfish and anti-God motives are not erased, but they are

gradually replaced by a desire to love God and live for him alone.

At first, this description might not seem to fit your own experience. Life does not feel like it is always about God. Some people haven't even heard of the true God, so how can their behavior have anything to do with him? However, you don't have to be self-consciously thinking about God to be for or against him.

When a teen violates a parent's directions, it doesn't always feel like an act of rebellion against the parent. It just feels like the teen wanted to do what he or she wanted to do. The disobedience was "nothing personal," yet it *was* personal. It was a desire for freedom, and against the parent's authority.

Or take internet pornography. For many people, it feels like a little-less-than-innocent indulgence. It might not be honorable, but it doesn't feel like it's *against* anyone. No one is getting hurt, and it's just a small pleasure. But the reality goes deeper than that. People *are* hurt by it, and it *is* against the spouse. It breaks the vows once made to her, and is a temporary shifting of marital allegiance. The pornography lover is saying that his desires cannot be met through his spouse, so he can indulge in mental betrayal to find the satisfaction he

craves. Going even deeper into the heart, such behavior is against God. These actions say that God is either blind or far away. After all, who would do such a thing if he believed he was in the presence of the King? The pornography lover is implicitly saying that God is just a person, limited in what he does and where he can be. Furthermore, when God says, “Be holy as I am holy,” the pornography lover responds by saying “No” or “Later.” He responds to the King’s command to pursue sexual purity as if it were a mere suggestion.

These examples illustrate the fact that all of life is personal. Whether we consciously think about it or not, we know *the* God (Rom. 1:21), the Searcher of hearts (Jer. 17:10). We don’t just have a fuzzy idea that there is a god or a “higher power.” The Bible says that in our hearts, we have a personal knowledge of the God who truly is. The problem is that we don’t always like his intrusive or disruptive ways, and we try to ignore or avoid him. We “suppress the truth” we know (Rom. 1:18–21).

But we are not always blind to these motives. When we are going through especially hard times, our God-motives often come to the surface. We may find ourselves saying, “God, what did I ever do to deserve this? How could

you do this to me?" The tough times expose our basic allegiances. Do we live for God or for ourselves?

Even with atheists, the God-ward heart will be revealed. Atheists might live with a profound fear of death, revealing that, at some level, they know they will someday face the living God. Or they might consult palm readers for direction, tacitly acknowledging a divine plan and their fear that it might not go well for them. These behaviors are echoes of God-oriented motivations. In their hearts is the question, *Will I live independent of God or will I acknowledge him as Lord?*

Granted, we are not always aware of these motives, but that doesn't mean they don't exist. *All* of our motives are hard to see.

Consider the case of the ancient Israelites. In Numbers 14 they had just seen unparalleled miracles performed by the God who had chosen them as his very own people. After leading them out of slavery in Egypt and destroying Pharaoh's army, God provided them with a new and fertile land. The problem was that the people living in the land thought it was theirs, and they weren't going to give it up without a fight.

The spies who scouted the land came back with a mixed report: the land was ideal, but the