



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD
WITH ULTERIOR MOTIVES
APRIL 30 – MAY 6, 2017

SERMON OUTLINE

With Ulterior Motives
Acts 8:1-25

The Sorcerer's Encounter with God Revealed his Motives for Belief

1. God tore away Simon's Position of Power

2. God revealed Simon's Slavery to Envy

Our Encounters with God will Reveal our Real Life Motives

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

A personal encounter with God reveals our impure motives.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Have you ever heard someone say that they wanted to spend some time “finding themselves”? What does this mean, and what actions do people take to accomplish this?

2. What are the flaws in trying to discover or find yourself on your own terms?

Leader: We live in a time when searching to find truth and purpose inside ourselves is highly valued and encouraged. We are also taught that we cannot question other people's "truths," because who is to say what is right or wrong? The problem with this mindset is that our thoughts, feelings, and intentions lie to us (Rom. 1:28-31). Because God is truth, we need Him to teach us the truth about ourselves. Our identity is to be found in Christ alone. We must learn to rely on His Spirit to reveal the impure motives we have for following Him and practicing religious works.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 139:23-24.](#)

3. Psalm 139 is about God's all-knowing and ever-present nature. In your own words, what did David ask of God in verses 23-24?

4. What is true of our relationship with God when we approach Him like David did? What prevents us from approaching God like David did?

5. What does God know about you that you don't know about yourself? What means has He used to reveal this to you?

Leader: David, knowing that God knew everything, asked God to search him and know him. David knew that God knew Him, but he also loved God enough to seek the type of evaluation that can only come from God. This conclusion mirrors the beginning of the psalm where David said the Lord has searched him and known him. David knew God was trustworthy and faithful, and he was inspired to desire God more and to know God more. When our motives for following God are impure, we will not ask these questions of Him for fear of the answer. A person who truly desires a relationship with God wants to grow in Him regardless of the sacrifice and repentance necessary to get there. Today, God uses things like our small groups, church, Bible study, and prayer to open our eyes to who we are in Him and ways our behavior may be missing the mark.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JEREMIAH 17:9-10.](#)

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

6. God reminds us through Jeremiah that our hearts are “deceitful” (some translations say “desperately sick”). What are some of the ways our hearts lie to us, especially about our motives for religious behavior?

7. How does Jesus challenge the idea that our deceitful hearts are “beyond cure”?

Leader: Apart from Christ, our hearts are inherently deceptive. Throughout our lives, these hearts have led us to believe lies about who we are and why we do what we do. We believe we are not attractive enough, smart enough, or powerful enough. Our religious behaviors (prayer, worship, small group attendance, and so on) are often motivated by pride. We are trapped in sins, or believe the lie that we are self-sufficient. Our hearts deceive us into thinking that what is bad for us is good for us, or that God doesn't love us and we are beyond forgiveness. All of us have in some way believed the lie that we can define ourselves, when it is God alone who defines us. The Lord designed and defined us before we were even born (Ps. 139:13). When we embrace God's estimation of our hearts, we can find forgiveness and acceptance from Him.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:1-2.

8. How does God use other believers to point out “any offensive way” (Ps. 139:24) in you? What would it look like to follow these instructions with others in this group?

9. What does Paul mean when he says we are to “carry each other's burdens”?

Leader: While we need God to show us what is in our hearts, we can see what is there with His help. He has given us other believers, the Spirit, and His Word to test ourselves. Each of these are a grace from God that can see the offensive ways in us more clearly than we can see them. Because He loves us, God has given us multiple ways to test our own motivations and bring them back into line when they are not honoring to Him. Because our hearts are sick and our motives often impure, we need God's help, and He is gracious to provide the help we desire. And when we grow weary, our Christian brothers and sisters are there to help carry our load and point us back to our identity in Christ.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

10. God's intimate knowledge of our hearts should lead us to trust Him more and seek to know Him more. What step do you need to take toward Him this week?

11. What would it take for our group to become the type of place where vulnerability and accountability of sin is possible?

PRAYER

Praise God for caring enough about us to search and know us. Thank Him for paying for every deceptive thought and offensive way on the cross of Jesus Christ. Ask Him to search and know you by His Spirit and reveal to you where you are out of line with His Word.

MEMORIZE

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. – Psalm 139:23-24

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

PSALM 139:23-24

In dealing with sin, David was equally hard on himself. He invited God to search and explore his own heart, a fact he had already acknowledged (v. 1). He wanted God to know his heart so God could make it known to him. He could not fully know his own heart because of the self-deceptiveness of sin (Jer. 17:9). Test me, he asked God, as a refiner would test and purify metal. Know intimately my anxious thoughts, he prayed.

David asked that God would see and reveal to him any offensive way in which his sin grieves the Lord. Only then, once his own sin is confessed and removed, could God lead him in the way everlasting, the way of holiness.

JEREMIAH 17:9-10

These verses contain words of deep insight about the heart. This body organ refers to more than the emotional part of a person's makeup. It represents not only the seat of feeling but of understanding and volition. Some versions translate "desperately sick" rather than deceitful. This is not a false concept. Sin is a sickness. This is why Jesus compared himself to a physician. This concept of sin as sickness includes the idea of rebelling against God. It also adds the end result that comes when people ignore his will for their lives. Sick people adopt morbid, distorted views of life that they would not embrace if they were well. This is because they do not understand themselves. This is exactly what God, through Jeremiah, said about the heart.

GALATIANS 6:1-2

Rather than exhibit destructive attitudes and actions (see Gal. 5:26), Christians are to help one another. Paul again addressed the Galatian believers as brothers, signaling a new topic but also emphasizing their spiritual kinship and his warm feeling for them. He gave the example of someone who was caught in a wrongdoing. Whatever the nature of the person's sin, spiritual

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

believers are to restore the individual. He urged any believer engaged in restoration to have a gentle spirit rather than a harsh, judgmental attitude. The word “gentle” has the idea of strength under control (see on 5:22); the restorer is to be firm but kind. Paul then exhorted believers to carry one another’s burdens. The word “burdens” refers to loads too heavy to bear alone. It could indicate oppressive loads in general but well may have referred specifically to moral faults referenced in verse 1. The guilt and shame from such sins would be heavy loads. Believers, however, also struggle with other loads that threaten to overpower them. Helping shoulder others’ heavy loads would fulfill the law of Christ.