



Trapped: Part 3

The Thing that Matters

Small Group Material

October 2nd, 2016

Leader Guide

Bottom Line: In order for your heart to be captured, it must first be available.

Study Verses: Matthew 21:23-27, Matthew 16:1-4, Matthew 15:1-9, Psalm 51:3-12

Define The Win: Participants would understand the importance of testing their motives and confronting what lies underneath their behavior. They would recognize how powerful their motives can be in altering their perspective of authority.

KEY POINTS

- We aren't available to surrender because we serve other masters.
- We want God's ways, but on our terms.
- We are masters at looking for exactly what we want to see. We use our mind to either find truth or hide truth.
- When we find truth but don't like it's implications, we disregard and dismiss it.
- When God captures your heart, His commands become irrelevant. Obedience becomes an expression.
- God doesn't want "grin and bear it" heartless obedience.
- We pretend that we are unsure and claim there isn't enough evidence to submit. But, the truth is we don't want to submit.

- If you can convince yourself God is not real, you will always have a reason why you can disobey Him.

ENCOUNTER

"Our self-centered hearts distort our reason to the point where we cannot use it to draw true inferences from what is really there. If our disapproval [of God] is strong enough, our sensory faculties and our rational faculties will not be able to infer that He is there." **John Piper**

- Read the quote from John Piper. How can our hearts influence not only what we see, but our response to the evidence presented to us? How are we masters at looking for exactly what we want to see?
- Reflect on a time when your motives altered your perspective of a situation. How did your motives determine your response?
- Why is confronting and exposing our motives such a critical piece in understanding our response to authority?
- When making a decision or determining your response to a situation, do you tend to test your motives before acting? Why or why not? If you do, how do you dig down deep enough to reveal issues of the heart?

FORMATION

- Read Matthew 15:1-9. How had the religious leaders made tradition and the rules more important than their obedience? What is the danger in heartless obedience or selective obedience? How did Jesus describe the current state of their heart?
- Read Matthew 16:1-4. What motivated the religious leaders to ask Jesus for a sign confirming His authority? Why did Jesus refuse to give the religious leaders what they wanted? How does this interaction confirm the diagnosis Jesus gave of the condition of the leader's hearts a chapter earlier?
- Read Matthew 21:23-27. In this passage, how did Jesus respond to the religious leaders questioning His authority? How did His response cut to the heart of the real issue at hand? What standard had the religious leaders set to determine their truth?
- Read Psalm 51:3-17. What does the Lord desire of us? What are the sacrifices that truly honor God? What happens when we pursue truth in our innermost being?

EXPRESSION

- Are there places in your walk with God where you would say you are just going through the motions and your heart isn't in it?

- We want God, but on our terms. In what places are you ignoring the implications of God's truth in order to protect your own? How are your motives influencing your response to what you see in this situation?
- What is motivating this response? Why are you resisting to submit in this area? What would it look like to surrender this area over to God?
- In order for your heart to be captured, it must be available. What really has your heart? Would you say you have made your whole heart available to God? Why or why not? How can you make your heart available to God this week?

LEADER INSIGHT

We see what we want to see. We are masters at looking for what fits our agenda and disregarding everything else. We use our mind to either find truth or hide truth. If one believes the glass is half empty, then everywhere they turn they will see a world that always hands them lemons. When one tunes into a political debate, everything they encounter will be viewed through the lens of their party affiliation meaning they can dismiss everything the other political pundit is saying. If you watch a movie knowing the surprise twist at end, you begin to notice clues that went unseen during your first viewing.

The lens we use to view the world shapes our response to it. This principle holds true when it comes to our understanding of God and our view of His authority. If we reason God can't be trusted, we will more than likely pinpoint the places where, from our perception He let us down. If we feel there isn't enough evidence to believe in God, our eyes will search out everything to confirm this point. If we can convince ourselves God is not real, we will always have a reason why we can disobey Him.

We pretend that we are unsure and claim there isn't enough evidence to submit. But, the truth is, we don't want to submit in the first place. We want God's ways, but on our terms. We desire God's vision just as long as it lines up with our perspective. We all establish a standard by which we measure truth. More often than not, the standard we use is ourselves. What implications does this truth have on me? What is God asking me to do and am I willing to do it? Rather than pursuing God's truth, our tendency is to spend our energy protecting our own truth so we can be the one calling the shots. When we find truth but don't like it's implications, we disregard and dismiss it.

On the flip side, we can obey out of obligation. "Grin and bear it" defines this type of obedience. There is no joy to be found, only duty. Obedience doesn't automatically equal a heart that is in step with God. When we go through the motions, we remain in neutral and there is no pursuit of God's heart. Instead, just like the religious leaders in Jesus' day, our hearts can be far from God and we can be more concerned with how others perceive us than with how God sees us.

All of this speaks to the importance of testing our motives. The one thing God wants from us is the very thing we can hide from everybody else- our motives. These drivers influence everything about us, including our perspective and response to authority. It could be very easy to say that we are the only ones who know what drives our behavior but that is giving us too much credit. We don't tend to look beneath and explore our hearts. We fail to ask important questions like: What drives our behavior?

What do we really want? What is it that we truly desire?

God desires truth in our innermost being. This entails testing our motives and coming face to face with what drives our behavior. In order for our hearts to be captured, they must be available. When God captures our heart, His commands become irrelevant. Obedience becomes an expression of the work taking place inside our hearts. It's through the renewal of our mind that our heart gets transformed.