Dear Open Door Family,

In any given month I will get a number of phone calls or people coming to the church who have a sad story and what sounds like a legitimate need. Those kinds of calls or visits are very difficult for me. How in the world can I possibly know if the need is legitimate? Are they really in need or are they just going down the list of churches and trying to find one that will give them what they want? The hardest part in all of this is that I cannot see the heart or the motive behind what is being said. Because of this I have been taken advantage of in the past. And yet I still don't know how to meet these situations in a good way. When it comes to the MOTIVES of the heart, that is a difficult thing to understand. I don't always know what all the levels of my own motivation may be. That may be why I find prayer hard sometimes. Especially when I know that what is in my heart and my innermost motivation is really what matters to God when I pray.

James 4:2-3 *(NLT) ...Yet you don't have what you want BECAUSE you don't ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your MOTIVES ARE ALL WRONG...*

James 4:2-3 *(NET) You do not HAVE because you DO NOT ASK; you ask and do not receive because you ask WRONGLY, so you can SPEND it on your PASSIONS.*

James 4:2-3 *(NIV) ...You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with WRONG MOTIVES, that you may SPEND what you get on your PLEASURES.*

There are many aspects to prayer and prayer should always be first and foremost a way of spending time with our Lord Jesus. When we are troubled, hurting, when we are in desperate shape, to be able to get before the Lord and pour out our hearts to Him is an incredible blessing. Prayer can also be where we ask for things from God. We can ask for things for others or for ourselves. James is speaking specifically to us as individuals and HOW we ask things of God. Two things seem to have gone wrong. First, people were NOT asking ANYTHING of God. So God did not answer since a request was never made. The second was that when people did ASK for something, the motivation behind the request was WRONG. The word *PLEASURES* in the Greek is the word for hedonism which means the pursuit of personal pleasure above everything else. The word *SPEND* means to squander. Davis put it this way: *This is not the trusting child asking for a meal, but the greedy child asking for the best piece or the spoiled child demanding his or her own way*. So what is it that we need to do? Stop praying until our MOTIVES are perfect? NO, because that will never happen this side of eternity. But we can ask God to give us insight into our desires. We can ask God to show us when we are being self-focused and selfish with our requests. The ESV Notes give this insight: *Bringing our request to God can have a PURIFYING influence on our desires.* It may be that in the very act of asking for something totally selfish that the conviction of the Spirit of God will show us that we are wrong. We can also ask ourselves the following questions. Do I really need what I am asking for? Am I asking for something that will honor God? Why do I really want this? Yes, we must pray and ask or we will never receive. But when we ask it needs to be from an unselfish heart seeking God and His kingdom first.

PRAYER: Lord, please keep me from being selfish and self-absorbed as I pray. Please, Lord God, sort out my twisted and sinful motives. Bring the conviction of Your Holy Spirit on anything I am asking for in my life which is sinful. Please help me to pray and ask big things of You - but only those things which will continue the good work which You are doing in my life.

Pastor Mark Kieft

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