

# Motives are the Seeds of Action

## I Think Before I Do

By Rick R.

In my early days of sobriety my wife came home from an Alanon meeting all excited about what they had talked about. Apparently, they were discussing their Fourth Step inventories and she explained that when taking step six, it was important that she *examine her motives* before making decisions. How interesting and profound that statement was, at the time, and it has come up many, many times since that initial conversation. Since almost *everything we do begins with what we think* that statement has been a big part of what I believe our goals are supposed to be when we are in the process of cleaning up the wreckage of the past. It also implies that we should examine our motives for what we do, from this day forward, and be sure that they conform to the spirit of the principles that are suggested in the A.A. program. This kind of thinking was foreign to me before John Barleycorn got his grip, but when the alcohol took its toll and I was circling the drain, I was forced to decide what I was going to do with the rest of my life. It became very important to learn and understand what the causes of my failures *were*, in the past, and what I could do to correct them. Like most of us, we have measured our successes and failures based on things we have accomplished, by the things we owned, and where we lived. It made little difference how we acquired those things. How different my thinking is today, compared to how it was back then. I no longer base my success on material possessions. As the old country song says, "one rich man in ten with a satisfied mind." This, to me, does not mean that we must take a vow of poverty. To me, this means that if I am honest with myself and that my motives are pure and unselfish, I can be content at any economic level. My *motives* make it so.

I was doing a little research to find the definition of the word *happiness* and discovered that it is often described as "*a byproduct of right living and not an end in itself*" Happiness is not a goal, but it is the result of *living right*. A friend once shared at a meeting that, *satisfying his/her wants will never make a person happy*. Another person shared that she had read something that described it like this: "*happiness is like a butterfly, the more you chase it, the farther away it gets, but when you stand still, it will land on your shoulder*". If my motive is to create happiness, it's probably not going to happen. These subtle little gems of wisdom are revealed to me daily and they slowly become a part of my mental make-up.

Examining my motives has made me look deeper at many of the subtle little differences in the words we use and their causes and effects and, for my purposes, I find that my defects of character, *cause* my shortcomings, and when I understand my defect, (faulty thinking) my shortcoming (faulty behavior) can be corrected. When I understand the problem, the troubles can be corrected. These ideas may be hard to grasp in the beginning but if I hadn't started looking deeper into my motives, I may never have resolved the deeper issues. These days, Unselfish Motives are the seeds that all my thoughts and actions stem from, and that is as simple as it gets.