

Thoughts/Knowledge vs. Feelings/Emotion 12-1-13

IN 1 Corinthians 2 :14-16 Paul speaks about a contest between two minds on one person. One is the worldly, carnal mind, and one is the spiritual mind. We might consider another dichotomy of self-division: Thoughts vs. Feelings.

Attached is a secular article that discusses the stress between thoughts and feelings. We will find that there is a spiritual truth here to be learned. A Christian must learn to balance feeling and knowledge. We will see that feelings ought to follow thoughts. We will see that functional Christianity needs both feelings and knowledge to be successful.

First, we know that feelings alone are unstable. Peter tells us this in 2 Peter 3:16, when he says that those without knowledge or understanding are unstable people. Many Bible passages warn us about making decisions by our feelings:

Proverbs 28:26 "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool"

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"

Second, we also know that understanding alone is empty. John warned the Ephesians church of this in Revelation 2:3-4 . Paul said to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 8:1 that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. He was not degrading knowledge, but describing the way that knowledge is the exterior structure, and emotion fills that structure. Knowledge leads and defines the form, and emotion fills it.

The Bible makes it clear that both knowledge and emotion are needed in successful Christianity. Consider Romans 15:13: *"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."* Here we see the emotions of joy and peace filling the knowledge of faith (Romans 10:17).

A Christian must put knowledge first; this means of course the true knowledge from God, not from men. Then a Christian must put feeling into place; emotion following understanding.

Examples of Success:

We have a knowledge of salvation (I John 5:13). There are emotions that should fill that knowledge: Joy (I John 1:3) and Peace (Philippians 4:7) are two of them.

We have a knowledge of judgment (II Peter 3:11). There are emotions that should fill this knowledge: Fear of the Lord (Philippians 2:12) and Mercy towards others (James 2:13).

Examples of Failure:

When we let fear lead us, we may question whether we are truly saved.

When we let joy lead us, we may deceive ourselves as to our condition before God

When we let sorrow lead us, we may believe that God does not love us.

Conclusion: How can we be satisfied in service? By putting Godly knowledge first, and causing emotions to follow.

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THOUGHTS VS. FEELINGS

Thinking and feeling lie at opposite ends of the spectrum. Human Beings are capable of either thinking or feeling, but usually not at the same time. Many people tend to confuse the two processes. It is not uncommon to hear feelings couched as thoughts and thoughts presented as feelings. Although there are obvious exceptions, thoughts may be seen as arising from the brain (above the neck) while feelings arise from the body (below the neck). A thought is something that one generates while a feeling is something one experiences. Many, if not most, thoughts may be generated automatically (see Conscious-Unconscious). Our opinions and beliefs are thoughts and tend to be products of our upbringing. This includes racial attitudes and political biases. There is a tendency to simply adopt the beliefs and attitudes of the people we were surrounded with as children.

Thoughts are appraisals or opinions of what we perceive or experience. They act as explanations to help us understand our world. Not understanding what is happening around us leaves us feeling helpless, vulnerable and frustrated, which we find unpleasant. Understanding gives us a sense of competence or mastery that is comforting. Emotions happen in response to thoughts or perceptions. If I think that I am a worthy person who is loved and valued, I will feel good about myself and the world I live in. If I think that I am unworthy and have nothing to offer others, I am apt to feel unhappy and hopeless and may become depressed. Although the process is largely automatic, our feelings follow our thoughts. The good news here is that we are, in fact, in charge of how we feel.

As either a thought or a feeling becomes more intense, the other function fades. Thus, when feeling anything intensely, it becomes difficult to think or concentrate. A person with a car parked on their foot would have great trouble doing an exercise in mathematics. Similarly, someone lost in a problem solving exercise might forget the pain in their knee. That is why a hobby or other interest can provide such relief from the stresses of a complicated world.

One can learn to notice when one is thinking and when one is feeling. Each is appropriate in different situations. Communicating with loved ones works better when feelings are dominant, with a bit of thinking, such as "I will never call my wife bad names, even when I'm angry, because I love her". Business transactions, on the other hand, require mostly thinking, with the feeling of trust (or mistrust) as a helpful guide to be checked with as needed. Identifying our thoughts and feelings accurately is part of living a full and satisfying life.

http://www.cgmlt.com/images/pdfs/Thoughts_vrs._Feelings.pdf