



TC's Thoughts for Discussion

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"Whether I'm right or whether I'm wrong, whether I find a place in this world or never belong, I've gotta be me! What else can I be but what I am? I want to live, not merely survive. I can't be right for somebody else if I'm not right for me. I've gotta be free! I'll do it alone, that's how it must be. Daring to try, to do it or die, I've gotta be me!" Those lines are from song lyrics of the Sammy Davis Jr. rendition of "I've Gotta Be Me."

Both Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley are often identified with "I Did It My Way." With that song they elicited lots of spine tingles and crocodile tears, even more so after their deaths.

Older folk will remember "Doin' What Comes Natur'lly," from the 1946 musical, "Annie Get Your Gun." The troupe sang about how the Oakley family and their community lived happy lives despite their lack of education and wealth: "Still, they're as happy as can be, doin' what comes natur'lly."

Odds are that at least one or two of those songs inspire feelings of pleasant nostalgia for you. There may be a myriad of possible reasons for that, but this one thing's for certain: We're all creatures of Human Nature. We've each learned that it can be painful to replace what comes naturally with behaviors that others may expect...or even prescribe for us. Along the way we've also discovered that we must endure a lot of that pain in order to become functionally productive and reasonably successful within a civilized society.

Remember learning how to prepare for a job interview? How to dress? How to behave? What to think about? How to answer anticipated questions? Remember finding out that table manners and good English can either get you a job promotion or cause you to lose out? How about dating etiquette? Adjusting your personal ambitions to become a valuable member of a TEAM can also be painful. In none of those contexts will *doing what comes naturally* yield a favorable outcome.

So how does one gain all that painful, but critical knowledge efficiently? Twentieth-Century American moral and social philosopher, Eric Hoffer, wrote, "When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other." While it's true that experience is a good teacher, learning from other people's experiences can be considerably more efficient and a lot less painful. That's one of the primary reasons why God put His word in writing for us—so that we can learn why and how to align with His superior thinking in order to experience abundant life, now and later, with a lot less pain.

Most of the Old Testament heroes had substantial character flaws. We can relate to that. Many of the New Testament characters did stupid stuff, too. We can relate to that. In both testaments, the individuals and the nations always dropped the ball only when they were engaged in the stinking "gotta be me" thinking that's joined-at-the-hip with Human Nature. When they recovered, it was always after they had discarded that stinking thinking and replaced it with the fully-informed thinking that God still prescribes today. Painful? Yes. "No pain; no gain."

Fully informed? Yes: "My people are destroyed for lack of [sincerity?] [prayer?] [worship?] [holiness?] [righteousness?] [faith?] [regular church attendance?] [hyper-spirituality?] [getting "truly 'saved'?"] [believing "what 'we' believe?"] knowledge..." —Hosea 4:6

For every human being, "doing what comes naturally" comes all too naturally. Why? Human Nature is the Sin Nature. Christians are instructed to crucify it. What comes naturally for us is captured in a dangerously misguided religious cliché, "Follow Your Heart."

The Old Testament is clearly a record of God's effort to teach the Hebrews why and how to THINK rationally...to use their minds, instead of their hearts, for making choices. At Jeremiah 17:9 in the KJV translation is this: "The heart [is] deceitful above all [things] and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Here's a worthy thumbnail sketch of God's entire Old Testament message:
 "O.K. guys, these are the boundaries for your thinking and your behavior. Stay within these boundaries to enjoy my blessings and my protection. Step one foot outside these boundaries and you're on your own. Step back inside with plans to stay and you can, again, enjoy my blessings and my protection."

I was a successful Bible teacher for a LOT of years—big sanctuary classes.

I knew what my denomination believed and that's what I taught.


Yes, I should've checked it out to make sure it was true.

So why didn't I do that? Well, maybe I didn't do that for the same reason that you haven't really checked out what your denomination teaches. "In religion and politics, people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second hand, and without examination." —Mark Twain



The Gospels record Jesus' modeling of – and confirming – that mindset for us: He never once permitted his feelings to override his thinking. Want to be like Jesus? That's how. Want proof? Read about His post-wilderness-experience temptations at Matthew 4:1-11.

Now that your knowledge includes the critical fact that human nature is the sin nature, can you afford to continue being "you?"...doing it "your way?"..."doing what comes naturally?"

—T. C. Newsome 

PS: Post a comment or question or just read what others are saying: www.DYPK.org/apps/blog.

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