

Part 14: Sources of our Feelings

Start the meeting with a prayer and silence. Reflect for a few minutes on some of the stronger feelings you noticed in yourself during the past week, and share in the group what they may be saying and what lies beneath them. How do you feel as you talk about them? Can you accept all these feelings as being aspects of yourself? (30 minutes)

Origins of our feelings (Veltri: *Orientations*, pg 115).

In looking at our feelings and where they come from, we need to understand that they have different causes. It is wise to try to identify these, otherwise we may be trying to 'spiritualise' falsely what is really going on.

Consider the following:

1. The physical state we are in

Insufficient rest or sleep, overwork with resulting fatigue, lack of physical exercise, unbalanced eating habits, body cycles, hyperactivity and other body conditions – all affect our feelings. They will cause different physical states like listlessness, irritability, feelings of uselessness etc.

2. Our inner agenda

A life-history of events and needs gives each of us a loaded inner agenda which will generate its appropriate feeling to each situation. To mature in our self-knowledge, we can begin to look at our feelings and responses and see if they are appropriate to the event.

All too often a reaction we experience is lopsided or out of keeping with the circumstances:

- a child who was frequently called lazy when young may grow up always trying to prove herself worthwhile.
- another person may have learned to play the 'good boy' role as a cover up for his gross inadequacy.
- someone else may have learned to clam up as a defence in case she is caught unaware by a threat.

3. A free human response

Many of our present interior experiences are simply a free and honest response to a present situation. These can tell us exactly what is going on in the situation or in ourselves in response to the situation. The more we are in contact with these sensitive feelings, the more powerful they become to us as we use them to discern what is really going on. For example:

A remark at a meeting we have just attended provokes a feeling of uneasiness. This feeling we recognise is not a defensive cover-up, but a reaction to the remark which we sense to be dishonest. The uneasy feeling is a real indicator of real dishonesty. Having recognised it, we can then decide how to act appropriately in the situation.

At another time we may find ourselves distancing another, keeping that person away. Again we recognise that this is not a defensive cover-up, but rather it tells us that the other person is trying to manipulate us.



Exercise with our feelings

(a) Place yourself in the presence of the Lord and pray for enlightenment. Relax, let your real feelings surface and name them.

(b) Ask the Lord to help you uncover what is really going on beneath your experiences. Talk to him about them.

1. Is the source biological?

24. Is the source from inner agenda? If so, precisely what? Is it a reliving of the past, a defence built up?

25. Is the experience simply a free human response to the present? What does it tell me about what is going on in the event and in me?

(c) Talk to Jesus about these experiences. You may want to thank him for them. Or, if they were negative, you may want to ask him for growth in freedom. You might talk to him about how you may handle them in the future. Perhaps you could imagine yourself in a similar future situation, and ask the Lord how you might later handle it. Then let go. This process of recognition with the Lord is in itself a freeing process, and leads to recognition of what is happening when it is happening.

(d) Jot down in your journal what you have discovered and felt. (20 minutes)

(e) Share in the group what you feel comfortable with. (30 minutes)

At home this week

Each day as you come to sit with God, get in touch with your dominant feeling and, having identified it, try to find out where it comes from. Try to get as clear a sense as possible of what it is saying to you. Check always: 'Am I responding freely to situations as they arise, or is my behaviour being dominated by my inner agenda?'



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