

Emotional reasoning, or rational thinking #1. "I feel it, therefore I am" - 20191005

Hi all,

Let me define 'emotional reasoning' right at the start:

Emotional reasoning is a process in which a person believes their emotional reaction is true, regardless of the evidence before them. It is the process by which we form a thought, opinion, idea, or belief based on how we feel.

This means logic, evidence, and facts do not influence an emotional reasoner because they believe what they feel and therefore think, is true. No amount of facts and evidence can change their mind. Even if they observe evidence to the contrary of their feelings, they won't accept it because they deliberately reject logic in favor of their feelings.

They feel it, therefore it is true. Period. Paragraph. Over and out.

An emotional reasoner lays aside logic and the thought process that includes analysis, reflection, contemplation, and reasoning, in favor of elevating how they feel about a person or situation above all. Emotional reasoning leads a person down a path of dysfunction and even self-destruction at times.

Let me be blunt: You will never grow spiritually beyond your level of emotional health.

Scripture repeatedly tells us to take our thoughts captive, to think on good things, to believe the best, and more, yet Christian culture is filled with emotional reasoners.

They are spiritual babies even after years of knowing the Lord; bound by emotional stagnation due to events in life.

Their issues aren't founded in the emotional, but in their thought life. Many choose to stay in an emotional rut because they've been hurt too many times, or they just don't have it in them to fight the battle of thoughts over emotions. Some have never learned how to think, how to make their emotions submit to Christ and His ways and His thoughts - they have never learned the higher ways.

Thoughts must control emotions rather than emotions controlling thoughts. Paul didn't say to bring reasoning captive, but imaginations captive. That's emotions.

The disclaimer is that there are times to obey emotions, and in the best case scenario reasoning and emotions work hand in hand. After all, at a hospital emergency room you want doctors and nurses who both emotionally react to the immediacy of the emergency while also having the ability to reason through what needs to be done to save the patient.

Some examples

Examples include the inability or unwillingness to make decisions.

A person may be facing dire financial difficulty, but they can't bring themselves to get out and get a job because if truth be told, they enjoy Facebook and other social media more. What our grandparents called lazy, we label spiritual or otherwise cover up logic with the fact we just don't feel like getting a job.

"I feel depressed, so (therefore) my marriage is failing." This is a person who feels safe in depression, choosing the safety of depression over their marriage rather than getting out to get counseling and working through difficulties. Their feelings leave them wondering if they want to pay the price to save their marriage. Emotions prevent them from doing the difficult thing that would help preserve and transform their marriage. They would rather stay in the safety of what they feel because it is known, and carries no risk of failure. This person is actually living in failure, but can't see it.

If you've ever been unfriended on Facebook by someone angry with you, it may be they are an emotional reasoner. You may have hit their 'hot' button, and the next thing you know, you're unfriended. The same thing happens in real life too - you and a friend may have an argument, one that you are trying to reason through, but your points are met with emotions that aren't anywhere close to logical, and your friendship ends right there.

A person excited about a personal prophecy from a so called 'prophet' telling them to go to China, packed up and was gone within 2 weeks because God said so. They had laid aside reasoning - logic, planning, support - and landed in Hong Kong. A month later the church was scrambling to buy them airfare home. They had used emotional reasoning but labeled it faith. It was not faith, but presumption and foolishness.

In real life or in social media, you can measure emotional reasoning by observing if the person's reaction is far greater than the situation calls for. Is their reaction disproportionate to the situation at hand? In other words, do they go nuclear on you when the situation is actually very minor? Do they leave logic when you get 'too close' perhaps, and just explode on you or dissolve into tears or accusations? They are emotional reasoners.

Another sign of emotional reasoning is the avoidance of an answer to a question. Rather than get caught in their flawed logic, this emotional reasoning person talks of how they feel, how others were wronged and so on - a distraction of emotion to prevent the answering of a question they are uncomfortable answering.

Sometimes a person can't honestly process their thoughts and feelings on a subject fast enough during a discussion, so yelling in an emotional outburst brings the discussion to an end, which accomplishes nothing.

"I don't feel saved, therefore I'm not (and God is mad at me)." This is a person who can read chapter and verse that they are saved, but they believe their emotions rather than God's Word.

How did Jesus clear the temple, upsetting tables and making a whip of cords, yet was without sin? How did Paul and Barnabas have a disagreement so intense they parted ways, only to remain friends and become coworkers again at a later date? How did Peter work through his emotional outburst of denying Christ to become the great apostle?

These things and more in this series...more next week, until then, blessings,
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Emotional reasoning or rational thinking #2, justified anger - 20191012

Hi all,

As ancient Israel settled into the land, built a temple, and cities grew, the need of city dwellers to buy animals for the required sacrifices had become a sizable industry. If you live by the Old Testament law and live in a city, where do you get a lamb for Passover? If you sinned or needed to make some other offering, where would you get the doves or lamb or goat to sacrifice?

The Levites were the priestly tribe, but there were a limited number of jobs to do around the temple, so as their numbers grew and more people began living in cities, the Levites started raising animals for the sacrifices for city dwellers, especially around Bethlehem which had large pastures. It was no doubt to those Levite shepherds the angels appeared when Jesus was born, in keeping with the lines of authority, announcing first to the priesthood that the final sacrificial Lamb had been born in town.

As city dwellers came to the temple there were markets selling the animals required for sacrifice, as well as 'money changers', mentioned in John 2: 13-19 and Matthew 21: 11-13. This is the group Jesus attacked by overturning their tables and making whips of cords to drive them all out, saying, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of thieves.'"

Exodus 30: 11-16 required a 'temple tax' of a half-shekel, which people paid when they came to make a sacrifice. But the gospels tell us this was Passover, so Jews were coming from all over the Roman Empire, which meant they used currency (coin) that had the images of pagan gods or goddesses on them, which was not acceptable. So they would exchange their pagan currency for the Jewish half-shekel.

The money changers and sellers of animals charged exorbitant prices to the city dwellers and visitors coming to the city for Passover, which is what Jesus was angry with - extorting people who were trapped because they had to make sacrifices to be righteous before God. The money changers were taking advantage of their situation.

Justified anger isn't emotional reasoning - nor is it a sin

Jesus was justified in his anger because it was not right that extortion was taking place, and that on temple grounds. Instead of the temple area being for people to pray and focus on God, they had opened a coffee shop...er, sorry, opened a market place in the lobby, and one that charged exorbitant prices, taking advantage of those who had come to worship and offer sacrifices to God. :)

If you or I see an unjust situation and we get angry, it may very well be righteous anger. But in this day and age the lines between anger based on eternal principles of right and wrong have been replaced with anger based on 'because I feel like it'.

A friendship ended because the one friend would not excuse nor condone the adultery of her friend. She justified her affair with the married man because his marriage was failing, he was planning he said on filing for divorce, he was not happy. She and their affair had made him and her very happy, so in her thinking, being the adulterous was a God-made way of escape for him from his unhappy marriage.

When her friend called it what it was, adultery, and expressed anger and shock at her friend's justifications, the friend stormed out and ended all contact. The adulterer was using emotional reasoning, angry at her friend who stood on principles of right and wrong, She justified her adultery based on how she felt, and telling herself it was God leading her to do so.

Layers of hardness of heart

Another situation when Jesus got angry happened in Mark 3: 1-5, concerning the healing of the man with the withered arm. He had asked the religious leaders if it was right to do good on the Sabbath, but they refused to answer Him.

The text tells us "Jesus looked round about them, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts". The Greek root 'poroo' is used to describe their hardness of heart. In common use it was a construction term, used to describe the layers of whitewash or mortar one applied to a wall. First application, then let it dry. Then a second application, then let it dry. The term was also used to describe a callous, which is a layering of blistered skin until it becomes hard.

Jesus was angry with those who exhibited such a process in their thoughts and lives. They knew what the right answer was - yes, it is right to do good on the Sabbath - but they didn't want to deal with the unrighteousness of their thoughts and emotional reasoning, so they stayed silent. To respond righteously they would have had to deal with the layers of hardness they had built up - and that was too much work. They would have to admit and expose deeper layers of hardening and wrong emotions and wrong reasoning - and they didn't want to do that.

Jesus did what was right anyway, and healed the man, patterning an example for us to always do right now matter how others receive it. As John 3: 20 says; 'Everyone who does evil hates the light, neither will they come to the light, because their deeds would be exposed.'

The take away today is that we should examine ourselves to see if our anger is justified (righteous) anger, or not. Is our anger based on emotion because under that knee-jerk reaction is illogical thinking and issues we protect by being angry at anyone who approaches?

Or is it something simple like kicking the dog when you get home because you're angry with someone at work? Are you angry with someone else but take it out on your kids? Do you get angry just because you feel like it, or are you willing to examine your heart to see what the real issues are?

More next week...until then, blessings,

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Emotional reasoning or rational thinking #3 - 20191019

Hi all,

A person reasoning with emotions believes what they feel is truth, even if physical and logical evidence say what they feel is not true. They believe what their feelings tell them above everything else.

They will also insist others and life itself bend to what they feel - and anything and anyone that is contrary to how they feel in their emotional reasoning, is eliminated. Here are some examples.

Bringing it home...real life emotional reasoning examples

A spouse can't resist believing their mate is being unfaithful, reading into everything said or done as emotional proof they must be seeing someone else, though there is in fact no physical evidence nor relationship evidence it is true.

You feel lonely so you conclude you are not worth loving, so no one cares for you.

You think your new romantic interest is perfect in every way, so much so you cannot see they are a flawed human like you - You feel good about them and all you see is the good and 'fall in love' because you feel 'high' about them, explaining away their flaws or thinking you will change them.

You are angry at a person but can't explain why you feel angry towards them, or your reasons for being angry with them are petty but blown out of proportion - you feel they did something bad enough to make you justifiably angry.

You feel stupid though the evidence of your life shows you are 'about even' with others, unable to dismiss your mistakes in life that everyone makes, and decisions we all would do differently in hindsight. But you still feel stupid.

You focus on the negative that happened in the day and can see nothing but that, it fills your emotions and thoughts. Your day, your event was ruined because of that 1 negative.

You have such a high standard of expectations that everything is either perfect or they are ruined. You see things only right or wrong, good or bad.

Everyone and everything is right or wrong, without any ability to see more complex issues or other factors in why someone said or did something. If they are wrong, they are eliminated from your circle of friends or contacts. You don't like them because all you see is their imperfections. You feel their imperfections are dangerous to you.

You don't listen well, but emotionally grab hold of what a person is saying part way through a statement, and immediately form a rebuttal or attack on that, rather than listening to the whole sentence or line of thought. (Even if you sit silently as they talk, you aren't listening, but rather forming your argument based on their earlier half sentence you grabbed hold of). Then, when you attack or rebut, they say 'that's not what I said', and are right - but you stopped listening half way through the first thing said you think you didn't agree with.

A person who feels life isn't fair because they apply their standard of what is fair to every person and every event in life. If what happens differs from what they think is fair they feel resentment and anger. An example would be a person feels they deserve a bigger raise but the boss doesn't allow it. Or with their spouse: They want a better car or better furniture or a Country Club membership, or a more expensive vacation, but their spouse insists on spending only what they can afford. This is also the person who binge shops or eats, because they feel they deserve 'it' because something elsewhere in life has been unfair to them.

You blame others for your emotional pain, like a spouse or friend. Have you thought or said: 'Stop making me feel bad about myself'. Truly no one can make you feel bad about yourself, that is your issue - but you blame others.

You must be right in any argument or discussion. You bend people to what you want - the boyfriend who the girlfriend coerces or manipulates to get them to dress or act like they want, for example. Being right and getting your way is more important than the higher peace in the relationship. There is no peace unless the other person bends to your will. This person reasons by emotions and there is no winning against that, for if they feel they are right, then they are right and their friend or spouse or pastor or coworker or boss is wrong.

Let's take some imaginations captive, shall we?

"Casting down **imaginations**, and every **high thing** that exalts itself against the knowledge of God; bringing every thought **captive** to the obedience of Christ."

The Greek word translated 'imaginations' is 'logismos', and it means the 'core reasoning that reflects someone's values, how they assign value to determine what they find to be reasonable.' Logismos emphasizes determining an opinion. In short, an imagining and connected emotion of what **we** think is right or proper or should be.

Castle walls

"Every high thing: is the Greek word 'hupsoma', and means a 'high wall, tall barrier, rampart' (like a castle wall) . In other words, our emotional reasoning and opinions formed from those emotions act as the wall of a castle, preventing Christ's thoughts and ways from influencing us away from our emotions and imaginations.

We build the walls because we make decisions and form opinions based on (wrong) emotions, rather than reasoning.

The only solution is emotional discipline.

Bringing emotions "captive" to obedience. The Greek word 'captive' is 'aichmalatos', with the word 'aichma' meaning 'spear'. This word means taken captive by spearpoint - take thoughts captive as a prisoner of war is the exact metaphor Paul uses, for in that day prisoners were taken captive at the point of a spear. That is what we must do with our 'core values by which we assign meaning'.

When first attempting this it is usually very difficult because the emotional reasoning person has been doing it their whole lives, and no one but Jesus has ever gotten them to examine themselves.

More literally then: "Pull down your opinions which erect themselves as castle walls against what we know of Christ's ways and thoughts. Take every emotion and thought and purpose captive at spear point like a prisoner of war and make it submit to what it has heard (of Jesus), and be ready to avenge within yourself any disobedience we find (within our emotional reasoning and thinking (and feelings))." (II Corinthians 10: 5-6)

How a person delivers themselves from emotional reasoning is next week, concluding the series then. Until then, blessings,

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Emotional reasoning or rational thinking #4, Stop emotional reasoning - 20191026

Hi all,

In John 7: 19-25 Jesus asks why the leaders wanted to kill Him, but the people's emotional reaction could have come from our time: "You're crazy. You've got a demon, who is trying to kill you?"

Jesus said in response: "Don't judge by appearance, judge righteous judgement." (v24) In other words, making judgements by appearance and the emotion that is a reaction to that appearance, is wrong.

Having an immediate emotional reaction to His words prevented the people from looking at the facts. It is the same for you and I. Emotional reasoning prevents us from looking at the facts, at the larger picture.

Receiving correction at Jesus' command, some set aside their emotional reasoning and said: "Isn't this He whom they are trying to kill?" (v25)

They changed their reaction from emotion to righteous in an instant, showing it can be done. They simply received correction, took control of their emotions, used the brain God gave them, balanced emotion with fact, and made a righteous judgement: 'Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?'

We catch ourselves when we form an emotional judgement, stop, change, and accept what the facts tell us.

Balance, balance - rather than grow, focus on the gift

Learning how to balance emotional reasoning with rational thought is a process. Many people have no 'filter' before they speak or act - if they think it, then out the mouth it goes or they take action without any thought attached other than what that emotion calls for. Others stay in a years-long emotional tug of war between emotional reasoning and logic:

Some live with an abusive spouse or 'significant other', but stay with them due to emotional reasoning in spite of logic telling them to leave before something worse happens.

Some have become sexually involved with someone outside of marriage and struggle between emotional reasoning and the logic of their commitments to one another, refusing to deal with fear and security and financial issues.

Some flare up in anger, leave social media friends, groups, or real friends, only to feel bad later but are too proud to admit they overreacted. Very often such a person will then push their 'gift' before others - the thing they do in the Lord that is fun and clearly from God- though He is dealing with them about their character, so they hide behind their 'gift' so they don't have to grow up. Music, witnessing, their cause, etc. It's all to hide their emotional character issues.

Some cannot discuss issues and ideas without personally attacking the other person, using emotion as reasoning. Logically they have no moral foundation upon which they base their reasoning, and because it is emotional reasoning their minds are confused with double standards, hypocrisy, and illogical beliefs. When discussing ideas they flare up and leave the discussion - they can't handle the emotions that are stirred up because they are reasoning by emotion.

Some don't 'feel' safe, comfortable, at peace, so refuse to discuss ideas and concepts, but rather seek to exclude anything that doesn't make them feel 'safe'. We see this now on US college campuses when speakers with views different from the liberal view are excluded, some actually saying they don't feel 'safe' listening to different views. That is emotional reasoning.

Safety. Fear. Past hurts. Insecurities. These are reasons people stay in emotional reasoning. To leave emotional reasoning for logic would mean a huge rearrangement to their lives, living arrangements, character growth, and more.

How to change

Learn to control your emotions. When an emotion flares up, catch yourself before you speak or act. Bring it captive by spear point to Jesus. Control yourself. Talk it through with yourself or a close friend. You have a character flaw, one you have refused to submit to Jesus for years and years, and now He wants you to learn to control your emotional reasoning. Control your emotions. Work at it.

A person doesn't need prayer for this other than to be strengthened from within to rise up and take control of their emotions. No hands laid on them, no demons to cast out. Just simple discipline. The very word 'disciple', meaning 'learner', states discipline is the key ingredient. There is no other solution.

The first time you may not catch yourself until after you sinned and blurted out something or left a chat room or unfriended someone or broke off a friendship. You know a person is struggling with growing up if you've ever heard: 'I haven't unfriended them, I just don't follow them anymore.' Same with real relationships. "We're still friends, we just don't do things together like we used to." That lie to oneself and others is chaff that will be burned away when they stand before Jesus. Saved, but as by fire as per Paul in I Corinthians 3-15.

The next time you'll catch yourself and 'hold your tongue'. The next time after that you'll recognize the emotional reasoning rising in you as it happens, and you'll apply thoughts that look at the other person, their circumstance, your own heart, and be able to make a righteous judgment. Repeat that each time. It is a process, a discipline, but it becomes a way of life.

Emotional reasoning: When a person believes their emotions are facts and with that foundation, thinks and makes decisions based on those emotions. Emotions are appearance based. What is said, written, done, that causes us to react emotionally, and we make decisions based on those emotions, those appearances.

Jesus: "Don't judge by appearance, judge righteous judgement." (John 7: 24)

Disciple. Discipline. Take control of your emotions before you start to reason with them. What would Jesus think about that? One of my most common prayers: "What do you think about this Father?" "What do you think about this Lord?"

New subject next week...until then...blessings,
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