

# How to Move God From Your Head to Your Heart

Some of us (me included) tend to approach life first from the head. (If you naturally approach life first from the heart, reading this may help you understand your spouse or friends better.) We studied hard in school, and when a problem comes up now, we try to figure things out. All of that is fine except when your relationship with God stays only in the head. It's important to move beyond a spirituality that is only intellectual, to move God from your head to your heart.

Some branches of Christianity tend to emphasize the intellectual aspects of faith almost exclusively. Biblical truth is preached. Your journey of faith is characterized by learning propositional truth and how much you know the Bible. Children are taught Bible memorization. When you have a problem, the "Christian" thing to do is look for a biblical truth to counteract a wrong belief. Your heart is not very much involved because as Jeremiah said, it's wicked.

Other branches of Christianity tend to place much greater emphasis on the emotional aspects of faith. Services focus time on music, emotional worship and ministry. Preaching, while biblically based, is more about dealing with the issues of life. Children are taught to experience God through prayer and music. When you have a problem, the "Christian" thing to do is ask someone to pray for you. Your head is not very much involved because you can't trust reason anyway, so "they" say.

This is not a critique on various branches of Christianity. There are dangers on both "sides." But if your relationship with God has been limited to propositional truth, beliefs and cognitive intellectual "work," you're still missing out on so much. God needs and wants you to move beyond a spirituality that is limited to your intellect.

## **God Desires Both Your Head and Your Heart**

All of you—spirit, soul, and body—was created by God. That includes your heart, your feelings, your emotions. God created you as an integrated whole human being. It was only after sin entered that emotions and intellect became separated. Now as we experience God's redemption, we must allow Him to impact every aspect of who He created us to be, including the emotional part of our nature.

Having one (intellect or emotion) without the other is dangerous. Having Word alone will leave you dry and miserable. Having emotion alone will leave you foundationless and unstable. You need both the Word (known intellectually) and the Spirit (experienced in your heart) to grow up spiritually.

Christianity is not anti-intellectual, as some claim. God is clear: "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isa. 1:18a). We absolutely must know biblical truth. And yet that's not enough: "The demons also believe and tremble" (James 2:19b).

Jesus didn't come to make pronouncements; He came to be *God with us* (see Matt. 1:23). The heart—your heart—is what is most important. And if God doesn't have that, well, you're in a very sad state of affairs. "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8).

If you have limited knowledge of biblical truth, that's where you need to focus. But if that's been the only part of your relationship with God, don't stop there. There's much more He wants for you.

### **My Own Story**

I grew up knowing a lot about the Bible. I lost count of the number of times I read the Bible through. I was in church every week, and studying the Bible was part of my schooling for 16 years. I did all the right things. I was a poster child

for living right. I'm very glad I lived that way; it kept me out of jail and a lot of other sad places.

But I was miserable. Empty. Something absolutely vital was missing. I was dead inside, and it showed. I knew all the right things, but nothing was right. Yes, I was scientifically trained as a physician, and I was good at it. But I was like many others, I believe, my default mode of approaching God intellectual.

For me, there was a very significant night when everything changed. I had been searching for God's answer to my brokenness, and that night it happened. I was acutely aware that something inside of me became alive that had not been alive before. It's not that my mind was turned off; it wasn't. But what God did in my heart was separate from my intellect. I felt things, but "emotions" is much too tame a word to describe what was happening. I met Jesus personally, and my spirit became alive.

That was 20 years ago now. My brokenness didn't go away in an instant after that night, but my life did begin to dramatically change. God's voice began to make sense to me. I had to learn about spiritual warfare and a lot more. But more than anything else, I began to experience living "fully alive"—not only intellectually, but physically, emotionally and spiritually as well.

## **What You Can Do**

If your Christianity has been primarily an intellectual pursuit, perhaps you're feeling very dry and are hungry for something more. Here are a few suggestions to help you along a path forward.

### **1. Read the Bible for spiritual food.**

There's a difference between reading the Bible for study or information (learning), and going to God's Word for spiritual

food because you're starving. Study is absolutely important. Many people have far too limited an understanding of the Bible than they need. Don't stop studying!

But also learn to take God's Word into your soul for spiritual nourishment. Imagine yourself in the story you're reading. Or let your frustration or anger or excitement express itself with David in the Psalms. Or let Jesus' own words seep into the places of your heart where you need comfort or healing. You'll find so much more satisfaction as you do this.

## **2. Pray also with your heart.**

Yes, pray with your mind, but also let your heart cry out to God. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding" (1 Cor. 14:15b). It's both-and. Express your needs. Ask for forgiveness. Tell God how great He is.

And then also let your emotions flow out in His presence. When you're feeling something in "real life," go to God with it. And please don't get all super-spiritual when you start praying. If you're frustrated or angry, yell at God if you need to. When you're grieving or lonely, cry in His presence. When you're confused, let it all flow out before Him. Bring the non-intellectual parts of you into God's presence too.

## **3. Stay long enough to listen.**

Once you've let yourself get emotional with God, don't rush away. Stay there and get quiet. God doesn't often add His voice to a cacophony of sound in your head. Let your mind and heart be still—out of exhaustion if nothing else. Stick around long enough for your mind and heart to run out of "stuff" to say and do. And then listen (See Ps. 46:10).

When your heart is still God can speak. That may be in church, in your prayer closet or outside in God's nature. Sometimes He comes with a quiet presence: "I'm here." Sometimes it's with conviction and an invitation to change. Sometimes it's with

comfort and healing. Sometimes it's to send you on a mission for His kingdom. And you'll never understand what He has to say if you rush away too quickly.

If you want your walk with God to deepen, to incorporate every aspect of who you are, make sure you are bringing not only your head but also your heart into your Christian experience. God is eager to embrace those parts of you too; after all, He made you that way!

**Your Turn:** Has your Christian experience been incorporating both head and heart? Which aspect do you need to incorporate more? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

**Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley** *is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the Fully Alive kind of life that Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .*

*This article originally appeared at .*