

Principle Number Three: Discernment

The next step, as we try and discover God's will, is that we should always be careful that we're not just following our emotions. Your feelings can change like the wind, so don't put your faith in them. We are to be Holy Spirit led.

We Are What We Think: "As a man thinks so he becomes. As he continues to think so he remains."

We can't choose our situations, but we can choose our response to any situation – it's all about choice.

What you are determines what you see; what you see determines what you do.

There are basically three ways from which we gather and process knowledge or understanding:

- **Perceptual knowledge** (eye, ear) through observation and sensory experience.
- **Conceptual knowledge** (heart and mind) by reason and intellectual inquiry.
- **Spiritual knowledge** (love) by moral and personal affinity. Knowledge of the things of God is more of a spiritual than an intellectual exercise.

There are basically two elements necessary to know the things of God:

- A revelation from God by the Holy Spirit.
- An appropriate spiritual response by man (1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4).

Matthew 6:22–23 ²² "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

As a man's own inner thoughts are known only to him, so only God's Spirit knows the mind of God. Spirit answers to spirit, not Spirit to mind.

An Unbeliever: The Natural Man

- An unregenerate person (not "born-again") who does not have the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- This individual can have absolutely no understanding or appreciation of the gospel message.
- sees the world only through a limited, worldly perspective and bases their world view from the processing of both perceptual and conceptual knowledge (soul without Kingdom of God Holy Spirit illumination).
- Cannot appreciate nor grasp God's Kingdom realities; is both repelled and mildly attracted to authentic, Holy Spirit filled people.

A Believer: (can be either "carnal" or "spiritual")

1. The Carnal Man:

- Regenerate or "born-again", but who demonstrates a life-style resembling that of an unbelieving, unregenerate person.

- The carnal Christian is a believer with childish ways, as seen in a jealous, competing, divisive and sectarian spirit; an immature Christian who lives more for human opinion than for Christ or God's Kingdom realities.
- Because a carnal Christian is neither hot nor cold, they live in a spiritual paradox having little to no impact in the lives of others.

2. The Spiritual Man:

- Regenerate and possessing spiritual maturity, as seen in freedom from sectarian strife. **1 Corinthians 3:3-4** ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere* men?
- Has a nature that responds to the truth.
- Unbelievers find the spiritual man difficult to understand while carnal Christians find this person to be both attractive and repulsive.
- Their life-styles, like a living tree, indicate progressive change and maturity.
- The single most evidence of a spiritually mature person is the demonstrable love relationship with God, expressed in love toward all others.
- It is often times said of these that they are "Christ-like".

The Soul

Our Human Soul: What many call our conscience, the Bible calls the soul. The soul receives information from the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch). The soul consists of:

- a. My mind (my ability to reason);
- b. My emotions (my ability to feel);
- c. My will (my ability to choose).

The mind and emotions feed information and assert direction upon the will. Those who have not received Christ as Lord and Savior make all of their decisions based entirely from this highly subjective level.

ALL decisions flowing out of this level of will are dictated by the soul (what we think and how we feel). Major life-changing decisions should NEVER be based on our soul response.

The Human Spirit

Just as there is a conscious area of our lives, there is an unconscious area called our subconscious. The Bible calls this the spirit.

God does not take us out of the world or make us robots – we will still feel like sinning, and sometimes we will sin. The difference is that before we became Christians, we were dead in sin and were slaves to our sinful, soulful nature. But now we are alive with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Our spirit then became a place of glory and beauty, fully under the control of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us as we allow Him to guide us.

We must learn to discern between our soul-to-spirit response and our Spirit-to-spirit response. It is only when we choose to "be still" in the presence of God and meditate on His Word and will that we begin to discover His will for us. This has been called "practicing His presence" and can be achieved each and every moment of our lives - this is not reserved for the super-saint; it is God's perfect plan for those who seek first His kingdom.