The Benefits of our Efforts: My Response to Thinking Like a Christian

by Collin Girouard

Human instincts. We’ve all heard of the term, but are they real? If yes, then how widespread are they? Or, a better question; how exact are they? Do all humans have the same basic instincts, or do those instincts vary based on the different lifestyles and environments around each individual? Of course, I’m not talking solely about basic physical instincts, like breathing or the urge to eat, but rather, cognitive instincts; the field of our minds that deals with our morals, choices, behaviors and interactions with others, and the gaining of knowledge. I believe that all humans have some amount of instinct in this (or these) areas. As someone who works with children of nearly all ages, some instincts are very apparent, no matter the child’s personality type. For example: each child wants to go first at some point or another. Additionally, children of all ages have seem to have some concept of morality; whether it be because one child has had a longer turn doing something fun and this inequality has been noticed, or if one child hits or takes something from another. In each of these scenarios, and countless more, the reactions are often the same, some form of attention raising, confrontation, or retaliation with the hope of righting the alleged wrong. While it could be said that each child has simply been taught what is and isn’t fair, the fact that each individual came from a different family with different parenting techniques yet always have the same reactions makes me think that humans have some built-in idea of shared morals.

So while I believe that yes, we do all have some amount of these instincts, we have not yet discovered whether they are all equal in each person. One glance around the world would prompt a negative response-there’s no way that everyone could have the same moral instincts! But this is where we enter the idea that our instincts can change and develop over time. With this idea in mind, we can begin to explain why each person may feel so strongly about some things while others do not, and also how some views may completely oppose another’s view of the same issue. *Thinking Like a Christian* gave us a christian perspective on the 10 main aspects of life. The book, with each of its chapters devoted to one specific aspect and view, really shows how polarized some real-life issues currently are. While, for a christian, the viewpoints presented by the book should be easy to agree with, that also shows how difficult it would be for others to accept as well. If the views are easy for us to follow, then imagine how difficult it would be for someone with the opposite beliefs to at least see eye to eye. Thus, maybe our built-in morals and beliefs really are made differently. Either way, adding in the equation of emotional effort is one of the steps that, in my opinion, will begin to tip the scales of differing viewpoints in the direction of Christ’s morality.

To define what I mean by emotional effort in this case, let’s split it between two

categories: one category where effort is put in to strengthen the belief for oneself, and another where effort is put in to help those who do not see (or who are choosing to not see) the simple truths behind the pillars of life and society. Using similar reasoning, we can divide the ten main aspects of life into two categories; one that is mostly personally oriented, and the other being centered around a larger group. The fields of theology, philosophy, psychology, and ethics all begin within each individual. On the other hand, biology (being a physical science), sociology, law, politics, economics, and history are all traditionally centered around a group. Allow me to make one thing clear here; each of these ten pillars of life have some amount of both individual and group application, but this differentiation between the two categories simply helps us view their main purposes.

Now, I will briefly touch on each topic mentioned above and how, while our instincts may in fact be different in these ares, our efforts to grow mentally and spiritually in them is what truly matters. Beginning with the personally centered topics, these are the areas that begin within yourself but are some of the most important things to share abroad. Theology, the study of the nature of God, is one of the big factors of our personal, spiritual beliefs, for while God is a mysterious being from the view of mere humans, the better we understand him and his righteousness, the better we can then grow in our relationship with him and spread his love with others. And this is just as it sounds; the better you do, or the more effort you put in, the greater the outcome. Similarly, philosophy, the study of reality and knowledge, can be better understood so we can know more about where we come from and where that knowledge comes from-God. Additionally, psychology, the study of behaviors, and ethics, the knowledge of morals, can be practiced and sharpened for us to make better personal choices. Again, all of these areas begin within ourselves, but must be spread and shared with others whose efforts have further driven their instincts away from the truths of God’s way of life.

Next, putting effort into the areas of life that deal with groups is essential in beginning to grow healthy, prospering societies. Biology is a rather large speed bump due to the widespread belief in theoretical human origins. However, because each side believes their own facts (or lack thereof), we must go back to the mindsets, the psychology behind those beliefs and introduce true theology and ethics into them-this is how we strengthen and unite our societies. The other real-life issues surrounding law, politics, economics, and history each in their own way present a difficult task to persuade anyone in one direction. So again, when the proper effort on the Christian’s part is put in to understanding and excelling in these fields, the truth and prosperity will surface and help bring others to the same path.

In conclusion, I did enjoy the information and ideas presented in *Thinking Like a Christian.* While the information was rather easy to agree with based on my relatively equal religious beliefs, the biggest takeaway that I gained is this idea about instincts and efforts. The Bible says that God will repay each person based on their own deeds. So while the mystery of instincts remains, it is really the work and effort that we put into our lives and the lives of others, with the goal of growing closer to God, that matters in the long run. My favorite “part” of the book is how it separated and discussed each topic individually, giving a well rounded summary of each. So, with each of these topics both isolated and standing together, my goal is to put more effort into each area to benefit my life, the lives of others, and ultimately God’s kingdom.