

## Christian Education and Youth Ministry: Balancing Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Objectives

Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.

A big emphasis in Western culture especially in the United States today is on feelings; a neo-hedonism is evident throughout our society. I was at a traffic light not long ago and saw a bumper sticker, “If it feels good do it.” I thought, “If I floor it now and rear-end this guy to wipe out that stupid sticker, when he comes flying out of his car and yells, ‘Why did you do that!?’ I’ll say, ‘I was just doing what you said!’”

Feelings are important. They are one of God’s great gifts but only when we exercise the fruit of the Spirit called self-control (Galatians 5:23), which involves subjecting our feelings to our cognitive command. We must not do what is contrary to God’s Word and his will, and that is determined largely by mental reflection on whether something is consistent with or contrary to the Bible.

Also, feelings by definition are unexamined (which is a cognitive activity), and unexamined feelings can, and often do, lead to results that the one doing the feeling wouldn’t want. For example, the fellow with the “If it feels good do it.” bumper sticker didn’t think through the logical extension of that thought: that there may be people who feel like doing something counterproductive to his liking and even his well-being. He is also making some unwarranted assumptions, either consciously or unconsciously. One of those assumptions is that mankind is essentially good, and therefore whoever reads his bumper sticker wouldn’t feel like doing anything negative to him, but God’s Word most realistically explains how human nature, since Adam’s and Eve’s disobedience, is corrupted, and it is inclined to do what is sinful and evil. (Psalm 51:5; 1 Kings 8:46; Proverbs 20:9; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 5:12,18-19; 7:15-25; 8:5-8; Ephesians 2:1-5)

I originally wrote this essay for a course on *Models of Ministry to Youth* that I taught when I was a professor at Calvin Theological Seminary. Therefore, I specifically mention several of the applications as pertaining to youth ministry, but everything that follows applies to all the Lord’s ministries.

A key component of effective ministry is balancing essential aspects of the various ministries in which the Lord has called his people to serve him. In addition to this essay on balancing cognitive, affective, and behavioral objectives, I’ve written papers on several other key areas that need to be kept in balance, e.g., [balancing theory and practice](#), [balancing others’ and our own expectations](#), [balancing the corporate and the individual](#), and [balancing two key dimensions of leadership: initiation of structure and consideration](#), all of which are on both of my Websites (*op cit.*). Many reasons reveal the need to keep these essential aspects of ministry in balance, e.g., the challenge we have to manage our own favorite emphases; trying to keep other people, especially those to whom we are accountable, on board with us; influences from the literature and popular, but not well thought-through, praxis by peers; and other pressures as indicated in what follows. The challenge to maintain balance is compounded by the reality that not all is bad or counterproductive with each alternative—the good in each is needed—and even

the good in each can be overdone to the detriment of our ministry's main goal: "to equip [Christ Jesus'] people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (4:12-13 TNIV) So, let us now look at the matter of balancing cognitive, affective, and behavioral objectives, why it is so important, and how to do it.

## **Differentiating Cognition and Affect**

Cognition and affect compose two major dimensions of intelligence. In the developmental school of human learning research, cognition and affect are viewed as existing on a continuum; they are not discrete categories. Nothing is solely cognitive or affective. For example, if one is listening to a boring speech (which is typically considered to be mostly a cognitive activity), he or she has some strong feelings (affect) concerning the experience. Conversely, if a student is daydreaming about someone he or she loves (a highly affective activity), he or she is still engaged in thinking (cognition) about the loved one.

Cognition involves factual knowledge, data, logic, and mental activity. Benjamin Bloom has identified a hierarchy of cognitions, a taxonomy of cognitive activity (in ascending order): rote knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluative skills.<sup>1</sup>

A strong and effective youth ministry intentionally includes cognitive challenges in its program. Keep in mind that adolescents love to activate their newly developed cognitive capability of conceptual thought, and skillful youth leaders incorporate that capacity into their lessons. For example, with the Bible as their base, such leaders raise questions, especially in the higher categories of thinking on Bloom's taxonomy.

Affect involves feelings, emotion, attitudes, interests, and appreciation. David Krathwohl has identified a hierarchy of affective capabilities (in ascending order): receiving (awareness, willingness to receive, controlled or selected attention), responding (acquiescence in responding, willingness to respond, satisfaction in response), valuing (acceptance of a value, preference for a value, commitment [conviction]), organization (conceptualization of a value and organization of a value system), and characterization by a value or a value complex.<sup>2</sup>

Affect is a crucial dimension of the learning we seek to facilitate in our ministry to youth. It is strongly linked to motivation. Our students can know a lot about a particular subject,

---

<sup>1</sup> David R. Krathwohl, "Stating Appropriate Educational Objectives" in David A. Payne (Ed.), *Curriculum Evaluation: Commentaries on Purpose, Process, Product* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1974), pp. 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> Krathwohl, pp. 76-77. See also David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals Handbook II: Affective Domain* (New York, NY: David McKay Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 95-185. See also, Edward D. Seely, "[Curriculum Development and Lesson Planning: For Teachers & for Teachers of Teachers.](#)"

but unless they have affection for that subject, they won't be inclined to do much about it. We must teach the content of the Bible (more on the cognitive part of the continuum), but unless we help the students develop a love (including strong affect) for God and for God's Word, the Bible will gather dust on one of their book shelves.

Attitude toward a subject is a key aspect of the affective dimension of learning. Robert Mager points out that an attitude expresses itself in a behavioral manner; it's the general tendency of a person to act in a certain way under specific conditions. Hence, we're able to predict how a person will act in a particular situation depending on how he or she has functioned in the past.<sup>3</sup> A person's behavior informs us of his or her attitude toward the subject, which in turn helps us in ministry to determine how well we're doing in our teaching on that subject.

### **Distinguishing and Measuring Approach and Avoidance Tendency**

Mager distinguishes between approach tendency and avoidance tendency. If we can measure the frequency with which students approach a particular subject or engage in what we are encouraging them to do, we'll be able to tell whether they have a positive attitude toward the subject, or a negative one; moreover, we can predict whether they are inclined to do more or less in that aspect of life.<sup>4</sup> Indicators of approach tendency or avoidance tendency include the following: percentage of those completing or dropping out of a program; the total number of students late for meetings; the care with which projects are accomplished (e.g., neat, average, sloppy); the number of young people willing to volunteer for a task in the program; the number of youth who act on what is taught (e.g., read the Bible and pray) as measured by pre-presentation and post-presentation diagnostic instruments (e.g., a pre-post questionnaire).

A pre-questionnaire is a list of questions dealing with the subject(s) about which the leader wants information as to how the student views the subject(s). This instrument is given to the students prior to the learning experience, e.g., a class, course, retreat, or trip. A post-questionnaire is preferably the same questionnaire given at the end of the event.

To facilitate obtaining the most accurate and reliable results, consider providing a blank line at the top left or right side of the page where each attendee can put a code that differentiates him or her from everyone else, instead of writing in his or her name. This controls the contamination of your feedback results due to the favorability factor—the universal desire for respect among all mentally healthy people. Many, especially adolescents, have a strong desire to be liked, particularly by their teachers and leaders; therefore, if they think one or more of the questions will possibly cause their teacher/leader or others who might see the questionnaire to disapprove, they won't disclose what they really feel—only what they think will make them look good—which is counterproductive to your purposes. Therefore, ask each attendee to put a number in

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert Mager, *Developing Attitude Toward Learning* (Belmont, CA: Fearon Publishers, 1968), pp. 14-16.

<sup>4</sup> Mager, pp. 79-81.

the code line that he or she will remember (when filling out the post-questionnaire). You can then match the pre- and post- results to obtain the information you want.

What we are hoping to see, of course, is a higher score in the post-questionnaire than was indicated on the pre-questionnaire. For those who want to determine whether the difference is scientifically significant, statistical tools exist to provide such information. An example of a pre-post questionnaire that I used with seventh and eighth graders prior to a unit on the history of our church is this one:

1. How interested are you in studying more about what our church believes?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Very interested
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat interested
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't care one way or the other
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Not too interested
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all interested
  
2. How interested are you in studying more about where our church came from?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Very interested
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat interested
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't care one way or the other
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Not too interested
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all interested
  
3. I find Sunday School
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Very interesting
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat interesting
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't care one way or the other
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat uninteresting
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Very uninteresting
  
4. I find Catechism
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Very interesting
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat interesting
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't care one way or the other
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat uninteresting
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Very uninteresting
  
5. Circle each of the words which tell how you mostly feel about the subject of history.

Interesting	Boring	Exciting
Dull	Useful	Fun
Too hard	Too easy	Very important
  
6. Circle each of the words that tell how you mostly feel about Sunday School.

Interesting	Boring	Exciting
Dull	Useful	Fun
Too hard	Too easy	Very important
  
7. Circle each of the words that tell how you mostly feel about Catechism.

Interesting	Boring	Exciting
Dull	Useful	Fun
Too hard	Too easy	Very important

To make it easier to quantify, measure, assess, and evaluate, each of the alternatives to be checked or circled could be put on a Likert scale (e.g., 1 – 5), with the lower number indicating little or no interest and the higher number, great interest. An affective objective such as the following could be written: “Given an affective pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire each student will score at least one increment higher [or the class mean score will be at least one point higher] on each positive item of the post-questionnaire.”

Since longitudinal results are most significant, we should ask our young people to complete such instruments, e.g., pre-post questionnaires not only before and immediately after the presentation, but also post-questionnaires one month and/or six months later. Even longer would be excellent, another reason for youth ministers to stay longer in their place of service. Ask the students to fill out the same instrument at those later times and then compare and contrast the results with the instrument they completed before the learning experience. We would hope to see more contrast, indicating that the class, retreat, or trip resulted in measurable differences in the desired direction. Yet pre-post tests or questionnaires are not the only way to do longitudinal evaluation.

Another simple but effective way to measure affect is with a stamped and self-addressed envelope (SASE). This feedback mechanism is especially helpful to preserve anonymity. Of course, other feedback means, such as texting or email, will be faster, but the attendees’ identities will become known. To see if a lesson on forgiveness (e.g., Matthew 18:15-35) produced desired results you could give each student a SASE and ask him or her to send it back to you after having forgiven someone in the manner Jesus taught. To find how well the subject has been learned and incorporated into the students’ lifestyles, send the SASE to them a month, six months, or a year later, but tell them you’re going to do so at the end of the lesson.<sup>5</sup> As always, be sure to do what you say you will do.

Affective objectives can be written as well for the other indicators of approach tendency or avoidance tendency that Mager has observed as identified above. For example, “Class attendance book checks will show that more students arrived on time or early for the class during the last third than during the first third of the year.”

Such objectives have other important uses. Think of the value such data would have for the youth minister going into his or her annual review if they show a significant increase on the post-questionnaire! These data will be heartening to the youth minister, especially in those times of discouragement when he or she wonders if anything good is taking place in his or her work. These and other, especially cognitive, data will allay the concerns of congregational skeptics who wonder if their money is being well spent on the

---

<sup>5</sup> Don’t give the students the SASE at the end of the event; too many will lose, misplace, or forget it between then and the time you want it back. You will thus receive inadequate data for drawing an accurate and generalizable conclusion as to the effectiveness of your affective objective.

youth leader. Parents would appreciate objective evidence that their children are connecting more in their relationship with the Lord and his covenant people.<sup>6</sup>

### **Facilitating Affective Approach Tendencies**

In youth ministry, and in other aspects of Christian education, we need to work on building approach tendencies and reducing avoidance tendencies. As Mager has written, “‘attitude’ is based on what someone says or what he [or she] does. *It is based on visible behavior...* Whenever we use the word ‘attitude,’ we are making a prediction about the future behavior of a person based on our observations of his [or her] past behavior.”<sup>7</sup>

What are some ways to facilitate the increase in affect, to improve attitudes about—tendencies to approach rather than to avoid—what the youth need to engage? Let’s first consider negatives to eliminate. Avoid putting young people in situations where they will experience pain: e.g., fear and anxiety, bullying in any form, frustration, humiliation and embarrassment (put downs have no place in the church), boredom, physical discomfort.<sup>8</sup> Don’t make people the butt of a joke. Have a sense of humor, but be very cautious of humor. Remember the most successful comedians’ humor has been self-effacing, but even there be careful.

Don’t become angry with your students; anger is not a motivator to do what you want. In fact, it can and does motivate people to do the opposite of what you want. Putting people in uncomfortable situations causes an avoidance tendency, not an approach tendency. Healthy normal people avoid pain; they’re not drawn to it.

ALSO, since all human beings are sinful, including church people (albeit who are trying to grow in sanctification, maturing in Christ Jesus [Ephesians 4:13]), if an attendee is mistreated in any of the above or other ways, immediately come to his or her rescue and facilitate a just resolution of the matter. Very importantly, follow up after class or the youth group meeting, and ask him or her in private how he or she is doing, thus demonstrating your love for, and value of, him or her, indeed, Christ’s love for, and value of, him or her, indirectly through you and directly in the attendee’s life.

If the mistreatment occurred in a group setting, where it was observed by others, deal with it right then and there. If the wrongdoing occurred between the two or three persons involved, take them aside, out of hearing range of the rest of the group, and address the matter with only those involved. One youth minister friend articulated the basic principle very well when he said, “Sin in public, repent in public; sin in private, repent in private.”

Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love

---

<sup>6</sup> For further information on evaluation, see my essay, “[Evaluation in Church Education](#),” and related documents on both of my Websites (*op cit.*).

<sup>7</sup> Mager, pp. 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Mager, pp. 50-57.

one another.” (John 13:34-35 TNIV) Jesus also said “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw [approach tendency] all people to myself.” (John 12:32 TNIV) He who loved to the fullest (John 15:13) does draw men, women, and children from everywhere to himself. Talk about acting to engage approach tendency!

What are some positive things we can do to facilitate such movement in our students? When Jesus said “Love one another,” he used the special Greek word for love, *agape*, which is defined by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 in action words:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

As leaders we need to model love. Treating people in this manner will obviously attract them and produce positive results. In so doing we teach—by modeling—how to do Christ-like love. Be patient with those slow to learn something. Always treat students kindly.

Church and other Christian education and youth ministries should be fertile oases to which people can come from their struggles in the desert experiences of life. After encountering the mean people they’ve had to grapple with in their daily lives, when they come to church worship, church meetings, and other gatherings of Christians, young and older people need and want to experience the enriching engagement of uplifting interactions with brothers and sisters in Christ. Even in meetings that are not worship services, be sure to start the meeting with a passage from God’s Word, a comment on its meaning and its application to daily life that especially refers to the subject to be addressed in that meeting. Their need to meet with God and his people is a big reason why they have come to (approached) the group.

This emphasis upon positive affect and facilitating approach tendency, does not mean we should never address the negative realities in life in our teaching at church, or elsewhere. The church with its Biblical worldview and message offers the most realistic help for people—and we can do so by offering the hope that only our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, can provide—which he has called us to do, cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. Likewise, pertaining to corrective feedback, do it in private unless disrespect is shown in public, and then do so calmly in love—but do it!—thus demonstrating how to handle those common life matters in a Christ-like manner. (Ephesians 4:15)

Relating the subject matter to the felt needs of the students is another key way to facilitate approach tendencies in your students. These felt needs involve the great questions of life with which the students are wrestling, e.g., Who is God, and what is he like? Is there more to life than what we now see, or is this all there is? How can I know what is true?<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> See Edward D. Seely, “[Great Questions of Life: Felt Needs to Address in Christian Education](#).”

We need to relate what the Bible says to those questions and to the deepest longings of the young and older people in our ministries. The more they can see how the Bible is helpful to them, the more positive will be their attitude and the more inclined they will be to want more connection with not only the resources, e.g., the Bible, the related study materials, and the teacher, but also the program with which they are associated, and the Lord to whom they point and reveal.

A powerful resource for teaching the Bible, in particular the six main themes or doctrines that flow throughout the Bible, that will help students learn the main message of the Bible and its very practical application to their lives is a course called [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity](#). It is in the format of a PowerPoint with sentences and many helpful graphics, including video clips. For youth and children’s ministries, leaders will want to select the slides from each of the six doctrines that the students can process at their stage of development. Such shorter PowerPoints on each of the six doctrines are also available on both of my Websites.<sup>10</sup>

As one of my students wrote in a paper on this subject, “Most youth are interested in today’s popular culture, so...find creative ways in which the Bible speaks to issues in pop culture.” One way I’ve taught in this manner is to find a contemporary song that relates directly or indirectly to a passage in the Bible. Listen to their music, select a song that speaks to a contemporary life issue that you want to address in a class or other youth group, and then bring it to that class or meeting. First ask the students to read the text, and then, before playing the song, ask them to listen for ways the song compares and/or contrasts with the text of the Bible as they hear the song played. The following discussion is most likely to be engaging, informative, and helpful in enabling the students to discern truth from error in the culture and help them serve the Lord in the calling he has given them.

Build in as many positive conditions, including pleasant experiences, as possible. As Mager explains, “A positive condition or consequence is any pleasant event that exists during the time the student is in the presence of the subject matter, or that follows his [or her] approach to the subject matter.”<sup>11</sup> As the axiom of reinforcement theory reveals, behavior that is rewarded tends to be repeated. As people engage in activities that they find enjoyable, they are more likely to continue and even increase their involvement in those pursuits.

Include fun activities. However, be selective. When educational games are considered, carefully and prayerfully choose games according to what can be learned from them; match the games with the lesson aims. Also keep in mind that not all games are safe—physically, psychologically, or spiritually—and young participants intuitively sense the danger. When they become fearful, avoidance tendency—not approach tendency—

---

<sup>10</sup> From Acorn to Oak (<https://fromacorntooak12.com/>) and How Can Churches Facilitate Education Leading to Maturity in Christ Worldwide? (<https://seelyedward.academia.edu/>).

<sup>11</sup> Mager, *Developing Attitude Toward Learning*, p. 58.



occurs. Be careful of individual competition. A cautious use of group competitions, *where no individual can lose face*, is sometimes useful for tapping into internal motivations to teach a point that a particular game can make effectively. Nevertheless, the leader must be vigilant to watch for any group deriding an individual for “letting the group down.” It is generally wise to not ask young people to select who they want in their group or on their team. Teenagers (and many adults!) lack the perspective-taking ability to consider the situation from the others’ viewpoint. Try to put yourself in the position of the youths who silently, fearfully, and fervently pray that they will not be chosen last! Think about how the last one to be chosen interprets that development and how he or she feels.

It is much better that the teacher or youth leader appoints the teams with careful attention to who is selected and in what order. There are several non-threatening ways to make these selections. For example, depending on the size of the whole group and the size of the teams needed, starting with the person on the teacher/leader’s left, ask the whole group to number off by three or four. Then ask all those who are number one to meet in one part of the room, all those who are number two to meet in another part of the room, etc. Another way to select teams is to use the months of the year. Beginning with January, ask all who were born in January to meet in one part of the room. If that team needs more than those who were born in January, ask those who were born in February to join them. If that gives the team too many members, ask only those who were born from February 1 to 10 to join the team with those born in January. Proceed accordingly until you have the teams you need.

The leader of each team should be appointed by the teacher. Some procedures are much more helpful—and facilitate approach rather than avoidance tendencies—than others. Begin by avoiding the word “leader,” which carries negative—and sometimes frightful—implications for many people. Instead of asking certain people to be the “leader” of their group, make the request based on the task you are asking them to do. For example, say, “We need a ‘facilitator’ [or a ‘recorder’] for each group.” Also for the above reasons, do not ask the group to select its own leader: the teacher or youth minister should appoint the leader. Several nonthreatening ways have been used for making these appointments. Say, “We need a facilitator for each group. To do so, determine who in your particular group has his or her birthday closest to today; that person will be your facilitator.” Another way to make the selection is to say, “...determine who in your particular group travelled the farthest to be here today.”<sup>12</sup>

As the teams meet with others in this manner in order to plan their strategy for the game, they get to know people they would not have otherwise come to know and appreciate their abilities and other aspects of who they are. Friendships can and do form that would otherwise not have occurred when only cohorts who have known each other for years stick together and don’t relate to those they don’t know.

---

<sup>12</sup> For other suggestions, see my brief article, “[Small Group Ministry: Tips for Maximizing the Effectiveness of Small Groups](https://seelyedward.academia.edu/research).” The same article is also available on my academic Website at <https://seelyedward.academia.edu/research>.

As I mentioned above, we can and should teach the content of the Bible, but if we don't also help the people we teach to develop a love for God's Word, it will not be used and applied to their lives. Another example of a balance between cognition and affect can be seen in teaching about Jesus' crucifixion. We teach the *cognitive* information by reading and comparing the related Bible texts, explaining the Biblical backgrounds and the Old Testament prophecies, and helping students apply the significance of Jesus' crucifixion to their lives and develop the skills required for effectively explaining Jesus' crucifixion to others.

To facilitate the *affective* dimension of students' learning about Jesus' crucifixion, we can describe in detail what our Lord actually experienced, e.g., how he was lashed 39 times with a whip of several leather strands that had chips of sharp bone or metal on the ends that were designed to tear out flesh each time the victim was hit, how he was spat upon by the soldiers, and how they beat the very sharp crown of thorns into Jesus' head. At that time we could pass around a crown of thorns similar to the one Jesus' had pummeled into his head so the students could feel the sharpness of the spikes. The rest of his experiences, including his conquering Satan and all evil, his victorious resurrection, and his eternal glory for and with us, could be presented in detail, depending on the demographics of the class or group (e.g., the age of the students). A helpful resource for this lesson is in my PowerPoint presentation, [Easter—Biblical Significance of Easter Signs and Symbols](#). The accompanying [Easter—Biblical Meaning of Easter Signs and Symbols: Commentary on the PowerPoint Slides](#) provides moving additional information.

We could also speak of how God had to watch all this being done to his only begotten Son and compare and contrast how upset we become as parents when someone at school even speaks in a mean manner to our son or daughter.

If we can help young people to imagine and contemplate all that our Lord went through for us, it is likely the impact of his love for them will move more deeply within them. The result goes beyond the understanding of what Jesus did to a more probable response of love and discipleship. The *cognitive* facts are basic, but the *affective* response to those facts is required if we are to see the behavior, obedience, the Lord requires.<sup>13</sup>

Include discussion. Here are some questions to help the class learn what Jesus went through for us and what his passion means for us. As the group reflects on and discusses the exceedingly unjust rejection, hatred, and brutal attacks on him, doing so will have a powerful effect on the affect, as well as the cognition and behavior of the group or class members, especially on adolescents for whom wanting to be liked by everyone is so important to so many—and also to many, too many—adults.

1. What did Jesus experience in his passion for us?

---

<sup>13</sup> John 14:21; 15:9-17; Matthew 7:15-23; James 2:14-26

2. How did Jesus respond to the enormous and unjust rejection he experienced?
3. How do people typically respond to rejection by others today?
4. What enabled Jesus to go through this horrific and brutal treatment? Be sure to include any of the following not mentioned by the group.
  - a. He loved the people he came to save.
  - b. He prayed for God’s help.
  - c. He remained steadfast in his commitment to his calling.
  - d. He always put pleasing God above his desire to please others.
5. When we are rejected by other people, what can we remember about what Jesus went through for us that will help us respond in a Christ-like manner? Be sure to include any of the following not mentioned by the group.
  - a. Remember Christ’s command to love all people, even our enemies. (Matthew 5:43-45; Leviticus 19:18; John 13:34-35; 15:12-14)
  - b. Pray for God’s help. (1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:16; 1 Peter 3:12)
  - c. Remember our calling, our vocation, and remain steadfast in our commitment to be Jesus’ disciples. (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 1 Peter 2:9-12; 3:15-16)
  - d. Make our greatest desire, objective, and accomplishment to please God over people. (2 Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1)

### **Behavior’s Shaping Effect on Affect**

While affect motivates behavior, behavior shapes affect. One of my professors told his class that his neighbor was going on a trip for three weeks and asked him if he would take care of his goldfish. My professor thought, “Oh brother! I don’t have any desire to mess with this fish. Yet, because he’s my neighbor, I’ll do it.” So for the next 21 days he fed the fish, cleaned the tank, changed the water, and made sure his neighbor’s pet had all it needed. After the three weeks, can you guess what had developed? A positive affect toward the fish. After all that time caring for it, his attitude had changed, and he began to actually like watching it swim around and entertain him. He enjoyed seeing the fish come to him when he dropped its food into the tank. When the neighbor returned, my friend actually said he was disappointed to give up taking care of the fish!

Ad agencies urge “Try it; you’ll like it!” Evidence exists that people, who have an opportunity to try something new, more rapidly adopt that innovation, than those who don’t have such an opportunity. Trying something new dispels the concerns associated with it.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 2003), p. 258. See also, Edward D. Seely, “[Defusing Fear of Innovations: Diffusing Change in the Church.](#)”

We also see indications in the Bible and in church work of the effect of behavior on affect. Jesus said, “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men *loved darkness* instead of light *because their deeds were evil.*” (John 3:19) Their practice of evil deeds drove them to love darkness. In another direction notice the effect short-term mission trips have on youth and adults who participate. Engaging in such a mission profoundly moves those who attend and motivates many positive acts of service.

We do teach a lot of cognitive material in youth ministry and in other aspects of Christian education. Such an orientation is vital: it is God’s Word together with the Holy Spirit’s operation of it on people’s minds and hearts that brings salvation, including the sanctification that results in reaching “unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and becom[ing] mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13)

Now notice the effects on behavior that Paul identifies.

<sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. (4:12-15 TNIV)

That message, however, is essentially relational (vertical with God and horizontal with others), and it must be transmitted in and through relationships to be communicated most effectively. This is surely one reason why Jesus told his disciples, when he sent out the 70, to not go from house to house but to stay with those who respond and relate to them over time. (Luke 10:1-12)

Since much of our teaching is essentially cognitive, occasionally, especially in youth ministry, it is good to include a program that is weighted toward the affective in order to provide an overall balance. An example of such a program would be to have at least four sets of parents who would provide a Friday or Saturday night at their homes once a month (one such place every week) where young people could come and just “hang out.” They could do whatever they like in a wholesome Christian atmosphere with the parents present. Some young people could just talk together in small groups of their choosing; others could play games (e.g., pool, board games, badminton); others watch a movie; others talk with the parents. Of course the important catalyst of healthy snacks and pop that the young people enjoy would be plentiful. These would be valuable times for youth leaders to relate to the young people. Such occasions would eventually provide times for substantive discussions (containing significant cognition) and establish connections that will be catalysts for future opportunities to be even more helpful in meeting students’ needs, especially facilitating their maturity in Christ.

As young people have such positive experiences, approach tendencies will develop and become reinforced producing a strong affect for matters pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Keeping that affect and the attending cognitions in balance will facilitate their

behavioral maturing in Christ, serving him ever more effectively, and accomplishing his purposes for them.

### **For Reflection**

1. Are you keeping a balance among the head, the heart, and the hands—the cognitive, affective, and behavioral—dimensions of learning? How are you including each?
2. How can you help the young and older people, to and with whom you minister, to develop not only an understanding of, but also a love for, God, his Word, and doing his will?
3. What else can be done to help young people develop an approach tendency toward their youth group?
4. Can you write an affective objective that will help your students to read and obey the teachings of the Bible?
5. If you are currently teaching or leading a youth or other group, or if you envision doing so in the future, what upcoming lesson do you have, or envision having, for which you could write an affective objective that would assure you that the students have taken to heart the message you want to convey and indicate the likelihood they will act accordingly?