

Course I: *A Sense of Self*
"Why Did I Do That?"
Lesson 4

“WHY DID I DO THAT?”

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Unit 2 – Lesson 1
(NewLife Behavior English Edition)

NewLife 
B E H A V I O R
Ministries

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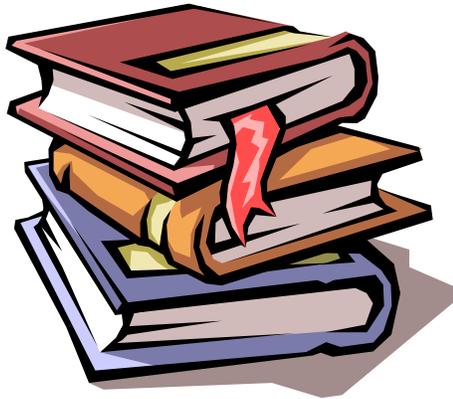
“If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature . . . “
(Second Corinthians 5:17)

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RESPONSE SHEET

Dear Student,

We have found that thoughtful written responses greatly enhance the student's understanding of this course material. Therefore, we urge you to use this **RESPONSE SHEET** as an aid in the study of this lesson.



STEP 1: BEFORE YOU START

Before you start this lesson, please write three or four sentences in the box below on this thought: "I am in my current personal position and condition because I did _____ or did not _____." Then, put this sheet out of sight until you finish the lesson.

STEP 2: STUDYING THE LESSON

Read through this lesson as you would read a chapter in a book. Look at the **STUDY QUESTIONS** on page 11 (do not attempt to answer them now). Then, go back and do a more in-depth study, reading all the Bible references.

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“WHY DID I DO THAT?”

Before starting this lesson, take a few minutes to complete the following thought: “I am in my current personal condition because I did _____ or did not do _____.” Write your thoughts on the **RESPONSE SHEET** and then put it away until you finish this lesson.

Also, we suggest that you read the entire lesson through the first time without looking up the scriptures. Next, go back and study each Bible reference. Finally, return to do a more in-depth study before trying to complete the **STUDY QUESTIONS** found on the last page.

I. Introduction

As you worked through Unit 1, you learned about three ways of viewing the world: the atheistic, agnostic and Christian world views. You also learned about the “new life” that is available to the Christian. Now you are ready to begin anew unit in behavior. Since this is the “New Life Behavior” course, our central theme is how a “new life” or “new life thinking” can impact our behavior. In this first lesson we will ask the title question . . .

“Why did I do that?”

Let us begin to look at how *thinking* and *feeling* lead to behaving.

Why did Adam and Eve disobey God? Why did Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10) offer unauthorized fire before the Lord? Why did Moses strike the rock instead of speaking to it as he had been commanded? (Numbers 20)? Why did Peter later change his behavior while Judas committed suicide? It wasn't that they didn't know better. Why do we act the way we do? In this lesson we will explore this question. The basis of “why” is in the Proverbs 23:7 (King James Version): “As a person thinks in his heart, so he behaves...” This thought could be considered the “moot” for this whole series of studies.

Let's begin by looking at some common responses that people give whenever they are asked *why* they behave a certain way:

- After Adam and Eve sinned, Adam said, “Eve made me do it” and Eve said, “The devil made me do it.”
- Some say, “A little voice made me do it.”
- King David, after his sin with Bathsheba, would say, “It was due to lust.”
- Some say pride made me do it.
- Some say they were hungry, or drunk, or “high,” or angry.
- Some say they don't know why they were doing it.

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- Some say their parents are to blame.
- Peter and Judas blamed themselves.

There are three general answers that people give as to why they behave as they do.

- #1)** The atheist says; “I decided to satisfy my biological and social needs and urges,” or “What did you expect? I’m just human.”
- #2)** The agnostic answers, “I don’t know why I did it,” or “They made me do it,” or “I was just afraid they would not like me.”
- #3)** The Christian declares, “As a person thinks and feels, so he behaves. Since I allowed myself to do it, I am responsible. I can control my behavior. I will accept the consequences of my negative actions and enjoy the positive benefits of my behavior.”

Part of the “good news” (the Gospel) is that we do not have to be a victim of our upbringing, our environment or even our present condition, but that we can *choose* how we behave. We think this is truly a reason for rejoicing! Through the power of Christ we can say “I can...” (Philippians 4:13), rather than “I can’t...”!

Now let’s look at some of the details that can help us understand why we behave the way we do.

II. The Four “G’s” That Control Our Behavior

Experts recognize that there are “Four G’s” that impact our behavior, as shown in figure 1-1, and discussed in the following paragraphs.

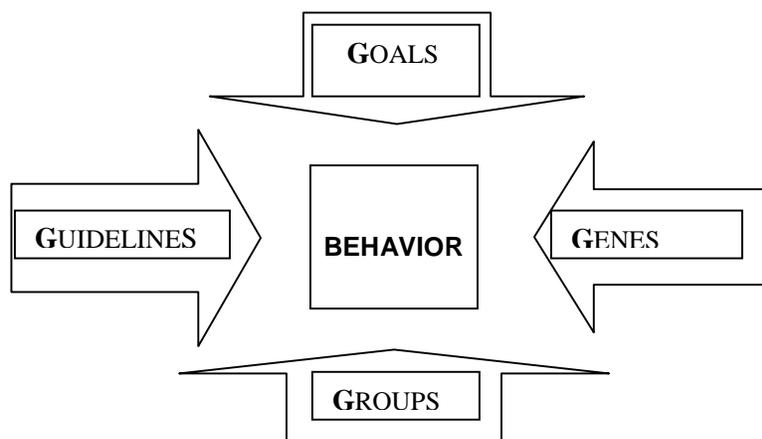


Figure 1-1. The “Four G’s” That Impact Human Behavior

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A. **Genes**

The genetic structure (road map) that we inherit from our parents and other ancestors is a factor in our behavior. Just as we might have inherited “grandpa’s big nose,” we may have also have inherited his disposition. According to studies of identical twins raised apart in different environments, researchers found striking similarities in the behavior of separated twins. We have no choice in the basic temperaments and different talents. There is no right or wrong kind of temperament. It is a beautiful thing when we can give our temperament and talents over to God and live in harmony with the style and temperament that we receive via our genes. While we don’t *have* to follow the behavior predisposed to us by our genetic structure (road map), we are *inclined* to follow it unless we, someone, or something redirects our behavior. The groups in our home, school, work place, church and other places can be strong factors in influencing our behavior.

B. **Groups**

The groups into which we are born (parents), with whom we grew up (family, peers, friends, teachers), marry into, work, and socialize with can be powerful influences on our behavior. They can encourage or discourage our natural tendencies. A child learns what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior from the group into which he or she was born and usually acts accordingly. When we are small, we may act like our parents. As preteens and teens, we tend to act like our peers and heroes—sometimes in a distinctly different way from our parents.

Dating and the anticipation of dating can cause all kinds of behavioral changes. Preteen boys start shining their shoes and combing their hair!

The groups with whom we associate are very important. The Bible warns against having evil companions (First Corinthians 15:33). Like our genetic structure, we did not have a choice of the group into which we were born nor very much choice in the groups with whom we associated during childhood. As we become older, sometimes our best choice is to leave the group. This is where our guidelines come into play.

C. **Guidelines**

We “catch” or develop our guidelines, priorities, ethics, or values from the groups mentioned above. (We do not inherit our guidelines.) We also develop guidelines of our own. When we are young, we tend to be politically and religiously similar to our parents because we value their opinions. Later, as we learn about other opinions, we may either reject our parents’ values or go through a process of evaluating them until we consciously choose them as our own. Those we chose as important and/or

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valuable form the basis for our guidelines or priorities. Our guidelines have a strong impact on our **Goals**.

D. **Goals**

The goals that we set for ourselves, believe in and diligently work toward, greatly influence our behavior. Obviously, a parent whose goal or aim in life is merely to have a good time is going to act differently than, for example, a parent who gives up many pleasures for himself in order to provide for his children. The goals we set for ourselves is greatly determined by guidelines or values that we feel are important.

We all have goals whether we are consciously aware of them or not. To choose not to have goals is to choose to live aimlessly, which is a goal in itself. When Jesus was being crucified on the cross, He could have responded as some others who have cursed their enemies. Instead He asked God to forgive them. Jesus had a goal: fulfilling God's plan. Between the usual reaction (cursing those who hurt us) and His response (asking for blessings and forgiveness for them), He made a decision based on love and the value of man's redemption. We, through Christ, can do likewise (Philippians 4:13)

III. How Our Mind Works

A. **The Three Functions or Parts of Our Minds**

According to our lesson motto (Proverbs 23:7), there are three separate but interrelated parts of our minds (see figure 1-2):

1. *Thinking (Cognitive)* – Includes knowing, remembering, perceiving, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating and understanding.
2. *Feeling (Affective)* – Includes love, fear, resentment, anger, compassion, and a wide range of other human emotions.
3. *Behaving (Action)* – The action/reaction or “doing” part of behavior, which includes running, hitting, testing, drinking, listening, hugging, touching, talking, etc.

As you view figure 1-2, notice that the three interlocking circles overlap and form additional shapes. The innermost shape we will designate as **THE MIND**. The mind is the core of our thoughts, feelings and actions. Under the mind we note an area designated as **Needs**. Our *needs* for health, security, relationships, expectations and appreciation will impact on our THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, and GOALS, and vice versa.

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Another area is designated *thoughts*. It represents our *perception* of self, parents, family, friends and all “others” we know. Our *thoughts* of ourselves (self-image) will also influence how we **FEEL** and **BEHAVE**.

You also notice an area designated as **Genes**. Each of us is given *temperaments* (styles) of behavior, through our genes. As we mature, we learn to express or restrict the free expression of our *behavior styles* (daring, talkative, shy, analytical, etc.). Our *temperaments* influence how we **THINK**, **FEEL**, and **ACT**. We will study more about this latter, but briefly: our internal factors (goals, feelings, thoughts, genes, guidelines, and needs) interact with each other and interact with our external factors to produce our behavior.

BEHAVIOR MODEL

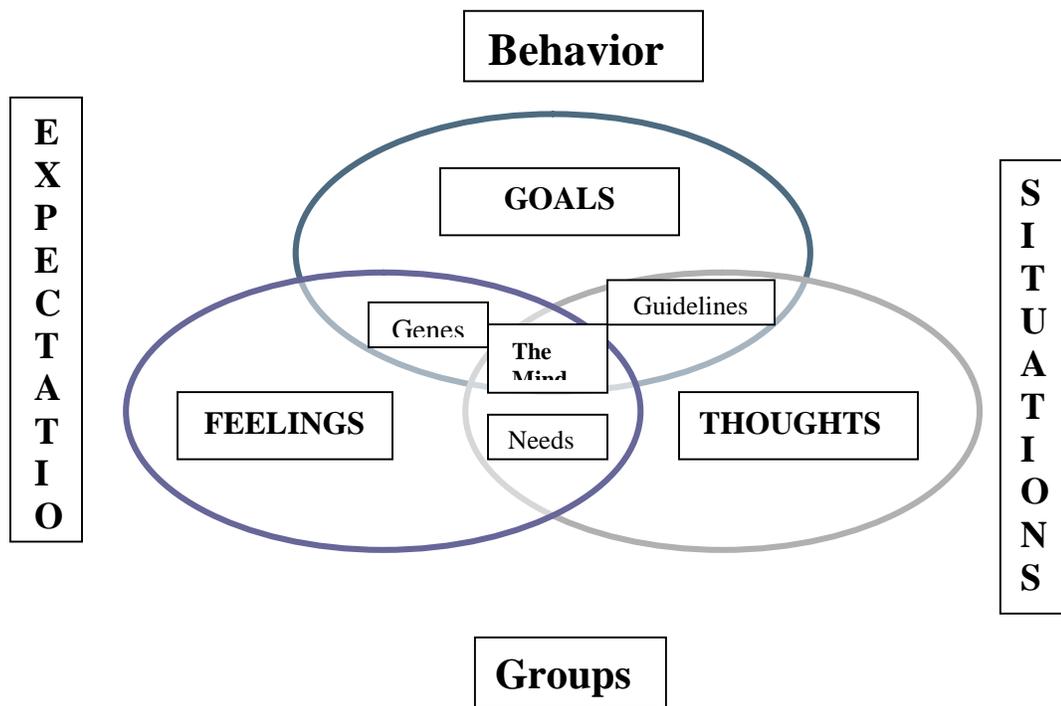


Figure 1-2. Internal and External Factors Interact to Produce Behavior

B. Which Comes First?

It is difficult to know if THINKING precedes FEELINGS or vice versa, or does BEHAVIOR precede both (see figure 1-3)? I suggest that we think of our lives as a continuous circle, going from one situation to another; each situation can cause a

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person to either BEHAVE, FEEL or THINK. Thinking, feeling and behaving are inter-related (figure 1-1). Each of the three has a cause and a reaction. Any of these three basic functions of the mind can come first, but they all work together!

1. **Thinking first**

Many times thinking comes first. Our thinking can lead us to good or bad feelings. Thinking and feeling *together* can produce certain behaviors.

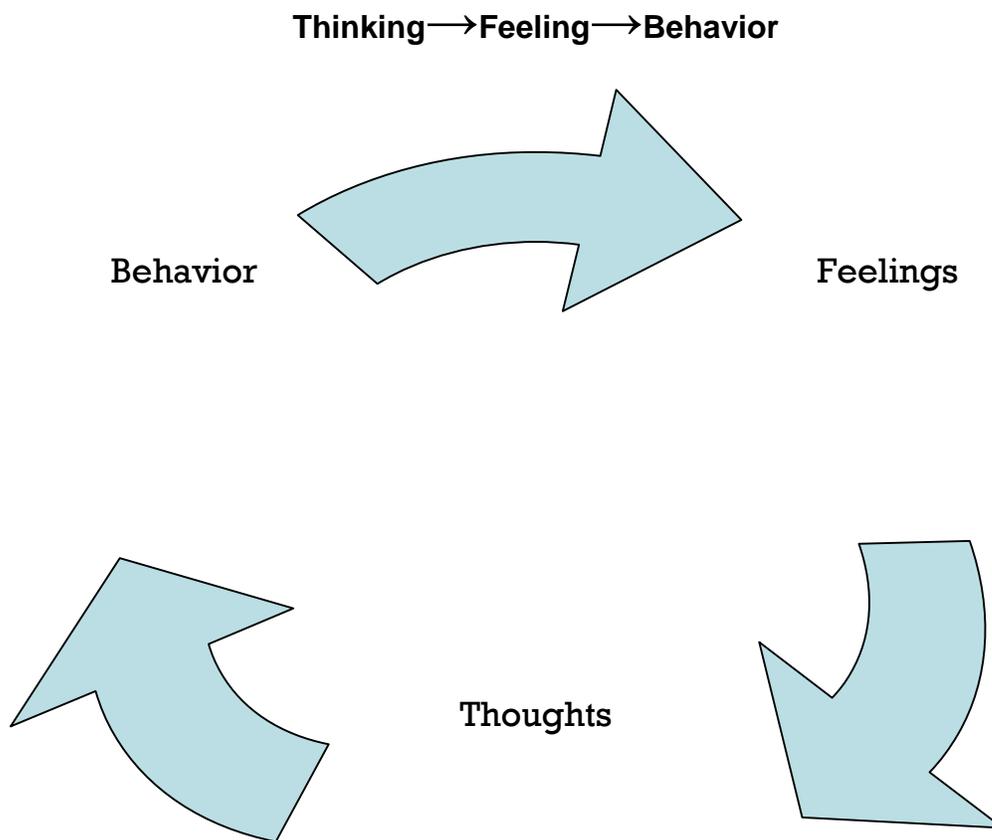


Figure 1-3. Possible Order of Events

Example:

Luke 15:17: "When he (younger son) came to himself" - (realized how much better his father's servants had it), we see the thought process at work. Then the son feels, "I am not worthy to be a son." Next he humbles (feeling) himself to be a servant. Finally, he arises and goes home (action).

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Realization → Humility → Goes Home → Salvation
(Thoughts) (Feelings) (Behavior)

It is very important to see all three steps (thinking, feeling and behaving) working together at the same time. We can see from these examples that what we put into our minds and allow ourselves to dwell on are *the* determining factors of our behavior.

2. Feelings first

Sometimes feelings come first. Negative or positive feelings about a person or situation may lead to negative or positive thoughts, which will produce a certain behavior.

Feelings → Thinking → Behavior

Example:

James 1:13-15 explains how this progression from feeling to thinking to behavior can lead to sin. We are tempted (something appeals to our lust). Lust has three forms: the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (First John 2:16). Lust is something from the inside (feeling). Then something from the outside comes into our path, creating an enticement. With the enticement, we begin to rationalize the behavior (thinking) we are considering. Our own desire or lust has allowed us to be enticed. When we give in to the enticement, we sin (act) and sin (unless dealt with through coming back to Christ for a correction in thinking, feeling, and acting), leads to death.

3. Behavior first

Or, behavior may come first. Perhaps we inadvertently do something without really thinking about it. Feelings of shame or esteem may result in negative or positive feelings about ourselves.

Behavior → Feelings → Thinking

Example:

Paul, in Acts 9, was going from house to house persecuting Christians. He asked for and received a letter from the high priest to go to Damascus and look for Christians so he could bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. On his way, Paul was struck blind. Out of his fear (emotions, verse 6), he asked God for instructions. After obeying God in baptism, Paul modified his concept of Jesus as the Messiah. Now Paul saw Jesus not as an imposter but as the One to whom Paul would devote his life.

Persecution → Fear → Instruction
(Behavior) (Emotions) (Thoughts)

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IV. Summary

By consciously considering (thinking) our response to a given situation or stimulus, we can change our responses to temptations. This is great news! We are *in charge* of our actions!

When we die to self and live for Christ, we are capable of decisions to behave in a manner, which may be very different from our past.

In summary, we see that human behavior involves much more than a spontaneous reaction. We can learn to control our behavior by working on the way we feel and think. It is comforting to know that it is possible to be and do what we choose, rather than be puppets of someone else.

Now that we realize that we are free to change, let us decide to become the servant of Christ. Christ was *free* and became a servant (Philippians 2:1-11). Then we will feel, act and think as Christ did. Then, if someone asks, “*Why* did you do that?”, we can actually say, “Because that is what Christ would have done.”

Please study Philippians 4:8 and Galatians 2:20 for a better understanding of this idea.

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STUDY QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

1. The central theme of this *NewLife Behavior* lesson is how our behavior is impacted by our
 - (a) environment
 - (b) associates
 - (c) family
 - (d) thinking

2. Part of the “good news” (the Gospel) is that our childhood experiences do not have to make us
 - (a) a victim
 - (b) a genius
 - (c) a dunce
 - (d) a success

3. The “4 G’s” that impact our behavior are goals, genes, guidelines and
 - (a) golf
 - (b) groups
 - (c) graphics
 - (d) geography

4. The three main functions of a person’s mind are thinking, feeling and
 - (a) making decisions
 - (b) worrying
 - (c) behaving
 - (d) spelling correctly

5. From our ancestors, we can inherit our genetic structure, like Grandpa’s big nose, and even our
 - (a) disposition
 - (b) deposition
 - (c) demography
 - (d) geography.

6. How we think and act is influenced by our
 - (a) feelings
 - (b) diet
 - (c) bone structure
 - (d) sleep habits

7. One thing that has a strong impact on our goals is our
 - (a) education
 - (b) friends
 - (c) money
 - (d) guidelines

8. To choose not to have goals is to choose to live
 - (a) in Texas
 - (b) richly
 - (c) aimlessly
 - (d) long

9. Feelings of shame may lead to
 - (a) negative feelings about ourselves
 - (b) thinking too highly of ourselves
 - (c) feelings of superiority
 - (d) not thinking at all

10. We can learn to control our behavior by working on the way we feel and
 - (a) eat
 - (b) sleep
 - (c) think
 - (d) exercise

REFLECTION

Please write a few sentences telling what new things you have learned about your present situation or condition and how you can use these new ideas.

APPLYING THE LESSON

Finally, to gain the most from this study, list one or more ideas that you want to use to change your behavior. Also, list questions you want to ask your instructor or studymate.