

Understanding People - Chapter 10 - People are Volitional  
Student Class Notes

1. Crabb begins the chapter discussing the effect of confusion on people (pp 153-157).
  - A. According to him, the motivating force behind the desire to end confusion is gaining control. This is ultimately a resistance to the idea of being dependent on God. It is an aspect of pride.
  - B. There are only two options for dealing with undeniable confusion. Either rely on help from an unconfused source which results in dependence upon that source, or gain understanding so that you can remain in control.
  - C. Confusion a necessary part of life because we know only in part - which is directly stated in . 1 Corinthians 13:12. Deuteronomy: 29:29 states that there are secret things that belong to God. He is omniscient and we are very limited.
  - D. People are resistant to the reality that life is spent making decisions in the face of unresolvable confusion resulting in efforts to reduce the confusion to levels in which it can be ignored. This trivialization of reality is the attempt to hold on to an illusion of being in control.
  - E. Simplification of reality perverts volitional capacity and closes off thought forcing belief and actions into predefined categories, formulas and theories. They may produce the comfortable feeling that life is manageable, but it may be contrary to truth and it will cut off the significant changes that should take place in the process of maturing spiritually for it fosters greater independence from God instead of greater dependence.
2. The statement that *"Humans are volitional beings and are therefore ultimately responsible for all of their behavior"* is false for some behaviors such as seizures, reflexes, physical / mental inabilities are not volitional. However, those behaviors that are not physically/medically induced are in the realm of volition and therefore responsibility. All **moral** behaviors are volitional and therefore a matter of individual responsibility - Matthew 15:19; Proverbs 23:7; Rev. 20:12-13 )
3. Any theory of personality that fixes responsibility for what a person does on something other than personal choice, whether cognitive of the choice or not, is at least in part, unbiblical. God holds people responsible for the actions they take. (Crabb's examples: work on the Sabbath - Numbers 15:29-36; Ananias & Sapphira - Acts 5:1-10; the rich young ruler - Matthew 19:16-22). (pp 158f)
4. V-1 is the capacity to choose behavior. (pp 159)  
V-2 is the capacity to choose goals  
V-1 is choosing behavior designed to reach the desired goals of V-2  
Every behavior has a goal - everything you do has a purpose that you think your actions will achieve.
5. The past will have a bearing on the goals a person values, but motivation always occurs in the present in pursuit of desired future outcomes. "Motivation becomes a 'here-and-now' phenomena with a look to the future" (Crabb - pg 159)

People chose both **what** they do and **why** they do it. This is the strategy (V-1) for reaching the desired goal (V-2) (pg 160)

6. Beliefs about what bring satisfaction - significance / impact and security / relationship - and always carry with them a goal to be pursued (pg 161). Choices are made in the pursuit of the goal
7. A full volitional circle is when the choice of specific behavior is seen as a choice because the goal of that behavior is recognized

A volitional circle that is less than full is when the choice of specific behavior does not seem like a choice because the goal of that behavior is not clearly recognized.

The loss of felt choice does not loss of **actual** choice (pp 163)

“The key to dealing with the problem of loss of felt choice is the recognition that every action has a purpose” (pp 164). “Behavior will feel like a choice to the degree that the goal of the behavior is recognized” - corollary - “Behavior in pursuit of an unrecognized goal does not feel like a choice” (pp 164). This determines the fullness of the volitional circle.

8. Recovering the thrill of volitionality requires clear sight of the self-protective purposes that corrupt nearly every direction that we pursue (pp 166).

Repentance of that self-protection and moving in the direction of trusting (dependence) God will restore the sense of volition. Truth becomes more important than the feeling of control (pp 167). Exposing lies - such as the idea that a full personal life is available through physical pleasure - and then moving to live according to truth restores the sense of volition and ability to make the necessary changes.

Recognition of and repentance from wrong goals is crucial (pp. 168).

The knowledge that in all circumstances you can choose to walk the path of life with Christ is the secret of contentment (Philippians 4:9-13) pp. 168

*Note - Crabb suggests that self-protection is a major purpose in decision making. While there may be an element of that in most decisions, Satan's deception of Eve in Genesis 3 had more to do with slandering God to create in Eve a response of pride to gain what he said God was withholding from her. - it was good for food, delightful to the eyes and desirable to make one wise. The lust of the flesh, eyes and boastful pride of life can present a purpose of selfish gain without a factor of self-protection. “I want it because I want it” - not because of fear of not having it*

5. Confusion is an opportunity for those that pursue God for it is the opportunity to trust God for the present and future and enjoy the freedom to choose. ,Confusion is an enemy to sinful man and on all that insist on controlling their world according to their own wisdom and selfish desires.
6. The volitional circle fits with the rational circle & repentance and the personal circles as follows:  
V-2 brings you back to the personal circle. People are trying to make sense of their existence, so they develop different goals in life depending on their images (R-1) which form their strategy of living (R-2). People do not understand everything, (especially from a godly perspective), so their goals in life become fuzzy (V-2) and this makes specific behavior seem like responses rather than choices. Behavior (V-1) reveals goals (V-2), these in turn give insight into images (R-1) and strategy of life (R-2). By helping a person to live life based on objective, accurate decisions based on truth - every area is affected. Of course this requires true repentance from former goals/strategies.