

# Cognitive Dissonance

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Cognitive dissonance is a dilemma in which a person is struggling with two conflicting beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes. For example, someone says, "I know I need to spend more time with my family, but the job really needs me." Do you see the dissonance between the two beliefs? Another person says, "I know it's wrong to lie, but I really need this job." In the struggle of dissonance, they may give in and lie on their resume.

There are examples of cognitive dissonance in the Bible. Consider the rich young ruler. He came to Jesus asking, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I might obtain eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16). Yet, the dissonance came in his unwillingness to part with his riches. James wrote of the "double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). Jesus Himself said,

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Matthew 6:24

Other examples from the Bible could be presented, but let's think about some areas where cognitive dissonance may be stagnating our growth as Christians.

## Personal Evangelism

"I want to share the word with others, but I don't think I know enough."

## Attendance

"I know I need to attend more, but my schedule won't permit it."

## Bible Study & Prayer

"I want to study and pray more, but I don't have the time."

Do any of those sound familiar? The important question is how do we overcome the dissonance between the two beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes? Since dissonance speaks of being out of harmony, and thereby in conflict with another, one way to overcome is to change one of the conflicting behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs. Consider the example regarding personal evangelism:

"I want to share the word with others, but I don't think I know enough."

How do we get rid of the dissonance between these two beliefs? Since we all understand the importance of evangelism, the dissonance here can easily be removed by equipping ourselves to share the Gospel. In other words, if one doesn't think they know enough, and truly wants to be more evangelistic, then learn how to do it.

"I know I need to attend more, but my schedule won't permit it."

Here again, don't we all understand the value of being at worship services and Bible classes? Then remove the dissonance by building your schedule around the times of worship, rather than letting your schedule pull you away from the assembling of the saints.

"I want to study and pray more, but I don't have the time."

After the two previous examples, you know what needs to be done here to remove the dissonance.

In many cases, the dissonance we experience is created by false beliefs or lies the devil tells us. Satan wants us to believe we don't know how to share the Gospel. He loves to see us load up our schedules with activities and chores that keep us away from the encouragement of the assemblies. He is a master at convincing us, that when it comes the things of God, we have no time.

It is time to conquer the lies we tell ourselves and sadly, firmly believe. It is time to stop being double-mined, and wasting our energy trying to serve two masters. Jesus said,

"The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

Matthew 6:22

The word translated "clear" literally means, single. In other words, Jesus is speaking of the importance of single-mindedness. When He says our whole body will be full of light, it means no dissonance! No dissonance means greater joy, less worry, less stress, and less uncertainty. Let's turn our areas of cognitive dissonance into areas of cognitive harmony.