

# Understanding and Leveraging the Trichotomy of Human Nature

## 1 Thessalonians 5:23

**OPENING JOKE:** True Story of the First Place Winner in the recent Criminal Lawyers Award contest.

Charlotte NC. A lawyer purchased a box of 24 very rare and very expensive cigars then insured them against, among many other things - fire.

Within a month he had smoked all 24 cigars. Without having made his first premium payment on the policy the lawyer filed a claim against the insurance company. In his claim the lawyer stated that the cigars were lost in a series of small fires.

The insurance company refused to pay citing the obvious reason that the man had consumed the cigars in a normal fashion. The lawyer sued and won. Delivering the ruling the Judge agreed with the insurance company that the claim was frivolous, however he agreed with the lawyer that the insurance company insured the cigars against fire without defining what was acceptable fire and was obligated to pay the claim. Rather than endure the lengthy and costly appeals process the insurance company paid the lawyer \$15,000 for his loss of the 24 cigars lost in the fire.

After the lawyer cashed the check the insurance company had him arrested on 24 counts of arson.

Well life is often a series of small fires...left unchecked they can lead to a disastrous end.

In this series we have been talking about some of the, “tough issues” we face as a society. We’ve noticed that the battlefield for these issues is very often the MIND. So today, I want to talk about our relationship to our MIND and our Mental Health.

**INTRODUCTION:** Theologians have debated for years whether man is essentially a Dichotomy or a Trichotomy. You ask, “what is the difference?”. The two words answer the question, “does a human essentially exist in two parts or three?”.

The original languages of scripture, **Hebrew**, **Greek**, and a little **Aramaic** can at times confuse the issue.

The English language is very *linear* and *compartmentalized*. We like dictionaries with clear definitions, thus our language is fairly *mathematical* and *straightforward*.

Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic are more akin to the **Romance languages**. They have many words, and case endings that convey slight changes of nuance. So they are much better at capturing the **emotional essence** of the speaker.

However, when we translate these ancient romantic languages into our linear English, it's like translating **Shakespeare into Calculus**. The essential meaning of the text is captured perfectly, but the beauty of the text is sometimes compromised.

**ILLUSTRATION:** You are familiar with the idea of **LOVE**, we have one word for LOVE in English and we use it ad nauseam. I love fried chicken, I love the Florida Gators, I love my wife. The reader is supposed to use context to interpret what kind of love I'm referring to.

The Ancients didn't trust the listener as much as we do, so they would use a variety of words and case endings to make certain the intended meaning was conveyed.

So if we are speaking of:

- Brotherly love - Philia
- Divine love - Agape
- Romantic love - Eros
- Friendship - Pragma
- Family love - Storge
- Flirtatious love - Ero-tor-opia or Ludus

In the text, each of those words are translated into English as LOVE. You see?

So when it comes to understanding a PERSON. We have a similar storehouse of words applied, but the translators are not all in agreement as to what the words have reference to. Are these words referring to the same concept or something entirely different.

So we see English words in the text, **Soul, Spirit, Heart, Mind, Even Ghost and Flesh.**

Sometimes in the OT the word "**nephesh**" is translated as SOUL and other times MIND. Same original word. The same is true of the word, "**ruah**" at times its translated SPIRIT at times SOUL.

Theologians are taking all of these words and concepts and trying to systematize them in a way we can comprehend. So one school of theologians say all of these different words mean essentially the same thing, thus man is TWO PARTS, spirit and body. These are called **Dichotomist**. Another school of theology would say, "No we recognize a difference in the use and contexts of various words that seem to refer to three parts, Body, Soul, and Spirit - these are considered **Trichotomist**."

I hold to the **Trichotomist** position.

One of the key texts for this position is:

**TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember the NT is in **GREEK** so the words are:

- Pneuma translated Spirit
- Psuche - translated Soul
- Soma - translated Body
  
- **Body** - That is the physical, tangible part of you.
- **Soul** - That is the seat of your mind, will, and emotions (sometimes called the heart).
- **Spirit** - That is part of you that relates to the eternal.

**ILLUSTRATION:**

- **Plants** - have a body, but no soul or spirit.
- **Animals** - have a body and soul, but no spirit
- **Humans** - have a body, soul, and a spirit (God breathed into Adam and made him a living Spirit).

When Adam and Eve were created, they were fully alive, Body, Soul and Spirit. In other words they were perfectly healthy humans. They did not experience sickness or death, they enjoyed perfect community with one another (naked and unashamed) and they walked with God in perfect harmony in the cool of the day.

**In Genesis 2:16–17 (ESV) God said,**

<sup>16</sup> ... “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Well, what happened? Eve took and ate, Adam took and ate, and they lived many, many years longer. The question arises in what way did they die?

**The trichotomist would say -**

- Their SPIRIT died instantly, they were cut off from God.
- Their SOUL, mind will and emotions, were corrupted, they understood something of God but they had been infected with demonic error.
- Their BODY would ultimately die.

Like reproduces like, so apple seeds bear apple trees, lemon seeds produce lemon trees, and sinners reproduce sinners. We were born physically alive, mentally corrupted, and spiritually dead.

**THEN COMES THE GOSPEL**, the good news of what Jesus has done so that we can be redeemed. We hear, we understand with our mind, we have a change of mind (repentance) and we believe... thus we are BORN AGAIN.

What part of us is reborn? Remember Nicodemus raised this question in **John 3**, "I can't enter again into my mothers womb can I?". Jesus said, "flesh is flesh, SPIRIT is SPIRIT"

Upon faith in Jesus Christ, our SPIRIT is made alive, born again, you see?

So now - if you are a follower of Jesus, this is your current state:

- Your **BODY** - will one day die and be raised again. Till then you will struggle with the effect of sin. The number of your physical days are determined, they are written in a book. You say, "Well why exercise and eat right?". You can't effect the quantity of your life, but you can improve the quality.

That is why Paul said, "Bodily discipline is of a little benefit".

- Your **SPIRIT** - the part that came alive when you believed, it is as saved as it will ever be. Your SPIRITUAL self is as saved as Paul, as Billy Graham, even as SAVED as Jesus Christ Himself. His life and righteousness was imputed to your Spirit. In 10 million years your Spirit will not be any more saved than it is right now.

That is why Paul said, "We are already seated with Christ in the Heavens". Spiritually, we actually are.

- Your **SOUL** - is a different matter all together. Remember that refers to your MIND, your WILL, and your EMOTIONS.

These are fallen and effected by sin. They must be changed slowly over a lifetime.

that is what Paul is referring to in **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

*2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

This is what Theologians refer to as **Sanctification**.

So,

Your SPIRIT is already made perfect.

Your BODY will be made perfect at the resurrection.

Your MIND is being made perfect day by day.

HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

By progressively subjecting your thoughts to God's thoughts.

That is what Paul meant in **2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

The word picture there is that of a Roman Centurion with a spear taking a person prisoner till they submit to Caesar as Lord.

We do the same with THOUGHTS or IDEAS. We take them captive at spear point until they are submissive to the LORDSHIP of JESUS CHRIST. You see?

You say, "Well I'm not sure I believe everything the Bible teaches". Friend, please understand, that makes absolutely no difference.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I never did well in school. I always struggled academically. Why? Because, I saw things differently than my teachers and professors. I didn't always agree with their take on American History, or Science. So I would answer honestly and I believe accurately... but they did not accept my answer.

Somewhere along the way, I was making my case with a friend that I just didn't agree with the teachers conclusions. My friend explained to me, "Brother, that makes absolutely no difference. That is just simply not how the education system works. You are not graded on rightness or wrongness... you are graded on your ability to know and understand what the teacher is looking for and you ability to provide what she is looking for when requested.

That was a revolutionary concept for me. In other words, it was ok if the teacher was wrong. I just provide the wrong answers when requested and I received a passing grade.

Well, when it comes to our relationship with God. ***He is never actually wrong.*** But sometimes, we are not sanctified to the degree that we comprehend HIS RIGHTNESS.

So it is not uncommon for an unbeliever or a new believer to say - I don't see it that way. Well, I understand, but that really has no bearing on actual truth. Let God be true and every man a liar.

NOW - when it comes to the issues we have been discussing. The BATTLE ground is in the MIND. The weapons are IDEAS. Listen to Paul's argument in 2 Cor. 10 as a trichotomist...

**2 Corinthians 10:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh (BODY) but have divine power (SPIRIT) to destroy strongholds (in the SOUL, mind, will, emotions... how do we know? The next verse).

## 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

**NOW - what do we do if the IDEAS of Cultural Marxism, LGBTQ, BLM, all of these things begin to effect ourselves, our family, our church, our community?**

We must address the issues on all three levels - Body, Soul, and Spirit. Let's talk about each one.

## 1. SOUL - Mind, Will and Emotions

Do you see any observable changes that have made it possible for these ideas to take root in this generation more than in all that preceded it?

How about the Informational and Technological revolution?

- Teens today spend approximately 9 hours a day absorbing media. 91% go to bed with their devices.
- Handheld devices account for 58.99% of online traffic - computers, laptops are basically obsolete.

### a. DEFENSE

**ILLUSTRATION:** I remember my first computer. I was told about this device called the modem that could dial into the library of congress and access 1000's of books. Today practically every book ever written can be accessed from my pocket. As well as every song ever recorded, every movie ever filmed.

Simultaneously, I can be connected wirelessly to anyone on the planet, regardless of their ideology, morality, or system of beliefs. Also, they can have access to me.

There are Gate Keepers of this cyberspace. Guess what ideology they hold to? People like Dorsey, Zuckerberg, Gates, and the like... the vast majority are Cultural Marxist.

So, when it comes to our tech, we must learn how to filter the unmitigated absorption of IDEAS that come into our minds.

Let me warn you - it is impossible to create a perfect defense. This space is moving and evolving. **The enemy is intelligent.** *Satan makes Einstein look like Gomer Pyle on Valium after an hour on Willie Nelson's tour bus.... You see?*

So he will outsmart you. The plan cannot just be DEFENSE. There must be...

### b. OFFENSE

You must learn how to encourage a robust spiritual walk. That is why we unite with and work with and financially support the local church. These songs have an effect, this teaching has an effect, group relationships have an effect. If you are not bought in, not wonder you are losing the battle.

Master the Word of God - **Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)** 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of **soul** and of **spirit**...

Remember Jesus battled Satans IDEAS in the wilderness with three verses from Deuteronomy.

The Word of God is the key to winning your family. Learn how to take IDEAS captive and ask, "What does the Bible say?" Be ruthless when they are ideas in your head.... be gentle and consistent when they are others.

## 2. BODY - Physical Part of You

Sometimes we as Christian assume that everything is Spiritual or Soulful. We forget about the Physical part of us. We get sick, we pray... in other words with treat the physical ailment with the spiritual remedy.

We should pray - there is a spiritual element or impact to every physical sickness.

But we ought not disregard the physical. Specifically, when it comes to the physical apparatus of the brain.

You see ideas and thoughts form in the soul, but the soul's primary tool is a physical organ.

So a person may be receiving correct, biblical, true information... but not be able to respond to it properly because of a physical or chemical issue.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I heard about a man...years ago, one of his kids was exhibiting emotions and making decisions that didn't make sense. They would keep speaking truth, the child even seemed to believe the truth, but nevertheless, something was going on in the brain that seemed to short circuit.

After an intense season of prayer... My friend sensed the Lord say, "**Don't confuse symptoms with sins**".

In other words, the behavior he was observing was a symptom of something rather than a sinful response to truth.

So my friend and his wife began to talk to Christian Counselors and Psychiatrists. One in particular who seemed to share their convictions. This doctor put the young person on a very low dose of medication called a norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor.

Suddenly, the child was behaving, not perfectly, but acceptably for the age. Now, truth had a fighting chance.

Christians, have historically been hesitant to get psychological help, especially medication.

**JOKE:** I've found that the same man who will take FloMax, Cialis, and Lipator for other issues... when it comes to his brain, he says, "I'll handle it myself".

- LISTEN, if following normal spiritual discipline and habits doesn't seem to be helping you like it helps others, it may be time to talk to somebody.
- If people who know you and love you are telling you, you need to talk to a professional. Maybe you need to talk to a professional.
- Depression is real
- Anxiety and Panic are real
- Addictions are real
- Gender dysphoria is real

Never turn to medicine first, and never turn to medicine only... but be open to seeing if there are physical symptoms that can be treated.

### 3. SPIRIT -

The Spirit is the most vital part of you, and thankfully it is the most simple aspect of humanity to fix. You are either spiritual ALIVE or DEAD. Simple as that. If you are DEAD, more than anything else you need life.

No wonder you don't enjoy reading God's Word, no wonder it's difficult to pray. You are dead spiritually.

The worse thing I could do for you is treat your soul and some doctor treat your body and leave you spiritually dead.

ILLUSTRATION: One of my favorite movies is, "Analyze this" starring Robert De Niro and Billy Crystal. Robert De Niro plays a Maphia boss who is experiencing severe Anxiety. He comes to Billy Crystal's character, a Psychiatrist for help.

Crystal's character says, "what am I supposed to make you a happy well adjusted gangster?"



**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

Well, I would say to you - what does it benefit a man if he finds mental health, physical strength, lives a long life, and dies and goes to hell?

My job is not to make you a happy and well adjusted pagan. I want to see you saved.

How does that happen? Well, consider the fact that when Jesus died. He suffered mental anguish, physical anguish, and spiritual anguish for you. He died fully and completely the death you were supposed to die. Three days later he rose again.

If you hear that, understand it and believe it... your dead spirit suddenly begins to breath. Congratulations my friend, you just experienced the new birth...