

They Call You Trinity

Discovering You:

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, Genesis 2:7

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Wesley J. Gabel

Bethany Church

Two 6th grade boys were placed in classes for slower learners. Their teachers missed something. Perhaps, insecurity and depression masked one's potential, and pride the other's. Regardless, the 6th grade teachers did not really know their two students, for one graduated from high school with honors and the other from college with highest honors.

We often misread reality because we see what is visible and ignore what is unseen. At a ceremony where young David was selected to be king, Samuel was convinced that God had chosen David's oldest brother, and David's father thought that David was too immature to even participate. Neither prophet nor father saw the real person. In fact, most of us don't see ourselves very well. We don't understand our potential, purpose, our hearts, and a lot of our behavior. In the 1960s and 70s, children would leave home, students school, workers jobs and spouses marriages to go off and "find themselves." They often didn't find anything.

At a superficial level, we use mirrors to examine ourselves. We might find a hot sauce mustache or a rebellious hair follicle, missed by our comb, but do we see ourselves?

We also use the mirror of public opinion to judge ourselves. Some years ago when our media-driven culture depicted mostly white people as role models, Afro-Americans began to assert, "Black is beautiful!" Those words, repeated and repeated, redefined attractiveness. In 1967 many Americans began to believe that "Thin is beautiful!" after 90 pound, 17-year old, British supermodel Twiggy arrived in New York City. She was very thin, almost anorexic, and

her image was splashed across tabloids and television with glowing comments. One wonders if this mirror led to many anorexic deaths. At a very emotional level, we use the words and opinions of others as a mirror. I discovered that my self-image and actions often were driven by my impression of public opinion. I discovered that the court of public opinion, or my perception of it, was a broken mirror that distorted the truth and crippled my life.

Jesus, however, used God's word as his mirror. As a result, he saw his life, purpose and potential differently. He saw everything differently, and his every thought was deeply rooted in the message of the Bible. God's word was the mirror to discover himself, and it was the glasses that helped him see the world.

The writer of Hebrews said this about the Bible:

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12, NIV)

That verse means first, that God's word is acting in our world and in our lives. God's promises, prophecies, and principles are behind the events of our day *and* the state of our hearts. I know that when many hear media reports of Sharon Stone attributing China's earthquake to karma and the Reverend John Hagee declaring that Hurricane Katrina resulted from a particular sin, they feel revulsion. We understand God to be love, and we cannot conceive any association of divine love with such mass, indiscriminate and horrific suffering. It is easier for us believers to trace the word and hand of God in compassionate efforts that follow such calamities; but the cross of Christ reveals that the love of God acts in the darkest moments of human experience.

The verse means second, that God's word cuts far deeper than any physical act. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. It doesn't just divide our thoughts and attitudes by rightness and wrongness. Instead, it exposes their source. It divides soul from spirit. As a sword

can separate a joint from the marrow, from the rest of the tissue, so the word of God divides what populates your heart by its source. God's word divides soul from spirit because they are different. This may seem ethereal and impractical; but it is very practical.

When I exercise at Mayo's health facility, I walk by a sign that says: body, mind and spirit. In a biblical sense, that is partly right. The Bible teaches that we are spirit, soul and body:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NIV)

We are spirit. Jesus told a Samaritan woman that God is spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. If we are made in his image, then we must have been created spirit. Indeed, Jesus taught that unless we are born a second time, born of spirit, we have no connection with God. We, therefore, are spirit, a living connection with God that died when Adam and Eve sinned, and must be reborn.

In Genesis 2:7, the Bible describes our creation:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7, KJV)

God formed a body from the dust of the ground. He breathed into the body the breath of life. The word *breath* can also be translated *spirit*. In the 20th chapter of John, the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples and breathed on them. He then said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Was Jesus remembering the initial breath of life in Genesis 2? Was he foreshadowing the wind that accompanied the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost?

The Bible tells us that the breath of God, acting on a body of dust, formed a living soul. We are soul that was formed by the Spirit's action with our bodies, so we are also soul and body. The soul is composed of the mind, emotions and will. You don't need a spiritual connection

with God to think, feel and choose. It is a process of the soul. It is not a process of the body.

While patients are conscious, neurosurgeons have confirmed that you cannot change their minds, emotions or decisions by probing the brain. If we were just organic, we could stimulate thoughts and decisions by probing the brain; but we can't because the brain hosts the mind, emotions and will. It enables them, but it doesn't control them.

The body is the host for the soul. The body enables the soul to do things, so our bodies affect what we think, say and do. The body also reflects the soul. We don't say that your body looks happy. We say, "You look happy.

In the Bible, at their creation, Adam and Eve's lives were dominated by their spirits. Their spiritual connection to God dominated the thoughts, feelings and decisions of their souls. In turn, their souls directed the actions of their bodies. The diagram shows this. However, after Adam and Eve sinned, they related to the world through their bodies. It became the chief informant to their souls. With their spiritual connection gone, they no longer felt the warmth and security of divine love. They acted to cover themselves, physically sewing leaves together for clothing. (In a prophetic act, God presented them clothes made from the skins of animals, probably lambskins.) Their thoughts, emotions and choices became dominated by their physical senses and by spiritual substitutes for a holy God. From the time of the first sin, human beings have relied on their physical senses and struggled with spiritual deception and superstition.

The point of Jesus' life, death and resurrection is to bring us back to fellowship with God and restore us as his creation. We are to be made holy in spirit no longer deceived by Satan's schemes. We are to be made holy in soul, where our thoughts, feelings and decisions reflect the purity of Jesus and grow into the maturity of Jesus. We are to be made holy in body, where words and deeds reveal the love of God.

You and I discover our true selves, the trinity of spirit, soul and body, when (1) we repent of our sins – and stop thinking that somehow we are wise enough to know what is harmful or know all the harm we cause – and stop believing we are good enough for God to accept us, (2) we trust Jesus to forgive us being baptized in his name, and (3) we welcome the Holy Spirit as he individually and corporately covers our souls and bodies with his love and counsel.

When I was a little child, I felt the love of the Lord; but when I became sensible to sin, I no longer trusted that forgiving love. I was deceived by all kinds of thoughts. Finally, the Spirit of Jesus gave me peace when he helped me see that my forgiveness was based on his promise rather than my practice. I was so relieved. I felt peace and a fresh love for Jesus. A few months later at church camp, the Spirit of God swept through all us campers. A passion overcame my fears of rejection. In a number of ways, I was more affected by my spiritual connection with God than the hurtful experiences of my soul. Mercifully, the Spirit of God is continuing to expose and address deficits in my thinking, emotions and decision.

Today, God desires to cover you with the warmth and security of his Spirit. He desires to renew you in your soul and body. He desires to purify you from spiritual deception. The promise and path are still the same. Repent, believe and you will receive.