

**The Counsel We Need Most:
Seeking Biblical Counsel in an Age of
Countless Therapies, Remedies, and Influencers**

1) That Word Above All Earthly Powers

Hebrews 1:1-3: God has spoken in his Son

Hebrews 2:1-3: We are those who have heard

Hebrews 3:7-4:2: Hearing must be joined with faith

Hebrews 4:12-13: Faith responds to the living Word of God

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

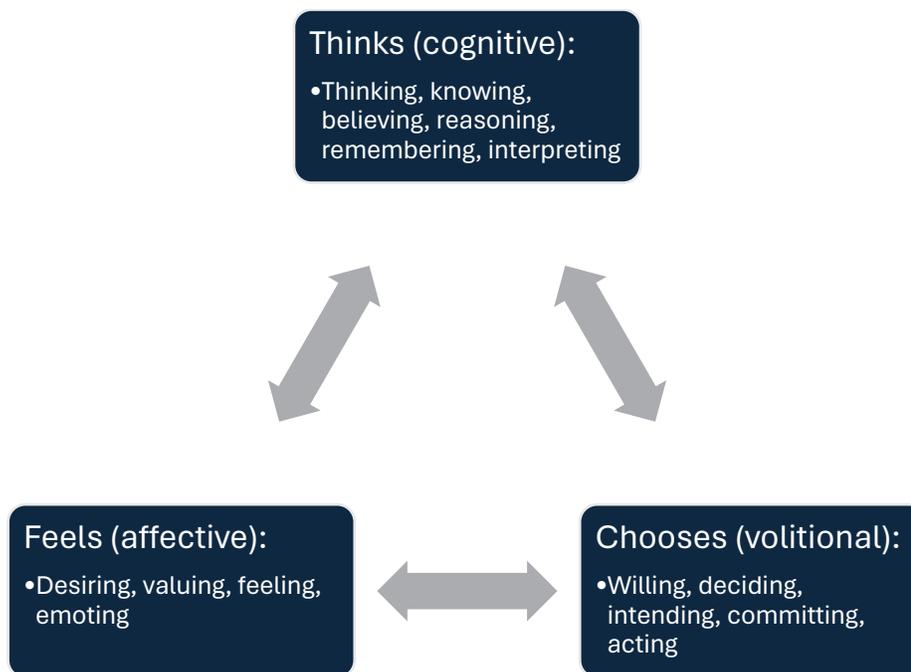
- “Discerning”
- “Thoughts and intentions”
- “Of the heart”

A Three-Dimensional Model of the Heart

Psa. 33:13-15: The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes [or “discerns”] all their deeds.

Prov. 4:23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

So what is “the heart”? (NB: this diagram, and the whole discussion, is adapted from Jeremy Pierre’s excellent book *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*.)¹



¹ Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (New Growth Press, 2016), 17.

2) The Alternative Voices

The Trolley Problem

The Berenstain Bears: Behaviorism for Kids (and Parents!)

The real world alternative voices: our “therapists, remedies, and influencers.”

Eclecticism: “A Little Bit of This, a Little Bit of That”

Reductionism: “Highly Organized Mud” or Broken Bodies, Broken Brains

The “levels of explanation” principle: a higher explanation can reach down to include the lower; the lower explanation will never reach up to include the higher.

3) The Counsel We Need Most

The heart of the matter: all of life *coram Deo*

Psa. 115:2-9: Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

“O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.”

“Human beings are active verbs with respect to God.” (David Powlison)

(Re)learning to read

“Scripture is about understanding and helping people.”²

Col. 2:1-10: For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ,³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

2 Tim 3:14-17 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2Pet. 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,⁴ by which

² David Powlison, “Faith’s Psychology and the Psychological Faiths,” *Christian Research Journal* 28, no. 3 (2005), <https://www.equip.org/articles/faiths-psychology-and-the-psychological-faiths/>.

he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Being counseled by, at, in, and with your church

“...the church must not give over the care and cure of troubled souls to other voices. Those voices may be well-intended, but when they try to fix ‘with God’ problems using a ‘without God’ message, *you have a problem with that*. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). Consciousness of God is the starting point, the system-aligning principle, the architectonic prerequisite for making good sense of life. When friends, family, coworkers, the mass media, self-help books, or psychotherapeutic professionals ignore reality, they inevitably miscounsel. In Jeremiah’s metaphor, they heal wounds lightly, ‘saying “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace” (Jer. 8:11). I will say it again. Pastors must not hand over care and cure of souls to other voices. Any number of people, paid and unpaid, are more than willing to do your work for you.”³

Read David Powlison

Some starting suggestions:

- *Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness* (New Growth Press, 2016).
- *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Crossway, 2017)
- *God’s Grace in Your Suffering* (Crossway, 2018)
- *Making All Things New: Restoring Joy to the Sexually Broken* (Crossway, 2017)
- “The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 2 (2005): 2–14
- “Suffering and Psalm 119,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 22, no. 4 (2004): 2–16
- “Pray Beyond the Sick List,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 1 (2005): 2–6
- “Predator, Prey, and Protector: Helping Victims Think and Act from Psalm 10,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 3 (1998): 27–37

³ David Powlison, *The Pastor as Counselor: The Call for Soul Care* (Crossway, 2021), 40.