

THE
DYNAMIC HEART
IN DAILY LIFE

....

CONNECTING CHRIST
TO HUMAN EXPERIENCE

....

JEREMY PIERRE



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Dedication

To my mom,

a model of self-reflection

To my dad,

a model of moving past such business

To my Sarah,

whose basic sensibility grounds the earth

To my kids,

whose sheer momentum stirs the sky

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CHAPTER 1

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THE DYNAMIC HEART

Head and heart have battled long enough.
It's time they got their acts together, literally.

— *Andrew Tallon*¹

Human experience is so vast and mysterious, so dull and routine. Human thoughts can skim the edges of eternal realms a few seconds before entertaining the urge for a Shamrock Shake from McDonalds. People deeply love others and yet are bored to death while talking to them. Individuals demonstrate epic resolve in tragedy but have difficulty getting up to exercise on Monday mornings. How can anyone describe such an incredible, regular thing? Poets and songwriters try to capture the sum of human experience, but at best they capture one small aspect of humanity. Likewise, philosophers and scientists observe in part. At best, they trace the corners of human experience, catching glimpses of its form. People know what they experience, but defining it can be like grasping vapor. Yet, even though vapor cannot be held, its essential properties and how it behaves can be understood.

So it is with human experience. No one can program human experience to follow an entirely predictable pattern, but everyone can certainly understand its general operating principles. In fact, it is vital to do so. When people recognize the contours of their experience,

they can seek help for themselves and offer help to others in need. Gladly for us, the human experience is a shared experience.

God designed people theomorphically—meaning, the functions of the human heart are reflective of divine internal functions.² Every human being on the green earth is made to image the same God, and therefore they share the same framework for inner experience. They operate according to the same design in different contexts and with different influencing factors. This chapter explores people's theomorphic design because understanding the breadth of human design helps people understand themselves and helps them offer adequately complex counsel to others. No one should treat people as merely rational beings in need of instruction, nor as merely emotional beings in need of healing, nor as merely decision-makers who need the right motivation. The truth is broader than each of these.

This is the first of five chapters addressing how the human heart responds dynamically. The purpose of these chapters is to equip counselors and caregivers to understand the experience of the folks in their care. The primary point of this chapter is: Human experience is three-dimensional. The human heart responds cognitively, through rational processes based on knowledge and beliefs. It also responds affectively, through a framework of desires and emotions. It also responds volitionally, through a series of choices reflecting the willful commitments of the heart. These three aspects of the heart's response are all a part of how people were designed to worship God.

Surface Issues and Deeper Counsel

A man sits in a counseling room, recounting a recent fight he had with his wife. He is an unhappy man generally, but he had exploded on her with an anger that surprised them both. The words that poured from him in that wild-eyed frenzy can only be described as wicked. In the ferocity of the moment, he stormed out of the room kicking things as he went. He even put a hole in one of the doors.

The evening ended in his leaving the apartment and sitting at the bar for a few hours. As he relates all this to his counselor, he stares at his shoes.

The counselor has a significant choice to make before he opens his mouth and sets the trajectory of care. He could set a trajectory arching low along the surface of the situation, pointing out what is obvious in an attempt to bring clarity and quick action. The husband's anger, expressed in a relationally harmful and sinful manner, caused this conflict. His explosion could fairly be labeled a fit of anger, to use the apostle Paul's words, which is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). Tracing the theme of anger in Scripture would give plenty of material to discuss why anger can be displeasing to God (Eph. 4:26–32; Col. 3:8; James 1:19). Obviously, the husband must repent of this sin and replace his anger with kindness, gentleness, and self-control—seems pretty straightforward.

But the obvious thing to say is not always the best. Pointing out this man's behavior as sin and calling him to change is not wrong. Helping him see those inner urges as alarming is not wrong either. In fact, these very things must occur. But how a counselor does this can be flat and one-dimensional. It can ignore the complex dynamics of both the relationship and the man's heart. A wise counselor will proceed in ways that square with the husband's experience, that resonate with heart dynamics of which he may or may not be aware.

The trajectory the counselor sets must aim deep, breaking the surface of this husband's anger, plunging deep into the why, not satisfied with hovering around the what. Why did he finally burst, and over that particular thing? How does the husband's anger relate to his general emotive stance toward life? How does his anger fit into the husband's relational dynamics? What awoke within him that sinister urge to harm? This husband did not have a generic anger inside him that happened to overflow. There is no generic anger. There is only a heart believing certain things, wanting certain things, choosing certain things—and anger is just his impassioned method of getting them.

The husband is looking at his shoes because he knows something alarming is going on inside him, and he needs a three-dimensional picture of it. As his self-awareness about his anger grows, he will see what he is believing about his world, seeking from those around him, and devoted to attaining. The husband will see what he needs to see in order to change. He will need more than self-awareness to change, but he cannot have less.

In order to answer the why question in people's life and behavior, they need to have a framework for understanding how humans experience the world. A biblical framework of human experience comes from a much more complex use of Scripture than simply trying to look up human experience or human psychology in the concordance and finding nothing, so reverting to looking up more antique ways of saying something similar: heart, soul, spirit, mind, will, and who could forget the all-important psychological term intestines.³ Now, these terms are vital to our understanding of how Scripture describes human experience, but the question we are asking is not, *What is the heart?* so much as, *How is the heart described as functioning?* Specifically, *How is the heart described as functioning to dynamically reflect its Creator?*

What people are doing as they experience life is reflecting the spiritual personhood of God as physical beings. Humans are theomorphic—formed as beings whose every thought, desire, and choice is designed to show the physical world the personhood of God. This personhood is characterized by both simplicity and complexity. It is one entity, but this one entity is three-dimensional.

Simple and Complex

Perhaps because psychological categories starting back with Freud are so deeply ingrained in Western culture, it is common to think of people as made up of various components. The id, the ego, and the superego have fallen on hard times as the dominant categories. Nonetheless, different psychological theories, especially those

considered intrapsychic, continue to represent people as having various, often opposing, forces operating within them. At a popular level, often people say, “It’s not a spiritual problem; it’s a psychological problem,” or “His problems are emotional, not spiritual.”

Such statements properly recognize that human experience is complex and multifaceted, but they betray a dismissal of people’s simplicity. Humans are unified in their personhood because God is unified in his personhood. People experience the world as spiritual beings made to reflect God. Spirituality, thus, is not a separate function, but expresses itself in the full breadth of psychological function.

Scripture uses different anthropological terms—heart, soul, spirit, mind, and more—to describe a simple, singular human experience. The authors of Scripture use these different terms to describe human functioning in largely the same way, which implies that they refer to the same internal reality.⁴ The terms for soul, spirit, and mind describe the same types of function as the term for heart. In other words, they all do the same thing, indicating the various biblical terms for human experience do not refer to multiple spiritual organs that do different things.

The biblical authors understand human experience as flowing from one, unified heart. I primarily use the term heart throughout this book. The Greek on which it is based, *kardia*, has the widest semantic range, meaning “the focus of his being and activity as a spiritual personality” and relates to “the unity and totality of the inner life represented and expressed in the variety of intellectual and spiritual functions.”⁵

Why is the simplicity of the heart so important to establish? Because people are unified beings, their inner experience is not fragmented into multiple, often disconnected, often conflicting forces. People’s problems are not either spiritual or psychological, mental or emotional, moral or social. People are moral agents who conduct themselves from a singular response system for which they are responsible before their Creator. Because this is true, all human problems are spiritual problems. Invasive thoughts, haphazard emotions,

disjointed personalities, unwelcome impulses—they all are problems of a unified response system designed by God.

I will discuss later how these experiences have physiological elements that are often beyond a person's immediate control. So when I say all human problems are spiritual problems, I am not saying they are merely spiritual. People have bodies as well—bodies that function not as vehicles to an independent soul that drives it, but more like the canvas and paint embodying the ideas of an artist. People are embodied souls, and their physical makeup is the necessary physical correlate to their spiritual heart.

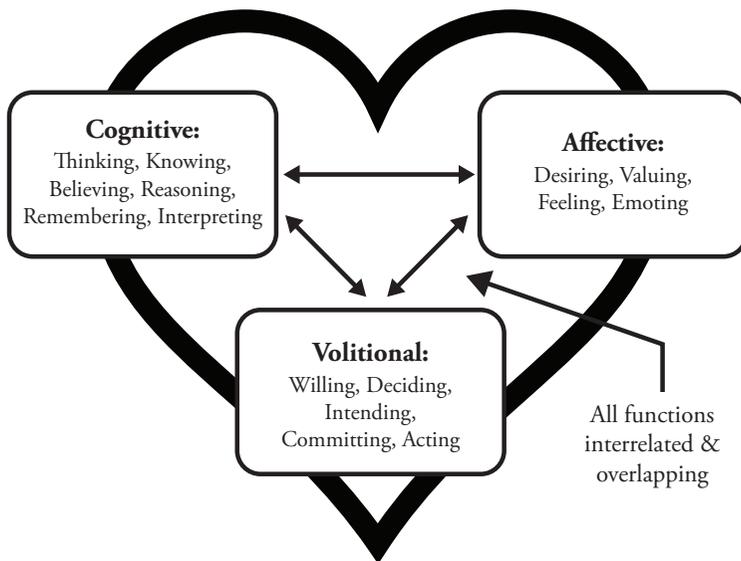
Spiritual problems are not a category alongside mental, emotional, or behavioral problems. Yes, these categories allow for helpful distinctions in how the heart is expressing itself, but all human responses are by nature spiritual. Whatever the complexity of social, biological, or developmental factors, all those things are different contexts and influences on a spiritual heart operating before God. People are simple, in that they are wholly spiritual persons.

But they are also complex. Though Scripture speaks of the heart as a unified object, it describes it three-dimensionally. The heart is alive and dynamic, functioning in a multifaceted way, similar to how one physical object has to be understood according to three axes of measurement: height, width, and breadth. In order for an object to be three-dimensional, it must be measurable along these three axes. Similarly, the human heart responds cognitively, through rational processes based on knowledge and beliefs. It also responds affectively, through a framework of desires and emotions. It also responds volitionally, through a series of choices reflecting the willful commitments of the heart. Thinking, feeling, and choosing are complex, dynamic heart responses.

Thinking, feeling, and choosing are different perspectives on the same, singular function. These three functions are necessarily inter-related. Thoughts can lead to feelings that can lead to choices; choices can also lead to thoughts that can lead to feelings; just as feelings can lead to choices that can lead to new thoughts. The following diagram

illustrates how the heart's function can begin at any perspective and then move in any direction, even as they interrelate and overlap.

The Dynamic Heart: Functions



People cannot fully separate thought, feeling, and choice in their responses. Imagine a dad who loses an infant daughter. His most prominent experience at first may be sheer anguish. The deep sorrow reveals how the dad valued his daughter and the aching desire to have her back. His affections are at work. The dad is also interpreting the situation according to what he believes about the world, and those beliefs may very well be strained by the weight of emotion he feels. He once believed the world to be a generally happy place, but this new experience shapes his prior reasoning. His thought process works in relationship with his emotions. His cognition is at work. But there is also another important element to his experience. The

dad will also find it difficult to maintain resolve, to choose life in a new reality without his daughter. The emotional weight and the shifting beliefs will influence the way he makes decisions and choices in this new reality. The volition is at work. All three dimensions of his experience are important to acknowledge in his grief, since each has a powerful influence on the others.

People are thinking beings, desiring beings, and choosing beings simultaneously. Scholars have described this simultaneous, multifaceted functioning in various ways, calling cognition, affection, and volition as a triune “modes of intentionality,” “domains of experience,” or “ways of being.”⁶ Perhaps it would be helpful to think of these different modes of heart movement as similar to the different modes of the earth’s movement as a rotating, tilting, and orbiting planet. All of these terms describe the movement of the earth, but each from a different set of concerns. The earth’s rotation explains days; the earth’s tilting and orbiting explain seasons and years. They are directly related in the final product of what a person in a particular location on earth will experience as day or night, season of the year, and visual display of the sky above. Just as scientists can explore the earth’s singular position from these different perspectives, so the heart’s functions can be examined more closely individually.

Cognition—The Thinking Heart

A vital aspect of human experience is cognition—the ability to think, to acquire knowledge, to process information, to believe certain propositions as true, and to interpret new information based on those beliefs. People are, in large part, what they know and understand. The Old Testament refers to these processes as occurring in the heart,⁷ and the New Testament follows suit.

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus acknowledges internal reasons, perceptions, and understandings as occurring within the heart. When the scribes came to accuse Jesus of blaspheming, Matthew describes that “Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts?’” (Matt. 9:4; par. Mark 2:8; Luke 5:22).

Similarly, when the disciples argued about who was the greatest, Luke said, “But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side” (Luke 9:47). Jesus, again, draws a direct link between perception, understanding, and the heart when he confronted the grumbling crowds, saying, “Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?” (Mark 8:17).

The apostle Paul often refers to the cognitive functions of the heart in his epistles as well. Similar to the gospel narrators, Paul attributes the internal dialogue of human reasoning to the heart, saying, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (Rom. 10:6). He attributes human imagination to the heart, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9; par. Isa. 64:4). The heart contains knowledge, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). The heart may also lack knowledge, “They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart” (Eph. 4:18).

The biblical writers present people as thinking creatures. They reason and understand. They possess knowledge. They remember past situations, interpret them in the present, and project estimations of their future based on their own structures of plausibility. What people believe about the world determines how they interpret new information they receive as they live in it. The thoughts of people’s hearts are of monumental importance to the trajectory of their lives.

Affection—The Feeling Heart

According to Scripture, the human experience also involves affection. Strong desires and emotions motivate people. People value certain things and act accordingly. These desires and values work themselves out in a complex spectrum of emotion—from sadness to happiness, anger to disappointment, relief to panic. People are, in large part, what they desire, value, and feel.

The Old Testament attributes feelings and emotions to the heart.⁸ The New Testament follows suit here as well: desire and passion reside in the heart, and the heart generates emotions. The gospel writers, particularly John, refer to the heart in this way. The heart is the place where desires operate (Matt. 5:28), and the heart is indeed dedicated to what people desire and value, as Jesus reminded his disciples, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21; par. Luke 12:34). The heart feels intense emotion, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road?” (Luke 24:32). The heart can experience distress and fear, “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:1, 27). The heart also experiences sadness and joy, “sorrow has filled your heart” (John 16:6), but “your hearts will rejoice” (John 16:22). Luke mentions many emotional responses and attributes them to the heart, saying, “my heart was glad” (Acts 2:26; Acts 46) and “they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth” (Acts 7:54 NKJV). The heart experiences satisfaction (Acts 14:17), and sorrow at departing from loved ones breaks the heart (Acts 21:13).

Paul frequently attributes feelings to the heart. He describes the heart as containing lust and desire (Rom. 1:24). Paul also references his own heart as experiencing pain and sorrow over those who are not saved (Rom. 9:2) and desiring for them to be so (Rom. 10:1). His heart is tearfully anguished over concern for the well-being of others (2 Cor. 2:4; 3:2; 6:11). Affection for others is expressed as their being in the heart (2 Cor. 7:3; 8:16; Phil. 1:7; 1 Thess. 2:17). Feelings of peace are experienced in the heart (Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15–16).

The biblical writers describe people as beings who desire and emote. These desires are a significant facet of human existence, motivating them to action and adding color to the experience of life. People long for certain things, and deeply feel their loss as well as their gain. They have value systems by which they judge the world, and their emotions are the gauge of the value they place on a certain objects. When people want something, they pursue it. People’s affections are a glorious part of who they are. The desires of

people's hearts are also of monumental importance to the trajectory of their lives.

Volition—The Intentional Heart

Human experience also involves intentions and choices. People actively make choices all day long. These countless decisions flow from the more hidden dedications of the heart. Whether strongly conscious or less conscious, the heart's intentions drive a person's actions. People are, in large part, what they choose to be.

The Old Testament also refers to the heart as the place of intentions and choices,⁹ and once again the New Testament keeps in step. In the Gospels, the writers often mention the heart as that place where the will functions. Intentions are attributed to the heart, "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). People's true dedications and choices reside in the heart rather than on the lips, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15:8; Mark 7:6; par. Isa. 29:13). Likewise, Jesus says, "What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart" (Matt. 15:18). The heart is cited as where people make a decision either out of consent or compulsion, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Matt. 18:35). Similarly, the means by which Satan controls the will of Judas Iscariot is by putting an intention in his heart (John 13:2).

Luke refers to the heart in this way frequently in the book of Acts. Satan again provokes willful action by means of the heart, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?" (Acts 5:3). Luke uses even more specifically volitional language in the following verse, "Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?" (Acts 5:4). Clearly, decisions for future action are made in the heart, as many more passages in Acts indicate, "it came into his heart to visit his brothers" (Acts 7:23). Loyalties of the will take place in the heart, "Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside,

and in their hearts they turned to Egypt” (Acts 7:39). Turning from God is also referred to as “the intent of the heart” (Acts 8:22).

Paul also refers to the intentional functions of the heart frequently. The heart can be willful against God, “But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom. 2:5). Paul says that “the purposes of the heart” are reasons for being condemned or commended (1 Cor. 4:5). He also attributes the act of making a decision to the heart, “But whoever is firmly established in his heart . . .” (1 Cor. 7:37). A Christian slave must obey his master willingly, that is, “with a sincere heart” (Eph. 6:5; par. Col. 3:22).

The biblical writers understand people to be moral agents capable of intent, decision, and choice. People intend certain purposes in their actions. They make decisions based upon the loyalties of their hearts. They resolve to accomplish certain things. They dedicate their efforts to certain ideals. People have active wills that direct their conduct. The intentions of people’s hearts are also of monumental importance to the trajectory of their lives.

The Integrated, Worshipping Heart

Why is the thinking, feeling, and intentional heart so important to God? Why did he design human hearts so intricately? The answer is simple. God designed the heart’s functions for worship: he wants people to respond to him with the complex beauty that reflects his own. Dynamic hearts worship God in daily life—in the way they think, the things they want, the choices they make. When people use those aspects of their heart in a way that reflects God’s character, they are worshipping. Cognitively, when people believe the testimony of God’s Word, they worship him. Affectively, when people value what God values, they worship him. Volitionally, when people submit their choices to God’s will, they worship him.

People were made to worship God with all their heart—the full breadth of their internal experience and external conduct. God wants people to reflect his own complex beauty as they respond to him and to his world. God created people as responders, and they answer back to God according to the purpose of their existence.¹⁰ Jesus said that the entire Law and Prophets rests on this, “to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all you soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment” (Matt. 22:34–40; ref. Deut. 6:4–6). God based the old covenant law upon this command, and Jesus fulfilled this law in the new covenant. God planned for this whole-hearted, dynamic love between himself and humans from the beginning, and he remains committed to his plan until the end.

God designed people’s hearts for a singular purpose: worship. As the heart’s thinking, feeling, and choosing serve this singular purpose, these functions are interrelated; they are different perspectives of the heart’s singular function. Human beings experience the world in a multifaceted way, and those facets are integrated, which means they necessarily influence one another. As John Frame explains, “To speak of human ‘faculties’ is to speak of diverse perspectives in terms of which we can look at the various acts and experiences of the human mind. None of the faculties, so understood, exists or acts apart from the others, each is dependent on the others, and each includes the others.”¹¹ God precisely designed people and delights in his design, calling people very good (Gen. 1:31). He gave people dynamic hearts to love him in the way we conduct ourselves on this green earth.

The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life

The world would be a living nightmare if any one of these aspects of human response were missing. Imagine how dangerous the world would be if people’s feelings did not accompany thoughtful reflection

or if people's knowledge did not coordinate with their choices. People make countless decisions on a given day—and both knowledge and feelings are necessary moral guides to those choices.

Imagine if all the decisions people made throughout their day were void of emotional investment. How would they interact with their family? What would they say to a coworker who tells them about a cancer diagnosis? How would they respond to the homeless they pass on the street? Imagine these scenarios as a cold comprehension of facts. Emotion-less responses are incomplete responses.

Emotion is a vital aspect of sane human response. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio studied patients who suffered damage to a specific part of the brain that largely controls emotionality. Rather than being more sound in their reasoning, people who experienced this damage made terrible decisions about moral situations that others instinctively knew to be clear. Those affective instincts—gut feelings—are necessary to good decisions. Damasio concludes, “The fragile instruments of rationality need special assistance” in the form of human emotive capacities.¹² People's emotional stance toward a situation allows them to preselect their options, making an actual real-life choice possible in a world of infinite potential responses.

Consider another scenario. On a given Sunday morning, people may have a wide variety of options open before them—a bike ride around town, breakfast at their favorite diner, enjoying a good novel on their back porch, going to church—all of which could be logically deduced according to the various beliefs they have. But vital to the process is people's emotional inclinations and volitional commitments about each option. The embarrassment people feel if the neighbor you had invited to church saw them skipping church, the guilt of not going, the joy they experience hearing the Word preached, the commitment they feel to their Sunday school class—these emotions influence the decision no less than rational arguments for going to church.¹³

What if, on the other hand, people were to remove cognition, so that all of their daily decisions were simply the result of their

feelings? The world would be full of grown-up babies, acting out of their immediate desires, unprocessed by an accurate knowledge of the world around them. People would be slaves of passion, pursuing immediately pleasure and avoiding pain. Sounds like a college fraternity.

Thinking is a necessary companion to feeling, since all emotions are based on perceived value. In order to feel, people have to have some understanding. For example, I cannot feel delight in my higher monthly yields or fear at losses unless I have some concept of how stock investments work. I cannot feel disgust at a politician's veiled racist statement without some knowledge of the history of racial tensions in America. God honors both the thinking and the feeling aspects of human responses. Matthew Elliot explains, "If emotions are merely physiological impulses, they can be ignored, controlled, or trivialized, while, if they have as their essential element thinking and judgment, they are an essential part of almost everything we think and do."¹⁴

People's thinking capacities allow them to possess knowledge and discern truth. Emotions require beliefs. It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which an adult could feel emotion void of any knowledge, apart from some neurological dysfunction (which is a definite possibility in a fallen world). When people are sad, they feel sad about something. The same is true when they are angry, happy, relieved, or fearful. There is cognitive content to their emotion, and these influence the choices they make.

The Dynamic Heart and Human Problems

Returning to the angry husband illustration, Scripture has a lot to say to him as he looks down at his shoes. But to make Scripture land well, this man needs to move his gaze from his shoes to his heart. God has revealed what human beings are and how they function, a reliable guide for this husband to understand his experience. Good counsel understands then explains people's experiences in ways that

ring true to them yet also casts a new light of understanding in accordance with the Bible. A wise counselor will not give one-dimensional instruction, but three-dimensional insight.

What if, instead of saying the obvious thing to this angry husband, a counselor asked the kind of questions that constructed a three-dimensional model of his experience? A counselor could help this husband consider how that fight revealed certain thought patterns and belief structures. In other words, his angry explosion displayed what he believes about the world. What beliefs were most active in his thoughts, not just at the time of the explosion, but also from day to day? Remember, he was unhappy long before he was angry. His unhappiness flows from a certain understanding of his life, of his wife, of his situation, and of God. It may help the man to explore where certain beliefs may have started, from a past experiences or relationships.

But exploring the husband's beliefs is not sufficient. A counselor must also help him understand his emotions and desires. Anger was the presenting emotion, but anger is never alone. The general sense of dissatisfaction and unhappiness that blanketed his life is just as important, if not more so. Emotions are the expressions of desires. What does he wish were true of his life? By what values is he measuring his wife or himself? The furious kicking and screaming was not arbitrary, but flowed from a burning desire for something that he viewed his wife as hindering him from getting. The goal is to help the husband understand what desires are being expressed in his feelings, what particular objects he is valuing so deeply he is willing to go to war for them. Doing this will allow the counselor to eventually cast a positive vision for what the feelings were designed to do: to value God higher than all else and to hold every other desire in service to it. This is part of worship. When this is not occurring, feelings are not functioning properly.

In addition to the husband's thinking and feeling, his intentions also need to be addressed. At some point, he chose to erupt at his wife. Whether he was cognizant of the moment or not, the husband

voluntarily entered into his behavior. But that choice was not merely an anomaly. He will need to consider the pattern of choices that characterize his conduct, especially toward his wife. Had the husband been choosing not to express his thoughts or feelings to his wife, and his resolve finally melted in the heat of his anger? But the personal choices involved in his anger are wider than the way he relates to his wife. He made that choice out of a deeper structure of commitments. What do the husband's general pursuits indicate about those structures? How does he choose to use his time or his money? Does he actively follow after God in the way he conducts himself, or does he see God's intrusion in his life as burdensome? Worshipping God means to obey willingly. The way the husband treats his wife is not just about his intentions toward her, but his loyalty to the God who designed him.

In counseling and in other forms of personal ministry, the trajectory of care must delve deep into the dynamic heart instead of skim along the surface of the presenting issue. Counselors, pastors, and lay leaders can say more than the obvious thing. They can seek to understand others' experience so that they may help them understand it for themselves. A theology of human experience allows counselors to do this because God designed the heart to respond like he does in thought, desire, and intention.

Counseling should be directed to the breadth of the heart's functions—thinking, feeling, choosing. Emphasizing one aspect without due attention to the others will lead to a lopsided view of people and a lopsided methodology in handling them. A goal of the counselor should be to work toward the unification of these functions so that change is whole-hearted and not compartmentalized. Often troubles come from people's inability to square, for instance, their feelings with what they know to be true and to what they claim to be committed. If unification of the heart is a methodological principle for counselors, then they will perceive that the problem lies not just in an errant or inordinate desire in itself, but in that desire's failure to line up with the other functions of the heart.

The unification of the heart is the unification of faith; the heart's functions work in step with one another as faith in Christ has greater influence over their mutual operation. A divided heart moves toward becoming an undivided one. This leads to greater peace and consistency in a person's experience. This consistency is certainly not invariable, as we will consider in the next chapter.