

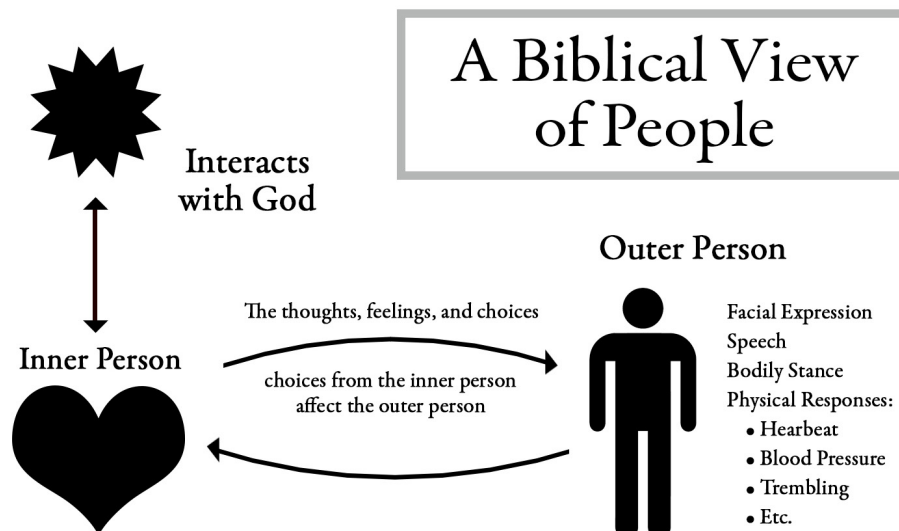
THE MEDICINE-ONLY APPROACH TO COUNSELING

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Biblical Vs. Materialist View of Human Nature

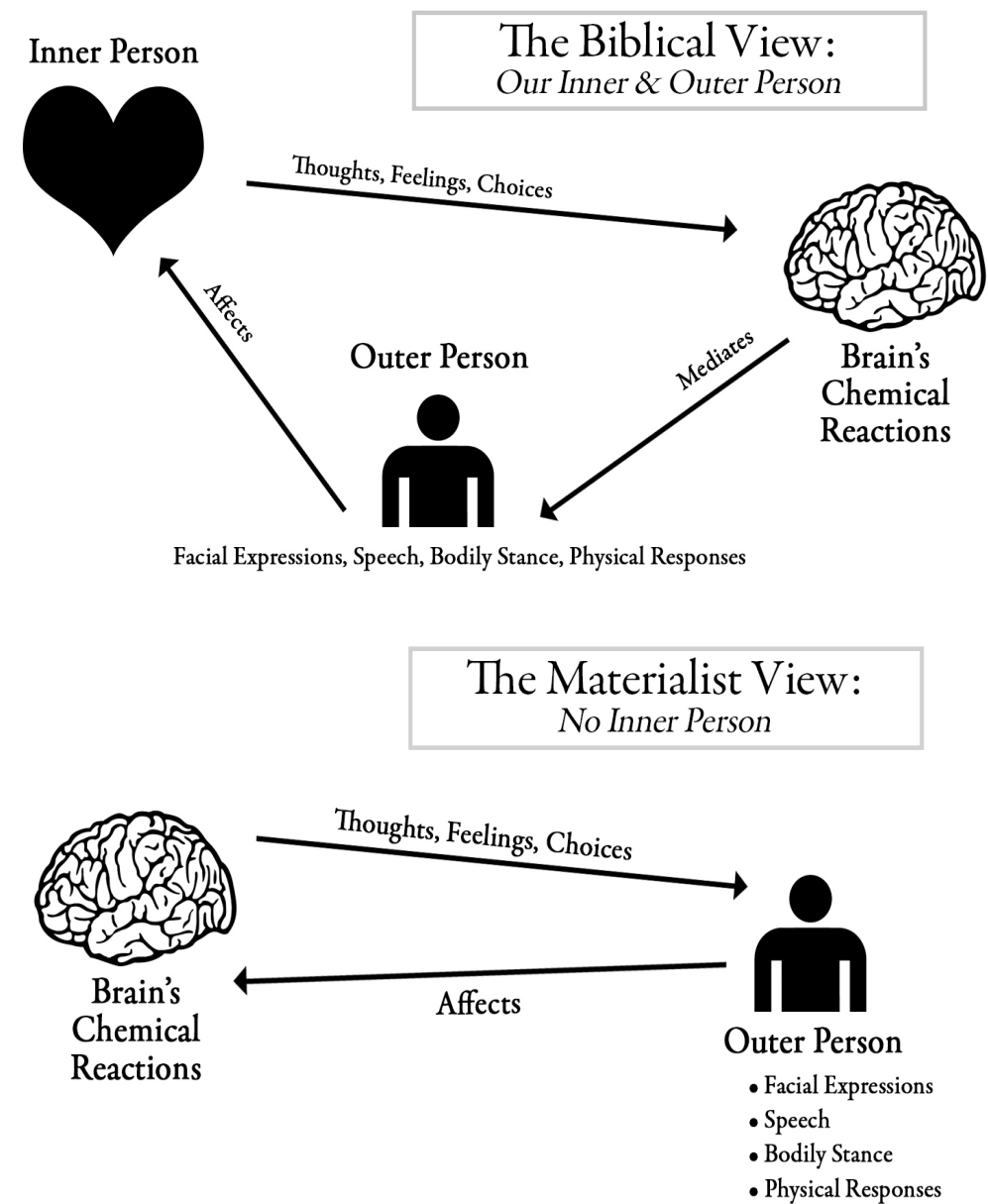
A. Biblical View - Duplex Beings: Inner and Outer Person

1. The Bible refers to the inner person as the heart, soul, mind, or spirit.
 - The inner person is the source of our thoughts, feelings, and choices.
 - God interacts with our inner person.
2. The outer person is the part of us that others can see.
 - Our speech and behavior are our body's reflection of our inner life (Luke 6:45).
 - Facial expression, tone of voice, words, actions.
 - Body responds to activity of inner person with physical changes.
 - Angry feelings may produce a flushed face.
 - Anxious thoughts may result in elevated blood pressure.
 - Body can influence thoughts, feelings, choices.



B. Materialist View

1. The material world is all that exists. There is no unseen world. There is no inner person
2. The brain, an organ of the physical body, is the source of thoughts, feelings, and choices.
3. Thoughts, feelings, and choices are determined solely by the brain's balance of chemicals.
4. The Bible clearly teaches that our invisible inner person (not our brain) is the source of our thoughts and intentions (Heb 4:12), our emotions (Rom 9:2), and our choices (Matt 15:18).



C. Summary

1. The Bible teaches a duplex view of human nature.
2. Our inner and outer persons interact, and each can influence the other profoundly.
3. Measurable changes occur in our brain as we think, choose, or feel. But these changes originate in the inner person and are mediated by the brain, an organ of the outer person.

Is Emotional Pain a Disease?

A. What Is Pain?

1. Pain is designed by God to function as a warning signal.
2. Physical pain tells us that something is wrong with our bodies.
3. Emotional pain tells us that there is a problem in our inner person ("heart").

B. Is Physical Pain a Disease?

1. Physical pain is a sign that something is wrong with our bodies.
2. Medicine for physical pain does not cure the problem that is producing the pain; it helps us feel better.
3. If the doctor doesn't treat the root cause of the pain, we will continue to need medicine to relieve the pain.
4. Pain medicine only covers up the sign that something is wrong. It doesn't treat the underlying disease.

C. Why Do We Have Emotions?

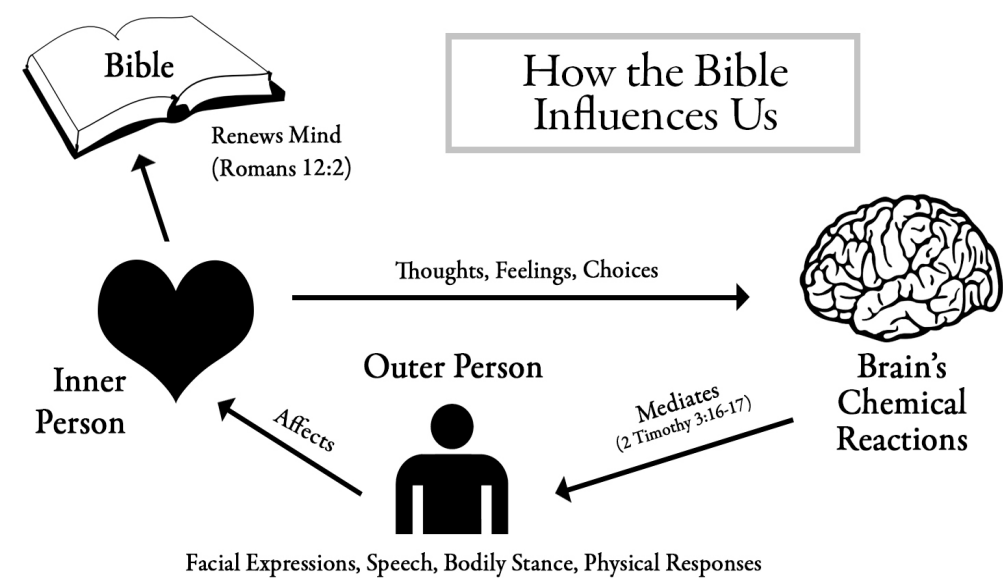
1. Our emotions enable us to know the condition of our inner person, in the same way that physical sensations enable us to know the condition of our outer person.
 - When I touch a hot stove, I know right away that I have injured my hand.
 - When I make a choice that is contrary to the Bible's teachings, my conscience tells me right away that I am doing the wrong thing.

D. "Heart Trouble"

1. Emotional distress may be a sign that the things I habitually think about or choose are not consistent with the Bible's standards.

E. Listening to Our Emotions

1. We should not expect our feelings to show us what God wants us to do. God has given us His Word for this purpose.
2. We should expect that our feelings may be troubling if we have misplaced priorities or are disobedient to God's Word.
3. When we have "heart trouble," this is a sign that we need to prayerfully compare our lives to the Bible's standard and seek to correct whatever is out of balance.



F. Emotional Pain is Not Always A Sign of “Heart Trouble.”

1. The Inner and Outer Persons affect each other.
 - Our inner person can affect our physical health.
 - o Example: chronic anxiety can lead to high blood pressure.
 - Our physical health can impact our inner person.
 - o Example: an untreated rapid heartbeat can produce anxiety.
2. Generally speaking, emotional pain very often is a sign of “Heart Trouble.”

G. Is Emotional Pain a Disease?

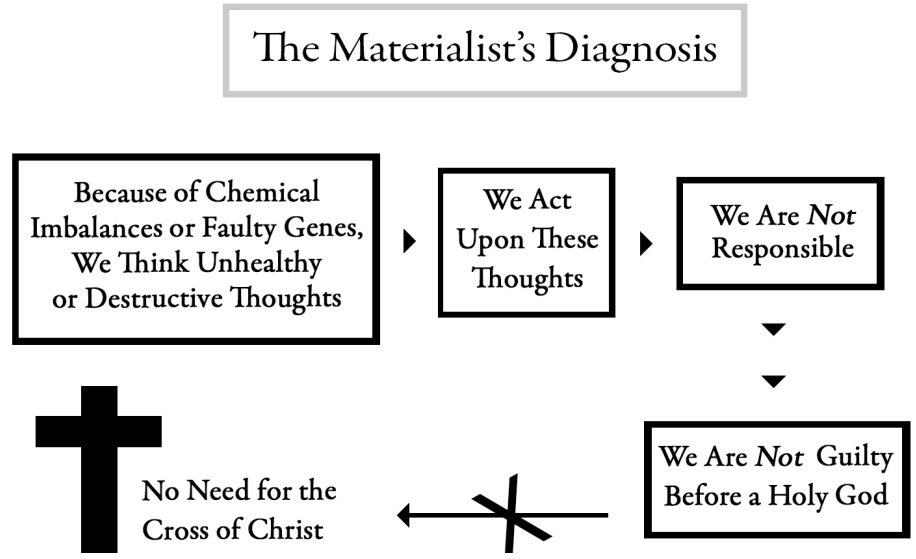
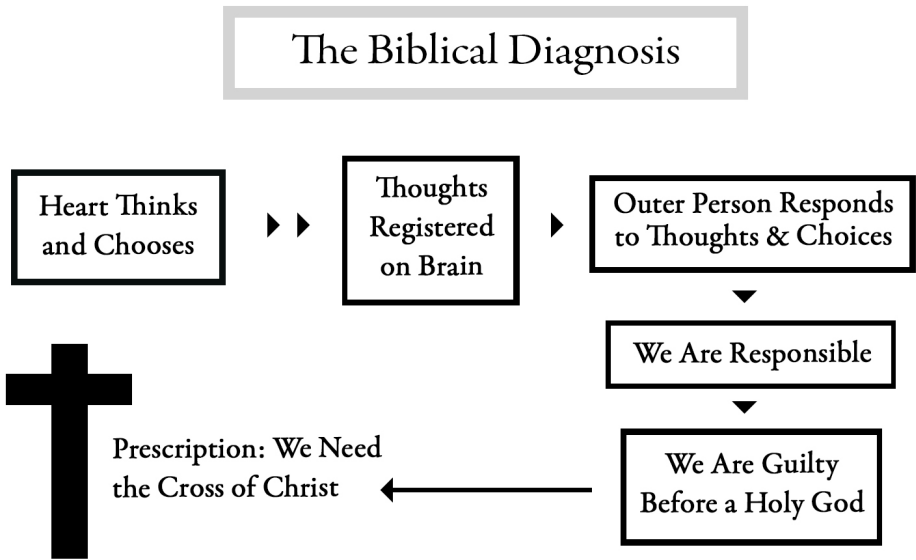
1. Emotional pain is a warning signal that tells us when something is wrong with our hearts.
2. Medicine for emotional pain does not solve the problem that is producing the pain; it masks the pain.
3. If we don’t address the root cause of the pain, we will continue to need medicine to feel better.

H. What About Brain Diseases?

1. The brain, an organ of the physical body, can itself develop diseases.
 - Example: Alzheimer’s disease causes physical changes in brain cells, resulting in their death.
2. Is emotional pain a brain disease?
 - Troubling emotions are not, in themselves, brain diseases
 - o Although sometimes they can be signs of a brain disease like Alzheimer’s.

Did Christ Have to Die? Biblical Implications of the Disease Model

If our thoughts and choices are determined solely by the activity of our brains rather than by our inner person, then when we do wrong it must not be our fault. A disease must be to blame.



Can Medicine Help?

A. First, The Bad News

- 1. Medicines, alcohol, and street drugs make us feel better by masking emotional pain.
- 2. All of these substances can also produce dependency.
- 3. Medicines that make us feel better may lose their effectiveness over time.
- 4. Medicines may also produce side effects that may be mistaken for new problems, resulting in new medicines being added.
- 5. Medicines prescribed for psychosis can clear confused thoughts in the truly sick, but can act as a “chemical straitjacket”, damping normal responses in those who don’t truly need them.
- 6. Violent and suicidal thoughts and actions may result from antidepressant treatment.

B. Do Psychiatric Medicines Cure a Chemical Imbalance?

- 1. There is no scientific evidence showing that disturbed emotions are caused by a specific imbalance of chemicals in the brain.
- 2. There is evidence that psychiatric medicines improve feelings by increasing levels of certain chemicals. Scientists still don’t know why this happens.

C. Factors Complicating Biblical Counseling

- 1. Some have physical conditions that may interfere with their ability to understand or apply biblical truth.
 - Examples: brain conditions like retardation, Alzheimer’s, or schizophrenia.
- 2. Difficulty understanding biblical truth.
- 3. Not saved.
- 4. Suicidal/homicidal.
- 5. Severely emotionally overwhelmed.

D. What Can We Expect From Medicine?

- 1. Suppress hallucinations and delusions.
 - This can lead to clearer thinking in those with brain disorders like Alzheimer’s or schizophrenia.
 - Clearer thinking enables a person with brain disease to monitor his thoughts and choices in a way that is consistent with the standards of God’s Word, resulting in a self-controlled and godly life.

2. Decrease anxiety and depression.

- There are real physical changes that are induced in the brain as a result of taking psychiatric medicines. We can expect the medicines to produce these effects.
- But will these effects really solve our problems?

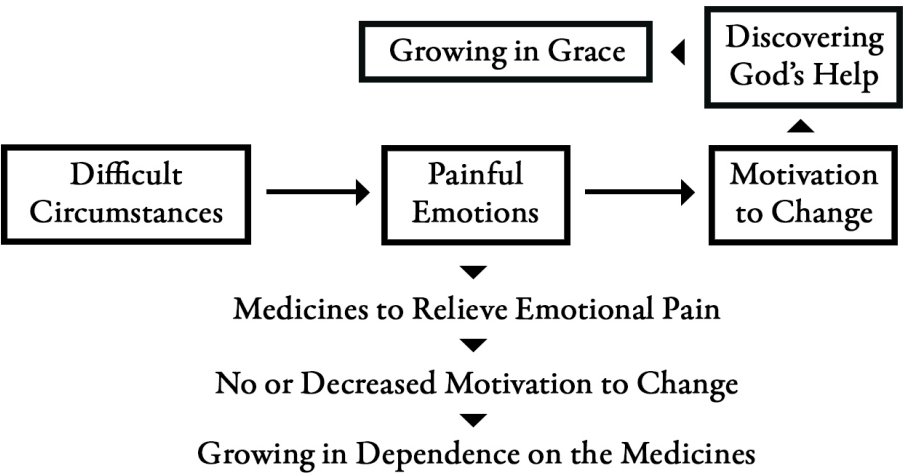
E. A Medicine Can’t

- 1. Teach us to choose to think thoughts leading to peace and happiness instead of thoughts leading to anxiety or depression.
- 2. Show us how to make lifestyle choices that will result in greater stability.
- 3. Train us to respond to our physical limitations with attitudes that build us up instead of tearing us down.

F. Summary

- 1. Medicine may be needed to control a few serious brain conditions, solve a crisis situation, or help a “stuck” counselee begin to move forward.
- 2. However, even those who take these medicines can learn better self control and habits of thought that will lead to greater emotional stability through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.
- 3. Only biblical change offers true, permanent hope for those who suffer with emotional pain.

Learning From Our Painful Emotions





Books

Fitzpatrick, E., Hendrickson, L., *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?*

Fitzpatrick, E., Newheiser, J., Hendrickson, L., *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices.*