Three-part Heart

ThreePartHeart.com

By Henry H. Mitchell, 2024-2026.

The **three-part heart** concept can be extraordinarily (supernaturally!) helpful. And it is very simple. Here it is.

God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are created in His image (*Genesis* 1:26). As a result, we ourselves inwardly mirror those three Persons. – And our activities and the universe around us do, too! Admittedly, our own "mirroring" is imperfect, and may be badly broken, but realizing its presence and repairability is a first step toward highly-satisfying experiences and results.

Follow the page numbers below for applications and examples of the **three-part heart** concept. After reviewing the first two sections ("The Basic Chart" and "Leased Property"), you can read other sections that draw your interest, and not necessarily in the sequence they are presented. Look at the last two sections to see my history ("From Me") with this topic and my opinion of its significance ("Where Now?").

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***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment

The God Column

God the **Father** originally designed us to live with him in eternity and in perfection. But we were born rebellious and have acted accordingly (see *DivineOutline.com*). So he sent God the **Son** Jesus to be our defender, offering us a new start (rebirth) and a clean slate (Jesus paid the ultimate price, in our place, for our rebellious sinfulness). If we accept his rebirth offer and sin-payment, he further offers us God the **Holy Spirit** to live inside us and teach, empower, and guide us.

The Us Column – the Three God-Mirroring Parts of our Heart

We have those three God-mirroring "modules" within us – **Original Design**, **Passionate Protector**, and **Competent Worker** – awaiting the corresponding God-connection. And even if we have accepted the rebirth and sin-payment contract, we still have the dead/dying/rebellious elements that constantly have to be swept aside in favor of the new and lasting Divine connections.

The Activities Column

Human activities (and all of nature and the universe!) fall into the same God-mirroring pattern: **Plan**, **Defense**, and **Offense**. We talk about it in war, in sports, in games and competitions of all kinds. It is also true of going shopping and every mundane activity: we determine to do something, we find solutions and workarounds to obstacles, and we press on to completion.

The Characteristic Pattern Column

Notice that the first entry in all these columns involves **Purpose**. The second entry suggests and involves **Drawing-in**, **Protecting**, and **Nurturing**. The third entry contains **Sending-out**, **Exhibiting Strength**, and **Accomplishment.** In the following sections of this article we will find these characteristic patterns repeated in human life, in nature, and throughout the universe.

Up-Down, Right-Left: Talking the Chart(s)

I intend the charts in this article to be read up/down, then right/left.

For the up/down part, God's three persons are listed in the first (leftmost) column. The up/down of each additional column describes that topic's three-part-heart reflection of God's three persons listed in the first column.

For the right-left part, those right-left lines tie the corresponding words together. Read the words in each line back and forth. Form sentences and sequences. Add various subjects and verbs, as they come to mind: “He is . . . ,” “He enables me . . ,” “I can . . . ,” “I will . . . ,” “ We do . . . ,” etc.

Following are examples that occur to me as I read right/left on the lines:

> “The Father created me and my original design. He is daily revealing my plan and purpose.”
>
> “Jesus is my passionate protector. He gave himself in my defense. He draws me in to him, protects, and nurtures me.”
>
> “The Holy Spirit enables me to go on offense as a competent worker. He sends me out, and gives me strength for the needed accomplishments.”
>
> “I am a reflection of the Father, through his design, plan and purpose, “knit in my mother's womb” (from *Psalms* 139:13).
>
> “I am a reflection of Jesus, and like Jesus I passionately protect the Father's original design, plan, and purpose in me – including my innermost moral core.”
>
> “I am a reflection of the Holy Spirit, and that reflection is visible to myself and others in the strength and loving accomplishments he enables through me.”

On Following Pages . . .

. . . The left end of the chart(s) will remain unchanged from section to the section. The right end of the chart will show the three-part-heart characteristics of that section's topic. But first, before we get into the charts, let us look at our “lease” . . . .

Here's a way of thinking about this three-part-heart topic.

Lease with Optional Extension

We are living in leased property – this bundle of flesh, blood, thoughts, and emotions. God designed the property to his specifications. He gives us a lifetime lease, and if we will accept it, he will give us an eternal extension of that lease. The eternal extension is free. He has already paid for it. (See *DivineOutline.com*.) If we accept the eternal lease, that re-up and re-occupancy will trigger a complete rehabilitation of the property with an eternal guarantee of perfection. Not only that, the rehab work can start right now, on this first lease, during our lifetimes on planet earth! (*Romans* 8:11)

Maintenance and Repair Issues

God designed us exactly the way he likes. We may not recognize that at the moment, because things have gone wrong. Rot, broken parts, things that just don't work right, physically, mentally, emotionally. But the original design is still there and God loves it, so much he wants to move in with us. And he loves us so much that he gave his only son (*John* 3:16) to die as penalty-payment for our rebellion and brokenness, so we could qualify for this miraculous merging of households.

He Fits the Space He Designed

And for it to "fit" him as he moves in with us, he made it like himself. It has space for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. WE have space for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have those three God-mirroring areas: Original Plan, Passionate Protector, and Competent Worker. (See "The Basic Chart" section above.)

New Realization, New Respect

If we realize that he loves us so much he made a place perfectly constructed for him to live in it with us, that realization gives us a stunning perspective as to how much respect we should have for ourselves. And how much we can trust him to move in and make repairs as he desires. Whenever he desires. However he desires. He's the architect, he's the builder, he's the landlord.

And he is our spouse! No wonder we should be sharing this space. We are the Bride of Christ. (See *Ephesians* 5:31-32, *Revelation* 19: 7-9, and *MysteryOfMarriage.com*.)

No Wait Required

"I stand at the door and knock." (*Revelation* 3:20) We don't have to go anywhere looking for him, we don't have to get ready for him, all we have to do is open the door. (See *AConstantPresence.com*.)

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	***I Corinthians* 13:13, "Three things will last forever . . . ."**	***Romans* 10:17, "Faith comes by [obedient] hearing, and [obedient} hearing through the effect of the [*Rhema*, revealed] word of God."**	***James* 2:17, ". . . Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Hope	[Revealed] word of God	
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Faith	Faith	Faith
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Love	[Obedient] hearing	Works

Hope, Faith, and Love: Our Responses to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

In *I Corinthians* 13 the author Paul ends a profound discussion of love, faith, spiritual gifts, and maturity by saying that faith, hope, and ("the greatest") love last forever. His statement is a clear reflection of the three-part nature of God. For us, as Paul asserts, love is "greatest" because love is how we are active participants in God's plan. Love IS our obedient actions in response to God's compelling personal revelation within us.

Faith Comes . . . How?

A typical Christian teaching regarding *Romans* 10:17 is that faith comes by (passive, perhaps siting in a pew in a sanctuary) hearing the (written) Word of God (the "Logos"). There may be some truth in that teaching, but this "Word" in this verse is not "Logos." Instead, it is "Rhema," God's personal internal revelation to us. And the "hearing" in this verse is not passive; it is a word meaning "obedient response." Looking at the original Greek text for both that verse from Paul and another key verse from *James*:

James 2:26 – *"As a body without breath (that is not breathing) is a corpse, faith separated from labor/work is a corpse also."*

Romans 10:17 – *"So then faith comes by obedient/responsive hearing of God's revelation (Rhema)."*

Obedience Leads to Miracles, Miracles Increase Faith

I believe Paul's instruction works this way. When we obediently act on God's personal revelation to us, we discover that he adds miracles small and large. (Think “loaves and fishes!”) That amazing result gives life and growth to our faith. Without our action, we do not experience his miracles and as a result our faith is “a corpse,” as *James* says.

Look Right to Left in the Chart

Note the patterns within the above chart, tracking each line from right to left. Our faith rests in Jesus. Our works of love come through the Holy Spirit. Our internal revelation, the hope within us, is from the Father's plan. (See also *DivineOutline.com* and *AConstantPresence.com*.)

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	***I Corinthians* 13:13, "Three things will last forever . . . ."**	***Romans* 10:17, "Faith comes by [obedient] hearing, and [obedient} hearing through the effect of the [*Rhema*, revealed] word of God."**	***Romans* 5: 3-4, ". . . we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Hope	[Revealed] word of God	Hope
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Faith	Faith	Character
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Love	[Obedient] hearing	Perseverance produced by suffering.

Pain Brings Gain

Adding to the previous section ("Faith, Hope, and Love/Works"), in the rightmost column of the above chart, Paul shows the high value of adversity. If we persevere through suffering, that is when our faith and faithfulness becomes evident. Character is visible faith and faithfulness.

Perseverance Cuts Through the Fog

And it is character that leads us back to hope – our satisfaction that we are living within God's plan/design for us, which he has revealed within our hearts. We can now see what was hidden in the midst of pain, in the "midst of the fog of war."

Acts of love in the midst of adversity are the most powerful examples of love – love on steroids! Jesus stated (*John* 15:13), "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Again, Look Right to Left in the Chart

Notice again, looking from right back across the chart to the left, perseverance connects to obedient hearing and the work of the Holy Spirit. Our faithful character is a reflection of Jesus. Our hope is in our participation in the Father's plan for us, now and for eternity.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	***I Corinthians* 13:13, "Three things will last forever . . . ."**	***Romans* 10:17, "Faith comes by [obedient] hearing, and [obedient} hearing through the effect of the [*Rhema*, revealed] word of God."**	***Hebrews* 11: 1, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen . . . ."**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Hope	[Revealed] word of God	Things hoped for, things unseen
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Faith	Faith	Faith is substance and evidence of the two items above
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Love	[Obedient] hearing	

God Creates Out of Nothing: Our Faith Is Substance!

Continuing on themes of the two previous sections, we look at the freshly-added right column above, perhaps the best-known statement regarding faith found in the New Testament.

If We Act!

Our faith is made *alive* through Spirit-inspired and -empowered works of love. (See two sections ago, "Faith, Hope, and Love/Works.") Our faith is made clearly *visible* by our determined, persistent Spirit-inspired and -empowered works of love in the midst of adversity. (See the last section, "Perseverance: Love on Steroids.")

Reading the Chart: Faith Is Our Access to God's Plan, Just as Jesus is Our Access to the Father

In *Hebrews* 11:1 we are told that our living, visible faith accesses the substance of the Father's plan, as well as evidence of the infinite things of the Father that are unseen. At the left end of the chart, note that this statement is in perfect step with the relationship of Jesus to the Father.

Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (*John* 10:30); "No one comes to the Father except through me" (*John* 14:6); and "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). In those words, Jesus explains that he is both the substance of the Father and the evidence of the Father. Likewise, our living and visible faith in Jesus unlocks our access to the Father and his plans for us.

Climbing the Chart, Like a Ladder

The bottom line of the chart (love, even greater than faith! – see "Faith, Hope, and Love/Works") brings to life our middle line of the chart, which in turn unlocks the top line of the chart.

The Center of the Chart and Our Lives: Faith, Jesus, and Our Faith In Jesus

Our living and visible faith in Jesus is at the center of this chart, and, far more importantly, our living and visible faith in Jesus is at the epicenter of our spiritual life, now and for eternity.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	***I Corinthians* 13:13, "Three things will last forever . . . ."**	***Romans* 10:17, "Faith comes by [obedient] hearing, and [obedient} hearing through the effect of the [*Rhema*, revealed] word of God."**	**When Things Go Badly**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Hope	[Revealed] word of God	Confusion, loss of purpose and direction
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Faith	Faith	Trauma and pain, visible and/or invisible injuries
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Love	[Obedient] hearing	Disappointment and paralysis

Damage – Seen in All Three Departments

At times things go badly. That is the human condition. Our defenses are overrun. Our faith is challenged and may seem lost. The passionate protector part of us is hyperactive. As a result, we may find ourselves both adrift without purpose and paralyzed regarding what to do next.

Look Up!

So our connection to the left of the chart – to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – may seem loose or lost. Rather than focus on the right part of the chart – ourself and our woes – we must do everything we can to make the strongest possible connection to the left part of the chart: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At the simplest level, we must sincerely, without holding back, open ourselves to Jesus's always-present knock at our door (see *AConstantPresence.com*).

Three Fixes, Three Departments

God tailors his plans and solutions to each of us uniquely, so it is impossible to have a single prescription for when things go badly. However, the next three sections of this article will discuss reliable steps forward. These three "fixes" do not have to wait for things to go badly. They are helpful practices for all days, good and not-so-good.

“Fix 1: A Restful Yoke” (see next section) repairs our defense (middle line on the chart) and restores our connection to Jesus. Our traumatized souls are soothed.

“Fix 2: Perseverance, Again!” (see second section ahead) repairs our offense (bottom line on the chart), restores our connection to the Holy Spirit, removes our paralysis of action, and thus boosts our faith (middle line), and makes it possible to hope (top line on the chart).

“Fix 3: Information, Insight, and Wisdom” (see third section ahead) utilizes all three lines of the chart to remove confusion and renew purpose and direction. Our hope (top line on the chart) revives with clarity and certainty, with God's plan and purpose for us emerging step by step.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	***I Corinthians* 13:13, "Three things will last forever . . . ."**	**When Things Go Badly**	**Fix 1: A Restful Yoke, *Matthew* 11: 28-29**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Hope	Confusion, loss of purpose and direction	"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . . "
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Faith	Trauma and pain, visible and/or invisible injuries	". . . for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Love	Disappointment and paralysis	"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Rest, Not Agony

The first fix when things go badly is a come-to-Jesus experience: Jesus, our Defender, says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened [trauma, disappointment, confusion], and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me [my plan for you, dispelling your confusion and paralysis], for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (*Matthew* 11:28-29 *NIV*)

Note that Jesus indicates a gentle, restful learning experience when we come to Him with our burdens. Too often the idea of self-examination (a necessity prescribed by several Scriptures) is wrongly promoted as throwing oneself prostrate before God, in abject agony over one's shortcomings. We have plenty of shortcomings, but Jesus talks of our taking his *gentle* yoke.

A Yoke That Is Light, Not Heavy

Yokes are the devices with which beasts of burden (oxen) are fitted, yet Jesus' yoke instead gives us *rest*. Yokes are often made for multiple beasts of burden. I would suggest that Jesus yokes us with the Holy Spirit, who carries the weight on our behalf, while giving us *rest*, even in the midst of activities that the Holy Spirit leads us and energizes us to accomplish.

And besides, at the outset, the forgiveness we receive in the process of self-examination, repentance, and forgiving others, relieves our greatest burden: the curse resulting from our own sin (see *Mark* 11:25).

Reading the Chart, Right to Left

Notice at the top of the chart that if we accept Jesus' light yoke, he will turn our burden into a learning experience! We will be restored to hope in God's plan. Our confusion and loss of purpose and direction will be dispelled.

In the middle of the chart, the pain of our soul will be restfully soothed.

At the bottom of the chart, our weariness, disappointment, and paralysis will give way to once again being able to take loving actions toward others.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**When Things Go Badly**	**Fix 1: A Restful Yoke, *Matthew* 11: 28-29**	**Fix 2: Perseverance, *Romans* 10:17, "Faith comes by [obedient] hearing, and [obedient} hearing through the effect of the [*Rhema*, revealed] word of God."**	**Fix 2: Again! *Romans* 5:34, ". . . we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."**
Father	Plan	Confusion, loss of purpose and direction	"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . . "	[Revealed] word of God	Hope
Son	Defense	Trauma and pain, visible and/or invisible injuries	". . . for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."	Faith	Character
Holy Spirit	Offense	Disappointment and paralysis	"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."	[Obedient] hearing	Perseverance produced by suffering.

Again . . . and Again

Here we will elaborate on thoughts discussed above in "Perseverance: Love on Steroids" and the sections on either side of it.

As reposted on the right side of the chart above, Paul wrote two related instructions in his letter to the Christians in Rome. In *Romans* 10:17: "Faith comes by [obedient] hearing, and [obedient] hearing through the effect of the [*Rhema,* revealed] word of God." And in *Romans* 5:3-4, ". . . we know that suffering [including disappointments, trauma, and pain] produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

The *Rhema* of which Paul speaks is God's revelation to us, within ourselves. It is a deep realization of what God is explaining to us. It is our personal situation, informed by principles of Scripture. (In *Luke* 2:19, Jesus' mother Mary pondered all these *Rhemas* in her heart.)

Climbing the Chart's Ladder

When we sense our personal *Rhema* and act on it with perseverance (bottom line), our faith and character are boosted and developed (middle line), and our hope is restored (top line).

We Don't Know Everything, But We Know Enough

Often (maybe always!) we do not know God's great overarching plan for us. But in my experience we can always sense the next step we must take. It might be putting food on the table, taking care of housekeeping and repair chores, paying bills, spending time with someone who needs us, maybe even applying for a job that isn't logical to most observers, perhaps resigning from a position in a move that others cannot understand.

Also in my experience, one may not feel like taking those steps, and may even receive vigorous opposition from others to our taking those steps. That's when perseverance comes into play.

Surprise!

Many times I have thought I was taking steps for one purpose, only to have that purpose fail, and then I discover I have been specifically prepared for another result which is a blessing I never imagined. Therefore, whether in failure or blessing, the actions with steadfast obedience – perseverance – validate God's *Rhema*. I believe this is an example of learning to “hear God's voice.” On very rare occasions He speaks audibly, and when that happens, I'd better listen! But often He speaks through principled nudges, and when that happens, I've hopefully learned to take action with perseverance.

Life is a maze. We do not know what is ahead of us. But God does, and he internally nudges us along the right path, sometimes a complicated one with many unseen nearby dangers to avoid.

Fix 3: *ThreePartHeart.com*
Information, Insight, and Wisdom

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**When Things Go Badly**	**Fix 1: A Restful Yoke, *Matthew* 11: 28-29**	**Fix 2: Perseverance, *Romans* 10:17, "Faith comes by [obedient] hearing, and [obedient} hearing through the effect of the [*Rhema*, revealed] word of God."**	**Fix 2: Again! *Romans* 5:34, ". . . we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."**	**Fix 3: Information, Insight, and Wisdom**
Father	Confusion, loss of purpose and direction	"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . . "	[Revealed] word of God	Hope	Information
Son	Trauma and pain, visible and/or invisible injuries	". . . for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."	Faith	Character	Insight
Holy Spirit	Disappointment and paralysis	"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."	[Obedient] hearing	Perseverance produced by suffering	Wisdom, accompanied by a smile

Talk It Out

When in uncomfortable circumstances, I have a strong urge to talk to others. *Proverbs* 15:22 (*NIV*) states, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." Observations from different perspectives can be very helpful. That was easy for me when my wife Patricia was still walking this earth with me. We were one, and our mutual conversation and trust produced great satisfaction. But now, without her, the urge to converse is still there, and the urge is not just mine. It seems to be widespread, if not universal.

Words from *Proverbs*

My father Trubie Mitchell long ago coached me regarding the importance of meaningful conversation, hopefully leading to information, insight, and wisdom. My daughter-in-law Hannah Mitchell reminds me that most translations of *Proverbs* more often use the equivalent word-set knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

How This Fits Our Chart

Top line: information (knowledge) is facts, or even a collection of facts sufficiently significant to be called a plan. Middle line: insight (understanding) is connections among information, and how that information *could* be personally used or carried out. Within the connections we gain insight as to any dangers that may be involved, so that our defenses are in place. Bottom line: wisdom is how and when the information *should* be used. Wisdom usually cannot be directly imported from others. However, their insights can be tested against one's personal *Rhema* (see previous section) to discover the wisdom for one's own life.

It is interesting that this process actually provides a “bounce” or “boomerang” in our chart. As stated in the above paragraph, information (line 1) leads to insight (line 2) leads to wisdom (line 3). Then wisdom put into action produces the persevering work empowered by Holy Spirit (line 3), which leads to faith and character (line 2), which in turn produces hope (line 1) and dispels confusion and loss of purpose and direction.

Notes from Experience

Back to my observations of my father's conversational style, the additional presence of a smile is “icing” on the information-insight-wisdom “cake.” A smile suggests optimism and confidence regarding the future and choices to be made.

A further benefit of conversation is that hearing oneself talk sometimes clarifies issues in a way that one has not previously noticed. Trying to explain things to others, you end up explaining them to yourself.

Hearing from Others; and More Importantly, Hearing from God

Within the process of seeking conversations, especially among Christians, is the desire to receive encouragement in one's situation. Of course, a danger in relying on the encouragement of others is that they may offer discouragement instead. That is when one must have one's own internal God-connection, praying and seeking His will, not anybody else's.

The entire conversational process is actually not an attempt to simply hear from others. It is an exercise in opening one's senses and inner doorways to Jesus, who always stands knocking. Of course, Godly information and insight can come through others. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, listening carefully to others may reveal that we have inner barriers to information, insight, and wisdom of which we were unaware. Again, we are trying to maximize our synchronization with God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through our corresponding inner facets.

Distressing Echoes: Depression, Anxiety, and PTSD

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**When Things Go Badly**	**Depression (inability to escape a negative past)**	**Anxiety (inability to deal with an uncertain future)**	**PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, similar to unresolved grief)**
Father	Plan	Confusion, loss of purpose and direction	Hopeless	Worry	Addictive self-protective behaviors
Son	Defense	Trauma and pain, visible and/or invisible injuries		Fear	Damaged defensive "breaker switch," protective system overwhelmed
Holy Spirit	Offense	Disappointment and paralysis	Helpless	Paralysis	Addictive functionally-destructive behaviors

Old Woes, New Names – They Fit Our Chart

In recent decades, "when things go badly" and have echoing internal effects which linger, the results are often described in both professional and popular psychology as a troublesome trio of depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Note in the above chart that defining characteristics of the troublesome trio fit neatly within the three-part-heart categories.

Depression, anxiety, and PTSD are professionally considered separate conditions and diagnoses, but one individual can be said to suffer from more than one of those conditions at the same time.

Professionals Have Methods

I am not a professional, but, as for most people, periods of my life have included significant stress and upheaval. So I have come to know the troublesome trio, and have read and heard much about them.

There are many professional avenues to treatment of the troublesome trio. Psychiatrists use pharmaceuticals. Psychologists use many counseling therapies.

Objectivity Helps

Repeating the assertion that I am not a professional in these matters, I do believe that one very helpful principle is to find ways to quickly gain objectivity when negative thoughts and emotions rush to prominence. Professionals have told me that, and I find it to be good advice.

Escaping the Quicksand in the Creekbed

I relate the “objectivity” advice to an experience I had in my early youth. On Sunday afternoons, I liked to run and splash, for three miles or so, the sandy bed of a creek near our home. If a big rain had recently occurred, the sand bars in the creek could be deceptively dangerous. Appearing to be solid sand, they were actually fully saturated and almost floating. The result was quicksand. If you stepped on them, the bottom fell out and you were sucked down until you hit the solid sandstone bottom. That could be a long way down and potentially fatal.

So Dad told me to always carry horizontally a substantial stick, such as a section chopped from a small sapling's trunk. On several occasions, that stick provided a support on the wet sand, enabling me to push myself up on the stick and extricate my body and legs from the collapsed, sucking sand.

Escaping the Quicksand in One's Head

Similarly, when a bad thought comes crashing in, perhaps what they call a PTSD flashback, the “stick” can be a fast reminder that the bad thought is not actually happening in reality right now. Regarding the three-part-heart concept, I also find it helpful to recognize then that the “flashing emergency light” is found in one or more of my three internal God-reflecting facets. Looking again at the chart above, maybe the problem involves my plan (first row), or my defenses (middle row – that's the most likely spot), or in my accomplishments (offense, bottom row). With this in mind, my problem becomes less intensely personal and more solvable.

And for me, “solvable” involves re-visiting the three fixes above, “A Restful Yoke,” “Perseverance, Again!,” and “Information, Insight, and Wisdom.” Especially, the middle of those three fixes involves doing the next thing that one knows internally is the right thing, right now. No matter how small the action(s), keep at them. It's closely related to the old everyday-wisdom advice, “If you're stuck, move!” Remember the stick on the creek sand, supporting my wiggling escape to safety!

This section explores three practical aspects regarding our emotions.

First, our emotions are not random; they are produced by our three-part heart and mirror God's own emotions. (Of course, our human imperfection includes selfishness in our emotions that is not present in God's emotions.)

Second, when we name our emotions we tame them.

Third, determining a named emotion's place within our three-part heart will help us mature spiritually, and thus lead a better life!

Our Emotions in Three Categories

In this chart, on the far right we find three families of our emotions. The Sadness-Joy group is related (as we scan to the left) to feelings about our plan, our hope, our future. The Fear-Faith group is based on experiences from our past and our resulting defenses, and how to move past the negatives. The Anger-Love group deals with how we live effectively and show love in the present.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	***I Corinthians* 13:13, "Three things will last forever . . . ."**	**Focus of One's Emotions**	**Three Families of Our Human Emotions**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Hope	In the Future	1. Sadness-Joy
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Faith	From the Past	2. Fear-Faith
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Love	In the Present	3. Anger-Love

How does this relate to God's emotions? Continue to the next page!

Our Emotions / God's Emotions

In this chart, on the left our emotion-groups 1 (Sadness-Joy) and 3 (Anger-Love) below mirror closely God's similar emotions in the chart's center. However, in category 2 (Fear-Faith) there is a difference: our emotions define our very human need which God does not share (to move from fear to faith). In the center column of this category God's emotions (Jealousy and Compassion) are expressed through the work of Jesus (redemption, protection) and the Holy Spirit (nurturing, empowerment), thus providing Divine solutions to our human need to move from fear to faith.

Three Families of Our Human Emotions	**Biblical Descriptions of God's Emotions** (See the end of this section for references.)	**Our Goal: the Fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians* 5: 22-23)**
1. Sadness-Joy	**Grief/Sorrow** – God's reaction to human rebellion. **Joy/Delight** – God's pleasure in His obedient people.	Joy
2. Fear-Faith	These are God's emotions which draw us from fear to faith: **Jealousy** – selfless protectiveness, not human selfish controlling. **Compassion** – tender caring for the needy (us).	Faithfulness
3. Anger-Love	**Anger/Wrath** – righteous indignation toward wrong. **Love** – the essential nature of God.	Forbearance Kindness Love Gentleness Self-control

On the right side of the chart above are listed “the fruit of the Spirit” from *Galatians* 5. These are marks of emotional maturity through the work of the Holy Spirit. Note that these represent supernatural internal emotional change as the Holy Spirit engages with us over time. The “fruit of the Spirit” is in contrast to the “gifts of the Spirit” (*Romans* 12, *I Corinthians* 12, *Ephesians* 4), which represent supernatural external actions of the Holy Spirit through us at given times. Both require our submission to the work of the Holy Spirit, which produces in us “fruit” (Godly emotions), and through us “gifts” (Godly actions).

Emotions: Naming Them, Taming Them

There is a very interesting and powerful characteristic of human emotion: if you name it, you tame it. If you haven't run across this before, take notice.

This characteristic is similar to the patellar or "knee-jerk" reflex, in which a tap on the tendon at the kneecap will cause the leg to involuntarily jerk. In the case of an emotion, if the person experiencing an intense emotion hears or speaks a verbal description of that emotion, it suddenly recedes.

This is also related to the intense crying of an infant when a need is felt. The crying (hopefully!) fades away as the toddler develops verbal skills, so that the need can be specifically named when it is sensed, and the emotional outburst is no longer needed to attract help from adults.

The concept is also compatible with traditional psychological counseling advice to create objectivity regarding any difficult situation. Hold it at a distance and examine it, so that it is no longer a part of oneself, but instead a separate entity that can be questioned and adjusted. (See also the discussion of objectivity and quicksand in the previous section "Distressing Echoes: Depression, Anxiety, and PTSD.")

Just Fill In the Blank: "You feel . . . ."

Secular author/attorney/mediator Douglas E. Noll discussed the emotional name it / tame it phenomenon in great detail in his book *De-escalate: How to Calm an ANGRY Person in 90 Seconds or Less* (Atria Books, 2017). I recommend the book highly. It is much more thorough than this short article.

Used in all sorts of situations from everyday home life to violent prison circumstances, the basic idea consists of simply stating "You feel . . . ," filling in the blank with a word describing the **emotional feeling, not the factual complaint, and not as a question**. To use the technique on oneself, of course it becomes "I feel . . . ."

We Need to Learn Words for That Blank

In our culture we are not taught to analyze and describe our own emotions. Instead, we try to suppress and ignore while being reasonable, rational, logical. So we have a problem especially when we try to fill in the blank "I feel . . . . " (For some reason, we can "read" others better than we "read" ourselves.) But there are thousands of English words describing emotions, and we know most of them. So it takes only a small effort to make the connection between feeling and word.

Author Noll of course does not relate this name it / tame it phenomenon to the three-part-heart concept. But that also takes only a small effort. Once the feeling is matched to a word, the emotion calms. Then the descriptive word can be matched to one of the categories Sadness-Joy-future-plan-hope, Fear-Faith-past-defense, or Anger-Love-present-action. Reasonable, rational, logical paths for action and spiritual maturation will emerge from the emotional seed.

Here are brief lists of words describing emotions by category. Each word can complete the sentence, "You feel . . . " or "I feel . . . ."

Sadness . . .	**. . . Joy**	**Fear . . .**	**. . . Faith**	**Anger . . .**	**. . . Love**
Annoyed	Alive	Alarmed	Brave	Anger	Affection
Anxious	Blissful	Apprehensive	Calm	Animosity	Attentive
Ashamed	Buoyant	Broken	Caring	Contempt	Benevolent
Brooding	Calm	Cautious	Committed	Defiant	Compassionate
Cheerless	Cheerful	Crushed	Confident	Disgust	Cordial
Defeated	Content	Disquieted	Courageous	Enraged	Fond
Deflated	Delighted	Fatigued	Determined	Exasperated	Forgiving
Demoralized	Ecstatic	Fearful	Encouraged	Furious	Generous
Depressed	Elated	Flustered	Faithful	Grim	Harmonious
Despairing	Enthralled	Foreboding	Fearless	Hateful	Hospitable
Discouraged	Excited	Frantic	Gracious	Helpless	Humble
Disheartened	Exhilarated	Harassed	Gutsy	Indignant	Kindhearted
Disillusioned	Exuberant	Horrified	Heartened	Infuriated	Loving
Distraught	Glad	Hurt	Honored	Irked	Magnanimous
Distressed	Happy	Injured	Impassioned	Irritated	Mellow
Downhearted	High-spirited	Jealous	Liberated	Mad	Merciful
Grieving	Hopeful	Jittery	Loyal	Mean-spirited	Modest
Heartbroken	Inspired	Jumpy	Nurtured	Merciless	Patient
Hopeless	Joyful	Numb	Reassured	Obsessed	Persevering
Joyless	Lighthearted	Possessive	Reinvigorated	Outraged	Pleasant
Melancholy	Merry	Rattled	Rejuvenated	Prickly	Polite
Miserable	Optimistic	Scared	Resolute	Resentful	Sentimental
Overwhelmed	Peaceful	Stricken	Satisfied	Riled Up	Strong
Panicked	Pleased	Tense	Self-confident	Tempestuous	Supportive
Sad	Radiant	Terrified	Strong	Tense	Sympathetic
Sorrowful	Relieved	Troubled	Tenacious	Torn	Tenacious
Tormented	Restored	Uncertain	Thankful	Troubled	Tenderhearted
Troubled	Satisfied	Unsettled	Transformed	Unforgiving	Thankful
Uncertain	Serene	Victimized	Triumphant	Ungrateful	Thoughtful
Uneasy	Thankful	Vulnerable	Trusting	Unloved	Tolerant
Unhappy	Transformed	Weary	Unwavering	Vengeful	Touched
Upset	Victorious	Worried	Vindicated	Wrathful	Warmhearted

And here again for comparison are our objectives, the fruit of the Spirit (from *Galatians* 5:22-23):

	Joy		**Faithfulness**		**Forbearance** **Kindness** **Love** **Gentleness** **Self-control**

Emotions are Good, Not Bad

That we have many emotions that are not in the short list of "fruit of the Spirit" does not mean that those emotions are bad, evil, sin, or something that must be suppressed. We live in a fallen world that throws at us many challenges and much pain. These emotions are necessary for our survival. In the same way that pinpointing, defining, and determining the cause of physical pain is a key to medical success, pinpointing, defining, and determining the cause of our emotions is a key to self-examination, spiritual maturation, and successful decision-making.

So, rather than ignoring or stifling our emotions, it is better that we "farm" and "mine" and "refine" them for the valuable insights they give us, and the directions toward a better life they can provide. The problems occur when we unthinkingly allow emotions to reflexively dominate our actions rather than inform us. But I believe the above techniques with God's help can make our emotions into valuable assets rather than rebellious troublemakers!

Bible References to God's Emotions

Following, within this chart, is a partial list of Bible references which describe God's emotions.

Three Families of Our Human Emotions	**Biblical Descriptions of God's Emotions**	**Our Goal: the Fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians* 5: 22-23)**
1. Sadness-Joy	**Grief/Sorrow** – God's reaction to human rebellion. – *Genesis* 6:6; *I Samuel* 15:11; *Isaiah* 63:10; *Mark* 14:34; *Ephesians* 4:30. **Joy/Delight** – God's pleasure in His obedient people. – *Nehemiah* 8:10; *Psalms* 147:11; *Zephaniah* 3:17; *John* 15:11, 16:24.	Joy
2. Fear-Faith	These are God's emotions which draw us from fear to faith: **Jealousy** – selfless protectiveness, not human selfish controlling.– *Exodus* 20:5; *Deuteronomy* 4:24, 6:15, 32:16; *Joshua* 24:19; *Nahum* 1:2; *I Kings* 14:22; *Psalms* 78:58; *Zechariah* 8:2; *II Corinthians* 11:2. **Compassion** – tender caring for the needy (us). – *Psalms* 103:13; *Lamentations* 3:22; *Matthew* 9:36, 14:19; *Mark* 1:41, 6:34.	Faithfulness
3. Anger-Love	**Anger/Wrath** – righteous indignation toward wrong. – *Exodus* 32:10; *Psalms* 7:11, 78:58; *Matthew* 21:12-13; *Mark* 11:15-17; *Luke* 19:45-46; *John* 2:13-17. **Love** – the essential nature of God. – *Psalms* 100:5, 136:26; *John* 3:16, 15:9-12; *Romans* 5:5-8; 8:38-39; *Ephesians* 2:4-5; *I John* 4:8-16.	Forbearance Kindness Love Gentleness Self-control

Rebellion has been happening in similar forms since the first days of Creation. In the Christian era, it's been happening almost 2,000 years. Humans want to retain control over their lives. We are reluctant to give that control over to God. Visibly active Christians are not immune to this temptation. In fact, they may be the chief target of this temptation.

Here is the typical pattern that results. The universality of it ensnares and enfeebles even the most well-meaning of Christians, due to the sheer weight of institutional traditions.

The ABCD of Rebellion:

Academic re-interpretation of Scripture, using secular literary and philosophical devices to place the three self-promoting and -aggrandizing **B-C-D** emphases listed below ahead of the plain literal meaning of Scripture.

Bureaucratic separate career clergy, allied and aligned with secular academia and government. Supposedly only this special trained class can properly understand the mysteries of Scripture, as the untrained laity may be led astray by what appears to be plain literal meaning. Within this system, God's graces supposedly only flow to the world-experienced laity through these classroom-tested clergy.

Ceremonial honoring of God promoted as one's primary spiritual responsibility.

Defining and **D**esigning connections among Christians solely within financial models that resemble perpetually-competitive medieval fiefdoms.

One-for-one Switch

Thus, since the early centuries, so-called Christian "leaders" have erected numerous **Bait-and-Switch Tollgates**, which falsely claim to grant entry into clear pathways to God, but mainly protect the various religious bureaucracies.

The tollgates mandate group-centered, externally-visible, and comfortably predictable
Good intentions, validated by the group's customs and cultural norms;
Good works (including significant monetary tolls); and
Ceremony.

Those are direct one-for-one substitutes for the true Scriptural mandates of individual internal, miraculous, and surprise-filled
Spiritual rebirth through utter submission to Jesus;
Maturation through ongoing submission to the Holy Spirit, manifesting both gifts and fruit; and
Living step-by-revealed-step the Father's unique plan for our individual lives.

Check the Chart

See these comparisons entered into the two columns at the right end of the chart on the next page. The three-part-heart fit is clear. The rebellion is against Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – all Three. The choice and results are extremely sobering. (See *DivineOutline.com* and *OurExtensionCords.com*.)

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	***I Corinthians* 13:13, "Three things will last forever . . . ."**	**God-directed Life Pattern, Based on Miraculous Internal Change**	**Self-directed Substitute Pattern, Based on Meticulous External Presentation**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Hope	3. Living the Father's step-by-revealed-step plan for our lives.	3. Ceremonial honoring of God.
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Faith	1. Spiritual rebirth through utter submission to Jesus.	1. Good intentions, validated by customs and cultural norms.
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Love	2. Maturation through ongoing submission to the Holy Spirit, manifesting both gifts and fruit.	2. Good works (including significant monetary tolls).
				Result: "Well done, good and faithful servant! " (from *Matthew* 25)	Result: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven . . . . I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (from *Matthew* 7)

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Anglican Priest and Therapist Andrew Miller's three-part heart evidence, as reported in Christa Black Gifford, *Heart Made Whole***	**Three necessities for a grieving child, from Amy E. Ford, *When Your Child Is Grieving***	**Three God-given inner needs, from L.J. Crabb, Jr., *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling***	**Three trees, from Tim Savage, *Discovering the Good Life***
Father	Plan	Original Design	Hope	Significance	Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
Son	Defense	Guardian	Stability	Security	Shoot from the Stump of Jesse
Holy Spirit	Offense	Functional Worker	Order	Love	Tree of Life

Comfort in the Midst of Grief

During February 2024 my beloved life partner, my wife Patricia, died unexpectedly. We had known each other since youth, we chose each other as teens, and we were married for more than 55 years. The shock and grief of her sudden departure were almost unbearable. Family and friends consoled me in many ways, including presenting books they thought might bring comfort.

Four Writers and the Three-Part Heart Concept

One of the first books came from our daughter Sarah Mitchell. She noted that it spoke of a three-part heart concept which I had discovered within myself a few years earlier, and she had heard me talk about it. (See the later section "From Me" in this article.) The book was *Heart Made Whole* by Christa Black Gifford, and it reported priest/therapist Andrew Miller's result of many years of counseling: he found that all his counselees have a three-part heart: the original design, a guardian, and a functional worker.

As you will read in "From Me," it matched my own experience. You will also note in various parts of this article that I use slightly different wording for the heart parts: Passionate Protector instead of Guardian, Competent Worker instead of Functional Worker.

Then Amy Ford's book on child grief listed three necessities which fall neatly into the God-reflecting chart: Hope, Stability, and Order.

L. J. Crabbe's classic on Biblical counseling also had a trio that fit the pattern: Significance, Security, and Love.

Tim Savage's advice on living the good life listed three trees, matching God's chronological revelation of himself through the Tree of Life (in the Garden of Eden), the Shoot from the Stump of Jesse (a Biblical proophetic name of Jesus), and the Tree of Life (a Biblical bookend, appearing first in the Garden of Eden, and again in the eternal Holy City, with the Holy Spirit now giving us a fore-sampling of its miraculous substances).

A Sample, Not a Survey

These references to Christian self-help are not meant to be an overall survey of the huge topic. I am only pointing out that within a few short weeks, several significant books were presented to me, and all contained themes that directly or generally concurred with the idea that we have a three-part heart. I suspect that many other books and advisory systems could be similarly compared.

The Artist's Signature, the Maker's Mark

As I have already made clear, I believe our three-part heart is a mark and reflection of the triune nature of our Creator. I think of it as the signature of the Artist in the original and unique work that each one of us is, the Maker's mark in his pottery (us).

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**A Common Definition of Successful Personhood**	**From Sigmund Freud's Model of the Psyche**	**From Carl Jung's Model of Psychological Archetypes**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	Superego	Anima/Animus
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Passion	Id	Shadow
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Pattern (or Persistence)	Ego	Persona

Actual Observations, Secular Descriptions

It appears to me that secular psychologists have long observed evidence of our three-part-heart nature. However, they describe this evidence in mostly secular rather than "religious" terms.

Defining "Personhood"

A common description of successful personhood in psychology literature is "purpose, passion, and pattern (or persistence)." It is easy to see from the chart above how closely the three parts of this definition parallel the three-part nature of God and the three parts of his reflected image within us.

Into the Void with Freud

Sigmund Freud is often called the "father of modern psychology" because of his trend-setting work in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In searching for underlying unconscious reasons for human behavior, he identified three components of the mind. His "superego" is one's collected moral and behavioral standards and ideals, the conscience, which fits nicely on the first line of our chart above. His "id" is the instinctual survival and procreative instincts, a primal defense which fits the second line of our chart. Freud conceived the "ego" to be the part of us that mediates the sometimes-conflicts of the superego and the id, in order to get things done in the real world – which is appropriate to our third line above.

Among the Writings of Jung

Carl Jung's early-1900s ideas differed from Freud's in that he concentrated on observable functions and behaviors, rather than invisible impulses. Jung proposed an "anima/animus" that provides one's basic self-identity including as male and female, one's inspiration, and one's rational and emotional qualities and abilities. Thus the "anima/animus" is a summary of our original design, and aligns with the first line of the chart. Jung's "shadow" is a defensive element that involves repression of

unwanted aspects of our lives, and thus may itself be negative and needing redemptive attention – a clear match to the second line of our chart. Jung's "persona" can be a mask that hide's one real self, but its purpose is to enable effective interaction with the outside world – and as such it matches, as does Freud's similar "ego," the person's attempts to get things done and therefore the third line of our chart.

Again, This Is a Sample, Not a Survey

Many other notables populate the field of psychology, both today and going back 2500 years to the Greek writer Hippocrates. I limit my above discussion to Freud and Jung because of their universal reputations as founders of modern psychology.

Old Ideas, Jung Ideas

A favorite topic of popular psychology books and articles today involves categorizing personality types. This modern effort is reminiscent of Hippocrates' ancient distinctions of four temperaments: sanguine (optimistic), choleric (angry), melancholic (unhappy), and phlegmatic (calm).

Among the current popular systems are two closely-related personality categorizations, both based on Jung's work. Both provide self-testing, in books and online, for interested individuals. One is from David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates, focusing on behaviors. The other is from Isabel Myers and Katheryn Briggs, concentrating on motivations. Both Keirsey-Bates and Myers-Briggs use the same grid of 16 personalities or temperaments.

Another popular personality-analytic system is Enneagram, seemingly based on ancient mystical principles rather than the psychology profession. Enneagram sorts individuals into 9 categories rather than 16.

Nature or Nurture? Always a Controversy

Opinions vary as to whether the 16 (or 4, or 9, or whatever number a system contains) temperaments are inborn, or developed; and whether they shift throughout a lifetime or are immovable. My experience is that, over nearly 50 years, my own Keirsey-Bates test result changes depending on my current responsibilities and how I am approaching them.

My Opinion: These Sorters Are Sorting the Top Line of Our Chart

It appears to me that these various temperament-sorters attempt to describe our personal plan, or our original design, or at least the way in which we sense and interpret our "self." They do not actually plot our defense and offense in life. Rather, they merely indicate the preferred style(s) in which we proceed. So the temperament-sorting questionnaire test results are magnifying glasses we might use to search for our plan and understand our design. Thus, the temperament-sorters are most relevant to the first line of our chart, rather than to the second and third lines.

Beware of Tunnel Vision: Our God Has Bigger Plans for Us

My caution regarding personality-sorting tests is that they may give us tunnel-vision regarding our personal situation, our calling, and our gifts and talents. They may lull us into a paralyzing mental

cocoon. Miracles involve, by definition, change. The active presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life always involves miraculous change, of both the person and circumstances.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (*Hebrews* 13:8). We are not. We are being changed (there are many Bible verses on this topic!).

The unchanging Jesus authoritatively states, “I am.” (See the article “'I Am,' He Says” at *EverythingHangsOnThis.com*.) But we as Christians must never presumptuously say, “I am the way I am, and I cannot change.” That is a dangerous rebellion against God and his plans for us. We may have a redeeming Jesus-*connection*, but we ourselves are NOT Jesus!

Relationships and Compatibility

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Relational Compatibility Factors**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	Culture – what we do
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	Commitment – why we do it
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment	Chronology – when and how we do it

Friends and More

We spend our entire lives dealing with relationships, and with compatibilities and incompatibilities within those relationships. The relationships may be friendships, they may be work- or study-related, they may be familial, they may be hobby- or sports-oriented, they may be among a group of Christians. The most intense relationships, for better or worse, are likely to be romantic.

Willingness to Reveal and Discuss

For relationships of any kind to be successful, there must be some level of compatibility. Identical is impossible. Clones are unneeded. We are all created differently. But respectful and appreciative relationships are possible. Not in every case, of course. Sometimes differences are irreconcilably large. But where compatibility is achievable, it best happens when there is a mutual willingness to expose and discuss relevant details of our culture/purpose/plan (what we do); our commitment/passion/defense (why we do it); and our chronology/accomplishment/ offense (when and how we do it). Notice how these three categories neatly find their place on our chart above.

Keep in Mind the 3 Cs

Culture, commitment, and chronology encompass every possible aspect of life. They are such all-inclusive categories that documenting them in their entirety would take longer than life itself. But the relevant aspects for our shared experiences and goals need to be freely, easily, and honestly discussed at the appropriate times.

This is especially important in romance and marriage (see *MysteryOfMarriage.com*). My memory-aid for romantic compatibility is: "Romance on the Seven Cs: Choosing Compatibility by Caringly Communicating Detailed Issues of Culture, Commitment, and Chronology." The concluding threesome in those seven Cs – culture, commitment, and chronology – indicate our three-part heart.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Reproduction in Humans, Animals, and Flowering Plants**	**Creative Activity**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	The offspring's genetic identity is half from male parent, half from female parent	Creative New Product
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	The female parent provides the protective element for the offspring as it forms (ovule becoming seed; egg; womb)	Incubation Process
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplish-ment	The male parent provides the traveling/ seeking part (pollen, sperm).	New Idea

Check the Chart

On our chart, the plan (top line) is the genetic code, contributed equally by each parent. The defense (middle line) is the protective capsule donated by the female parent. In flowering plants with sexual reproduction, this is the ovule which becomes the encased seed after fertilization. In some creatures it is the egg. In other creatures and in humans it is the womb. The traveling, seeking, "aggressive" element (bottom line) is donated by the male parent. In flowering plants it is the (gamete-containing) pollen. In humans and animals it is the sperm.

Creativity of All Kinds

In the reproductive process, we participate with the Ultimate Creator in the creation process. It is not surprising that here, of all places, his three-part "signature" is evident. However, creative processes of all types, not just reproduction, follow the same pattern. To successfully produce something new requires first the new idea. Then there is a period of incubation during which the growth from idea into product is revealed and completed: thus, again, a mirror of our three-part heart.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Nests**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	Production of healthy, strong offspring
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	Protecting, nurturing, encouraging, strengthening
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment	Launching into the wider world

"Nests" Can Be of All Kinds

In the animal kingdom, nests are the protective environment in which the young offspring are nurtured and strengthened in preparation for their entering the world as adults.

This is a very appropriate parallel for describing the human home.

Additionally, it is a very appropriate parallel for the way the Christian church is supposed to function. Marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship with his Church, and appointment to Christian leadership is supposed to be significantly based on one's track record with managing the similar processes within one's own family (see *MysteryOfMarriage.com*).

Survival: *ThreePartHeart.com*
Food, Clothing, Shelter

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Survival Needs**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	Shelter
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	Clothing
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment	Food

This Chart Is Easy!

Our shelter should be the place, a home base, which provides us with a foundation for us to fulfill our plans and purposes (top line).

Our clothing is our body's protection (middle line).

Our food is the fuel enabling our strength and accomplishments (bottom line).

Thus, our three most basic needs clearly reflect our three-part heart!

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Financial Pillars**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	Real Estate (home)
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	Securities (material investments for growth and/or income)
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment	Cash (available liquid assets and income-producing labor)

Money Worries, Money Wisdom

Most of us spend most of our lives with at least some anxiety regarding our finances. My wife Patricia and I spent many years "close to the edge," financially. God always provided our needs, and that is a principle of faith we can depend on. But I believe he also provides insight and wisdom so we do not have to devote our prayer life to perpetual emergency-flare financial help requests.

Three-part Financial Principle: A Place to Live, and Passive and Active Income

Due to advice from my father and from a contemporary friend, by the time I was in my thirties I had the above three-part view of our personal finances. It is much more recently that I realized that it fit perfectly the model of the three-part heart. This three-part model of finances does not solve all our financial challenges, but it does clarify how to think about financial matters and make appropriate decisions.

The chart indicates three priorities. They become especially strong pillars when debt-free. That is usually not instantly possible, and various financial advisors have plans and programs for achieving freedom from debt. My wife and I have had various levels and periods of debt, but making decisions and following God's leading has been much easier when there is no debt.

Home Base

On the top line of our chart, the choice and provision of a home is key to our purpose and mission. As listed in the previous section "Survival" above, our shelter should be the place, a home base, which provides us with a foundation for us to fulfill our plans and purposes.

Assets that Work for Us, Rather Than Our Working for Them

On the middle line of our chart, our financial "defense" is sources and potential sources of income that do not require our further labor. A few generations back, that was often covered by multi-generation family and the family farm. Today it could be any of many growth and income investments, the simplest of which is probably indexed mutual funds. They may be part of a retirement investment account, or stand-alone. A promised retirement income is another possibility, keeping in mind that sadly, not all promises are kept, especially when corporate bankruptcy occurs. Social Security also fits this category, and that likewise has a significant possibility of future instability. Some use rental property in this category, but often it requires so much attention that it falls more in the next category. Insurance contracts can temporarily cover known vulnerabilities, so they also can be listed among our defenses in the middle line of our chart.

Earnings and Uninvested Savings

On the bottom line of our chart is our third category, the fruit of our active labor, and how much we retain of it with frugality and good management. Look back to earlier sections, and it becomes evident that active pursuit of the bottom line can lead to success in the middle and top lines, whether we are talking about Love/Faith/Hope or Active Income/Passive Income/Home Base.

All Three Categories Work Together

With prayerful seeking of information, insight, and wisdom (see the section "Fix 3: Information, Insight, and Wisdom" above), all three of these financial pillars make life better for us. Using that prayer-sought wisdom, these three pillars do not compete with each other, but work together in a mirroring of the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Musical Compositions**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	Intended purpose of the music
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	Developed structure of the music
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment	Performance, setting, and audience of the music

Music Is Mandated!

From *Ephesians* 5:18-20 (*NIV*): "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Music should be a part of both our personal and our associational Christian life. Sadly, these days that is difficult. We are so inundated with hyper-professional music that we find it difficult to speak with originality in a musical language. We can hear musical "language" but we don't learn to "speak" it naturally and freely. I am old enough to remember when we were encouraged to make musical sounds and noises from our earliest youth. Media music was of such low transmission quality – crackles, scratches, static – that anything "live" was better. I suspect that to God's ears, anything "live" is still better since he has "earphones" connected to our hearts, as the verse above suggests!

Creation and Creativity, Again

Music is in the universal category of "things created by God." He wants us to further participate with him in the creation of it. (See the brief discussion of creativity in the previous article section "Making Babies.") So once more we should expect to find his three-part-heart imprint in music itself.

Chart Parts

In the first chart line above, involving plan and purpose, we find the intended purpose of the musical composition. Music has been used for every possible purpose, promoting every conceivable idea or product, or simply creating a rush of exhilaration with little further content.

In the second chart line, we find the nurtured and developed structure of the musical composition. This may include the melody; the harmonies; the progressions; the instrument choices (if

any); the lyrics (if any); the instructions for time signature, tempo, and volume – everything that the composer has assembled. Or perhaps, instead, the piece is a simple poem with its melody.

In the third chart line, we see the musical piece go from its creator(s) out to others. This is the performance, and the setting and audience of the performance. Added together, they (hopefully) accomplish the intended purpose. It doesn't have to be a big place or performance. After all, the most important venue is the heart, and the most important audience is God!

Once again, as we look at the chart, God in three persons is mirrored.

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Weather and Climate**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	Earth's life-sustaining environment
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	Earth, sea, and atmosphere, containing all needed elements
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment	Sun and moon, with orbital effects and energy input, causing life-giving movements and cycles

Huge Systems, Only Partially Understood

Weather and climate systems are infinitely complex. Scientists have only limited success in modeling them for accurate forecasts, especially over any significant span of time.

Chart Parts for What We Do Know

Our planet hosts plant, animal, and human populations even more complex than the weather and climate systems which give them life. This is the first line of our chart above.

Our second line is the protective capsule of planet Earth itself, containing all substances needed for life within its landforms, its oceans, and its atmosphere. And the atmosphere protects the life forms from lethal space-sourced bombardments of all kinds.

On the third line, we find the objects that set planet Earth, its lands, its seas, and its atmosphere in motion, allowing the self-cleansing and -balancing fluctuations which can successfully host life. Without the sun's energy and gravity, and without the moon's gravity, planet Earth would be just a dead lump in space.

A Major Source of Knowledge About God!

Besides the fact that these three lines again reflect the three-part nature of God, the processes of nature have always provided mankind with endless instructive parables to promote human wisdom. *Psalms* 19 is an ode to this fact, beginning with the first two verses: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge."

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Orbits**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	A stable elliptical pathway in space
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	Gravitational pull
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment	Forward momentum

This One Is Easy!

The subject of orbits is a simple fit to our three-part-heart chart. The orbit of the earth around the sun, of the moon around the earth, and any other of infinite examples, is a balance between the drawing-in force of gravitational pull and the sending-out force of forward momentum.

A baseball's arc (or that of a bullet) is also a balance between gravitational pull and forward momentum. But in the case of the moon, the forward momentum is such that the object "misses" the earth. ("Whew!") And in the case of the earth, the forward momentum is such that the object "misses" the sun. ("Double whew!") But the gravitational attractions of the earth-to-moon and the sun-to-earth are sufficient to keep the moon and earth from wandering off, lost in space. ("Triple and quadruple whew!")

Many of nature's activities display this balance between drawing-in and sending-out. It is a compelling reminder of the nature of God, as well as the precision of his creation.

Iron Horses and Metallic Thunder

***Genesis* 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . . "**	**Reflected Image Within Us**	**Present in All Human Activities**	**Characteristic Pattern**	**Mechanically Powered Transportation**
Father	Original Design	Plan	Purpose	Moving machines
Son	Passionate Protector	Defense	Drawing-in, Protecting, Nurturing	Contained pressure chamber
Holy Spirit	Competent Worker	Offense	Sending-out, Exhibiting Strength, Accomplishment	Useful harnessing of released pressure

Beyond Muscle

The harnessing of mechanical power has given humans access to all of planet Earth and beyond. The clip-clop of horses and padding of human feet have been rapidly replaced by the chug-chugs, putt-putts, purrs, rumbles, and roars of steam, combustion, turbine, jet, and rocket engines.

Machines Charted Above

This "mechanical" block on our first chart line, involving plan and purpose, is our desire to move and transport, small loads or large, slowly or rapidly, on or in land, water, air, and space.

Our "drawing-in" second line contains the fact that all these devices uses a pressure-containing chamber of some kind. Steam engines utilize the compressed steam from boiling water. Combustion engines mix fuel and air in a piston-compressing cylinder and ignite the mix to produce explosive power. Turbines and jets compress the air before it enters the combustion chamber. Rockets operate similarly, but carry their own oxidizer for the combustion process, thus do not need air to burn.

In all these cases, the pressure release is harnessed for energy of motion, as listed on our third chart line.

This is one more of an infinite number of everyday examples of God's three-part-heart pattern.

Here is my history with the three-part-heart concept.

Schwartz's Introspection Guide

Several years ago a friend who is a professional counselor suggested that, in order to create a little distance and objectivity regarding personal angst, I should review online articles about Richard Schwartz's Internal Family Systems Therapy, a secular counseling program.

Tongue-in-Cheek Friends: Hamlet, Romeo, Leonardo

Schwartz recommended introspection to identify separate facets of one's personality that have different emphases and come to the forefront at different times. Thinking about this, I found three such facets within myself. I tongue-in-cheek named the facets Hamlet, Romeo, and Leonardo, the first two after Shakespearean characters and the third after Italian Renaissance artist, inventor, and engineer Leonardo Da Vinci. I chose them not for their stories, the fictional ones' being terribly tragic, but for their supposed traits which either matched mine, or to which I might aspire.

To me, Hamlet represented who I was "born to be," based on my birth family, theirs and my early expectations regarding me and my life, and the values and moral code emerging from those formative years. Romeo represented the protective responsibility I took for my wife Patricia, our marriage, and our family life with three children. A number of violent and stressful events severely tested us through the years, and "defense" is an understatement regarding my view of the duties and character of my inner "Romeo." Leonardo was the part of me that enthusiastically learned and practiced subjects and skills, and was the part of me that sought (with varying success!) a satisfying professional life.

Jesus Will Have to Tame These Fellows!

The next step in Schwartz's system was to bring Self into supervisory control of the facets discovered. I told my counselor friend that was impossible for me. I had no self left outside the three discovered facets, so I would, instead, have to ask Jesus to take charge of Hamlet, Romeo, and Leonardo! Once I had labeled these three internal tendencies, I did find that thinking about difficult situations was easier. At least I knew "who" was complaining at times, and usually could detect "why," so I was satisfied with that result.

Miller's Counselees

As mentioned on page 19, after my wife Patricia died in 2024, our daughter Sarah brought me a book containing information reminding her of my Hamlet, Romeo, and Leonardo. – Priest/therapist Andrew Miller said that in his experiences, all his counselees have a three part heart: : the original design, a guardian, and a functional worker. Yes, it matches. Incredibly well. Actually, exactly!

And *Genesis* Explains It

As I mused over this parallel, I suddenly realized there is another significant comparison: *Genesis* 1:26 reports that God said, "Let us make man in *our* image . . . ." God is, again, *three*: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Father knits us in our mother's womb and has a **plan** for us; Jesus, the Son, died to **defend** us from the penalty for our sin; the Holy Spirit **empowers** us to do God's will in our world. Original design, guardian, functional worker. Again, a precise match.

Christian Writers and Secular Psychologists Observe It

Continuing with my reading of Christian-based books offered by consoling friends, I found further parallels. At this point in my thoughts on this topic, another counselor friend suggested that I look to see if there are (further) parallels among secular psychology writers. Finding those parallels was a real "light bulb" for me. It seemed to me that these secular psychologists are describing, in their various secular ways, an evident pattern of God's creation within each of us. Looking still further, I realized that numerous Biblical themes and doctrines also fit the three-part-heart concept.

Applications Are So Extensive They Are Universal!

By the time I reached this point in my reading, I realized that almost all of human life involves a three-step process. It appears in both grand and mundane settings – in games, in war, in careers, in shopping trips . . . . The three steps are: the Plan, and the two facets of execution of the plan: Offense and Defense. And it is not just present in human life, but also throughout nature and the universe.

I Liked the Three-part Heart Concept So Much, I Wrote About It!

I posted my musings on the three-part-heart concept online, and chose a web domain *ThreePartHeart.com* to make it easy to find. It is one of seven personally-significant essays that I completed after Patricia's death (much of which she had assisted in researching and writing), all indexed under the web domain *EasyToMiss.com*. Various discussions with friends and acquaintances over the next two years led to my revising (and hopefully clarifying!) this article as seen here.

I personally find several practical uses and benefits of the three-part-heart concept. And so I recommend them. As you consider the concept, you will surely discover your own applications.

Examining Ourselves

Of first importance are the many Biblical exhortations to examine ourselves, test ourselves, confess our shortcomings, humble ourselves, and other similar statements. The three-part-heart concept clarifies our view of ourselves, relative to the nature and characteristics of God – not of other humans, not of cultural trends. This concept, studied and practiced, can increase both our objectivity and clarity regarding ourselves, and our sensitivity regarding God's desires and directions for us.

Concentrating on Repairs Instead of Unnecessary Self-criticism

Related to this, the three-part heart concept can erase unnecessary self-criticism we level at ourselves when we feel unhappiness and a sense of failure. Yes, we can see our imperfections, but not with abject hopelessness. We can also see God's reflection in each of our three parts, and sense how he is repairing us, re-directing us, and drawing us into a clearer, firmer, more powerful connection with him. (See “Leased Properrty” section above.)

Identifying and Resolving Internal Conflicts

A major benefit is that the three-part-heart concept helps identify and calm internal conflicts. There are individuals (including in my family) who have a medical condition which makes them unable to determine the precise source of a pain others could quickly identify. For them, pain is a generalized discomfort, not a readily-named hurt. I have always had a similar feeling regarding internal uncertainties and conflicts: I feel unsettled, but unsure exactly what it is or what to do about it. From talking to others, I know I am not the only one who feels this way! But now I have a helpful tool. Approaching the discomfort with the three-part-heart in mind, I can ask myself, “Where is the complaint? Is it a problem with my design? Is it a complaint from my 'passionate protector?' Or from my 'competent worker?' Or I can re-phrase the question as, 'Is the glitch in my plan, my defense, or my offense?'”

In this manner, the three-part-heart awareness enables us to gain objectivity with regard to our circumstances, the facts, our emotions (see the section above titled “Emotions”), our reactions, and our plans. Once we have categorized where the glitch seems to be, we can step back from it, study it, pray about it, and work on it. (See the three “Fix” sections above.)

Arriving at Balance

In doing so, it helps us arrive at a balance in all three of our parts. There is a tendency in life to go pedal-to-the-medal on whatever is current in our lives. That may not be best. Think of all the very public, famous people whose personal lives are a mass of wreckage for all to see.

Focusing Prayer

Thinking about our three-part-heart greatly focuses our prayers. My wife Patricia used to say (and I have posted her handwritten note to remind myself) that prayer can be of the types “Help!” “Thanks!” and “Wow!” If we can intelligently analyze our needs, we can be very specific in prayer and expectant regarding answers. If we are expectantly alert, ready to accept surprises, we will soon realize that we have “Help!” We can sincerely say, “Thanks!” And we can evaluate our new situation – and praise God himself – with a “Wow!” (See also *AConstantPresence.com*.)

Freeing to Move Forward

And in this process, our three-part-heart awareness frees us to move forward along the wonderful path God is revealing to us. As we walk it step by prayerful step, our faith increases.

Reveling in Everyday Life and God's Creation Around Us

Beyond beneficial internal self-analysis, the three-part-heart idea gives us new clarity and enjoyment of observing God's incredible creation around us, as well as the everyday tasks we all have. It becomes almost a private game in whatever we are seeing: “What is the plan, the defense, and the offense here?!?” And, “What new information, insight, and wisdom can I absorb from this?!?”

Take It Nice and Easy!

A cautionary note: don't overload on this topic! Don't eat it up all at once! Take a bite or two, savor, digest. This is more of a “program running in the background,” in computer lingo, than a concentrated effort. As a collection of casual and habitual observations, it can help boost productivity, confidence, effectiveness, satisfaction, relaxation; and above all, love, faith, hope, and our consciousness of God's presence in our lives!

Enjoy your three-part heart!