

heart, soul, etc

How Is a Believer to Understand the terms "heart, soul, mind, and Spirit?"

From (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Matt 22:35-40 NASB

35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

37 And He said to him, ""YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

38 "This is the great and foremost commandment.

39 "The second is like it, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

HEART

The inner self that thinks, feels, and decides. In the Bible the word heart has a much broader meaning than it does to the modern mind. The heart is that which is central to man. Nearly all the references to the heart in the Bible refer to some aspect of human personality.

In the Bible all emotions are experienced by the heart: love and hate (Ps 105:25; 1 Peter 1:22); joy and sorrow (Eccl 2:10; John 16:6); peace and bitterness (Ezek 27:31; Col 3:15); courage and fear (Gen 42:28; Amos 2:16).

The thinking processes of man are said to be carried out by the heart. This intellectual activity corresponds to what would be called mind in English. Thus, the heart may think (Est 6:6), understand (Job 38:36), imagine (Jer 9:14), remember (Deut 4:9), be wise (Prov 2:10), and speak to itself (Deut 7:17). Decision-making is also carried out by the heart. Purpose (Acts 11:23), intention (Heb 4:12), and will (Eph 6:6) are all activities of the heart.

Finally, heart often means someone's true character or personality. Purity or evil (Jer 3:17; Matt 5:8), sincerity or hardness (Ex 4:21; Col 3:22); and maturity or rebelliousness (Ps 101:2; Jer 5:23)-all these describe the heart or true character of individuals. God knows the heart of each person (1 Sam 16:7). Since a person speaks and acts from his heart, he is to guard it well (Prov 4:23; Matt 15:18-19). The most important duty of man is to love God with the whole heart (Matt 22:37). With the

heart man believes in Christ and so experiences both love from God and the presence of Christ in his heart (Rom 5:5; 10:9-10; Eph 3:17).

SOUL

A word with two distinct meanings in the Bible:

1. That which makes a human or animal body alive. This usage of the word soul refers to life in the physical body. The best example of this usage are those passages in the New Testament in which the Greek word for soul is translated as life. "For whoever desires to save his life [soul] will lose it," Jesus declared, "but whoever loses his life [soul] for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

This idea is also present in the Old Testament. For example, the soul of a dying person departed at death (Gen 35:18). The prophet Elijah brought a child back to life by stretching himself upon the child three times and praying that God would let the child's soul come back into him (1 Kings 17:19-23).

2. The word soul also refers to the inner life of man, the seat of his emotions, and the center of human personality. The first use of the word soul in the Old Testament expresses this meaning: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (soul)" (Gen 2:7). This means more than being given physical life; the biblical writer declares that man became a "living soul," or a person, a human being, one distinct from all other animals.

The soul is described as the seat of many emotions and desires: the desire for food (Deut 12:20-21), love (Song 1:7), longing for God (Ps 63:1), rejoicing (Ps 86:4), knowing (Ps 139:14), and memory (Lam 3:20).

In the New Testament, Jesus spoke of his soul as being "exceedingly sorrowful" (Matt 26:38). Mary, the mother of Jesus, proclaimed that her soul "magnifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46). John prayed that Gaius would "prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2).

MIND

The part of a person that thinks and reasons. Although the Hebrew language had no word for mind, several Hebrew words are sometimes translated as "mind." The word for HEART frequently means "mind" (Deut 30:1; Jer 19:5). The word for SOUL is sometimes used similarly (1 Chron 28:9), as is the word for SPIRIT (Ezek 11:5).

No Hebrew word is translated as brain in English versions of the Bible.

Four separate Greek words account for nearly all instances of "mind" in the New Testament. They all mean much the same thing: understanding, thought, mind,

reason. While today we think of a person's mind in a morally neutral way, in the New Testament the mind was clearly thought of as either good or evil. Negatively, the mind may be "hardened" (2 Cor 3:14), "blinded" (2 Cor 4:4), "corrupt" (2 Tim 3:8), and "debased" (Rom 1:28). On the positive side, humans may have minds which are renewed (Rom 12:2) and pure (2 Peter 3:1). They may love God with all their minds (Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27) and have God's laws implanted in their minds (Heb 8:10). Since Christians have "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16), they are instructed to be united in mind (Rom 12:16; 1 Peter 3:8).

SPIRIT

A word with three distinct meanings in the Bible:

1. The word is used as a general reference in the New Testament to the spirit of human beings (Matt 5:3; Rom 8:16; Heb 4:12). Jesus made several specific references to His spirit in a human sense (Mark 2:8; John 11:33), as did Paul (Acts 17:16; 2 Cor 2:13). Paul sometimes referred to the spirits of those to whom he wrote (Gal 6:18; 2 Tim 4:22).

2. A second common usage of the word is in reference to good and evil spirits, meaning the beings other than God and humans. An example of a good spirit is an angel (Ps 104:4). The Bible also contains many references to evil spirits (Mark 9:25; Acts 19:12-17; Rev 18:2).

3. The word spirit also refers to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, the Spirit occasionally came upon people to give them power to do God's will or to enable them to serve God in a special way. For example, the Spirit of the Lord enabled Samson to kill a young lion with his bare hands (Judg 14:5-6). Earlier the Spirit of God had given Bezaleel wisdom and skill to build the tabernacle (Ex 31:3). The Spirit of the Lord also enabled the judges to lead Israel to military victory (Judg 3:10; 11:29) and the prophets to prophesy (Num 24:2; Ezek 11:5).

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was an even more active presence among the people of God. The Holy Spirit was the agent of fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Acts 1:16; 2:16-21; 3:18; 28:25-27), and He continued to inspire Christian prophets and workers in order to work His will on earth (Acts 2:4; 19:6). The Holy Spirit came upon new Christians (Acts 10:44-48), purified and sanctified them (2 Cor 3:18; 2 Thess 2:13), and guided the direction of early Christian missionary work (Acts 10:19-20; 16:6-7).

This Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus (2 Cor 3:17). A person can relate to Jesus only by means of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6). In the Gospel of John, He is called the Helper (John 14:16-17).

HOLY SPIRIT

The third person of the trinity, who exercises the power of the Father and the Son in creation and redemption. Because the Holy Spirit is the power by which believers come to Christ and see with new eyes of faith, He is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Like the eyes of the body through which we see physical things, He is seldom in focus to be seen directly because He is the one through whom all else is seen in a new light. This explains why the relationship of the Father and the Son is more prominent in the gospels, because it is through the eyes of the Holy Spirit that the Father-Son relationship is viewed.

The Holy Spirit appears in the Gospel of John as the power by which Christians are brought to faith and helped to understand their walk with God. He brings a person to new birth: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6); "It is the Spirit who gives life" (John 6:63). The Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, or Helper, whom Jesus promised to the disciples after His ascension.

The triune family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are unified in ministering to believers (John 14:16,26). It is through the Helper that Father and Son abide with the disciples (John 15:26).

This unified ministry of the trinity is also seen as the Spirit brings the world under conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He guides believers into all truth with what He hears from the Father and the Son (John 15:26). It is a remarkable fact that each of the persons of the trinitarian family serves the others as all defer to one another: The Son says what He hears from the Father (John 12:49-50); the Father witnesses to and glorifies the Son (John 8:16-18,50,54); the Father and Son honor the Holy Spirit by commissioning Him to speak in their name (John 14:16,26); the Holy Spirit honors the Father and Son by helping the community of believers.

Like Father and Son, the Holy Spirit is at the disposal of the other persons of the triune family, and all three are one in graciously being at the disposal of the redeemed family of believers. The Holy Spirit's attitude and ministry are marked by generosity; His chief function is to illumine Jesus' teaching, to glorify His person, and to work in the life of the individual believer and the church.

The Human Spirit

(from the website Contending for the Faith)

According to the revelation of the Bible and the experience of believers, the human spirit can be said to have three main functions. These three functions are conscience (Rom. 9:1; 8:16), intuition (Mark 2:8), and communion (John 4:24).

The conscience is the part of the spirit which distinguishes right from wrong and is not influenced by knowledge stored in the mind; it is rather a spontaneous direct judgment. The intuition is the "knowing" part of the spirit. All true knowledge originates not in the mind, but in the spirit. The revelations of God and the movements of the Holy Spirit are known to the believer through his intuition. A believer must, therefore, take care to heed these two aspects of his spirit: the speaking of his conscience and the teaching of his intuition.

Communion is the third function of the spirit, and is related to the worship of God. The soul is not competent to worship God. According to John 4:24, "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The Human Soul

(from the website Contending for the Faith)

Not only does man possess a spirit which enables him to function in the spiritual realm; he also possesses a soul which is the organ of his self-consciousness. The soul is the seat of the human personality. The ingredients which make us human beings belong to the soul. The intellect, thought, ideals, love, emotion, understanding, decision, choice, and other like qualities are all associated with the soul. The three main functions of the soul are the will (Job 7:15), the mind (Lam. 3:20, RSV), and the emotion (2 Sam. 5:8; Deut. 6:5). The will is the instrument for making decisions and choices. The second function of the soul is the mind, the instrument for thinking. It is in this part of the soul that man reasons and has knowledge (Prov. 2:10). The third function of the soul is the emotion. This is the instrument of likes and dislikes. Through the emotions we are able to express love or hatred, joyfulness, anger, sadness, or happiness. A shortage in this area will render us insensitive. By a careful study of the Bible we cannot help but be impressed that these three primary functions of the personality belong to the soul.