TRIUMPH THROUGH TRAUMA: EQUIPPING PARENTS TO

UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO CHILDREN FROM

TRAUMATIC BACKGROUNDS

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TRIUMPH THROUGH TRAUMA: EQUIPPING PARENTS

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For my family.
For the Church.

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PREFACE

A long, hard personal journey gave passion and conviction to complete this thesis. My wife, Nicole, has been my companion over those miles of struggle and learning as we rediscovered that Christ is sufficient for all of life's situations. We also quickly realized that we were not the only parents who had difficulty adjusting to the uniqueness of children from traumatic backgrounds. Like Hosea's life became a lesson for Israel, we found our experience to be a classroom in which to invite others. I pray that we have been and will remain faithful to learning and encouraging others to raise children who find transformation and hope through Jesus.

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Marion, Ohio
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A seven-year-old boy hears the corrective words of his mother and immediately goes to his room. His toys become hand grenades and the wall becomes the target. Other children are scared by the noise and shattering plastic pieces, and the parents are concerned about safety. Confused and uncertain of what to do, the father hugs his son and walks him outside of the house, hoping a walk will calm the quick-appearing battle. The walk only equips the boy with new artillery—landscaping stones—which find the front door of the house as their target. What are the parents to do? There seems to be no reason for this outburst, and it leaves the parents wondering if there is any hope for their family's situation.

Welcome to the world of parents whose children have suffered from traumatic experiences. According to The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), children experience trauma when an intense event threatens or causes harm to their emotional and physical well-being. While trauma is a broad category, it can result specifically from exposure to a natural disaster, exposure to war and terrorism, witnessing or being the victim of violence, being neglected, and experiencing serious injury or

physical or sexual abuse. NCTSN claims that roughly one of every four children will experience a traumatic event before the age of sixteen.[1]

Christian families are not exempt from traumatic experiences. Churches are likely to have families with children affected by trauma, and those parents are often bewildered when they confront trauma's impact. It might be a recently divorced parent trying to understand why her child is exhibiting new, strange behaviors. Perhaps a couple who recently took in a foster child have never seen some of the bizarre and violent behaviors that are now prevalent in their home.

The good news is that there is hope and help in the Bible for these parents to triumph over trauma. Through Christ, a child's despair and chaos can be replaced with joy and peace. Parents will struggle, though, to find biblical resources that expound on this hope to explain how trauma shapes a child's worldview and to suggest strategies to help shape the child's behavior toward righteousness.

Children can react to trauma in challenging ways that can last for long periods of time. While reactions differ, trauma often leads to confused and sometimes dangerous thoughts, desires, and choices.[2] Scripture can help children think, want, and choose righteousness to find freedom from the destruction of their trauma.

The key is to develop a biblical anthropology—who people are and why they do what they do—and use that understanding to disciple a child's heart toward right thinking, desires, and choices. This paper uses the biblical perspective of the human heart

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[1] "What Is Child Traumatic Stress?," The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, accessed September 6, 2017, http://www.nctsnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs.

[2] Pierre uses the verbs "thinking, wanting, and choosing" in chapter 1 of his book *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016).

that Jeremy Pierre presents in *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life* to assess the behavior-based intervention model called Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) to produce a guide for biblically informed parenting of children from traumatic backgrounds.

Familiarity with the Literature

Families whose children have been impacted by trauma will often be introduced to TBRI for help. TBRI began with the book *The Connected Child* in 2007 by Karyn Purvis and researchers at Texas Christian University, although they had not yet coined the term TBRI in that book.[3] That faculty released journal articles and instructional videos to further develop TBRI.

A 2013 journal article is the primer for understanding TBRI's three main principles: empowerment (attention to physical needs), connection (attention to attachment needs), and correction (attention to behavioral needs).[4]

The empowerment principles largely consist of creating and maintaining a safe and structured environment for children. It explains the importance of daily transitions and major life transitions for children, arguing that children feel safe with increasing predictability and perceived control throughout the day. The empowerment principle addresses sensory needs and nutrition issues to help children develop properly.

The connecting principles strive to create trust and attachment between a child and parent. They argue that as parents provide properly for their children, they are creating the "external modem" of a child's regulation of emotional and physical needs. Playful engagement encourages a child's self-calming and self-awareness, which allows trust to develop.

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[3] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing To Your Adoptive Family* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2007).

[4] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma." *Child and Youth Services* 34, no. 4 (2013): 362.

The correcting principles of TBRI focus on helping children from traumatic backgrounds gain what they probably lacked to some degree in infancy: food, warmth, sensory input, and emotional soothing. It presents a method for parents or caregivers to respond to challenging behaviors and reestablish a trusting connection with the child.

TBRI is used in homes, residential treatment facilities, group homes, schools, camps, and international orphanages[5]. Parents and professionals can implement its solutions immediately to curb severe behaviors. Behavior modification, however, seems to be the focus; no biblical anthropology is present.

Purvis created a corresponding resource called *Created to Connect*, which contains lessons with Bible verses attached to TBRI techniques. The lessons are devotional in nature as they explain the TBRI concept and apply a Bible verse to that concept. It presents helpful Bible passages, but not a comprehensive biblical explanation of how trauma influences a child.

The biblical counseling field is limited in resources addressing children from traumatic backgrounds. Pierre's book, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, however, gives a helpful general understanding of human experience. He categorizes three dimensions of the heart: cognitive, affective, and volitional. The cognitive dimension explains thinking, the affective dimension explains feeling, and the volitional dimension explains decision making. Pierre's 2010 dissertation gives even further background and research.[6] How these dimensions relate to human behavior will be explored in detail in future chapters. His work broadly explains all human beings, and it could be an effective springboard for understanding the specific experiences of children from traumatic backgrounds.

Interestingly, Pierre's categories of cognitive, affective, and volitional

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[5] "TBRI," Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development, accessed September 4, 2018, https://child.tcu.edu/about-us/tbri.

[6] Jeremy Paul Pierre, "Trust In the Lord With All Your Heart: The Centrality of Faith In Christ To the Restoration of Human Functioning" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010).

dimensions of the heart relate to TBRI's three main principles. The cognitive dimension relates to the empowerment principle. The affective dimension relates to the connecting principle. The volitional dimension relates to the correction principle. Placing Purvis and Pierre in dialogue is necessary to give parents a better understanding of a child's trauma and a better strategy for navigating them through difficult unrighteous behavior.

Additionally, biblical perspectives of suffering as it relates to children will strengthen this pursuit. David Powlison wrote a mini-book called *Recovering From Child Abuse,* where he briefly reminds a person who has suffered abuse about his identity in Christ and gives practical strategies for not getting stuck in the potential negative effects of his suffering.[7] Additionally, research on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is pertinent to this thesis. PTSD is a broad and growing field secularly, and biblical counseling resources are also emerging now. Among other resources consulted on the topic, Greg Gifford's book, *Helping Your Family Through PTSD*, will inform a biblical understanding of PTSD. Gifford uniquely applies PTSD to the family, which corresponds to the focus of this thesis. He also argues that PTSD is a type of suffering, for which the Bible gives guidance.[8]

Void in the Literature

This thesis is attempting to bridge the gap that exists between secular and biblical resources for counseling parents to understand and counsel children from traumatic backgrounds. Secular resources typically focus on fixing behavioral issues and often stop there. They do not recognize that children are made in the image of God and, as such, are able to know God and live in victory over the situations that develop in this

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[7] David Powlison, *Recovering From Child Abuse: Healing and Hope For Victims* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008).

[8] Greg Gifford, *Helping Your Family Through PTSD* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2017).

fallen world. Biblical resources address broader issues of human experience and PTSD, but little exists in the biblical counseling movement that applies that knowledge to children who have experienced trauma.

Traumatic situations are more complex than manifested behavioral issues. A child's heart is greatly influenced when he grows up in situations where God's design is marred by neglect and abuse. Since all people are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26), separating the hearts of children from their behaviors will result in a flawed understanding of the cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions of the heart. Parents and counselors must connect the hearts and behaviors of children from traumatic backgrounds to a biblical worldview to help these children live within God's peaceful design.

TBRI wants to see children happy and not hurting, and they advocate practices that value children. Karyn Purvis is even quoted as saying, "When you connect to the heart of a child, everything is possible."[9] Though the heart is mentioned, and Purvis comes from a Christian background, TBRI does not provide an adequate biblical understanding of who a child is or how a child is designed to think, feel, and act. Additionally, the goal of TBRI differs from the goal of biblical counseling. Purvis writes, "we know that a multidisciplinary approach can help many youngsters transform into happier, well-adjusted family members who are a delight to their parents. The key is to treat the whole child, with all his or her interrelated needs, not just one small aspect of behavior or illness."[10]

Is having a delightful child the ultimate goal, however? Every parent certainly hopes their efforts will result in a delightful child, but frustration will easily come if that

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[9] "TBRI," Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development, accessed September 4, 2018, https://child.tcu.edu/about-us/tbri.

[10] Purvis, et al. *The Connected Child,* 3.

is the goal of parenting. This thesis will argue that a longer-term solution exists that develops a delightful child further into one who also finds fulfillment and hope in life by following God's purposes. Put simply, the gospel will transform even the most traumatized person. TBRI contains valuable observations and practices, but counseling must go beyond behavior modification to address the cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions of human experience through traumatic situations. Without a biblical view of human experience, parents are left with behavioral principles detached from God's design of conforming to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). While it might claim to talk about the whole child, God's design is not present in TBRI's approach.

Pierre's work would inform this task. He argues that counseling should try to unite the functions of the heart. He explains, "Emphasizing one aspect without due attention to the others will lead to a lopsided view of people and a lopsided methodology in handling them."[11] The heart cannot be addressed merely cognitively, affectively, or volitionally, but all dimensions should be present in order to have an effective counseling plan.

Consider an example of a child throwing a fit when denied a candy bar. TBRI explains this fit as a result of fear from the child's past because she was often forced to go hungry in an orphanage. The counsel to parents is to provide "felt safety," which is where they would adjust their behavior so children would know in a profound and basic way that they are safe in their home and safe with their parent.[12] While every Christian parent should ensure their child is safe and provided for, a biblical counseling approach would equip parents with a plan for teaching their children to understand their fears. Fear is a feeling involving the affective dimension of the heart. That plan would include not just talking about the feeling (affective), but also help them understand how to think properly

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[11] Pierre, "Trust In the Lord With All Your Heart," 220.

[12] Purvis, et al., *The Connected Child*, 48.

about fear (cognitive), and how to make righteous decisions to overcome their fear (volitional). The gospel would be at the center of that plan, helping lead children to understand how Jesus helps them through all situations.

A biblical counseling approach could include practical strategies like TBRI suggests, but it will present them within a holistic approach of addressing each dimension of the heart. The problem is that Powlison's *Recovering From Childhood Abuse* is intended to be a short, concise read and does not develop as more than an immediate help.[13] Gifford's *Helping Your Family Through PTSD* does not detail the effects of trauma on a child's heart or inform the relationship between parents and children after trauma. Pierre does not apply his anthropology specifically to childhood trauma.[14] This paper will fill that void and open the door for biblical counseling materials on more specific issues related to childhood trauma.

Thesis

Trauma inescapably reinforces misguided thoughts, actions, and feelings in children. Behavioral therapies like TBRI offer helpful insight into the effects of trauma on children, but without a robust biblical anthropology, their assessment and recommendations fall short of the best goals for a child. Understanding God's design for human personhood will help parents understand how trauma severely influences the cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions of children's hearts, and respond in ways that go beyond behavior modification to align children's hearts with God's design.

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[13] The Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF) publishes The Journal of Biblical Counseling, which contains helpful articles on parenting that will also be explored, such as "Helping the Parents of An Angry Child" by Michael Emlet and David Powlison, and "Angry Teens: Start With Your Own Heart" by Paul David Tripp.

[14] Other Christian resources exist that have explored different aspects of trauma, which are helpful for understanding a bigger picture of trauma, such as: Kyu Bo Kim, "Embracing Trauma In Theodrama: Embodying Christiformity" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), and a number of counseling handbooks that address the major issues involved in trauma.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA, CHILDREN, AND THE
IMAGE OF GOD

When observing the behavior of their children who have experienced trauma, parents could easily ask *why in the world are they doing that?* Or in moments of frustration even ask *what is wrong with them?* These questions reveal the fact that something seems off, but parents often do not understand why. Furthermore, what is the standard by which they determine something is off? If something is off, then what are children to put on?

This chapter, therefore, will develop a biblical anthropology to help understand trauma's impact on a child. God's perfect design for people has been marred by sin, so every life experience, whether positive or negative, shapes a person's worldview and impacts whether she lives within God's design and fulfills her created purpose. The image of God in people and the composition of people are the starting point to understanding how trauma shapes a child's worldview. It is where to start to determine what is off and discover what needs to be put on.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation says that children are in foster care because they or their families are going through a crisis. Children are removed from their parents because they are unsafe, abused or neglected.[1] Essentially, they have experienced trauma. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a modern label that describes very serious trauma that the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) calls a disorder that can

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[1] "What Is Foster Care?" The Annie E. Casey Foundation, February 5, 2014, http://www.aecf.org/blog/what-is-foster-care.

develop when someone experiences a shocking, scary, or dangerous event. Examining PTSD helps develop a foundation for understanding how trauma affects a person. A diagnosis of PTSD is made when all of the following are experienced for at least one month: At least one re-experiencing symptom, at least one avoidance symptom, at least two arousal and reactivity symptoms, and at least two cognition and mood symptoms.[2]

A 2012 study of 732 children aged 17 and 18 who were in foster care revealed that the lifetime prevalence of PTSD for that age of children with foster care experience is roughly twice that of same-age counterparts in the general population.[3] Considering that statistic as well as the experiences that lead to their entry into the foster system, it is reasonable to say that these children suffer significantly. Furthermore, their suffering can be prolonged by re-experiencing symptoms of their trauma. Re-experiencing symptoms could be frightening thoughts, bad dreams, or flashbacks—anything that can cause them to relive their negative experiences.[4]

Interestingly, fifty-five percent of children in foster care in 2016 had a goal of reunification with parent(s) or principal caretaker(s), and fifty-one percent of those children actually did reunite.[5] Remember that these children are removed from their homes because of some kind of crisis, and they typically have more traumatic suffering than their non-fostered peers. So, if half of children in foster care returned to their families from which they were removed, then there would likely be some kind of flashback that will trigger more trauma, even if the parents have improved their situation.

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[2] "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," The National Institute of Mental Health, accessed July 10, 2018, https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml.

[3] Amy Salazar et al., "Trauma Exposure and PTSD among Older Adolescents in Foster Care," *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology* 48, no. 4 (April 2013): 545–546.

[4] "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," The National Institute of Mental Health.

[5] "Foster Care Statistics 2016," Child Welfare Information Gateway. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, accessed July 10, 2018, https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/foster.

Realize, however, that trauma does not only happen to children in the foster care system. Any child can experience a shocking, scary, or dangerous event that can bring about negative consequences. Those consequences could be summarized into two categories: physiological and emotional.

The Cooperation Between Heart and Body

Though greater attention in this thesis is given to the heart, the physiological impact of trauma on a child is important to summarize because people are psychosomatic beings, meaning that our physical bodies impact our spiritual being.

A 2005 study found that children and adolescents with histories of mistreatment have increased rates of PTSD, depression, personality disorders, conduct problems, oppositionality, attentional difficulties, suicidality, aggression, socioemotional difficulties, and substance abuse.[6] Even in infancy, where it might be thought that situations are not remembered and therefore not traumatic, trauma such as exposure to inadequate nutrition during the brain growth spurt, exposure to biological pathogens or chemical agents that target developing brain tissue, and exposure to physical trauma to the baby's brain interferes with the experience-dependent maturation of the brain's coping systems, therefore having a long-enduring negative impact on the trajectory of developmental processes.[7] Specifically, child maltreatment has been associated with alterations in the neurobiological systems that are highly involved in brain maturation, cognitive development, and emotional and behavioral regulation.[8]

Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine argue that an imbalance in some brain

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[6] Tiffany Watts-English et al., "The Psychobiology of Maltreatment in Childhood," *Journal of Social Issues* 62, no. 4 (2006): 718.

[7] Allan N. Schore, "The Effects of Early Relational Trauma on Right Brain Development, Affect Regulation, and Infant Mental Health," *Infant Mental Health Journal* 22, 1-2 (2001): 207.

[8] Watts-English et al., "The Psychobiology of Maltreatment in Childhood," 719.

neurotransmitters are improved by physiological means like exercise, physical touch, and nutrition. Levels of neurotransmitters like epinephrine, dopamine, serotonin, and others can be measured through urine tests. They worked with five-year-old Cammi, who was diagnosed as having reactive attachment disorder and early onset bipolar disorder. Cammi had a neurotransmitter test completed before starting Purvis' intensive behavioral intervention program, and then had another test tweny days later. At first, Cammi was irritable, volatile, explosive, and aggressive. In just twenty days, much had changed, including her aggression decreasing. The neurotransmitter test at twenty days showed her dopamine level decreasing from a very high 431 to 99. They attribute her reduced aggression to the decreased dopamine level. While physiological means can impact neurotransmitter levels, interestingly Cammi received no drugs and the program was strictly behavioral therapy.[9]

A child, like Cammi, who experiences this degree of physiological effects (a high dopamine level in her case) would also struggle emotionally or spiritually. The heart of a child, not just her brain, is being influenced. The physiological effects might be more visible, and a child might not articulate well what is happening in her heart, but the impact is still severe.

Regarding the cooperation between a person's body and soul, Welch rightly notes, "The unique contribution of the body to the whole person is that it is the *mediator* of moral action rather than the *initiator*."[10] Knowing that the body and heart cannot function isolated from one another, he argues that the heart tells the body what to do. If the body is the vehicle for the heart's initiations, then imagine what a child's heart is experiencing when she responds physiologically in the forementioned ways.

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[9] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing To Your Adoptive Family* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2007), 204-209.

[10] Edward T. Welch, *Blame It On the Brain?: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998), 40.

Similarly, the body can become weak, which causes limitations on the desires of the heart.[11] For example, a child might desire to perform well in school, but her malnutrition from neglect led to cognitive delays and she is unable to achieve the grades she would like. Her body limits her heart's desires, which could influence her to respond in sinful ways. While physiological effects should not be disregarded, the connection of body and heart requires that help for children must address their heart and not only the body. The Bible informs of us for this purpose, but it should be important to note that even secular thinkers understand that more than just the physiological realm of a child is influenced.

For example, Herman claims that trauma destroys the social systems of care, protection, and meaning that support human life. Therefore, recovering from trauma requires reconstructing these systems.[12] More than just social systems are at stake, but even secular thinkers can observe that what was considered to be normative for children must be reconstructed.

Reconstruction must be directed toward God's design, however. Bidwell attempts this goal by advancing the concept of pneumatraumatology, an understanding of traumatic injury from a spiritual, though not necessarily religious, perspective. He likens the Bible's wilderness experiences of Moses, the Israelites, and Jesus to the experience of physical trauma because the sojourner is placed in an unfamiliar setting and is tempted by many false comforts to turn away from God and toward something else. While there would not be agreement with every part of pneumatraumatology, one helpful insight is how trauma victims and their families might be tempted to think while in the wilderness of the trauma experience. They might reject or condemn God for what has happened.

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[11] Welch, *Blame It On the Brain?*, 41.

[12] Judith L. Herman, "Recovery From Psychological Trauma," *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 52, Suppl (1998): S145.

They might put all of their hope in medical technology and physicians and decide to see continued life, at whatever cost, as the only good option. They might value their life and loved ones more than they value God. They might cling to material possessions and invest themselves in many other idols.[13]

Trauma can impact a person physiologically and can influence a person in emotional or spiritual ways. Together, in the least, trauma affects a child's worldview. Doyle and Perlman assert, "When trust is damaged by adults failing to protect from or actually perpetuating trauma, basic worldviews and foundational aspects of relationships change. The inability to trust caretakers, God, or the universe makes it challenging to feel safe again following trauma."[14] This lack of trust is not God's design for a relationship between children and parents or other adults, but children can begin to think this reality is the norm.

To triumph through trauma, then, children must be reoriented to a worldview based upon their Creator. Those helping children should be focused on their origin and future, and only a biblical worldview provides a positive perspective of each of those, despite the trauma that has taken place. Beck and Demarest recognize that the Bible speaks to the natural and supernatural realms of this world and that modern social science cannot give as comprehensive an explanation of the world. They posit, "Social science can only describe and seek to explain the natural world and must remain mute regarding the supernatural context that surrounds the world as we know it."[15]

Fortunately, the Bible presents people as made in the image of God, which

[13] Duane R Bidwell, "Developing an Adequate 'Pneumatraumatology': Understanding the Spiritual Impacts of Traumatic Injury." *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 56, no. 2 (June 2002): 136-137.

[14] Andrea Doyle and Staci Perlman. *Trauma Counseling: Theories and Interventions,* ed. Lisa Lopez Levers (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2012), 148.

[15] James R. Beck, and Bruce A. Demarest. *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2005), 67-68.

answers questions of origin and future. The image of God informs how a person is composed and, therefore, is able to interact with this world. Secular thinking attempts to understand the creature through the creature, but God's revealed word helps us truly understand the creature through the Creator.[16]

The Image of God in People

Human beings are uniquely the only part of creation that is made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-31). Simply put, the image of God indicates that people are similar to God in some respects and they are able to portray his character and work in the world.[17] The image of God appears in the creation account (Gen 1:26) and is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (Gen 5:1; Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). Before the concept of the image of God is explained, however, a simple assertion must be clear: God created all people. Every person, therefore, has dignity and purpose, as the beginning chapters of the Bible express.

What a person believes about the origin and purpose of people will affect how he views their potential. People are the pinnacle of God's creation (Gen 1:26-31) and sin has marred God's perfect design (Gen 3). The major narrative of the Bible continues to explain how people can be restored to God and live in his perfect plan to find victory over a life impacted by sin. This explanation of origin and purpose brings much hope and potential for people, even ones who have experienced trauma. So, the starting point to help children who have experienced trauma is to teach them their created identity, which is informed by the image of God, so they can triumph over the marred reality that sin created in their lives.

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[16] Bob Kellemen and Sam Williams, "The Spiritual Anatomy of the Soul," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 108.

[17] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 184.

So, how does the image of God influence human behavior? Marshall notes the appearance of "image" and "likeness" together in Exodus 20:4: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." The Hebrew word for "image" (פֶּסֶל, pecel) is the same word translated as "idol." She posits, "Rather than needing to create an idol for worship, like their Babylonian neighbors, they were to realize that God had created them to bear God's image and likeness on the earth. This did not mean that they were to worship the creature rather than the creator, but that they had a special, God-given responsibility on the earth."[18]

People are created with a certain responsibility and inclination to interact with the world. Theologians have tried to categorize these interactions, or ways that people image God. Beck and Demarest summarize the arguments into three major perspectives: functional, relational, and substantive.

The functional perspective is an operational category instead of a metaphysical category, meaning it focuses on what a person does.[19] A person's dominion over God's creation is seen as his primary function. God commanded dominion (Gen 1:26-28), and a form of dominion is seen in the creation account when Adam named the animals (Gen 2:19-20). Rationalistic Socinians, the anti-Trinitarian predecessors of Unitarianism, denied original sin and Christ's atoning death on the cross. Instead, they stressed human rational powers, good works, and performance of moral and civic duties.[20] Not surprisingly, they preferred a functional explanation of the image of God. Their catechism states that the image of God "properly imports the authority of man and his

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[18] Molly Marshall, *What It Means To Be Human* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1995), 42-43.

[19] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology,* 141.

[20] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology,* 142.

dominion over all inferior creatures, which results from the reason and judgment communicated to him."[21]

While the Bible presents man's dominion over creation, there must be more than this function to explain the image of God. For example, Psalm eight carries a theme of God' sovereignty in giving mankind the responsibility to have dominion over the earth. Theologian G.C. Berkouwer claims, however, that Psalm eight "indicates clearly enough the unique position of man in the created cosmos, but this in no sense implies that this *dominium* especially reveals the content of the image of God."[22]

Another explanation of the image of God, then, is the relational perspective, which identifies the image of God in terms of the person's various relationships.[23] People are made in the image of God in that they are able to relate to God and in community with other people.[24] Bonhoeffer and Barth are noted for this perspective. Bonhoeffer wrote, "The likeness, the analogy of man to God, is not *analogia entis* but *analogia relationis. . .* The relation of creature with creature is a God-given relation because it exists in freedom and freedom originates from God."[25] Barth indicates that the mention of male and female in Genesis 1:27 implies a relational component.[26]

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[21] Thomas Rees, *The Racovian Catechism: With Notes and Illustrations, Translated from the Latin; to Which Is Prefixed a Sketch of the History of Unitarianism in Poland and the Adjacent Countries*. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1962), 1.2.21.

[22] G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 71.

[23] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology,* 143.

[24] Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, Church Dogmatics 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 3.1.192.

[25] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 37.

[26] Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation,* 3.1.195.

Finally, the substantive perspective identifies the person's likeness to God as a psychical or spiritual quality. The focus of this category is on intellect or reason.[27] This perspective is evident in the early writings of Justin Martyr when he asserts, "In the beginning He made the human race with the power of thought and of choosing the truth and doing right, so that all men are without excuse before God; for they have been born rational and contemplative.[28] Irenaeus was the first to distinguish between *image* and *likeness* in Genesis 1:26. The image consists of a rational mind and free will, which he called endowments, and the likeness consists of the supernatural gift of righteousness and holiness given by the Holy Spirit. He advocated that the image has always been intact, but the likeness was lost when sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden and is then restored at baptism.[29] Disagreement exists among theologians throughout history on distinguishing between *image* and *likeness*, but John Calvin summarizes, ". . . although the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks did not glow.[30]

Beck and Demarest's three categories of functional, relational, and substantive attempt to express the way a person images God. Lambert simplifies these three perspectives as "what we do," "the relationships we have," and "who we are", which would correspond to functional, relational, and substantive respectively.[31]

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[27] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology,* 145.

[28] Justin Martyr, "The First Apology of Justin," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 172.

[29] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology,* 145.

[30] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 188.

[31] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 184-187.

In whatever ways these categories have been explained and labeled throughout history, Beck, Demarest, and Lambert all agree that the different perspectives are not at odds with each other. Lambert concluded, "The Bible teaches many ways that we image God, and we should embrace all of them. There is nothing to be gained from insisting that the image of God is manifested in only one way, rather than in a multitude of ways."[32] Similarly, Beck and Demarest assert, "Within the unity of the person, the above capacities of the human being as *imago* function interdependently, not independently. The one human person thinks, wills, feels, relates, and acts as an organic whole.[33]

Berkouwer warns against looking only to the different abstracts of man without understanding that the Bible explains the whole man, his entire being. Specifically, he argues that theology cannot seek a solution like scientific anthropology or Biblical psychology, where it looks for information just on certain aspects of man. Theology cannot find data and then force it into these other disciplines. He believes this has led to conflict between theology and psychology, and contends, "It is clear enough from Scripture that its concern is with the whole man, the full man, the actual man as he stands in God's sight, in the religious bond between the totality of his being and God."[34] While man is shown in different ways throughout Scripture, Berkouwer asserts that the central dimension of man is not one of isolation from God, but one of the light and presence of God. He beautifully calls this an "inescapable relationship" between man and God.[35] It is foolish to ignore the bond between God and man from the created order, yet this is what secular approaches to anthropology and counseling do. Children who have suffered trauma cannot be fully understood from a worldly perspective; parents and counselors

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[32] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 188.

[33] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology,* 152.

[34] Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 31.

[35] Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 33-34.

must go further, therefore, to uncover how their hearts have been influenced. The goal must be like Pierre's goal in writing one of his books: "These pages are dedicated to showing how God designed people with dynamic hearts to experience the world fully only when connected to Christ."[36]

The theology of the image of God is more complex than even presented here, but a child will be able to understand and find hope in this aspect: he can know God personally and can change his faulty thinking and behavior because he is made in the image of God. Being able to know the perfect, loving, merciful God opens a whole new world for a child who has found his worldview drastically altered by trauma. When confronted with this truth, he will realize that he is not confined to his falsely constructed identity that is informed by negligent parents or abusive caregivers. He can know instead, perhaps for the first time, that there is a greater purpose in life than to just persevere through his difficult situation. For this reason, children who have experienced trauma must be taught that they are made in the image of God.

Another reason for discussing the image of God with children is so they realize that the image of God has been distorted in all people. Sin has marred the divine image though it did not destroy it. Even after sin entered the world, as explained in Genesis 3, the divine image is still borne by all people, as explained by Genesis 9:6.[37] This truth will help children understand that those who neglected or abused them were not following God's design. Children can know that their trauma is not the norm, nor does it have to be. Hope exists for the child suffering through trauma because he is made in the image of God. Hope even exists for the sinner who causes trauma because the divine image remains and allows for lasting change.

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[36] Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 2.

[37] Lambert. *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 188-189.

Lambert believes that every counseling need traces back to a failure to fully image God. He asserts, ". . . the goal of counseling *should be* to facilitate restoration of the image of God because, unfortunately, most counseling approaches do not see it as the job in counseling to have anything at all to do with God and his image in man."[38] Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 reveal that salvation through Jesus Christ brings a person back into the perfect image of God: true righteousness and holiness that is renewed in knowledge after the image of God. As Beck and Demarest expressed, "All humans, without respect to gender, race, or degree of functioning, are children of God by creation and potentially children of God by redemption."[39]

Manipulating a child to salvation should never be the goal, but they must know the blessing that comes when living in obedience to Christ. Greg Morse affirmed, "You are chosen, not forsaken. You are free, not a slave. He is for you, not against you. You are his child, not an orphan. That is who you are. Because that is who he says you are. And that is who he died for you to become."[40] There is hope for the child who has suffered trauma! The hope of lasting change comes through the realization that God predestined people to be conformed to the likeness of his Son (Rom 8:29). Beck and Demarest assert, "The fact of the human being's creation in God's likeness is stated in the first page of the Bible; but not until the revelation of God's Son and His redeeming work did the full implications of the human person's resemblance to God become clear."[41]

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[38] Lambert. *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 190.

[39] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 150.

[40] Greg Morse. "You Are Who God Says You Are." *Desiring God Blog,* June 3, 2018. Accessed July 11, 2018. https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/you-are-who-god-says-you-are.

[41] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 150.

This hope will at least spark curiosity in the mind of a child who does not know God personally, and it will be an oasis for a born-again child who needs a reminder of his potential to change through God's power.

The Composition of A Person

Knowing that people are created in the image of God is half of the equation in helping children. In addition, understanding the composition of a person is essential to knowing how to best counsel and shape a child to overcome the effects of trauma.

Theologians debate whether people consist of two parts, called *dichotomy*, or three parts, called *trichotomy*. Dichotomists believe that a person consists of material (physical body) and immaterial (soul or spirit) substances, while a trichotomist argues that a person consists of body, soul, and spirit, with soul and spirit being distinct.[42] A snapshot of this debate is critical for understanding how the dichotomist position best prepares counselors for helping children from traumatic backgrounds.

Smith summarizes the main argument of trichotomists, which uses two main verses for support: Hebrews 4:12 and First Thessalonians 5:23. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." So, if soul and spirit can be divided, then they must be distinct. First Thessalonians 5:23 says, "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." There appears a three-way distinction in this verse between spirit, soul, and body.

In response to these verses, Smith points out three issues with trichotomy. First, language does not work in such a mechanical, one-meaning-per-word kind of way.

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[42] Edward T. Welch, "Who Are We? Needs, Longings, And the Image of God In Man," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 29, 31.

He points to heart, soul, mind, and strength in Mark 12:30 as an example. These four words are not Jesus' way of describing people as consisting of four parts, but they refer to loving God with a person's entire being. The same logic is applied to Hebrews 4:12. A straightforward reading of the verse says soul *and* spirit, not soul *from* spirit.

Smith's second argument is that soul and spirit are used interchangeably in the Bible. Death is described as both "giving up the soul" in some passages (Gen 35:18; 1 Kgs 17:21; Acts 15:26), and "giving up the spirit" in others (Ps 31:5; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59). The dead are described as "the *spirits* in prison" (1 Pet 3:19) and as "the *souls* of those who had been slain" (Rev 6:9). The scriptural designation for man is "body and *soul*" at times (Matt 6:25; 10:28) and "body and *spirit*" at others (Eccl 12:7; 1 Cor 5:3,5).

Finally, Smith argues that trichotomy is rooted in Greek philosophy more than biblical exegesis. Many Greek philosophers believed that spirit and body were of such a disparate nature that they could only meaningfully interact through a third intermediary substance. In other words, they believed the soul functions as a middle ground for the spirit and body. For these reasons, Smith believes that a dichotomist view of man is more helpful for counseling.[43] Welch agrees, warning that trichotomy creates a framework for thinking that the physical body has physical needs, the soul has psychological needs, and the spirit has spiritual needs.[44]

None would argue against the body having physical needs, but what is the difference exactly between psychological needs and spiritual needs? This separation is precisely why secular counseling to children from traumatic backgrounds is flawed—it does not address the entire child, just the assumed psychological needs without the realization that the soul and spirit are referring to the same part of the child. Pierre writes,

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[43] Winston Smith, "Dichotomy or Trichotomy? How the Doctrine of Man Shapes the Treatment of Depression," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 22-23.

[44] Welch, "Who Are We?," 29.

"People's problems are not either spiritual or psychological, mental or emotional, moral or social. People are moral agents who conduct themselves from a singular response system for which they are responsible before their Creator. Because this is true, all human problems are spiritual problems."[45]

Lambert presents four biblical terms describing the existence of the immaterial soul: soul (Ps 6:3), spirit (1 Sam 1:15), hidden person (1 Pet 3:4), and inner self (2 Cor 4:16).[46] Pierre, however, contends, "Scripture uses different anthropological terms—heart, soul, spirit, mind, and more—to describe a simple, singular human experience. . . The terms for soul, spirit, and mind describe the same types of function as the term for heart."[47] Pierre gives a robust explanation of these biblical terms,[48] but Baumgartel and Behms describes the Greek word καρδία (kardia), translated as heart in the New Testament, as "the focus of his being and activity as a spiritual personality" and it relates to "the unity and totality of the inner life represented and expressed in the variety of intellectual and spiritual functions."[49] Pierre magnifies and categorizes this definition of the heart into the three dimensions on which this writing will focus: the cognitive, affective, and volitional.

Recognize a connection between the three main categories of describing the image of God in people, the three dimensions of the heart, and the three empowerment principles of TBRI, as visualized in table one.

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[45] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 15.

[46] Lambert. *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 194.

[47] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 15.

[48] Pierre, "Trust In the Lord With All Your Heart," 24-77.

[49] Friedrich Baumgartel and Johannes Behms, "*kardia*" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 3:609-10.

Table 1. Connection between categories of the image of God,
dimensions of the heart, and TBRI principles

Image of God	*Dimension of the Heart*	*TBRI Principle*
Substantive (who we are)	Cognitive (thinking)	Empowerment (safe environment)
Relational (the relationships we have)	Affective (feeling)	Connecting (trust)
Functional (what we do)	Volitional (decision making)	Correction (responding to challenging behavior)

The similarities in these three areas present great hope for helping children from traumatic backgrounds. As TBRI presents practical behavior modification methods, the dimensions of the heart will give a biblical understanding of the child's behavior, which harmonizes and highlights the image of God in which that child was created. This framework, which will be developed in subsequent chapters, will equip parents and counselors with the knowledge and ability to help children far beyond simple behavior modification to reestablish God's design for that child.

The Image of God and A Person's Identity

Pierre asserts two types of identities from which any person operates: a constructed identity and a given identity. A constructed identity is an "established self-image, made up of a complex arrangement of various conceptions, values, and commitments about who they are and what role they play in the world," whereas a given identity is "who God has designed them to be and how God has designed them to function in the world."[50] A person's given identity is in line with the image of God in which every person is created. Therefore, parents and counselors should direct children to understand their given identity.

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[50] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 127-128.

Trauma can construct a false identity in the mind of a child. Consider Robert, a child who is born to negligent parents. He is forced to fend for himself mostly at home, crawling to a trash bag of junk food in the lower kitchen cupboard when he is hungry. His basic needs are not being met, and as he grew his parents did not taken time to address his bathroom training. Children's services eventually intervened and removed him from that home and placed him in a foster home with an older lady who had good intentions to care for him but became impatient with his slow progress. As Robert grew, he became more defiant and his foster mother found it easier to leave him in his room with cartoons on the television than take time to address the pressing needs. Outside of school and church, Robert had little interaction with other people. This isolation produced poor social skills as Robert never learned how to properly interact with a parent, let alone any adult. He would often be embarrassed when around other children at church or school because of his smell from still wearing diapers.

At the age of seven, when moved to another foster family, Robert had constructed an identity that he is worthless, is second-hand to other children, and cannot trust adults because they might neglect him. This complex arrangement of various conceptions, values, and commitments of who Robert is and his role in the world is what Pierre calls his constructed identity.

Robert's thinking is certainly distorted, but the only hopeful reality that can be offered him is one that transcends the inherent sinfulness of the people who have created his suffering. In other words, He needs to understand and live by God's design for him, and he needs to be introduced to Jesus Christ, who offers hope and peace that is currently foreign to him. He will not know that design, hope, or peace, however, unless he is counseled through his trauma to understand it.

Pierre argues that people do not consciously choose every part of their constructed identity, but they hear the environment of voices around them and eventually absorb those values. He continues, "People make little decisions that, over time, reinforce

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these layers of identity until it solidifies and becomes less penetrable the more packed in it becomes."[51] Robert has so many layers packed into his identity that it will take more than just telling him affirming statements, even while they are true, because his concept of reality is false.

Robert needs to understand why he has suffered the way he has, and he needs to know that that is not how life is supposed to be. Lane and Tripp present a common biblical counseling model summarized by "heat, thorns, cross, and fruit." "Heat" is the person's life situation with difficulties, blessings, and temptations.[52] Lane and Tripp talk about suffering in their presentation on heat, but their discussion is geared to someone who can think clearly about their response throughout suffering. Children who have experienced trauma and have a constructed identity based on lies may not even be fully aware of their heat. In fact, they may have been in that heat their entire lives and do not know any other way of life. Purvis acknowledges that some inappropriate behaviors are influenced by old traumas, neurological limitations, and the appropriate urge to survive. They operate on their limited life experience. For example, a seven-year-old boy frequently walks into neighbors' houses unannounced and uninvited because before his adoption he lived alone on the streets and has no experience of private homes or the nuclear family. A six-year-old girl becomes angry, volatile, and distressed when she gets close to a swimming pool because she watched her sister drown a year before.[53]

Even though Lane and Tripp write, "There is pain and we shouldn't be shocked when it comes our way",[54] a child may not recognize much difference between

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[51] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 128.

[52] Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 83.

[53] Purvis, et al., *The Connected Child*, 44.

[54] Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 109.

"normal life" and suffering because their whole worldview has been shaped by their trauma. They are ultimately still responsible for their responses to situations (James 1:14-15), but they might not know any other way to respond to the layers of false identity that have blinded them from God's design.

Even more, a child's worldview can be so distorted that he believes he is stuck in his poor behavior and attitudes. A father was talking to his 8-year-old son during a frustrating moment where his son was sinfully responding to another child who accidentally kicked him. When the father told his son that he could choose to make the right decision to respond kindly, an angry roar rose from deeper than his four-foot stature suggested: "I can't be kind!"

Children who have experienced trauma are often plagued with guilt and shame because of their situations. These feelings are certainly part of their heat, but they need to be counseled to realize that their situation is not necessarily their fault. Some heat comes because of a person's direct sinful choices, and some heat comes because of the actions of some people against another person. Children do not deserve to be neglected or beaten. Those are sinful choices of parents. These children have been sinned against by negligent and abusive parents and their healing will begin by correcting their false identity by teaching them God's design for their lives.

Conclusion

If there is any criticism of the biblical counseling movement offered here, it is that some might not recognize just how hot the heat can be, which can lead to calloused or insensitive responses toward those who suffer. Trauma shapes a child's worldview to develop beliefs, desires, and commitments that are inconsistent with how they were created. The image of God, and therefore a person's given identity, is an essential starting point for understanding how trauma influences a child.

Every person is a psychosomatic being, where body and soul interact.

Theologians have categorized the image of God into understanding humans as substantive, relational, and functional beings, explaining who people are, the relationships they have, and what people do. The categories align with the dynamic heart model's three dimensions, which will provide a framework for parents and counselors to understanding and respond to their children. In fact, for lasting transformation, parents and counselors must employ a dynamic heart perspective in understanding the child as made in the image of God, how a child's worldview has been influenced, and then take steps to bring order into the child's disordered life according to God's design.

CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA FROM A
DYNAMIC HEART PERSPECTIVE

It is easy to tell someone to "just get over it" or "shrug it off." It is easy for
Christians to point out a person's sinful choices and hold them accountable for their
responses without giving as much time to discovering the influences behind those
decisions. Any Christian should readily declare that every person is led into sin by his
own desires (Jas 1:14-15), but that does nullify the validity of how those desires were
shaped. If parents and counselors can help explain to a child the conditions of his heart
following inappropriate behavior, then the child can better understand why he makes
those choices. Here is where lasting transformation comes for the child.

In applying the dynamic heart model to childhood trauma, this chapter will
explain the intuitive responses of a person's heart, then explain and apply the cognitive,
affective, and volitional dimensions of the heart. Finally, it will evaluate Pierre's
influences on the heart and develop a proper view of self-identity from which a child
should live in the image of God. The hope is that parents and counselors would be able to
apply this framework to the lives of their children so they will align children's hearts with
God's design.

Intuitive Responses of the Heart

People's hearts are always active, and they function out of established
structures that express themselves in interactive ways. A person will not always
immediately understand why they do what they do or think what they think. King David
alludes to this in Psalm 139. He begins the Psalm by acknowledging that God has

searched him and knows him even more deeply than he knows himself. Fittingly, he ends the Psalm with verses 23 and 24 saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" With this truth in mind, the Holy Spirit can help reveal through self-reflection what is under the surface in a person's heart. Pierre categorizes beliefs, desires, and commitments as intuitive responses within the framework of the three dimensions of the heart: cognitive, affective, and volitional.[1]

Pierre writes, "Beliefs express themselves as interpretations, desires as feelings, and commitments as choices."[2] Beliefs and interpretations align with the cognitive dimension of the heart. Desires and feelings align with the affective dimension of the heart, while commitments and choices align with the volitional dimension of the heart. In any one situation, a person can interpret it, develop feelings because of it, and make choices in response to it. In other words, a person's beliefs, desires, and commitments are intermingled because each dimension of the heart is always functioning. Table two presents Pierre's summary of the intuitive responses aligned with the dimensions of the heart.

Table 2. Pierre's intuitive responses aligned with the dimensions of the heart

Intuitive Response			Dimension of the Heart
Beliefs	*Express themselves as…*	Interpretations	Cognitive
Desires		Feelings	Affective
Commitments		Choices	Volitional

Even so, people can unknowingly prioritize one dimension of the heart over

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[1] Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 31.

[2] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 31.

others. As it relates to children, there will be times that children make choices because their affection outweighs their cognition. Or a child may act a certain way because his volition is prioritized over his affection. For example, a child with neglectful parents disobeys his daycare worker's rule about only taking two snacks during the afternoon because he believes that he will not receive dinner at home that evening. He knows (cognitive dimension) that he is breaking the rule, but he chooses (volitional dimension) to stash a couple extra snacks in his backpack because his commitment to survival is prioritized over his knowledge of the rules.

Pierre offers one of the most helpful frameworks for understanding human experience, but his wording could be slightly revised so that parents and counselors can determine the motivations of their children's hearts more quickly. I suggest rephrasing it this way: Interpretations indicate beliefs, feeling indicate desires, and choices indicate commitments. Table 3 shows the rephrasing of the intuitive responses aligned with the dimensions of the heart.

Table 3. Rephrasing the intuitive responses of the heart for
parents and counselors working with children

Intuitive Response			Dimension of the Heart
Interpretations		Beliefs	Cognitive
Feelings	*Indicate…*	Desires	Affective
Choices		Commitments	Volitional

This simple rephrasing does not change the meaning of Pierre's work but presents it so that if parents could picture these columns in their head, the first column is what they would see or hear first from their child. Parents can quickly see the inappropriate behaviors. Behavior modification programs see these too, and they suggest

responses to try and correct the behavior. With this rephrasing of the intuitive responses of the heart, we can start at the same level of observation, but this framework will help parents and counselors go beyond the surface to understand the heart and help correct a child toward God's design. Like pulling back layers of an onion, a child's interpretations, feelings, and choices are the manifestations of the deeper levels of beliefs, desires, and commitments, which reveal the even deeper dimensions from which the heart functions.

Parents should diligently look and listen for their child's interpretations, feelings, and choices. When a parent speaks with or observes her child, she will quickly see the choice a child made, or hear how the child feels. A boy might cry, "Nobody likes me," which should lead a parent to ask questions to uncover what this interpretation reveals about his son's beliefs about himself or a particular situation. A girl might declare "I'm really sad about my fish dying." Once he hears this feeling, her father can begin asking questions to uncover the desires of his child's heart. A teenage boy responded to an insult by punching another boy in the face. This obvious choice should lead a parent to question his son to determine what his son was really committed to in that moment. Looking for and listening to interpretations, feelings, and choices, which are usually more readily presented by children, will help parents take the next step in discovering what is happening in their child's heart.

Remember that people are incapable of understanding everything going on inside them. Their interpretations, feelings, and choices are influenced in a number of ways, which will be discussed soon. However, "people are responsible for the whole trajectory of their responses."[3] This statement is even true about children from trauma. Often, these children are genuinely victims of sinful behavior, but they are responsible for their responses. Great compassion must be given to help these children understand what is true in the world by uncovering what is happening in each dimension of their

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[3] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 37.

heart and redirecting them to God's design.

One caution must be stated as the dimensions of the heart are previewed separately. God created the whole person, not competing parts that require taming or elevating. Shores remarked, "God designed us to be integrated, whole beings, with emotion, mind, imagination, will, and body working together in complete harmony. Otherwise, why would he command us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut 6:5; Mark 12:30)?"[4] However, the history of western thought shows the attempt of explaining the various capacities of humans. Plato, Athenagoras of Athens, Gregory of Nyssa, Thomas Aquinas, Rene Descartes, and many others, including theologians, posited theories emphasizing various functions of the human person.[5] Pierre summarized those views into the categories of intellect/reason/cognition, emotions/feelings/affection, and will/decision/volition,[6] leaving him to select the terms cognitive, affective, and volitional to refer to the dimensions of the heart. We will now overview the cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions of the heart and make applications to a child influenced by trauma.

The Cognitive Dimension of the Heart

In simple terms, cognition refers to thinking or the process of gaining knowledge. Every person interprets everything they experience. They form conclusions about experiences and develop a worldview based on those interpretations. Interestingly, two people who have the same experience could interpret it differently because every

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[4] Steve Shores, *Minding Your Emotions* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 79.

[5] James R. Beck, and Bruce A. Demarest. *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 214-221.

[6] Jeremy Paul Pierre, "Trust In the Lord With All Your Heart: The Centrality of Faith In Christ To the Restoration of Human Functioning" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 5.

person constructs beliefs about his world starting from his earliest years of existence. People have different spheres of beliefs about many different things. Some beliefs are easier to change than others, like a child's favorite color, favorite type of clothes to wear, or the best video game. Other beliefs are more difficult to change, like their beliefs about God or their understanding of family dynamics.[7]

Beck and Demarest summarize that people organize information about themselves, others, and the world. People are self-conscious as they try to understand who they are. They become others-conscious by observing visible signs like words, facial gestures, and body language. They also become world-conscious by organizing information into sciences like geology and astronomy or into world history and biography.[8] As knowledge increases, beliefs develop. Pierre expands on the concept of control beliefs, which are the core convictions that carry the most influence over all other beliefs. He argues, "Whatever beliefs are most active over time in peoples' minds will become central. This core structure of belief is the lens through which people perceive their world."[9]

Consider, then, Jacob, who experienced abuse since infancy. When he started kindergarten at the age of five, a school counselor noted bruising around his eyes. Social services intervened and found reason to remove Jacob from his biological parents and place him in a foster home. His foster parents were constantly perplexed and frustrated because of Jacob's aggression when he was reprimanded. When Jacob broke a rule, his foster parents thought it best to send him to his room so he would not harm other children in the house or be embarrassed if corrected around other children. In his room, they would try to talk through what he did and issue appropriate consequences. However,

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[7] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 38-39.

[8] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 221.

[9] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 39.

when he would go to his room, his behavior became more aggressive by stomping on the way, slamming his door, and throwing toys against his wall once inside. A couple times he even put a hole in the drywall with his fist.

Obviously, this behavior is dangerous and must be addressed. Behavior modification techniques could help bring some correction in the moment, but after the second hole in the wall, Jacob's foster dad wanted to try to figure out what was going on in Jacob's heart. Dad was able to calm Jacob and initiate a conversation. Through some helpful questions, Dad learned that Jacob's biological parents would send him to his room when he was disobedient and hit him with a belt. Often, the buckle would hit him on his face.

Dad learned that Jacob's interpretation of the experience of being told to go to his room indicated his belief that he would get hit with a belt up there. Jacob would act aggressively in his room because he thought he had to protect himself.

Once Dad uncovered this part of Jacob's heart functioning, he and Mom were able to reassure Jacob of his safety, talk with him about God's design for parents and children, and even adjust their discipline plan to not include going to his room for a while until Jacob's control belief changed.

Remember that whatever beliefs are most active over time become control beliefs, and Jacob was dominated by this belief about belt punishments in bedrooms for five years. Interpretations indicate beliefs. Jacob needed help understanding that his perception of his situation was not accurate but was a reflection of a preestablished belief he developed. However, preestablished beliefs may or may not be accurate.[10]

The Affective Dimension of the Heart

Pierre asserts that people feel their wants. A diagnosis of cancer brings fear

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[10] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 39.

because a person desires life. Therefore, emotions serve as the gauge of desire.[11] Forrey explains emotions as a phenomenon starting with an internal experience and resulting in an external expression. A person assesses a situation based on his values, which then prompts a state of feeling that motivates or prepares the person for a behavioral response.[12] Emotions can be reactive or proactive, but either way, Forrey agrees with Pierre that emotions are always linked to values in a person's heart.

From where, though, do these emotions come? Some Christian counselors would declare, ". . .it is important to understand that negative emotions are not sinful. Feelings, both negative and positive are not right or wrong; they simply are. You are human and therefore you feel."[13] Forrey rebuts that emotions are connected with the values of the heart. Therefore, emotions can be right or wrong, and can even be commanded as virtues or prohibited as vices.[14] There is no doubt that humans have feelings. We are created by God to emote. Welch contends that people often think that emotions happen to them. Like something *made* them angry or they *got* depressed. However, anger and depression are emotions we "do." While he does not reject the idea that emotions are incited by events outside of us, he ultimately believes, "Emotions also say something about us, about our own hearts. They come *from* us rather than come over us. They are judgments we make that are initially rendered in a language different than speech.[15] After all, it is by a person's "own desire" that he is tempted and lured into sin

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[11] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*.

[12] Jeff Forrey, "The Biblical Understanding and Treatment of Emotions," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 396.

[13] Gary Chapman, *Now You're Speaking My Language* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 84.

[14] Forrey, "The Biblical Understanding and Treatment of Emotions," 401.

[15] Edward T. Welch, "Counseling Those Who Are Depressed," ed. David A. Powlison, *The Journal of Biblical Counseling, Number 2, Winter 2000* 18 (2000): 19–20.

(Jas 1:14).

Beck and Demarest are right to conclude, "Since humans were created by God to experience a wide range of emotions and feelings, we must not suppress feelings, as Stoic philosophers urged, nor eliminate desires, as Buddhism demands. Humans find fulfillment as God-created emotions are properly expressed and negative emotions controlled."[16] In other words, we need to recognize the emotion at hand, uncover the desires behind it, and take that captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5). Parents and counselors who do this are helping restore the image of God that has been marred by sin.

Being "like God" in Genesis One was the Creator's intention for people. Being "like God" in Genesis Three is a perversion of the Creator's intention. The difference is that the motivation changes after Adam and Eve sin in Genesis Three to become selfish and replace God's purposes with man's purposes. Before the fall, emotions would have functioned in ways supportive of God-honoring living, but since the fall, emotions have functioned in ways that reflect sinners' desire to be independent of God. Forrey concludes that even though not all emotional experiences will be obviously wrong, they will ultimately serve the creature and not the Creator.[17]

Feelings might not always be easily expressed by children, but parents will likely see some manifestation of a feeling, what Forrey would call a behavioral response. It might be a facial expression, such as happiness being manifested by a smile or laughing. It takes more work than observation, though, to understand what a child's emotions reveal about his desires.

Sometimes children need help even recognizing their emotions. While methodology is not the focus here, it can be helpful for parents or a counselor to have a

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[16] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 227.

[17] Forrey, "The Biblical Understanding and Treatment of Emotions," 398-399.

chart that shows emotions through emojis or illustrations. Children can point to the one that shows how they feel. It seems so simple and must go much deeper to truly help the child, but this is the start of uncovering what is happening in their hearts.[18] Once emotions are identified, questions can be asked to discover more of what a child is truly desiring. Just like some of the beliefs a child may develop are inaccurate, some of their desires might not be righteous. Shifting that desire toward righteousness is necessary. Also, some desires are right and appropriate, but they need to be expressed properly.

Grief is an example of an appropriate emotion that could be expressed improperly. Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica not to grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thess 4:13-14). Grieving was an appropriate emotional response to the death of their brothers and sisters in Christ, but that grief must be expressed in obedience to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). Experiencing the loss of their brothers and sisters did not bring about the loss of God's love and promises to them. God still exists and still gives them hope.

Consider twelve-year-old Jane's new habit of clinging to her mother at bedtime. Her mother is concerned because she does not feel like it is healthy for Jane, and it is also becoming obtrusive to Mom's marriage. After working with a biblical counselor, Jane eventually shared that she had been thinking a lot about her older sister who had committed suicide two years earlier. The counselor explored the feelings that came with those memories and realized that Jane was experiencing some level of fear. One day Jane told her counselor that she was afraid that she would lose her mother. Her feelings of fear, which were influenced by the trauma of her sister's suicide, indicated her desire to not lose her mother and her desire to not experience that level of sorrow again.

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[18] A good secular example of helping children identify emotions is Milagros Montalvo's article "All About Emotions" in *Scholastic Teacher* 126, no. 1 (2016): 60-61. She provides classroom activity suggestions for teachers like painting with a color that describes their day. She would then ask students to identify the emotion they are representing by that color. She suggests talking to students about what they do to manage emotions, like talking to others or taking a short break. This activity can help identify emotions and create a safe environment in which to talk about emotions, but it does not give any help beyond suggesting coping strategies.

This desire manifested itself by clinginess. In this case, Jane had an appropriate desire, but she was not expressing it properly. She created a false scenario of losing her mother, which influenced her feelings. Jane found help by learning about God's sovereignty and our dependence on Him, as well as receiving counseling for her grief of losing her sister.

The Volitional Dimension of the Heart

Since all people are born into sin (Rom 5:12), all people are inclined to sinful motives and choices. Children do not need to be taught to sin.

Any person who strives to follow Christ understands the lament in Jeremiah Seventeen that the heart is deceitful above all things and is desperately sick (Jer 17:9). Christians fight this spiritual battle between the sinful inclinations of their hearts and the righteous given them by Christ every day. If someone does not know Christ personally, then nothing is curbing that naturally sinful bent of their heart.

People make choices out of their nature, and unregenerate people lack the motivation as well as the ability to honor God. They are held captive by the sin principle (Rom 6:6, 16, 20), the "law of sin" (Rom 7:25), the sinful nature (2 Pet 2:19), various lusts and passions (Titus 3:3), and evil powers (2 Tim 2:26).[19] Therefore, it should not be surprising when a non-Christian acts sinfully. However, even though Christians have a regenerated soul and can choose to walk according to the spirit, they still struggle with unrighteous choices because of their flesh.[20]

Pierre defines a choice as the "outflow of complex structures of commitment" while commitments are "the heart devoting itself to something it deems worthy."[21] Like feelings, choices are connected to values within a person's heart. So many short examples

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[19] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 227.

[20] Beck and Demarest, 227.

[21] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 44-45.

could be given of choices revealing commitments: a child plays video games for an hour instead of doing homework because he is more committed to his ease and comfort than hard work. A boy fights another boy who made fun of his sister because he is committed to his family's safety. A man chooses to work overtime even at the expense of time with his family because he is committed to building wealth.

Any of these examples show that people prioritize certain commitments in certain situations. Instead of giving another example of the volitional dimension of a child's heart, I will give a brief case study of a child's situation at school to show how all of the dimensions of the heart function at all times. A person thinks, feels, and acts at all times in any situation, and there could be multiple motivations at work as his heart functions throughout a certain situation.

Mrs. Smith tells her fifth grade class to line up to go to gym class. Richard stays at his desk a little longer than the other kids and takes longer to put his materials away. Mrs. Smith encourages, "Richard, try to hurry please." It does not seem to prod him along any faster. The rest of the class lined up, but Richard still lagged behind. Mrs. Smith instructed, "Richard, get in line now please." Richard folds his arms across his chest and yells *no*!

In that moment, Mrs. Smith's first thought is how defiant and disobedient Richard is. This behavior is inappropriate and must be corrected. Let us pause the story and take a look at the dimensions of Richard's heart in this moment.

In the cognitive dimension, interpretations indicate beliefs. When Richard heard the instruction regarding gym class, he immediately interpreted it to mean that he would have another difficult time at gym like he did the previous week when Mrs. Lennox had children doing balancing exercises. He kept falling and his classmates laughed at him. He thought about previous classes where he was always one of the last kids to get picked for the team. Since the beginning of the year, he developed a belief that he is not good at athletics and his participation will result in embarrassment.

In the affective dimension, feelings indicate desires. When Richard heard the instructions regarding gym class, he immediately felt fearful. He might have even started sweating and feeling his heart speed up some. He also was exhibiting some anger as he thought about how classmates had treated him in the past. His desire: he wanted to be accepted by other kids.

In the volitional dimension of the heart, choices indicate commitments. Richard's choice was clear. He folded his arms and defiantly said no to his teacher. In that moment, he was committed to his integrity though he might not explain it that way. He did not want to put himself in the position where he could be embarrassed.

Richard is thinking, feeling, and committing to all of this in a one-minute long situation. Now back to the story. Mrs. Smith realized something seemed unusual in Richard's response, so she had an aide escort the class to the gym while she stayed in the classroom to talk to Richard. She was able to talk to him and figure out what was truly happening in his heart. Once she realized that Richard needed help feeling accepted as he deals with his fear, she made an agreement with him. She would go to gym class with him and talk to Mrs. Lennox about the situation. Mrs. Lennox could address the class to create an environment of encouragement, and she could remind students of the consequences of making fun of others. Richard would develop a new level of trust with his teachers, and his teachers could inform his parents of the situation so they can continue to talk with him to develop accurate interpretations, feelings, and choices.

Mrs. Smith could have easily said, "Direct defiance is not allowed in the classroom. Go to the principal's office now." While that is certainly a necessary response for teachers in some cases, in this situation, it actually would have supported and reinforced Richard's sinful volition because Mrs. Smith would have helped him escape gym class! The lesson from this case study is that behavior modification techniques could further reinforce inaccurate beliefs, desires, and commitments. Instead, parents and counselors can help shape a child's heart, which will also improve behavior.

The Influences on the Heart

Psalm 88 is strangely comforting. It is actually a very dismal psalm by the Sons of Korah crying out to God in the midst of much trouble. Tripp and Lane summarize it in this way:

Verses 3-5: You are in deep inner despair.

Verses 6-7: You feel forsaken by God.

Verse 8a: You have lost your friends.

Verse 8b: You feel trapped and helpless.

Verses 9-12: You feel as if you are dying, crying out for help, but none comes.

Verses 13-14: You feel as though God has turned his back on you.

Verses 15-17: You feel like bad things always happen and nothing ever changes.

Verse 18: You feel like you wake up every morning to a very dark world.[22]

This psalm is comforting because a suffering person will find solidarity with the writer and be encouraged to approach God honestly because He understand the full range of human experience. Psalm 88 is a display of faith because it takes faith to trust God in difficult situations, knowing that He can help.

This psalm is also a reminder of how suffering can influence our thinking, feeling, and choosing. In fact, Psalm 88 presents all four contexts to which the dynamic heart responds in Pierre's model: God, self, others, and circumstances.[23] God designed the dynamic heart to be influenced by everything around it. In fact, "The operations of one person's heart influence the operation of another's—their perspectives, their

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[22] Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 98.

[23] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 101-102. Much of the content in this section is summarizing chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of this book even if not specifically noted.

opinions, their likes, and dislikes."[24] Think about how strongly a child is being influenced then! Their very existence is dependent on other people, and those parents or other caregivers are going to significantly shape a child's heart. The Bible teaches the priority of parents teaching and modeling God's truth to their children (Deut 6:6-7; Ps 78:5-7; Prov 1:8; Joel 1:3; Eph 6:4). However, this fallen world does not always follow God's design. Children are left to be influenced in many ways, then, that are antithetical to His ways. We must discuss influences because we need to know how the internal dynamic heart that has been presented up to this point interacts with the various components of a person's situation.

Lane and Tripp presented heat, representing life's difficulties, in their model for biblical counseling, but they did not give a robust understanding of how heat shapes a heart. Chapters six, seven, and eight of How People Change is very helpful, but Pierre bridges the gap to give a framework for understanding how external influences affect the inner heart that is always thinking, feeling, and choosing. The trajectory of influence he demonstrates consists of three parts: external conditions, passive dynamic effects, and active dynamic responses.

External Conditions

External conditions are the contextual factors that create an ideal state for particular internal responses. People do not choose these external conditions. Instead, they are given conditions like the family into which they are born, genetic characteristics they inherit, or socioeconomic opportunities made available to them. Pierre identifies a person's physical body as part of their external conditions. Things like age, personality, and mental and physiological capacities will affect their dynamic heart. In addition to this are the four contexts of relationships with which every person relates: God, self, others,

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[24] Pierre, 88-89.

and circumstances.

Since the heart was made for worshipping God, every person relates to Him in thought, desire, and choice. Some relate rightly to Him while others do not. Some people will have little knowledge of God, while others have much. Children, in particular, might have no knowledge of God. A lack of knowledge about God, however, does not negate the image of God in which the child was made or the purpose of worshipping God for which the child was created.

A person's relation to self involves the constructed identity versus given identity, which is expounded elsewhere in this thesis. People are also influence by others and their circumstances. These two areas are where most of what we would consider to be traumatic would fit. Relationships with others and what other people might do to a person will severely shape him, as well as the events and situations in which he finds himself.[25]

Parents and counselors of a child who have experienced trauma will need to listen intently for these influences. The way the child relates to God, himself, others, and his circumstances shapes his heart by leading to passive dynamic effects.

Passive Dynamic Effects

Passive dynamic effects are the imprint that external conditions make on the heart's beliefs, values, and intentions. They are passive in the sense that the person does not voluntarily submit to or necessarily know how the external conditions are shaping him. The dynamics of the heart are more severely impacted if the external conditions are

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[25] Other models exists to organize external forces on a person that are similar to Pierre's model of God, others, circumstances, and self. For example, Shields and Bredfeldt outline some specific external forces that bring human suffering, which aligns what secular psychological research says about trauma with theology and expands on it to give a fuller picture of human experience. They claim four external forces: the world, the flesh, the devil, and God in *Caring for Souls: Counseling Under the Authority of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2001), 94-116.

more direct and extreme. Trauma fits perfectly into the understanding of passive dynamic effects, though it is difficult to know just how severely trauma impacts a person.

Weaver, Preston, and Jerome present helpful questions to attempt gauging the severity of trauma's harm to a child. First, is the painful event a single blow or a recurring or pervasive experience? Second, does the painful event also undercut or destroy a child's primary support network? Third, how traumatic is the painful event? Finally, what resources does the child have to turn to in times of distress?[26] Parents and counselors should consider these question as they seek to determine the severity of influences on a child.

Active Dynamic Responses

The dynamic heart is always active and always able to respond to external circumstances. The passive dynamic effects are imprints on a person's heart that put to shape the active responses of a person. A person is responsible for these responses. External conditions and passive dynamic effects should not be used to justify sinful responses, but they should help inform a parent or counselor of what is happening in the cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions of the child's heart.

Here is a simple example to put this model of influence together: Andrew received a poor grade on a school test and threw it away to try and hide it from his parents. They did not learn about it until the next teacher conference. The external conditions could include aspects of how Andrew relates to his parents regarding schoolwork—their high demands and disdain for poor grades. It could include how he perceives himself. Usually he scores well and is known for his intelligence. This low grade could be a blow to what he thought was true of himself. These external conditions

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[26] Andrew J. Weaver, John D. Preston, and Leigh W. Jerome, *Counseling Troubled Teens and their Families: A Handbook for Pastors and Youth Workers* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 32-33.

passively led him to develop a belief that his parents will be disappointed in him, and he felt fearful because he genuinely desired their approval. His commitment was to preserve his reputation with his parents, so he chose to throw the test away. His parents should give consequences for his lying and trying to hide from them, but if they wanted to see life-long change, they should work to figure out these influences on Andrew's heart, the dynamic activity of his heart, and then adjust any ways of thinking, feeling, or choosing to best match God's design.

Let me present a more complex example now to illustrate how trauma was impacting Brandon, an 18-year-old whose parents arranged to meet with his pastor, a biblical counselor. Brandon confessed that he was having same-sex desires. His pastor met with him several times to ask questions and listen well to try to identify if this was a new rebellious desire that would lead to sinful choices, or if there was more happening inside of Brandon's heart. Following the dynamic heart model, the pastor was already aware of Brandon's feelings, revealing his desire for same-sex activity. He could hear Brandon's struggle with what choice to make. Would he submit these feelings to the obedience of Christ, or would he give in to his flesh? The pastor was still unsure of Brandon's commitment.

At one point, the pastor asked Brandon what he hoped for in a relationship with another man. He wrote down Brandon's list on a whiteboard: loyalty, being available, enjoying conversation, doing activities together, and prioritizing the relationship. The pastor was shocked at this list and started seeing what Brandon's interpretations were indicating about his beliefs. Everything on this list were characteristics of an appropriate and good friendship between two men. It was actually a righteous desire. The pastor wondered why Brandon believed that a homosexual relationship was the only means to achieve a relationship with those qualities.

He was somewhat familiar with Brandon's background, so he tried to ask more questions to see what other influences were weighing into this situation. The pastor knew

that Brandon's dad was abusive and left his family when Brandon was six years old. He grew up with just his mother and she was very protective of Brandon. She tried to shield him from any harm, which included entrusting Brandon to a small homeschool group where he learned in a home with six other children. He had very few friendships because of his upbringing. When he turned eighteen five months earlier, he got a job and started making plans to go to the local community college. It seemed that his same-sex desires started developing shortly after his world was opened up to these new experiences at 18.

The pastor wanted to Brandon to better understand his heart so that he would have a greater appreciation for grace in that moment, so he took time to explain why he thought Brandon believed he could only achieve the kind of relationship he desired through a homosexual relationship. Since Brandon's dad left the family, he grew up so badly wanting a relationship with a man, specifically his father. A relationship that would be characterized by the way he listed to his pastor.

When Brandon started seeing homosexual relationships in public and began hearing the deception that came from those in that lifestyle, he started believing those lies. Since he never knew what it was like to have a strong relationship with a man, he developed a belief that he could only achieve that kind of relationship through homosexuality.

This knowledge helped the pastor create a discipleship plan to help Brandon develop righteous beliefs, desires, and commitments. It would have been easy for the pastor to give Brandon a list of Bible verses about homosexuality being sinful and expect him to follow the Holy Spirit in obedience, but it just was not that simple. Brandon's experience of his father leaving and then growing up with no man in the home impacted his heart more severely than what he understood. It took a patient and compassionate pastor to show how his heart was dynamically reacting to his world and shaping his beliefs, desires, and commitments.

A Correct Understanding of Given Identity

With the dynamic heart framework in mind, parents and counselors can direct a child to understand and live in their identity given by God. Recall the example of Robert, the seven-year-old who constructed an identity of himself as worthless, second-hand to other children, and unable to trust adults because they might neglect him. This chapter will conclude by understanding the given identity of every person, and how counseling through the dimensions of the heart will help children recover that correct identity and find hope and healing they need.

People must humble themselves under God's conception of them, which is a story expressed throughout the full narrative of Scripture. A given identity is found by understanding these four parts of that story: People were created, people are corrupted by sin, people can be redeemed, and people are awaiting a new creation.[27]

Robert's new foster parents arrange for biblical counseling. They are trying to develop a trusting relationship with him and are hoping they can see improvement to his negative constructed identity because it is impacting his ability to make friends, his confidence at playing baseball, his behavior, and his achievement at school. Robert's false identity must be deconstructed and an identity as a bearer of the image of God must be realized.[28]

People Were Created

Robert might not understand that he was created by the Almighty God who knows Him more intimately than any person (Ps 139:13-16). He could have thought that

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[27] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130.

[28] While methodology is not the focus of this thesis, it would be helpful to mention the work of Julie Lowe. She has helpful instruction on role playing with children in counseling at https://www.ccef.org/resources/blog/role-playing-creative-parenting-tool and great insight on play therapy on the CCEF On the Go podcast at https://www.ccef.org/resources/podcast/play-therapy.

he was an accident or has no purpose in this world because his biological parents did not care about him. He needs to hear about God's perfect creation and how humans are the pinnacle of it all. He needs to know that he was created in God's image, so he is valuable. This instruction would confront his inaccurate belief of worthlessness and give new trajectory for his desires and commitments.

People Are Corrupted by Sin

Jones and Hambrick outline three ways we suffer the consequences of sin. First, we are part of a fallen, cursed world, which creates diverse life disruptions that are hard to process, making faith and obedience more difficult. Second, we are sinned against by others, which includes traumatic experiences. Third, we reap the consequences of our sin.[29]

Robert would have to confront his suffering in developing this part of his given identity. He needs to know that his biological parents made sinful choices that are antithetical to God's design for parents and children. Especially as he sees his foster parents commit to loving him and working with him, his beliefs about not being able to trust adults can be adjusted to fit with God's design of parents loving, instructing, and disciplining their children.

Robert also needs to realize his own capacity to sin in his responses to his suffering and his continued behavior. Some of his commitments might be challenged here. Not only is he bad, but he is broken. Pierre contends, "Being bad emphasizes their voluntary participation in their estrangement from self, and being broken emphasizes the involuntary victimhood of their self-estrangement."[30]

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[29] Robert Jones and Brad Hambrick, "The Problem of Sin," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 140-141.

[30] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 134.

People Can Be Redeemed

It is so hopeful for Robert to know that his life does not have to be stifled forever because of his trauma! Not only can Robert be introduced to Jesus and understand spiritual redemption, but his beliefs, desires, and commitments can align with Christ's plan. The counselor might bring up specific situations like his lack of confidence in baseball or schoolwork, or his difficulty with keeping friends, exploring his interpretations, feelings, and choices and working with him to develop correct views. His counselor might try to identify common situations that influence Robert's misbehavior and then develop a plan for responding properly in each of those situations. Most of all, Robert can know that forgiveness and love are available to him through Christ in ways he will never experience from other people.

People Are Awaiting A New Creation

Second Corinthians 5:17 declares that those who are saved by Christ are a new creation. They are cleansed from sin and have an eternity secured with God in heaven. Pierre explains that the redeemed have a new master in their lives and have even greater promises still to come in eternity.[31] A dynamic heart approach to helping children from trauma would still be helpful even if the child is not redeemed, though. In general, biblical counseling is helpful to all people redeemed or not. Carson notes, "The process is the same: you enter into conversational ministry with an individual who needs the truth of God's Word, the power of the Spirit, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the patience of a biblical counselor engaged in the process with them."[32] Even the unredeemed will find that life is more peaceful and hopeful when they follow the design of their Creator.

[31] Pierre, 138.

[32] Kevin Carson and Randy Patten, "Biblical Counseling and Evangelism," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care Through God's People,* ed. Bob Kellemen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 315.

However, Carson clarifies, "Long-term, God-honoring change is impossible without a relationship with Christ."[33]

Conclusion

The dynamic heart model provides a framework for parents and counselors to uncover what is happening in the hearts of children. Trauma shapes a child's beliefs, desires, and commitments, and their noticeable interpretations, feelings, and choices are a starting point to reveal the greater activity in their heart.

Behavior modification tries to correct immediate inappropriate behaviors, but long-term change comes by redirecting inaccurate perceptions of human experience toward God's design for people as made in His image. Parents and counselors must be aware of the external conditions that influence their children and develop passive dynamic effects and active dynamic responses. Those external conditions develop beliefs, desires, and commitments in the child. If parents can remember the framework of interpretation indicates beliefs, feelings indicate desires, and choices indicate commitments, then they will be able to recognize the more recognizable activity of their child and press in toward revealing the greater heart activity.

The greatest hope is the redemption available through Jesus Christ. Trauma will always be part of a child's experience, but he does not have to be forever limited by its effects when he learns to direct his heart toward the joy he can find in the Lord.

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[33] Carson and Patten, "Biblical Counseling and Evangelism," 315.

CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA FROM
TBRI'S PERSPECTIVE

The foundations of TBRI emerged at a summer camp program in 1999 and become formalized over time through ongoing research by Purvis and her team. Camp Hope documented unprecedented behavioral and attachment gains in ten young foster and adopted children under the age of ten who had experienced neglect, abuse, or trauma. The camp sought to address the physical, behavioral, and relational needs of the children, and the camp environment was rich in sensory activities, social skills groups, and something they called nurture groups. After years of adjusting techniques according to observations, TBRI has emerged as a clear set of developmental principles for bringing healing to at-risk children.[1]

Purvis cites previous research that revealed the three main ''pillars'' that should be included in any program designed to treat complex trauma: First, development of safety. Second, promotion of healing relationships, and third, teaching of self-management and coping skills. These elements parallel the three principles of TBRI developed at the Texas Christian University Institute of Child Development after research and observations through their camps and other environments implementing their methods. The following figure shows the outline of TBRI's three principles and their subcategories.

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[1] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma." *Child and Youth Services* 34, no. 4 (2013): 362.

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│                    Empowering Principles                      │
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│  │       Ecology       │          │       Physiology        ││
│  │     Felt Safety     │          │       Safe Touch        ││
│  │    Predictability   │          │ Sensory Input/Physical  ││
│  │     Transitions     │          │        Activity         ││
│  │                     │          │        Hydration        ││
│  │                     │          │        Nutrition        ││
│  └─────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────────┘│
│                                                                │
│                    Connecting Principles                      │
│                             │                                  │
│        ┌────────────────────┴────────────────────┐           │
│  ┌─────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────────┐│
│  │      Awareness      │          │       Engagement        ││
│  │      Observing      │          │        Matching         ││
│  │ Recognizing Behavior│          │    Active Listening     ││
│  │     Eye Contact     │          │  Nurturing Interaction  ││
│  │    Body Position    │          │   Playful Engagement    ││
│  │  Voice and Inflection│         │                         ││
│  │   Encourage Process │          │                         ││
│  └─────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────────┘│
│                                                                │
│                    Correcting Principles                      │
│                             │                                  │
│        ┌────────────────────┴────────────────────┐           │
│  ┌─────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────────┐│
│  │ Proactive Strategies│          │  Redirective Strategies ││
│  │ Emotional Regulation│          │  Choices for Discipline ││
│  │ Encourage the Positive│        │         Redos           ││
│  │   Life Value Terms  │          │      Consequences       ││
│  │  Choices for Growth │          │       The "Voice"       ││
│  │                     │          │       The Stance        ││
│  │                     │          │     Task Completion      ││
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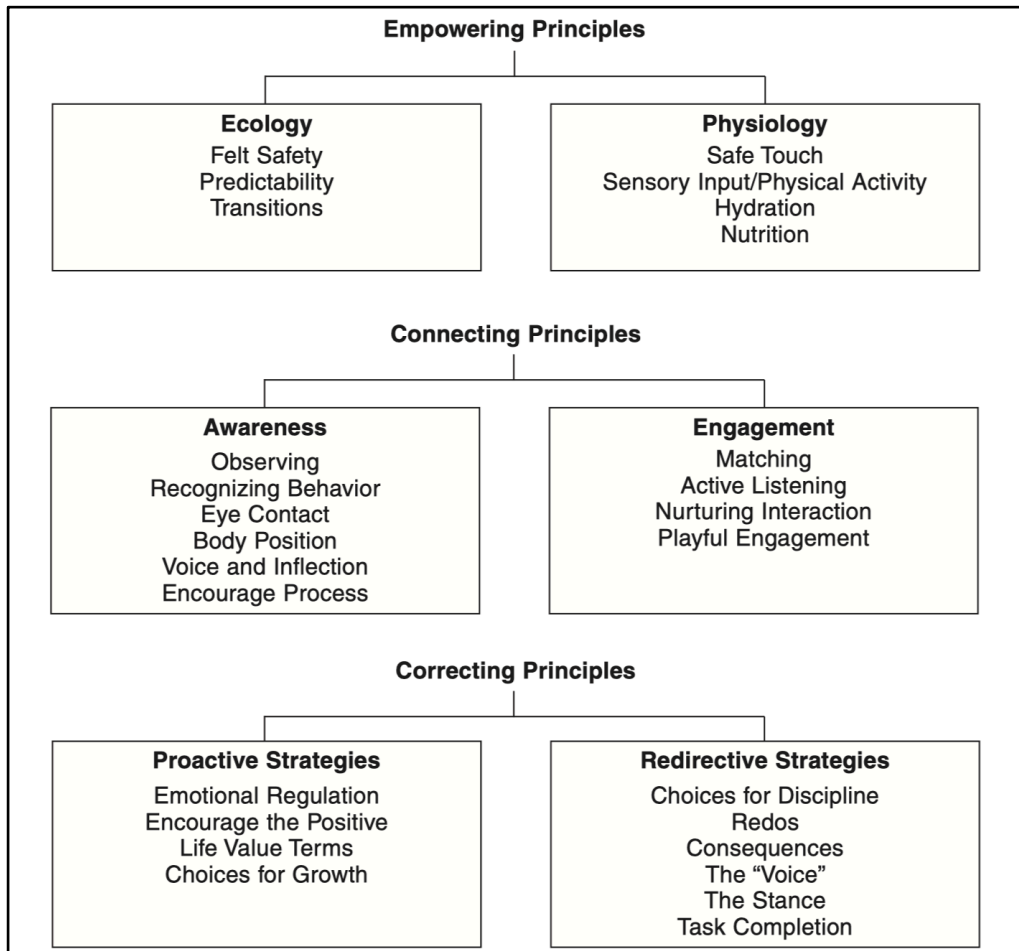
Figure 1. An Outline of the Trust-Based Relational
Intervention™ Interactive Empowering Principles,
Connecting Principles, and Correcting Principles[2]

As previously shown, the dynamic heart model's cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions of the heart coincide with the empowering, connecting, and correcting principles of TBRI. Each TBRI principle will now be explained and evaluated in light of the dynamic heart model.

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[2] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Jacquelyn S. Pennings, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 4.

<h1 align="center">The Empowering Principles</h1>

Ecology and physiology are the empowering principles of TBRI, which address the physiological needs of children. It recognizes that a child's mind is inside of a physical body, so it encourages safety and provision. Ecology is broken into three components: felt safety, predictability, and transitions.

Felt Safety

Felt safety is more than the reality of safety. Children must be safe, but they must also be reassured that they are safe. A foster parent might know that their child is safe, and they might tell him often, but children are always watching for danger. Purvis has observed that children are free to learn and grow when they feel safe.[3]

We have already noted that a parallel exists between TBRI's empowering principle and the cognitive dimension of the dynamic heart model. Of course, our hearts do not operate with independent dimensions, but the cognitive dimensions will mainly be applied to the empowerment principle as we continue. It should not be surprising that children who have experienced trauma can be concerned about safety, and even unconvinced about it. Their personal experiences shape underlying beliefs in their heart. If June was inappropriately touched by Janet's older brother when June was at Janet's house, it could be very difficult for June to want to return to Janet's house. When June's mother gave instructions for her to get in the vehicle to go to Janet's house for the next playdate, June might not quick obey her and could even manifest other defiant behaviors. June could have easily developed a belief that Janet's brother will always touch her inappropriately when she goes to Janet's house. She interpreted the instructions to get in the van as an invitation for inappropriate touching, even though her mother had already

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[3] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 5-6.

made sure that Janet's brother would not be home. In this situation, June did not feel safe even though her mother took steps to ensure that she would. June's dynamic heart's interpretation indicated a belief she had developed. TBRI is correct that parents should ensure their children's safety. By better understanding June's heart, though, her mother could go beyond making the behavioral improvement of ensuring safety by talking to her daughter about her belief and working with her to create a plan for safety. This way, June would know that her mother is keeping her safe, and she could be part of the safety solution.

Predictability and Transitions

Predictability refers to reducing stress and feelings of chaos in a child's life by providing order and routines, like a bedtime routine. Similarly, transitions are announcements of coming changes, which will reduce anxiety in a child.[4] Children benefit from having a forewarning when transitions come in daily activities, such as a parent saying, "five more minutes and then you must get out of the pool." TBRI recognizes two other types of transitions: major life transitions and developmental transitions. Major life transitions could be situations like the first day of school or a foster child joining a new family. Developmental transitions occur as the brain continues to reorganize itself during major developmental milestones throughout the lifespan.[5]

TBRI training offers practical methods for helping children with routines, like using notecards to display each activity for the day, giving frequent reminders, or joining the child during transitions so he is not alone.[6] Great emphasis is put on storytelling and

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[4] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 6.

[5] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 364.

[6] K. Purvis, D. R. Cross, and J. R. Hurst, *Trust-Based Relational Intervention Caregiver Training: TBRI Introduction and Overview*, participant workbook (Fort Worth, TX: TCU Institute of Child

persisting in family rituals to aid in major life transitions and developmental transitions. Beyond the practical, though, Purvis suggests that transitions create challenges for children who are fear-driven and for those with poor self-regulation.[7]

Caution must be given to the motivations of a child's heart when trying to help them overcome fear. Routines and transition help are valuable, but Lowe argues that parents must be careful where they teach children to place their trust and comfort when dealing with fear. Children could begin trusting routines or other practical methods more than they trust God, their provider and sustainer. Lowe gives the example of a child who is fearful of the dark and having trouble sleeping. A bedtime routine is established and followed, but after seeing something disturbing on the television one night, her routine is just not enough. She ends up in her mother's bed so that the mother and child could sleep well after their exhaustion of the routine not working. This child is learning that a survival tool, her bedtime routine, becomes a manipulative tool to get something more valuable—her mother's bed. Furthermore, children can develop dependency on routines instead of God. Lowe suggests that routines are short-term reprieves instead of long-term solutions.[8]

Self-regulation can be defined in many ways, but Werner argues, "Self-regulation is an umbrella term that captures the entire process of goal pursuit, a small part of which includes self-control."[9] TBRI's suggestions are very practical and valuable for caregivers, but the dynamic heart perspective would press further into the aspect of self-

Development, 2013), 11.

[7] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 364.

[8] Julie Lowe, "Helping Your Anxious Child," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 32, no. 3 (2018): 54-55.

[9] Kaitlyn M. Werner and Marina Milyavskaya, "Motivation and Self-regulation: The Role of Want-to Motivation in the Processes Underlying Self-regulation and Self-control," *Social & Personality Psychology Compass* 13, no. 1 (January 2019): 2.

control. Since self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), a person lacks self-control when his thinking, feeling, or choosing is not in line with God's Word. Parents should try to identify the external conditions that have influenced their child to be so anxious about daily decisions or major life transitions, then explore how their child's beliefs, desires, and commitments have been affected. Even if self-regulation issues are physiological, like malnutrition causing a ten-year-old to have the cognitive capacity of a five-year-old, as predictability and transition methods are employed, parents should also challenge unrighteous beliefs, desires, and commitments to align them with God's design. They would be teaching their children to develop self-control while alleviating fear by protecting and caring for them.

Physiology

Ecology and physiology set the stage for positive change by ensuring healthy conditions for children. Components of physiology include safe touch, sensory input/physical activity, hydration, and proper nutrition.[10] The details of TBRI's approach in these areas will not be examined since this thesis is not focusing on physiology. However, biblical counselors encourage people to work with physicians to ensure proper health because people are psychosomatic beings. If a child is hungry, cold, tired, or sick, his body can limit his thinking, wanting, and choosing to influence unrighteous responses. God designed parents to care for the needs of children. As they care for physiological needs, they are providing an optimal environment for the dynamic heart to be trained toward righteousness.

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[10] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 6-8.

The Connecting Principles

Trauma can result in children's dissociation and hyperarousal. TBRI's connecting principles address the tendency of a child to withdraw or dissociate as a means of self-protection. TBRI's methodology is grounded in secular attachment theories with the goal of developing trust between child and caregiver.[11] It recognizes that some children did not have the opportunity for proper attachment to their biological parents, so methodology will try to recreate those opportunities between a child and foster parent or other caregiver. Ideally, a biological parent imposes regulation on her child's regulation of physical and emotional needs by providing for his needs and responding to his cries.[12]

Awareness

The two subcategories of awareness and engagement help organize the strategies of TBRI's connecting principle. Purvis argues that a parent must become aware of the maladaptive strategies her child is employing, which have developed out of fear and anxiety in response to trauma. Eye contact, body position, voice and inflection, and encouraging process in the child are all part of the awareness subcategory because it allows the caregiver to get on a child's level to some degree with the child's permission, therefore developing trust. As the caregiver engages with the child, he becomes more aware of the child's real needs.

Engagement

TBRI suggests parents engage their children through matching, active listening, nurturing interaction, and playful engagement. Children naturally match the

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[11] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 8.

[12] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 367-368.

cadences and speed of their mother, establishing patterns and cycles. Children from

trauma benefit from replicating what they might have not experienced, which can come

from a parent matching the child's behavior to form connections. Parents can sit the same

way as the child or choose the same toy, sticker, or other item to form a level of trust and

safety.[13] Active listening and nurturing interaction focus on giving genuine attention to

children, reminding them that they are valuable. Not only does it include eye contact

when a child is speaking, but also repeating what they say, giving concise instructions,

and responding in other ways that provide opportunities for the child to be successful in

interaction. Playful engagement is a joyful part of TBRI, where parents can share

laughter, silliness, and fun with children through games and activities. Parents can look

for ways to turn mundane tasks like pushing an elevator button into silly opportunities to

promote interaction.[14]

A parent whose children never suffered trauma would naturally connect with

her child through awareness and engagement. However, trauma highlights the need.

Obviously, trying to connect with a child to develop trust would start with observing how

that child interacts with a caregiver and her environment. But even Purvis suggests that

the visible behaviors and responses of children are indicative of internal workings. She

notes, "Children's fear-based reactions are often behaviorally masked as anger,

willfulness, stubbornness, or defiance," and "Negative behaviors often mask hidden

feelings."[15]

If a child's reactions are actually masking activity within the child's heart, is

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[13] Purvis, Cross, and Hurst, *Trust-Based Relational Intervention Caregiver Training: TBRI Introduction and Overview*, 21.

[14] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 11-12.

[15] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 8-9.

matching their behaviors, actively listening, nurturing interaction, and playfully engaging really the best response? It certainly is helpful, but like Lowe pointed out with routines and anxiety, TBRI's awareness and engagement should be seen as a short-term help to get to the long-term transformation that comes with directing a child's heart to God's design. Practical behavioral approaches must be rooted in a biblical framework to find the greatest help and hope for a child. Moments of anger, defiance, or stubbornness involve intense heart dynamics. Working to establish trust between a child and his parent is an excellent first step, but the parent must be equipped to further help her child. She cannot stop at active listening and playful engagement or she will develop a son who trusts her but can still struggle with anger or defiance because he does not understand how his heart responds to his external circumstances. She must employ the dynamic heart framework to discover what her son's interpretations, feelings, and choices are revealing about his constructed beliefs, desires, and commitments, and then help shape each dimension to God's design.

It is also important to note that the main external condition TBRI seems to consider is the one between caregiver and child, which would fall under the "others" category of the dynamic heart model. Regarding empowerment, connection, and correction, Purvis writes, "These principles help both caregiver and child learn healthy ways of interacting so both are able to play a role in the healing process."[16] Trauma is just one external condition of many that affects how a child interacts with God, himself, others, and the circumstances around him. While TBRI acknowledges the impact of trauma on children, it does not suggest a framework for understanding how trauma shapes a child's worldview. I prefer to refer to "transformation" instead of the vague "healing." A child's transformation comes by more than just a proper relationship with

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[16] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 362.

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his parents. It comes through understanding his relationship to God as Creator, and how that relationship defines all others.

The Correcting Principles

TBRI claims that there must be a balance between structure, which is correction, and nurture, which is connecting. When structure must be increased, so should nurture so that a proper balance remains to ensure a child experiences a sense of safety, a sense of trust, a release of control, and a capacity to try new behaviors.[17] The correcting principles are divided into proactive strategies and redirective strategies.

Proactive Strategies

Proactive strategies are intended to create more positive automatic processes so that when the child begins to become dysregulated, she or he has effective strategies from which to choose.[18] It is essentially preventative teaching, focusing on rules and appropriate responses. At a TBRI camp, for example, they would demonstrate rule-following and appropriate behaviors through scripted dramas. The drama might start with exemplifying the inappropriate behavior, even using the child as the actor. Then a behavioral "redo" would be acted out by the same child.[19]

TBRI stresses emotional regulation. Parents can employ the Stop and Breathe technique by touching the child firmly on the shoulder, arm, or hand, making eye contact, and prompting the child to stop and breathe. The parent models the action for the child as

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[17] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 12.

[18] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 12.

[19] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 372-373.

a precursor to important problem-solving strategies. This technique can disarm and deescalate maladaptive behavioral strategies. TBRI also encourages parents to stress the positives seen in their child's behavior, and to give options to a child. Often, children from trauma do not feel like they have a voice, so parents can assist by giving two options and allowing the child the freedom and feeling of control to make a choice. [20]

By giving the child the opportunity to act out the inappropriate and appropriate behaviors, it reinforced the desired behavior in a memorable way. Parents of any children are always teaching the family rules and processes, though maybe not in a dramatic way. God gave parents the task of instructing their children (Deut 11:19; Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4), and children are to obey their parents (Col 3:20). However, any parent knows that the fallen nature of a parent leads them to not always teach well and the fallen nature of a child leads them to not always obey well. Correction is necessary, but if correction is divorced from the reality of fallen humanity, its attempts will not lead to lasting transformation because it is only reflecting the standards of fallen parent and not necessarily God's righteous standard.

To further this point, part of the correcting principles of TBRI includes "life value terms" such as "showing respect" and "being gentle and kind." These terms are used to instill life values to children who might have learned only the value of survival or any number of negative values.[21] A questions is begged: from where do these life values come? A behaviorist approach falls flat here because the parent is left to develop life values from their best opinion. If their life values disagree with their Creator's values, then they are not reinforcing values that will lead to true transformation for their child.

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[20] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 13-14.

[21] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 14.

Redirective Strategies

The goal of redirective strategies is to teach the child to deal with negative emotions. A parent is to use the minimum amount of response possible to effectively address the misbehavior, and when the behavior has been dealt with, there is an immediate return to playful interaction. This communicates to the child that when she or he cannot self-regulate her or his behaviors, a safe adult will step in to regulate for the child and keep her or him safe. It also communicates that although the misbehavior is not okay, the worth of the child is not in question.[22]

TBRI's redirective strategies include appropriate levels of response depending on the child's defiance using playful engagement, offering two choices, enforcing natural consequences, and using proper tone and stance when addressing behaviors. While there are helpful parts of TBRI's strategy, especially those that allow parents to quickly respond to negative behaviors, it is still grounded in values that parents think are best.

TBRI teaches caregivers to never reject the child as a person, only respond to the behavior.[23] The sentiment is understandable since every person is created in the image of God. Every child certainly is valuable and should never be rejected. But a serious flaw exists in the idea of only addressing the behavior because the behavior is coming out of the person! The problem for every human is that each one has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). It could almost come across as lacking compassion, but a child needs to understand that he is a sinner and any behavior, positive or negative, comes from his dynamic heart as it is affected by sin and other external conditions. When the child realizes this, it is actually easier to respond to the behaviors. So, yes, respond to the child in his fallen personhood, and respond to the behavior in an attempt to restore

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[22] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 12-13.

[23] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 375.

God's design in that situation.

Brief Overview of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

It seems appropriate to address cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) because the correcting principles of TBRI are strongly grounded in the principles and practices of CBT.[24] CBT is commonly mentioned as a treatment for people who have experienced trauma.[25] Yet, Purvis acknowledges that CBT has limitations, and a BC perspective reveals its inability to reveal the truth of our Creator by putting a person in control of their own thinking.

CBT is a type of talk-therapy that is used to treat a range of problems including depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug use problems, marital problems, and eating disorders.[26] NIHM claims that talk-therapies can be useful for helping people identify and deal with guilt, shame, and other feelings about a traumatic event.[27] Mehl suggests four reasons why CBT is so popular. First, it utilizes techniques that are similar to common sense parenting that have been around for a long time, like saying "If you talk to me that way again you will have to be disciplined." Second, no form of therapy has been studied more than CBT, and it has been empirically demonstrated to be effective in helping people change how they act and feel. Third, CBT's interventions are reproducible

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[24] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children With Special Social-Emotional Needs," 12.

[25] Doyle and Perlman list CBT first in their discussion of stage-appropriate interventions in *Trauma Counseling: Theories and Interventions,* ed. Lisa Lopez Levers. The NIMH list psychotherapy and medication in their website's section on treatment of PTSD. It mentions that many different kinds of psychotherapy can be helpful, but it only describes CBT specifically. The American Psychological Association lists four "strongly recommended therapies" for the treatment of PTSD and CBT is the first listed at http://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/index.aspx.

[26] "What Is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?" American Psychological Association, accessed July 11, 2018, http://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/cognitive-behavioral.aspx.

[27] "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," The National Institute of Mental Health, accessed July 10, 2018, https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml.

and easy to learn. Finally, it is so cost effective.[28]

The American Psychological Association claims that CBT is based on three core principles: first, psychological problems are based, in part, on faulty or unhelpful ways of thinking; second, psychological problems are based, in part, on learned patterns of unhelpful behavior, and third, people suffering from psychological problems can learn better ways of coping with them, thereby relieving their symptoms and becoming more effective in their lives.[29]

This therapy is aimed at correcting peoples' thinking and behavior, which seems like a logical place to start. The overall goal of CBT is to help a person find more effective ways to cope with their situations, but CBT places an emphasis on helping people learn to be their own therapists. Exercises in sessions and outside of sessions teach clients to develop coping skills, whereby they can learn to change their own thinking, problematic emotions, and behavior.[30]

Now consider CBT being used for helping children in foster care. Those who have experienced trauma are suffering through situations that are not always their fault and are often outside of their control. Yet, those situations are severe enough to alter their worldview to the point of creating relational and interpersonal issues, and a common help is a therapy that would attempt to teach children that they can change their own thinking, emotions, and behavior! Children need more support than CBT can offer.

Purvis argues that the TBRI model is necessary because it does what CBT cannot. She claims that CBT and other interventions "that require higher level cognitive functioning may not be appropriate for the most seriously harmed of these children.

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[28] Scott Mehl, "The CBT Therapist in Us All: A Biblical Evaluation of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy," *Association of Certified Biblical Counselors*, accessed July 11, 2018, https://biblicalcounseling.com/resources/acbc-essays/cbt-therapist-us.

[29] "What Is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?" American Psychological Association.

[30] "What Is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?" American Psychological Association.

Many of these children are in such a constant state of fear, anxiety, hyper-vigilance, and overstimulation that they are not able to cognitively process the demands that these treatment modalities require to be successful."[31]

From a BC perspective, some grace can be given because CBT tries to focus on how thinking influences behavior. However, it does not recognize the Creator of all people who designed the capacity to think and act, and it does not recognize the Bible, which explains why traumatic situations occur and how a person can properly handle the guilt, shame, and other feelings that can appear. CBT works toward healthier behavior by fixing faulty thinking, but it has no concept of a fallen, sinful mind from which every person operates. Mehl states, "In CBT, the counselor can only affirm that which is *helpful*, while the biblical counselor can affirm that which is *true*."[32] TBRI realizes there must be more connection to prepare a child to handle the cognitive demands. BC realizes that a person is created in the image of God, but that image is marred by sin, and his heart must be addressed to conform to his Creator's design.

Common Grace and Behavioral Labels

What value do secular and integrated theories of human behavior have in the lives of Christians? Common grace is a theological term that informs how Christians can respond in a world of so many ideas. Demarest defines, "Common grace is the undeserved beneficence of the Creator God expressed by his general care of creation and of all persons everywhere without discrimination (Ps 36:5; 119:64; 136:1–9)."[33]

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[31] Karyn Purvis, et al., "A Trust-Based Intervention for Complex Developmental Trauma: A Case Study from a Residential Treatment Center," *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal* 31, no. 4 (August 2014): 365.

[32] Mehl, "The CBT Therapist in Us All."

[33] Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 76.

Demarest outlines nine positive ends of common grace: First, in common grace God upholds the laws and processes of nature (Job 37:13; Ps 65:9a; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17a). Second, God maintains human and lower forms of life in existence through common grace (Ps 36:6b; Isa 42:5b; Acts 17:28a). Third, through grace God supplies temporal needs universally, like food, water, and shelter (Gen 27:28; Ps 65:9b; 104:14). Forth, through the Spirit God restrains the power of sin (Gen 6:3; Rom 13:1–4; 2 Thess 2:6–7; cf. 1 Sam 16:14). Common grace hinders wickedness from being as destructive as it might otherwise be individually and corporately. Fifth, common grace delays or withholds deserved judgment (Gen 8:21–22; Rom 2:4). Sixth, it facilitates the development of what is true and good in philosophy, the arts, sciences, and technology (Exod 31:2–11; 35:30–35). Seventh, common grace maintains the social and political order, thus enabling fallen people to live together in mutually helpful relations. Eighth, common grace serves to foster harmonious international relations, even among atheists and non-Christians. Ninth, God's good gifts are given to sinners as incentives to repentance (Rom 2:4).[34]

About common grace, Demarest concludes, "God's common grace facilitates everything that sustains and enhances life on this fallen planet. Because of it sinners are not as bad as they could be."[35] Kuyper wrote, "By His common grace God . . . enables even the unregenerated men to do good in the broad, non-redemptive sense. It is the source of the good, the true, and the beautiful which remain, in spite of sin, in human life, even in human life which has not been regenerated."[36]

Demarest's positive ends of common grace align with all of the dynamic heart model's external conditions that influence a heart, which will be expounded in the next

[34] Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation,* 76.

[35] Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation,* 76.

[36] Frank Vandenberg, *Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 207.

chapter. For now, though, the conditions of God, self, others, and circumstances are all affected by common grace in that God allows himself to be known to all people and curbs the wicked inclinations of peoples' hearts to where they are not as bad as they could be. BC is particularly interested in Demarest's point that common grace facilitates the development of what is true and good in philosophy, the arts, sciences, and technology. Even unregenerate people will be able to observe patterns of human behavior that are true, and biblical counselors should employ that knowledge. Lambert argues, "The doctrine of common grace allows unbelievers to know true things about the world even as they reject the God who creates those truths and reveals himself in them."[37] Powlison recognizes that secular researchers and clinicians know many facts about people and problems. They seek to answer crucial questions and address hard problems, and often embody skills in knowing, in loving, and in speaking that are helpful to those who struggle.[38]

The Biblical Counseling Coalition clarifies how common grace interacts with counseling theories:

> God's common grace brings many good things to human life. However, common grace cannot save us from our struggles with sin or from the troubles that beset us. Common grace cannot sanctify or cure the soul of all that ails the human condition. We affirm that numerous sources (such as scientific research, organized observations about human behavior, those we counsel, reflection on our own life experience, literature, film, and history) can contribute to our knowledge of people, and many sources can contribute some relief for the troubles of life. However, none can constitute a comprehensive system of counseling principles and practices. When systems of thought and practice claim to prescribe a cure for the human condition, they compete with Christ (Colossians 2:1-15).[39]

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[37] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 328.

[38] David Powlison, "How Does Scripture Teach Us to Redeem Psychology?," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 26, no. 3 (2012): 19.

[39] "The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition," The Biblical Counseling Coalition, updated July 2018, accessed May 20, 2020, https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/confessional-statement.

Whether it is CBT or theories posited by secular psychologists, true observations should be kept but submitted to the authority of Scripture. Similar thinking should be followed regarding behavioral labels. Some behavioral labels are commonly used in society, like ADHD, narcissism, and OCD, even if they are not fully understood. Mental health professionals use the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM) as their defining resource for describing, categorizing, and diagnosing mental disorders. The American Psychiatric Association describes a mental disorder as,

> A syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning. Mental disorders are usually associated with significant distress or disability in social, occupational, or other important activities. An acceptable or culturally approved response to a common stressor or loss, such as the death of a loved one, is not a mental disorder. Socially deviant behavior (e.g., political, religious, or sexual) conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society or not mental disorders unless the deviance or conflict results from a dysfunction in the individual as described above.[40]

Emlet noticed how it uses language that a biblical counselor would: distress, disability, deviance, and even the categories of cognition, emotion, and behavior. In Scripture, these are all reflective of the moral-spiritual lives before God.[41] Common grace on display! However, the descriptions of disorders in the DSM do not consider a biblical anthropology or elements of a person's soul. Regarding the DSM, the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors claim it "fails to express, recognize, or understand the spiritual aspect of problems that afflict people. Because of that failing it cannot offer clear help and hope for people diagnosed with its labels.[42]

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[40] *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 20.

[41] Michael R. Emlet, *Descriptions and Prescriptions: A Biblical Perspective on Psychiatric Diagnoses and Medications* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2017), 12.

[42] "Statement Regarding Mental Disorders, Medicine, and Counseling," The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, accessed May 20, 2020, https://biblicalcounseling.com/statement-regarding-mental-disorders-medicine-and-counseling.

Despite its severe shortcomings, Emlet, a physician and biblical counselor, does find value, though, in the DSM's labels. The most helpful of his claims is that psychiatric diagnoses can help counselors identify patterns of behavior. He told about one of his first counselees, a man diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, part of the autism spectrum. This diagnosis allowed him to study this syndrome to learn some of its typical behaviors. He was able to distinguish between what his counselee was unable to do because of his situation and what he was unwilling to do because of his heart.[43] This kind of common grace is helpful to parents and counselors because it can help identity commonly observed behaviors, but the knowledge gained from these observations must always be submitted to a biblical framework of human experience.

For example, Shi writes, "Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) is a childhood disorder that greatly impairs a child's social relatedness that begins before age five."[44] The way this is even written is problematic. First, it uses a label, RAD, to describe what is believed to be a disorder. I have sat in adoption trainings where RAD is presented almost as a worst-case scenario to receive in a child. Parents considering adoption have talked to me about their concerns to move forward with a child because they see this label. Granted, the behaviors usually presenting themselves to receive the RAD label are challenging, but the disorder label can often scare parents from ministering to the individual behaviors that earn this label.

A second problem with this sentence is that it indicates that the disorder greatly impairs a child's social relatedness. The anthropological angle here is that something is happening to the child over which he has no control. Certainly, there are external conditions at work influencing the behaviors presented in a RAD diagnosis. A diagnosis,

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[43] Emlet, *Descriptions and Prescriptions*, 43-44.

[44] Lin Shi, "Treatment of Reactive Attachment Disorder in Young Children: Importance of Understanding Emotional Dynamics," *American Journal of Family Therapy* 42, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2014): 1.

however, can bring despair to a parent who feels like her child is trapped in a condition with no lid to lift.

Despite these problems with how diagnoses can be perceived, a RAD diagnosis can be helpful to a foster parent. This diagnosis means that a professional has recognized behaviors such as persistent failure to initiate and respond to social interactions, indiscriminate sociability, hyperactivity, aggression, attention deficit, and emotional problems including lack of empathy.[45] This kind of list of behaviors will probably not cause a sigh of relief in foster parents, but it will allow them to know what behaviors to expect. It can help them more quickly look for the interpretations, feelings, and choices that are present from the beliefs, desires, and commitments that have developed in their child's dynamic heart and set them off on a path to helping the child recover God's design for him.

Conclusion

A behavioral system like TBRI can fall into the integrationist category. It was developed by a Christian woman who was employing her faith values into her work, like love, compassion, patience, and joy. But it fails to allow Scripture to define the responses of a child and reveal their hearts. Its value must be recognized, and some of its methods even used. It needs a stronger biblical foundation, though, and its methods redirected according to that foundation to impact the whole heart of a child and help him heal by discovering and living by his Creator's design.

Pierre's dynamic heart model does not just bridge that gap; instead, it digs much deeper and expansive to provide the foundation from which any attempt to correct behavior must come. Furthermore, the dynamic heart model is refreshing and hope-filled

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[45] Shi, "Treatment of Reactive Attachment Disorder in Young Children: Importance of Understanding Emotional Dynamics," 1.

for those in BC who have been discouraged by callousness toward the circumstances that influence a person.

CHAPTER 5

RESPONDING WITH COMMITTED PERSEVERANCE

Parenting is hard. In a thesis trying to compassionately consider the dynamic activity of hearts, I need to take a chapter to be pastoral and practical to acknowledge the challenges and encourage parents. It is easier to read words on a page than to implement them. The challenges of parenting can be exhausting and often to lead to feeling helpless and hopeless. Foster parents or caregivers in more temporary situations will feel like giving up at times, and parents trying to help their child heal from trauma can feel like they are making no progress.

The Melbourne Child Psychology and School Psychology Services explain that consistency is crucial in parenting. Children can learn to manipulate inconsistency to their advantage by playing parents against each other. Marital strife can result between parents who have different opinions on how to discipline and nurture. Children can develop attachment issues when parents seem unreliable, and parents can even begin questioning themselves and not following through on rules. Finally, they note that inconsistent parenting styles can lead children to gravitate toward one parent and demonize the other.[46] Developers of TBRI noted that interventions for children who have experienced complex trauma may be more effective when including caregivers because treatment occurs in the child's environment where challenges occur. Children spend

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[46] "Working Together: The Importance of Consistency in Parenting," Melbourne Child Psychology and School Psychology Services, accessed August 27, 2020, https://www.melbournechildpsychology.com.au/blog/working-together-the-importance-of-consistency-in-parenting.

many more hours in the care of parents or caregivers than they would in a professional's office for one hour. They claim, "it has been noted that relationship-based trauma can only be resolved through loving, stable relationships, such as can be offered by nurturing caregivers."[47] By God's common grace, these secular and integrative views are accurate because God's design for families was always permanency for the marriage and raising children to be prepared for adulthood.

I argue that parents need to understand how trauma severely influences the cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions of children's hearts, and respond in ways that go beyond behavior modification to align children's hearts with God's design. It is absurd to think that this can happen quickly. Instead, this process requires patience. Do not be discouraged, though! God designed parents and children, and He will empower you for this process. We will look to Scripture to understand the reason to persevere and how to have the strength to persevere.

The Reason to Persevere

Persevere because you are raising your children to believe in Christ and be prepared for His work. In the New International Version of the Bible, 2nd Timothy 3:14-17 says,

> "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

The Apostle Paul is writing to his spiritual son reminding him about his earthly upbringing in the faith. Parent should note two important realities: learned and become

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[47] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma." *Child and Youth Services* 34, no. 4 (2013): 361.

convinced. Timothy grew up with his mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, who both had faith in Jesus (2 Tim 1:5). It is clear that they took time to teach Timothy about the Lord and at some point in his life he became convinced. Bettis views these realities as part of the progression of parenting. The younger years are for learning and the older years are for becoming convinced.[48]

A child is completely helpless physically in his youngest years. He is totally dependent on his parents to care for him and create a safe environment for his growth. The same is true spiritually. Parents shape the environment for their child's learning, including what they learn about Jesus. What a responsibility! Bettis insists that parents of very young children stand in Christ's stead. To obey parents is to obey God. To disobey parents is to disobey God.

He rightly suggests two common mistakes parents make are outsourcing gospel teaching to a church worker instead of fulfilling their responsibility, and not adjusting to the phase of twelve to twenty-one when a child asks more questions and is working toward becoming convinced.[49] Parents cannot control their child's response to gospel teaching, but they can ensure the gospel is taught. Even though Timothy had been taught by mother and grandmother, he had to be convinced. He could not borrow his parent's faith. We do not know what it took to convince Timothy, but we know that children's hearts are dynamically responding to their world. Therefore, they are going to be continually applying their gospel learning to their new experiences. This process could lead to doubts and questions, and parents need to be patient and consistent in their lives and teaching.

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[48] Chap Bettis, *The Disciple-Making Parents: A Comprehensive Guidebook for Raising Your Children to Love and Follow Jesus Christ* (Clarendon Hills, IL: Diamond Hill Publishing, 2016), 25-27.

[49] Bettis, *The Disciple-Making Parents*, 26.

Once Timothy learned and became convinced of the truth of Scripture, he was prepared for its purposes. Second Timothy 3:16-17 reminds us that Scripture teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains in righteousness, so that the servant of God is equipped for every good work. This passage shows a brief timeline of Timothy being taught from infancy, eventually becoming convinced of his faith, and then growing in that faith to the point of effective living for Christ. Every parent should want their child to follow this example! We have the responsibility to teach our children and set the stage for them to become convinced, and then release them into adulthood where they serve the Lord Jesus.

You can see that this is a process, not a snapshot event for parents. The patience required in this task might seem impossible but remember Jesus' example toward Paul and ultimately you. First Timothy 1:16 says, "But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." Notice the connection between God's mercy and perfect patience.

Despite our sinful condition, God was merciful. His mercy is a display of his patience, which was to serve as an example. Lea and Griffin assert, "Christ's 'unlimited patience' is an attitude of moral restraint that holds out under provocation. This longsuffering held back overdue judgment and offered pardon and forgiveness instead of separation and lostness."[50] The context of that passage is God's mercy displayed in our salvation, but God is still merciful to His children as they continue to follow Him. As parents fulfill their God-given responsibility, God's mercy and patience are available and comforting.

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[50] Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 76.

The Dynamic Heart of Parents

The attention so far has been on the dynamic hearts of children, but we need to consider that parents' hearts are also active while parenting! Perhaps an entire volume could be written on the dynamic heart of parents, but for now we will continue to think about God's mercy and patience while applying the dynamic heart framework to parents.

Kelly's forty-one-year-old heart is always responding to her sixteen and fourteen-year-old daughters. Throughout every interaction with her daughters, Kelly is making interpretations and developing beliefs in the cognitive dimension of her heart, emoting and developing desires in the affective dimension, and strengthening her commitments that will affect her choices in the volitional dimension. In moments of conflict or discipline, the activity in those dimensions will come out in how she responds to her daughter and chooses consequences.

At the same time, external conditions are imprinting themselves on Kelly that will passively affect her heart. The external conditions could be how she relate to God, herself, others, and circumstances. Any parent's relationship with God will impact her parenting responses. If Kelly is distant from the Lord, her parenting responses could more easily lean toward unrighteousness. Kelly's self-concept will impact her parenting responses as well. If she had a difficult day or is upset with how she performed at work, her parenting responses might reflect her feelings of failure. Part of Kelly's self-concept is her motivation in parenting. Some parents can become so frustrated because of their child's consistent difficult behavior. They can believe the lie that they can fully control the outcome of their child's behavior, so when they do not get the desired result, they develop a false sense of guilt. Sometimes guilt comes by comparing their children to other children, therefore comparing their parenting to other parents. At this point, parents must check their motivations. Do they care too much about their own reputation? Do they want their child to act a certain way so that they look good? Or do they want a well-mannered child so that their lives are easier. The motivation of a parent should be to

respond to her child out of love and concern for his wellbeing, not the wellbeing of the parent.[51]

Regarding her relationships with others, situations involving Kelly's husband, daughters, or neighbors could all come into play. Pressure from her marriage might come out in her parenting responses. Or if neighbors or friends are present when she needs to correct her daughters, Kelly's concern for how she looks in front of her friends might impact her parenting responses in a given moment. Circumstances could be a variety of events or activities, including situations of her past involving her own parents that influences how she parents her daughters.

Sixteen-year-old Cyrena had been driving for five months and Kelly allowed her to go to local friends' houses in the evening. Cyrena's curfew was 9:00 pm on school nights. Cyrena was not home at 9:05 one evening. Kelly's heart starts beating a little faster as she goes to the front window to keep looking for headlights. She feels worried because this is the first time Cyrena has been late. Her mind starts thinking of all kinds of possibilities, even the worst ones. After a couple more minutes, she starts feeling angry. By 9:10, when the headlights appear in the driveway, Kelly had gone from peaceful reading fifteen minutes earlier to a mixture of worry, relief, and anger ready to explode in some way when Cyrena walked up to the door. Kelly opens the door and hugs Cyrena at the same time yelling at her for disobeying curfew and making her so worried.

Cyrena, unable to say anything yet, was shocked by her mother's reaction and just stood still with a stoic look. Kelly interpreted her quiet stillness as a defiant and careless reaction to the curfew rule, so she yells more and grounds Cyrena from driving for a week. Cyrena starts crying and yells, "I just got stopped by the train on my way home" as she storms upstairs.

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[51] Julie Lowe, "Reflections on Parenting a Difficult Child," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 31, no. 3 (2017), 61-62.

Kelly stood still wondering what just happened. She felt guilty for possibly overreacting, but also wondered why she got to the point she did so quickly. What happened was her dynamic heart started pounding overtime! She interpreted Cyrena's tardiness as her trying to be rebellious and that she cares about her friends more than the family rules. This indicated her belief that family rules are to be obeyed. Her belief is righteous, but her interpretations of the situation were incorrect.

Kelly's worry indicates her desire for her daughter's safety, and her anger indicates her desire to be respected by her children. These desires are righteous, but she did not submit her feelings to the Lord in that moment. Instead, she allowed her flesh to perpetuate the worry and anger by believing her created scenarios.

Finally, when Kelly opened the door with simultaneous hugging and yelling, she proved her commitment to loving her daughter and to enforcing her belief that family rules should be obeyed. She prioritized her inaccurate interpretations and strong feelings when responding to Cyrena and she forgot to show compassion and take time to learn the facts of what happened.

Parents must strive to follow God's design in their parenting responses. Thankfully, God is merciful and patient. In fact, he might even use our parenting mistakes and asking forgiveness of our children as further gospel teaching and modeling to our children. Tripp reminds parents that they are fully justified and accepted by Christ, but they are not yet complete. He encourages, "The power of sin has been broken, but the presence of sin still remains and will be progressively eradicated."[52] Just as God is committed to a patient process of conforming His children to image of Christ (Rom 8:29), so are parents committed to a process of teaching their children and preparing them to be convinced of the gospel of Christ.

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[52] Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 87.

The Strength to Persevere

Tripp suggests that children and parents suffer from spiritual blindness, unable to see themselves accurately. It is dangerous because spiritually blind people are blind to their blindness. They think they see well, but they are influenced by the deceptiveness of sin and the delusion of self-knowledge.[53] The dynamic heart model explains this influence like already examined, but the truth now is that parents must remember that God is still completing the work He began in them (Phil 1:6). They must depend on God's strength as they lead their children. As we start thinking about perseverance specifically, Tripp gives three practical suggestions.

First, he says parents need a process mentality. Change is hardly the result of one stellar moment. Instead, in each partial conversation and unfinished moment, parents are imparting wisdom to their children, exposing their hearts, building the child's self-awareness, enlivening their conscience, giving God-awareness, constructing a biblical worldview, and giving the Holy Spirit room to do what the parent cannot.

Second, he says parents need to see parenting as one unending conversation. Similar to the process mentality, parenting takes place over time through many interactions. Parents need relief from the pressure of feeling they must get a child to effective adulthood in one conversation, or that they must load all of their hopes and desires into their child at once. He encourages parents to commit to this phrase: many mini-moments of change.

Finally, encourages parents to have a project mentality. Following his same line of thinking, he acknowledges that parents know their children and should look every day to engage their children with what they know is important. The four-year-old is engaged differently than the seventeen-year-old. A project mentality avoids emotionally

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[53] Tripp, *Parenting*, 89.

reactive parenting that can feel like a roller coaster from one day to the next. When parents are inconsistent, children's behavior will be more inconsistent.[54]

A theme in the book of Hebrews is perseverance, and it is very applicable to parenting, especially when dealing with hard situations influenced by trauma. Hebrews uses athletic analogies to keep a picture in the reader's mind of moving toward a finish line. Hebrews 12:1 clarifies that there is a race "set before us." Do not overlook this powerful detail in the depth of all that is in verse one. Every Christian has a race set before them. For parents, the race is living the gospel and teaching it to children, in order to prepare them to become convinced and glorify the Lord in all they do.

Like marathon runners, though, many parents "hit the wall." It is painful to watch when some runners get close to the eighteen or twenty-mile mark and physically seem to shut down. "Hitting the wall" refers to depleting stored glycogen in the body and the feelings of fatigue and negativity that typically accompany it. Glycogen is carbohydrate that is stored in muscles and liver for energy. The body prefers it because is the easiest and most readily available fuel source to burn when exercising.[55] Parents might feel like they are crawling in exhaustion toward a finish line they might not even see. This situation is where Hebrews ministers deeply to a dynamic heart strongly influenced by challenging external conditions.

The Blessings of the Church

By God's design, every Christian is part of the Church, the body of Christ. Every Christian parent should be active in a local church and should not discount the blessings that come with being part of the Church.

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[54] Tripp, *Parenting*, 91-94.

[55] Susan Paul, "Understanding Why You Hit 'The Wall'," *Runner's World*, April 12, 2019, https://www.runnersworld.com/training/a20854502/understanding-why-you-hit-the-wall.

Hebrews 10:24-25 reminds believers to stir one another up to love and good works. In order to do that, the church must gather together. The Church is a people committed to discipleship (Matt 28:18-20), and therefore, to the priority of God's Word. In the context of a church, a person will find counsel, which is sometimes expressed in the Bible as "discipline," "admonish," "encourage," "rebuke," "train," and "equip."[56]

Hebrews 10:25 also reveals that believers are to encourage one another. In this context of encouragement, Christian parents will find accountability as well as the Word of God is ministered. A local church can provide accountability and encouragement in all aspects of the ministry of the Word for a parent: personal, private, and public.

The personal ministry of the Word is an invitation to self-counsel. Carson refers to it as, "The daily perpetual invitation to heart searching, heart repentance, and heart renewal through God's word. In other words, it is the examination of our own heart (i.e., thoughts, motives, desires) and behavior by taking the penetrating light of God's Word and letting it carefully examine every part of our life."[57] A local church will equip a parent by encouraging a personal ministry of the Word and providing public teaching that reinforces and helps bring understanding to personal ministries of the Word.

In addition to personal ministry, a local church provides the setting for private ministry of the Word. Carson views the private ministry as the one-on-one, face-to-face biblical counseling component.[58] Hopefully, parents are in a church with trained biblical counselors who can help minister to their needs as parents and also help minister to their children. Parents can work with counselors if needed to develop a plan to work through

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[56] Garrett Higbee, "Biblical Counseling and Soul Care in the Church," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care Through God's People,* ed. Bob Kellemen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 51.

[57] Kevin Carson, "The Personal, Private, and Public Ministry of the Word," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 264-265.

[58] Carson, "The Personal, Private, and Public Ministry of the Word," 266.

unrighteous beliefs, desires, and commitments. If biblical counselors are not in a current church, parents can look on the website of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (www.biblicalcounseling.com/counselors) to find one nearby and possibly even introduce their own church leaders to BC through that counselors.

Carson and Tautges expand the view of the private ministry to understanding it as part of the discipleship context of the church. The Great Commission involves teaching (Matt 28:18-20), and they suggest, "The goal of teaching is to help others obey God as we all learn to walk by faith, empowered by the indwelling Spirit, thus living in the presence of Christ who said He would be with us until the end of the age."[59] Biblical counseling should be part of the discipleship ministry of a church because it is one way of transferring truth from one person to another. Biblical counseling can be a one-on-one form of discipleship, especially when it is understood that biblical counseling does not only happen in formal settings. Other discipleship relationships exist in churches, and parents, like all church members, should be active in opportunities to teach and learn from others (Titus 2:3-4). Being discipled, formally or informally, are ways parents can think through their experiences with another believer as they discern the application of God's Word to their lives.

Finally, parents can experience the blessing of the public ministry of the Word of God. Public ministry of the Word includes anything that involves proclamation to a group. Parents who are blessed with faithful teachers in their church experience the blessing of learning and applying the Bible. As a pastor or teacher explains and applies Scripture weekly to the congregation, individuals are not just learning the content of God's Word, but they are learning how to apply it to their lives. They are responding to good questions and developing a process they can carry over to their personal times in the

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[59] Kevin Carson and Paul Tautges, "Uniting the Public Ministry of the Word and the Private Ministry of the Word," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care Through God's People,* ed. Bob Kellemen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 74.

Word. Another blessing is the enabling of church members' growth and stability in their faith (Eph 4:13; 2 Tim 2:15-17). Additionally, public ministry helps people develop a biblical value system and a network of shared wisdom.[60]

Imagine the encouragement to persevere that would come to parents who are active in church faithful to the ministry of the Word. As they sit weekly engaging with sermons and other public lessons, and as they interact with others in private settings, a parent's dynamic heart is being challenged and shaped. Scripture is an external condition impressing itself upon the heart! When discouraged and exhausted, parents will find comfort and peace. When celebrating and joyful, parents will be reminded to give glory to God and fight their pride. When confused, parents will be able to learn from others as they apply Scripture to one another. In all situations, parents will place themselves under the Word of God, continually conforming to Jesus (Rom 8:29), and therefore equipped for every good work God has prepared (2 Tim 3:16-17).

You Are Not Alone

In addition to being part of the Church, a "cloud of witnesses" is mentioned in Hebrews 12:1 as a reference to the faithful Old Testament saints mentioned in Hebrews eleven. The emphasis is on their witness or testimony, and the context of the passage is for believers to lay aside every weight and sin that holds them back and run the race set before them. Every believer can be encouraged by the testimonies of endurance and faith of so many who have run the race before them. In the same way, every parent can be encouraged by the endurance and faith displayed by other parents.

We have already discussed how this kind of encouragement can be found in the church, but parents would be wise to cultivate friendships with other parents where they can be encouraged and refreshed. Some elements of self-care are appropriate here.

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[60] Carson and Tautges, 76.

Purvis suggests that exhausted parents need to "refill their bucket" because the challenges seem greater when everyone is tired, and resources are diminished. She suggests taking time for exercise, adhering to certain dietary guidelines like taking multivitamins and avoiding sugar, relaxing with music, taking time to play, and hiring a babysitter for a night off.[61] The caution with any self-care proposal is to ensure a proper motivation. Selfishness can motivate these efforts to where we exercise or eat or relax a certain way because it is our bodies, our time, our health, our poor circumstances, and so on. We need to always remember that we are stewards of all God has given us, including our bodies. Certainly, we must care for it, but always with the motivation that I will glorify God in this body!

Hebrews 12:1 keeps this motivation in check. Even as we find encouragement from the testimony of others, which might come from a night out or jogging with a friend, we are to lay aside every weight and sin which clings to us that would hinder us from running the race God put before us. Our rest, refreshment, and encouragement from others should occur simultaneously with allowing the Lord to search our hearts and correct any grievous ways (Ps 139:23-24).

In addition to the cloud of witnesses, Jesus is always present with you. The New Internal Version says, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:2–3).

The strength to persevere comes through Jesus' presence. Christians are to fix their eyes on Jesus, and also to "consider" him, which will keep them from becoming weary and fainthearted. Fixing the eyes is slightly different than considering Jesus. We

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[61] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing To Your Adoptive Family* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2007), 230-232.

are to not only look to Jesus for strength to endure, but "consider" is a compound word in the Greek language meaning to think with repetition.[62] To paraphrase, to consider Jesus means to think about him and keep thinking about him. He is the example.

Parent, if you are overworked, stop overly depending on yourself and look to Jesus to find rest. If you are weary from the spiritual battle of confronting sinful hearts every day, do not justify your laziness or selfishness to not endure. Instead, consider Jesus, who endured far more than we ever will. Jesus had a harder race set before Him by God the Father than what any person on earth will have to endure.

We learn in these verses of Hebrews 12 that Jesus is the pioneer of our faith, meaning that He is the champion of our faith, the example to follow. He is also the perfecter of faith. Parent, find comfort here. Perfection refers to completion. Jesus finished the race set before Him when He was on earth. He endured the cross and despised the temporary shame it brought because there was a greater joy set before Him. He knew He would be resurrected, seated at the right hand of the throne of God, making salvation possible for Jews and Gentiles, and later receive to glory all who believe. Yes, there was a joy to come! Parent, our joy is providing the instruction and environment for our children to become convinced of the gospel and ready for that glory. Yes, there is joy to come!

Endure by Seeing the Invisible

Hebrews commends Noah and Moses' faith as men who endured even though the finish line was fuzzy. Hebrews 11:7 states that Noah constructed the ark out of faith after "being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen." What were the events yet unseen?

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[62] Spiros Zodhiates, "357. ἀναλογίζομαι," in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2000).

Noah received his instructions from God in Genesis 6:13-21. Parents might be able to relate to the dumbfounded response we could perceive Noah to have in that moment. Though Genesis 6:22 says he responded obediently, there could have been moments of doubt as he considered his task. Children from trauma especially present situations and force parents into scenarios where they can wonder if it is even possible to lead their child through it.

Noah's instructions also include the "events as yet unseen." First, no one had seen God's wrath so severely as what would be seen in the flood. Noah could have wondered if God would really deal with the wickedness of sin in this way. He could have been shocked and feeling grateful for God's grace displayed to his family. Second, no one had seen a vessel as large as what he was instructed to build. Noah could have questioned the possibility of he thought through all it would take to build the ark. Third, no one had seen rain. Noah could have been the object of insults from people who certainly could not imagine a flood because they had never even seen rain. They would not have even known how to predict the start of a rainstorm. It would come quickly and without warning when God decided to open the clouds. Finally, no one had seen God make a covenant with people. Genesis 6:18 is the first covenant to appear in the Old Testament. Noah could have wondered if God would truly keep His word. Would Noah's family really be saved? Noah and the world would learn that God is faithful to all He says. He was faithful and persevered in building the ark even when he was up against events yet unseen.

Moses faced a similar situation. Hebrews 11:23-29 categorizes Moses' life and each category is an example of Moses' endurance. In infancy, Moses endured a death sentence because of the faithfulness of his parents when they put him in a basket to float down the Nile River. As he was growing up in Pharaoh's household, he did not claim all the available privileges of Egyptian royalty or live in opposition to the Israelites. Moses endured the evil of comfort and opposition to God.

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When he left Egypt, he endured the evil of slavery and oppressive leadership. As he kept the Passover, he endured the wrath of God by obeying God's commands. As he miraculously crossed the Red Sea, Moses endured when the race set before him seemed impossible.

Hebrews 11:27 paradoxically declares that Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible." How does a person see that which is invisible? Through every difficulty, Moses kept his eyes on the bigger plan of God, the One whom he could not see. He did not know where the Promised Land was and could only see the wilderness. Even though the finish line was fuzzy, Moses knew the God who was directing Him toward it so he trusted and endured.

Conclusion

Most parenting resources suggest ways to focus on children's hearts and behavior, but parents must also be reminded that their dynamic hearts are also active in parenting. Parents often sin when responding to their children. When you add to the guilt of sin and failure of a parent's own heart the reality of their child's sinful heart, then situations can lead to exhaustion and feelings of hopelessness.

Parents need to persevere because they are stewarding young lives who can learn the gospel, become convinced of it, and live for the glory of God. Parents are the most significant influence on this process and Hebrews provides great counsel for finding strength to endure it.

Paul's beautiful prayer in 1 Timothy 1:17 expresses, "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." The invisible God works in ways we cannot see and has purposes that we might not see, but parents can follow Noah and Moses' examples and endure by seeing the Invisible. Look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfector of your faith, as you parent your children.

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CHAPTER 6

NEXT STEPS IN APPLYING THE DYNAMIC
HEART FRAMEWORK

Every counseling approach employs a philosophy or some way to view the

world. Therefore, any Christian who uses any counseling approach must evaluate it

carefully to ensure that it lines up with a biblical worldview and is not going to reinforce

principles that are antithetical to the gospel of Jesus.

Johnson offers several questions to help Christians evaluate any counseling

approach. First, what does this system believe and think about God? Second, what does

this system say about the nature of man? Third, what does this system say is the problem

of man? Finally, what is this system's solution to man's problems?[63] We will answer

these questions about TBRI as a final evaluation is made, and then talk about some next

steps for parents and counselors to apply the dynamic heart framework to helping

children from trauma.

TBRI does not express an explicit view of God, but Christian values are

certainly impressed into it by its founders. It borrows from secular theories that do not

acknowledge God, which influences an incorrect view of the nature of man. TBRI rightly

views children as those who are impressionable and influenced by a number of factors.

They focus on trauma, but TBRI never frames traumatic experiences in the light of sin

that has been committed against the child, nor does it refer to children's responses as

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[63] Dale Johnson, "TIL 273: How Should Biblical Counselors Assess EMDR Therapy?", August 24, 2020, Truth in Love (podcast), https://biblicalcounseling.com/how-should-biblical-counselors-assess-emdr-therapy.

bring sinful. It offers redirective strategies, but to what are parents directing their children? It suggests life values be developed by the parents and child, but what if those values do not align with their design? TBRI offers valuable observations about child behavior and practical steps parents can take in disciplining children, but it does not ground it in a biblical understanding of God or people.

A challenge to applying the dynamic heart perspective to children from trauma is making its methodology practical for parents and counselors. While practical examples have been given throughout this thesis, parents would likely feel more at peace with a plan of behavior management techniques associated with each dimensions of the heart. TBRI can fill some of this need, but overall, parents need to know how to recognize the interpretations, feelings, and choices of their child, and then be equipped with helpful questions to help uncover their child's beliefs, desires, and commitment. Similarly, counselors would benefit from practical techniques for the counseling room. It would be very difficult for a child to just walk in, sit down, and start talking proficiently through a dynamic heart model. Counselors and parents would benefit from further study to expand on methodology of counseling children.

Another challenge is in making somewhat complicated theology accessible to children, especially younger children. Concepts like the image of God and given identity versus constructed identity could be challenging for children to grasp, especially younger children. Theological resources for children exist, but it could be helpful to create a resource that explains the dynamic heart model in ways that children can easily grasp.

If a parent has read through this these, my hope is that they would take a two-fold response. First, start using dynamic heart language with your children and look for the interpretations, feelings, and choices of your children. One of the easiest vocabulary changes you can make in your home is to replace the question, "what made you do that?" with "what influenced you to respond in that way?" This question gently introduces and reminds children of influences and does not give them the chance to blame something or

someone else for their actions. Eventually, conversations about the kinds of influences they are facing will come, and children can be part of thinking through how they were influenced to think, feel, and choose.

My second hope for parents is to intentionally allow the Holy Spirit to search your dynamic heart and reveal any area of unrighteousness in your parenting. Parenting is not just about children. Parenting can be a sanctification tool the Lord uses to reveal sin and lead a parent toward righteousness. It might help to keep a diagram of the dynamic heart framework, like table two in this thesis, in a journal. In moments of parenting difficulty, take time to reflect on what was influencing your thoughts, feeling, and choices.

Parent, care for your own heart and be faithful as the Lord continues to use you to help shape your child's dynamic heart.

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ABSTRACT

TRIUMPHING OVER TRAUMA: EQUIPPING PARENTS
TO UNDERSTAND AND COUNSEL CHILDREN
FROM TRAUMATIC BACKGROUNDS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
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Traumatic experiences drastically shape a child's worldview and can leave parents and counselors wondering how to respond. Trust Based Relational Intervention is a behavioral system that provides valuable practicality to parents. However, it does have a biblical view of God and man to which parents can align their responses and correction. Jeremy Pierre's dynamic heart perspective of human experience provides an explanation of who children are, how they are influenced, and why they think, feel, and choose the ways they do. Merging the dynamic heart perspective with some of TBRI's practicality will help parents understand how their children are created in the image of God and how they can live in the power of the Holy Spirit to triumph through trauma.

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