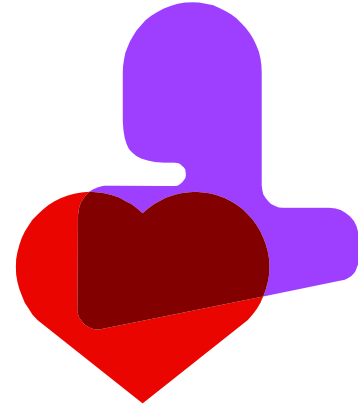


## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

The scriptures (or Bible) have many references to the word “mind”, and even more to the word “heart”.

What might not be simple to understand is that the mind and heart are part of a person’s being; these descriptions are what compose the part of a person that is not the flesh or physical, and may be thought of as behavior, personality or character.

The mind (or brain) is also “flesh” (or human tissue), and the heart is an actual beating organ, of course. **But the “Mind & Heart” of this title and subject is about the personality or character traits** – and not the actual physical organs as so often applied.



The scriptures describe the “Mind & Heart” as part of the person’s being (spiritual being); consider the verse from Matthew (from *The Message*)– where **Jesus describes the most important commandment:**

Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.  
This is the most important, the first on any list.

In other translations (of the Bible), the word “passion” is replaced by “heart”, the word “prayer” is replaced by “soul”, and the word “intelligence” by “mind”.

Introducing this third word, “soul” may seem to complicate the concept of the Spiritual Being, but there is still another central part called the “spirit”.

Thus, the Being (or name for what defines the person’s spiritual being) is composed of:

- **Heart** or our passion...or how we feel
- **Mind** or our intelligence...or what we think
- **Soul** or our human nature...or how live according to our nature
- **Spirit** or our **innermost being**...or how we live according to the Creator, God

In much of the comments to follow, some scripture will be applied along with excerpts and illustrations from the book, “The Release of the Spirit”, by Watchman Nee; and the book, “Embracing Brokenness”, by Alan Nelson.

You may be confused by the function and interaction of these four parts, but try to relate it to the physical or human body. Even the involuntary functions of your physical body require more than one organ to sustain life. Though we don’t think about breathing and blood circulation, our lungs and heart continue right on functioning. We live even without thinking about it!

## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

On the other hand, we certainly have to think about eating. When we eat, a combination of voluntary and involuntary organs and functions *go to work*. We voluntary prepare and consume our food, but the stomach, intestines and other organs digest and process it without our attention.

Using this simple example of physical processes – the conscious and unconscious activity – is a good way of trying to illustrate the relationship and inner-working of the heart, mind, soul and spirit. But before presenting more on the four, consider (and think about) some more verses for clarification on the heart, mind and so on.

In Ephesians, chapter 1, Paul writes:

I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you **intelligent** and **discerning** in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, **grasp the immensity** of this glorious way of life he has for Christians...

From the verses above, Paul is indicating that God wants us to **use our minds** (“intelligent”) and wisdom (“discerning”) “in knowing him...”

The phrase “grasp the immensity” is translated in another version as “the eyes of your **heart** may be enlightened”. Since when did the heart get eyes? Well, this assignment of eyes to the heart is symbolic to represent the condition of **embracing or accepting something wholeheartedly** (in this case, “the glorious way of life”). Have you ever had a heart-felt feeling for something; I mean a real-deep, strong feeling about something? Well, if you have, than you evidently “grasp” it – or have accepted it wholeheartedly.

The scriptures frequently refer to both the “Mind & Heart” in combination; from the book of Revelation, chapter 2:

Then every church will know that appearances don’t impress me. I x-ray every motive and make sure you get what’s coming to you.

In this verse, John (the Apostle) is writing of Jesus’ all-knowing – that “appearances” are not important or do not count. What count’s is “every motive” (or the actions of “Mind & Heart”). **What we think, what we say, and what we do – it is all a reflection of our being – of who we are in heart, mind, soul and spirit.**

## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

**And God knows us**; he has the ability to “x-ray every motive” – so that there is nothing left unknown before God. **Yes, God knows it all!**

Proverbs, chapter 27 says: “Just as water mirrors your face, so your face mirrors your heart.” In other words, **our behavior is a reflection of our heart**. A wicked heart is discovered by wicked behavior; and a compassionate heart is revealed by love and forgiveness.

When God sent his son, Jesus, to earth; **a new covenant was born**; a binding promise that would go beyond the law’s work as etched on stone (as in the Ten Commandments). This new covenant was to be written on the “Mind & Heart” of man, his creation. By writing the law on the “Mind & Heart” of creation, it would be as his own son’s life – not just a law to be violated or circumvented by the powerful and proud, **but a lifestyle that is found through obedience to God in Christ**. The new covenant was to become wholeheartedly accepted...

The book of Hebrews, chapter 8, describes the covenant:

This new plan I’m making with Israel isn’t going to be written on paper, isn’t going to be chiseled in stone; This time I’m writing out the plan in them, **carving it on the lining of their hearts**. I’ll be their God, they’ll be my people. They won’t go to school to learn about me, or buy a book called God in Five Easy Lessons. They’ll all get to know me firsthand, the little and the big, the small and the great. They’ll get to know me by being kindly forgiven, with the slate of their sins forever wiped clean.

Hebrews, chapter 10, also describes this new covenant along with the outcome – which is forgiveness...of each person (of Christ). Love is the cause for God writing his laws on the “Mind & Heart”, and forgiveness is the result... God is the creator of compassion – as all other good things; God’s compassion is offered to his created by way of Christ. Those who accept or receive this compassion are forgiven...

The Psalmist recognized both the wicked and the compassionate heart when he prayed (from chapter 7):

Close the book on Evil, God, but publish your mandate for us. You get us ready for life: you probe for our soft spots, you knock off our rough edges.

In another translation, the words “soft spots” is replaced with “Mind & Heart.

If God is to “get us ready for life”, our “soft spots or “Mind & Heart” must be changed and the “rough edges” knocked-off – that God’s compassion may live in us...

## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

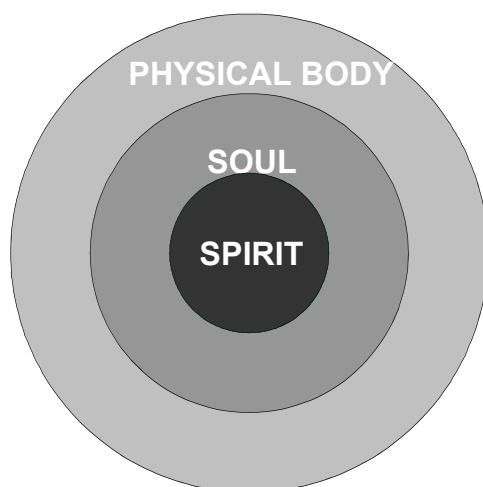
God writes the law on each “Mind & Heart” of his child but, in the process, he also takes the “rough edges” off – or he purifies and cleanses the heart by forgiveness and through his Word (the Bible) and the Holy Spirit. Consider 1 John, chapter 3: “And this is how we experience his deep and abiding presence in us: by the Spirit he gave us.

To understand how God purifies and cleanses the heart, I have sought the great works of Watchman Nee, “The Release of the Spirit”. Before delving into the book, a few words about the author:

Watchman Nee (1903-1972) was an evangelist in China. In this Communist nation, Christianity is forbidden and, where practiced, is at the risk of persecution – even death. In 1952 he was arrested by the authorities and found guilty of a large number of false charges. He remained imprisoned until his death; yet, he is remembered for his labor in growing the church against political oppression, and for his understanding (and experience) in the brokenness that must occur in the believer’s life for the necessary change of heart described in the last paragraph.

As I continue with a summary of his book, the possibility is very likely to omit or overlook critical information or commentary. As with the application of scriptures above, much more exist and could have been presented toward understanding the “Mind & Heart” in Spiritual terms.

Watchman refers to the “spirit” (lowercase) as the spirit innate in each man and women. Along with a heart, mind and soul, God endowed man with a spirit. This spirit is described as the “innermost” part of man or his dwelling place. The spirit is at the core the spiritual being (as illustrated below), and is surrounded by the soul, heart, mind, and physical body of the “outermost” part.



Watchman Nee illustration of the Spiritual Being

According to Watchman, God intended for the spirit to be man’s dwelling place – or the home from which he derives his behavior, his being – who he really is, his character...in the “image of God”.

But when man sinned against God (Adam and Eve in Eden), the soul became independent of the spirit (of man), and with the independence, was no longer governed by this spirit or dwelling place. Left to its own devices, the soul becomes hardened or encased – thus the spirit is seemingly hidden, but is actually bound by the soul.

## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

**Why is the spirit important?** Before attempting to answer that question, I ask you to consider the use of the word “spirit” as applied elsewhere:

- A spirited horse is very lively...even wild and untamed;
- When it is said, “in the spirit of...” the meaning is “in the atmosphere of...or condition of...” An example is, “in the spirit of fairness, let us agree to...”
- The word “spirit” identifies the intended, observed, or desired behavior or condition.

If I should add this, “spirits” refers to alcoholic beverages – but this definition does not really apply in this context.

Some believers may view man’s soul and spirit as the same thing – two words that refer to the same inner being of man. Others, such as Watchman, describe these two as separate – with the spirit of man being at the core of his being. In the *spirit of clarity*, I will stick to the soul and spirit as being separate – though having the relationship illustrated above and, further, the potential for joining into one unified entity or “core” of man’s being.

When one of my children was fairly young, he made the expression: “You broke my heart.” His comment had a degree of humor to it because, by all appearance, his heart (or emotions) was not affected in this way. Aside from that statement (and the humor of this moment), the heart can be broken – or hurt by trauma, losses, and other damaging conditions or circumstances.

**Can the heart be healed...from brokenness?** I believe that hurt can be healed; but whether the heart can be restored or made anew is another matter. The saying, “love heals all wounds” may have something to do with the degree of intensity of love – both that received and that given. But the prospect of a healed heart is a factor of love – real or true love offered by God both as a blessing (to receive) and as a gift (to give) through his Holy Spirit. What the saying should be – more accurately expressed – is that “God heals all wounds” through his love.

Psalm, chapter 147 describes this work (of God): “He heals the heartbroken and bandages their wounds.”

Isaiah, chapter 61 has a similar description of God – who heals the brokenhearted...

Drawing on my son’s expression, **the affect of hurt can be emotional** – which is what he was talking about. **The primary concern of God is a different type of hurt or a spiritual hurt.** The two (types) may be difficult to differentiate because they both involve the heart; and since God is interested in the heart, he must also be interested in both our spiritual and emotional hurt – in that order.

## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

The order (spiritual, than emotional) is because our spiritual hurt comes from nature – or the condition where our inner spirit is not enabled to work with our outer soul. Remember, the soul surrounds the spirit – and the soul can work independent of the spirit even though the spirit is *at the center*. With the soul working solo, the spirit cannot guide or influence the individual as intended; that is, **the spirit cannot lead or direct the soul, the outer man – to include his heart, mind and body.** The spirit is bound by the soul...

In solo, the soul can lead to much hurt (of the heart) because its nature is to serve self foremost. As long as the soul is in charge, the heart will be hurt by sin – or by the self-driven nature or orientation of the soul. The first sin in Eden was motivated by the desire to serve self – rather than serve or obey God. As a consequence (of Eden), man is born into sin – or is born with the nature to serve self foremost and, thus, *misses the mark* of real love. Absent of real love – or evidence of God in his life – the soul-driven man (the “soul-man”) follows his own desires of sin – or disobedience to God. **Hurt can be emotional – but the deeper source of hurt is sin.** Man is still able to love...but not love as God intended in Eden.

God heals the hurt by removing the sin – and he removes the sin through the shed blood of his son, Christ. Yes, Jesus’ crucifixion – his shed blood – is the cleaning agent for the sin in our hearts. Forgiveness – or the cleaning of heart – enables healing to occur; and when spiritual healing begins, the lesser hurt that is emotional can also be healed as well. First the spiritual, then the emotional...

The scriptures tell us that Jesus was able to love as God intended; and the wounds that Jesus incurred (during the crucifixion) have resulted in our healing; that is, that God’s love of salvation comes as result of Jesus wounds...and crucifixion. 1 Peter, chapter 2: “He (Jesus) used his servant body to carry our sins to the Cross so we could be rid of sin, free to live the right way. **His wounds became your healing.**”

By giving love through Christ, God offers healing to the heart; but though healing does occur, it must continue – as the nature of a man continues. Even though a soul-driven man receives Christ as Lord, he is still somewhat his old-self – his self-directed, soul-driven self of sin. Not to suggest that salvation does not matter, but to describe **salvation as only the beginning of the soul’s change from being self-driven to being God or spirit driven.**

## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

Remember, that love is a blessing and a gift through his Holy Spirit. How can the soul-driven or self-serving man become spirit-lead in obedience to God? By receiving this gift of love from the Holy Spirit, the forgiven may as well reflect the character of Christ in his life. He becomes spirit-driven – with real love in his heart. **He is now on the journey to love as God intended...**

Just as sin *hangs-on* to the heart of the forgiven, the soul stubbornly wants to maintain its independence – to bound the spirit, the *inner being*.

As Paul (Apostle of the New Testament) wrote in Romans, chapter 7:

I know that all God's commands are spiritual, but I'm not. Isn't this also your experience?" **Yes. I'm full of myself**—after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, **doing things I absolutely despise.**

What Paul is describing is the internal conflict or struggle of the soul and spirit – of a self-centered life or a God-centered life...with both the blessing and the gift of real love. There is a spiritual war or conflict within the forgiven...

**God is all-powerful.** God has the power to offer his love by forgiving our sins and to offer his love as a gift – that the forgiven may love others. Indeed, God *calls* or instructs the forgiven to love and forgive others – just as they have been forgiven and loved by God. The more spirit-drive the forgiven, the more love is given in obedience to God...and to his glory.

**God has a plan** to fulfill this call or instruction in the life of the forgiven. Sometimes he administers this plan in increments, or as one man expressed it, like the drizzle of a rain; but other times, his plan comes like a deluge – or in large order. God delivers this plan in varying degrees through the combination of discipline and revelation – through steady streams of instruction and through magnanimous miracles and understanding of the Holy Spirit.

**The Holy Spirit is God's administer of his plan.** When the soul-driven accepts God (and Jesus) as Lord, forgiveness and salvation enter the heart initiating the healing as described previously. The love of God is witnessed by this salvation and forgiving power – and is received by the one who is forgiven. Still stymied by the soul-driven life however, the forgiven must mature (or be refined) such that he may apply the fruits of love (and other gifts\* as well) received through the Holy Spirit.

\* *Fruits of the Holy Spirit* are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

Recall the previous introduction of the spirit as the “dwelling place”. God intended for his Holy Spirit and his creation’s spirit to be in harmony – according to Watchman Nee. Remember that Eden was a perfect place – or was without sin; and remember that sin emerged when the created **desired to be like God** – or to be independent of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation offers the entry of the Holy Spirit into the life of the soul-driven; thus, the intention (and condition) of Eden is initiated; yet, the forgiven still remains (or lives) in a fallen world...rather than Eden – and the forgiven must still contend with soul-driven desires that conflict with the spirit, the Holy Spirit of God.

Though God has provided salvation, **the forgiven still has the freewill to choose**; and sometimes, the choice may be in conflict with the Spirit. Even in such disobedience however, the forgiven will come under conviction and, brought to the knowledge of his disobedience, is instructed to confess and repent. Restoration follows the awareness, confession and repentance.

This cycle of sin...restoration may seem endless or, in some way, even pointless; after all, **what is salvation if the forgiven continues to sin?** Remember that the Spirit is present in the forgiven – and will not allow such repetition and “endless” cycles to continue. The forgiven must mature or grow in his faith – spiritual strength. **As with so many things that grow-up or mature, the forgiven is called or instructed to mature or grow in the Spirit.** The scriptures use the analogy of a baby that drinks milk versus a growing child (and adult) that eats meat (the first being the “newborn” of salvation and the second being the faith-building...spirit-driven...)

Again, God has a plan for each of the forgiven; some may grow through much revelation, others may grow through a lot of discipline; yet, God uses both to help the newborn mature to an adult in Christ. When the soul-driven becomes a spirit-driven through salvation, growth should begin...and continue...

The scriptures compare such growth to fruit-bearing trees. The forgiven matures and bears the *fruit of the Holy Spirit*. In the maturing however, God will prune (or discipline) to encourage more growth. You may recall that Jesus once encountered a fig tree that was barren (Matthew, chapter 21) and, on acknowledging the condition, the tree withered and died. In other scriptures, Jesus uses this comparison when he says that some trees bear good fruit while others bear bad fruit. Those who remain in Christ bear good fruit...or the *fruit of the Spirit*.



## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

To continue, pruning may be compared to discipline – and discipline is one of two methods used by God to bear good fruit in the forgiven. Remember that the soul remains with the forgiven – and can be in conflict with the Spirit now present in salvation. **How does God help the fruit to grow** – or the Spirit to overtake the soul; what is discipline – and how does it apply to the application of the tree?

**Sometimes discipline is referred to as brokenness.** I know, brokenness sounds a bit different in that it suggest that something is beyond repair – or perhaps forever scared or reduced in effectiveness, etc. Actually, brokenness is about breaking down the soul so that the Spirit can overtake or grow in the forgiven. Personally, I am not sure that brokenness and discipline are always the same – as discipline may include much teaching or instruction, while brokenness may be teaching or instruction in the school of “hard-knocks”. Still, the two methods have some common thread in that both lead the forgiven to more faith, more fruit and more Spirit-driven living.

In his book, “Embracing Brokenness”, Alan Nelson defines brokenness as:  
Brokenness is the process by which we come to the awareness of our inabilities and need for His great ability. The Sermon on the Mount is the best description of Kingdom living, and the beatitudes head up that description.

Alan continues with a word from Watchman Nee:

God allows the soul to fall, to weaken, and even to sin, that he (the forgiven), may understand whether or not any good resides in the flesh...the Lord tries him in order that he may know himself.

**Brokenness brings the forgiven (or reminds him) that he needs God;** thus, such discipline may come in the form of a crisis in which no other course (or means of control) is available. The forgiven may respond with bitterness and anger – suggesting the response, “why me”; but the ideal outcome is again, Spirit-driven living...in fear of God.

Alan continues by stating the goal or the ideal outcome:

**Our goal is to trust God, to maintain a proper fear of the Lord.**  
When we fail to fear the Lord appropriately, we run the risk of needing to be broken and tamed.

Proverbs, chapter 9 tell us: “Skilled living gets its start in the Fear-of-God, insight into life from knowing a Holy God.”

So fear is the beginning of “skilled living” – or wisdom...as used in other translations.

## The Mind & Heart in Spiritual Terms

The soul-driven life must be broken; or more specifically, the soul must be broken. Referring again to Watchman's illustration (and supporting dialogue), the soul surrounds the spirit (or Holy Spirit of the forgiven) and basically keeps the spirit shut-in or subdued...

Think of it like a crusty shell around a gem: the gem is bright and valuable, but it cannot shine through as long as the crusty shell – or soul – is hard and impermeable. Brokenness is the appropriate term to describe the “breaking-down” of this hard shell such that the Spirit may shine through – or the forgiven may experience a spirit-driven life.

The condition of brokenness brings the real sense that the forgiven is **not in control** – or is powerless to determine their salvation...beyond the grave. It is in this state (or condition) that the fear of the Lord (or reverence) grows with the awareness that God is all-powerful. **The forgiven cannot earn his salvation...as it is a gift.**

The scriptures in Daniel, chapter 2 describe God's power:

He knows all, does all: He changes the seasons and guides history, He raises up kings and also brings them down, he provides both intelligence and discernment, He opens up the depths, tells secrets, sees in the dark—light spills out of him! God of all my ancestors, all thanks! all praise!  
**You made me wise and strong.**

Daniel had witness the power of God – and gave praise in this power proven through his own life's experience. Realize that a similar proclamation was made by King Nebuchadnezzar – who was alleged to be the greatest of earthly kings of the time.

In the closing chapter of his book, Alan Nelson writes:

True brokenness never mars ones' self-esteem. The only part of self that dies during our breaking processes is the old self – the sinful nature. Brokenness overcomes the self-defeating part of us that works contrary to the Spirit...

Brokenness is not about breaking the spirit of the forgiven; but is about releasing the Spirit through the breaking-open of the hard, surrounding soul – the decreasing of the soul-driven and the increasing of the spirit-driven.

**Brokenness leads to wisdom, “the art of living skillfully in whatever actual conditions we find ourselves...”**