

Small Group Leadership Handout

Outline

Lesson 3 – Anthropology: Who is man?

- I. Introduction – The Problem of Evil and Who is man?
 - A. Primary Doctrine – Who is Man? Who is God? - The answers to these two questions form the foundation of everyone's worldview
 - B. The cosmic battle within – Galatians 5:16-17 – Our sinful nature is in constant conflict with God's Spirit – Romans 7:15-25, Romans 6:12, Romans 8:5-14
- II. Man's Essence
 - A. States of man
 1. Innocent – Genesis 1:27
 2. Fallen – Romans 5:12, Genesis 6:5
 - a. Hell – Revelation 20:15, Hebrew 9:27
 3. Redeemed – Revelation 5:9
 - a. Glorified – 1 Corinthians 15:42
 - B. Dualistic or Monistic – Both flesh and spirit or purely material?
 - C. Naturalistic Philosophy Implications – no gods or purposive forces, no foundation for ethics, no free will, no life after death, no meaning in life
- III. Man's moral state and Man's needs
 - A. Abraham Maslow – Hierarchy of Needs – man's ultimate objective is self-actualization – The Pernicious lie – getting in touch with your inner nature
 - B. Basically good or sinful? – Depravity of man – Man's propensity for evil
 - C. Carl Rogers - "I do not find that evil is inherent in human nature."
 - D. Scriptural Truth – Put to death your earthly nature – Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5-10
- IV. If evil is not inherent in man, then where does evil come from?
 - A. Abraham Maslow - "Sick people are made by a sick culture ..."
 - B. Carl Rogers – "... experience leads me to believe that it is cultural influences which are the major factor in our evil behaviors."
 - C. Social institutions and authority structures are blamed for man's evil actions – provides basis for understanding the battleground over social institutions today
- V. Why should "evil" bother someone with a secular worldview? – the question of evil is more difficult for them than us

Lesson Guide – Lesson 3: Anthropology: Who is Man?

Introduction



Lesson 3 takes us into the western regions of the compass, where we engage in an in-depth examination of biblical and contemporary ideas about the nature of the human race. The focus of the discussion is *anthropology*: Who is man? Where did he come from? What is the meaning and purpose of his existence? In the course of this study, Dr. Tackett demonstrates that the answers we bring to these questions have a direct bearing upon our approach to another pressing problem, one of the thorniest and most challenging of all – *Why is there evil in the world?*

Themes

Having established the importance of determining whether the cosmos is to be viewed as an *open* or a *closed box*, Dr. Tackett now moves on to examine another defining aspect of any comprehensive worldview: its basic assumptions about *mankind*. Here again we discover a fundamental conflict between Christianity and the perspective of contemporary culture. The Bible teaches that man consists of both body and spirit and is created in the image of God; our culture assumes that he is purely material, the product of mindless, purposeless forces. The Bible says that man has rebelled against God and fallen from his original state of innocence; contemporary thought maintains that he is "basically good." The Bible affirms man's need for divine grace, redemption, and regeneration; popular thinking asserts that "self-actualization" is the key to happiness and fulfillment.

Christianity represents evil as the product of the *Cosmic Battle* that rages *within* man – the conflict between humanity as it was *meant* to be and what it has *actually become* as a result of sin. Godless philosophy and psychology, on the other hand, can suggest only one possible solution to the problem of evil in the world: man must throw off the restraints of superimposed social conventions and institutions (i.e., any kind of moral standard) and pursue "self-fulfillment" to the fullest possible extent. This is what Dr. Tackett calls "the pernicious lie."

Points to Watch for

Some viewers – even those who consider themselves Christians – may have difficulty accepting the idea that "self-fulfillment" and the call to "follow your heart" are inconsistent with a Christian worldview. Others may object to Dr. Tackett's assertion that a great deal of the radical social and political activism we see in the world today is driven primarily by secular man's sinful desire to throw off the shackles of "God's social design." All will find it stimulating and profitable to wrestle with the question he poses: *why* do non-believers and evolutionists find evil so troubling?

Anthropology – Lesson 3: Who Is Man?

Evil – What is it, where did it come from? Why is there evil in the world?

The most popular question thrown in the face of Christians today.

Christianity has answers to this question, the world does not.

If the question is pressed back upon the world they come up empty.

Everyone acknowledges evil exists. – Some say “evil is necessary.”

Christians have been given the ultimate answer.

If one excludes God they are left in a very difficult position in how to answer these questions.

If you learn a persons answer to the questions “Who is man?” and “Who is God?” you will have a pretty good idea what the persons worldview looks like. These two questions form the foundation of one’s worldview.

Primary Doctrine

“Of all kinds of knowledge that we can ever obtain, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves, are the most important.” Jonathan Edwards

Who am I? Who are you? Who is man?

-Deep creativity

- Moral conscious

- Capable of unspeakable evil

- Deep hunger for relationship – yet remains very much “alone”

The Cosmic Battle Within

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Galatians 5:16-17

Two elements: Sinful nature & Spirit in conflict with each other

Mimics the Cosmic Battle – Truth vs. Lies; Spirit vs. sinful nature

Battle over Anthropology



The Pernicious Lie (1 : highly injurious or destructive : **DEADLY**)

The Biblical View of Man

His essence

His moral state

His need

The “state” of man or “modes”

Creation – Brought about the first state of man. – in the garden – innocent

Mode 1 – innocent

So God created man in his own image, in the image of god he created him; Gen 1:27

The fall

Mode 2 – fallen

...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned - Romans 5:12

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Man has no way to change the mode back to the original mode.

Descriptions and Names of the Old Man

Evil	Rebellious
Dead	Without hope
Blind	Haters of God
Deaf	Desperately Wicked
Lost	Children of the devil

C.H. Spurgeon – You cannot slander human nature; It is worse than words can paint it

In Mode 2 there are two state changes that can occur:

1. Change to another state
2. Death

Mode 2a.- hell. The result (the resulting state) of dying while in a fallen state

Revelation 20:15

Hebrews 9:27

Mode 3 – Redeemed

Revelation 5:9

Descriptions and Names of the New Man

The Redeemed	Children of God
Saints	Sons of God
Priests	Beloved
Called out ones	Wear white robes
The people of God	Born from above
A holy nation	

We carry forward the image of God in each state. But we also bear the sinful nature.

In redemptive state the Spirit of God lives within us – refer back to Galatians 6:16-17.

We are in a redeemed state, wanting to do the will of God yet having to overcome the will of our old self. – In conflict within

As believers we wrestle with this issue of evil – but what it means now as a redeemed individual.

R.C. Sproul “We have made a fatal error and its been made not because of a lack of brains but because of a heart that is hostile toward God. There is a deep rooted psychology of atheism in the human heart that creates bias in the mind. In our basic fallen, corrupt humanity we want to push God out of our thinking and conversion does not automatically cure that. The old man still fights against the truth of God...and we crowd out the things of God from our thinking because of sin. That remains the constant barrier for a total pursuit of the truth of God.”

The Cosmic Battle Within

For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I {would} like to {do,} but I am doing the very thing I hate....For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good {is} not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do

not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

Romans 7:15, 18-20

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Romans 7:24-25

But we do not take that as a means to absolve us from the responsibility that we have to put to death the deeds of the flesh.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Romans 6:12 and Romans 8:5-14

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able {to do so,} and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

State changes that can occur in the redeemed mode:

Death---Mode 3a: glorified

1 Corinthians 15:42 ¶ So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable {body,} it is raised an imperishable {body;}

Biblical View of Man

His essence

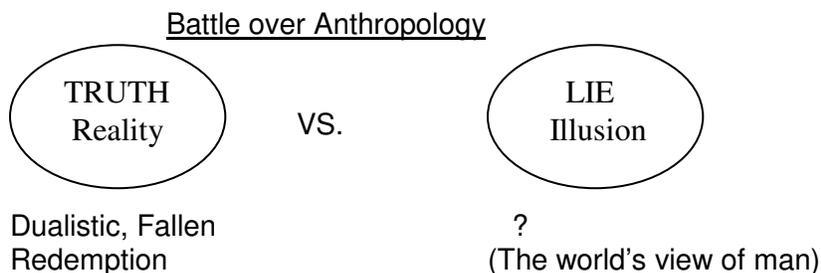
- made in the image of God.
- dualistic: both flesh and spirit

His moral state

- fallen nature

His need

- redemption



The World's View

Carl Sagan – “The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be.”

The World & Corliss Lamont's Primary Doctrine

"The non-reality of the supernatural means, on the human level, that men do not possess supernatural and immortal souls..." Humanism and Philosophy

There is nothing "outside of the box" – Who is Man? Material man, Natural man

Naturalistic Philosophy Implications

If man is but a material beast, having nothing beyond the evolutionary cosmic particles, then what must we conclude about man?

Does he have a purpose beyond himself? No

Can he have any meaning in life? No

Does he have a free will? No

Is he basically good? No

Is there anything beyond the grave? No

Dr. William Provine – Implications

No gods or purposive forces

No ultimate foundation for ethics

No free will

No life after death

No ultimate meaning in life

Man ends up a cause and effect machine reacting to stimuli.

Paul Kurtz –

"using the powerful critical tools of science and logical analysis, modern man now recognizes that the universe has no special human meaning or purpose and that man is not a special product of creation" The Humanist Alternative.

What is his source of truth? Science – examining the stuff in the box in an attempt to find universal truths.

Haeckel's Embryos – Implications



"A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy" Ingrid Newkirk
We are no different than a pig or a rat

Finish Green Party Activist Pentti Linkola-

Goes so far as to say that he has more sympathy for threatened insect species than for children dying of hunger in Africa.

If a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy then a threatened species is more important. Why? We have plenty of humans.

"While the death of young men in war is unfortunate, it is no more serious than the touching of mountains and wilderness areas by humankind" David Brown – former head of the Sierra Club

You will never understand the radical environmental movement if you don't understand the pernicious lie about who man is.

We (Christians) should be the greatest environmentalists. We know who created it. He gave man the mandate to take care of it.

Paul Kurth –

“ If man is a product of evolution, one species among others, in a universe without purpose, then man’s option is to live for himself...” The Humanist Alternative

Clarence Darrow –

“ The purpose of man is like the purpose of the pollywog- to wiggle along as far as he can without dying; or, to hang to life until death takes him” cited in The Best of Humanism

Dr. Dalrymple

The leading cause of women coming into the ER in the UK – suicide attempt.

For men, it is the second leading cause.

Why? If I’m of no value, if my life has no meaning or purpose why not end it?

Anthropological “Monism” (simply man is of one stuff)

“Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected”

Humanist Manifesto I

Biblical worldview – we are dualistic: body and spirit

Abraham Maslow – “Hierarchy of Needs”

SA – Self Actualization – knowing/doing your inner desires

Esteem – self respect, autonomy, status, achievement, recognition, attention

Social – affection, belonging, acceptance, friendship

Safety – security, protection from physical & emotional harm

Physiological – hunger, thirst, shelter, sex

What are we trying to achieve? Self Actualization – doing what your inner desires want you to do. “Follow your heart” “It’s all about you”

Maslow –

“As far as I know we just don’t have any intrinsic instincts for evil.”

Carl Rogers –

“ I do not find that...evil is inherent in human nature.:

Does this match with reality? (mass, sadistic killing)

How can we turn away from the consequences of these lies?

If evil is not inherent in human nature, where does it come from?

Maslow-

“If you think in terms of the basic needs; instincts, at least at the outset, are all ‘good’...careful study of them[instincts] will provide the values we need by which better societies can evolve.”

“Since this inner nature is good or neutral rather than bad, it is best to bring it out and to encourage it rather than to suppress it. If it is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy.”

We have a whole world of people simply following their inner desires.

What is the truth?

...or if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:13

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, {and} abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another,

since you laid aside the old self with its {evil} practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him--Colossians 3:5-10

We are not called to follow our inner desires – just the opposite. God has told us what our inner desires will lead to.

The Ol' Garden Lie

No! Get in touch with the inner man...Let him flourish...if you let him guide your life, you will be healthy, fruitful and happy.

- This is self-actualization...and the consequences are huge...

What is the enemy of Self Actualization?

Christianity – Moral restraint.

To the world we are the problem, and the One we serve is the problem.

If you make me feel guilty about my inner desires you are thwarting my efforts to achieve self actualization.

Who is Man?

The Truth claims

	Biblical Worldview	The World's Worldview
What is man's essence?	Man is created in the image of God	Goo-man, a product of mindless purposeless forces
What is man's moral state?	Man, though created perfect rebelled against God and is now fallen...his heart is desperately wicked	Man is basically good
What does man need?	Man needs divine grace, regeneration and redemption	Man must save himself through self-oriented pursuits.

Truth/Reality
Dualistic, Fallen, Redemption

Lie/Illusion
Monistic, good, self-actualization

If:

"[Man's] inner nature is good..."

"...we just don't have any intrinsic instincts for evil..."

"...Instincts, at least at the outset, are all 'good'..."

Hmmm?

Does not this raise a very obvious and important question? If man is instinctively and basically good, then why is there evil in the world?

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778)

"If man is good by nature, as I believe to have shown him to be, it follows that he stays like that as long as nothing foreign to him corrupts him."

"Man was born free, but everywhere he is in chains"

What are the chains? Christianity

Carl Rogers –

"For myself, though I am very well aware of the incredible amount of destructive, cruel, malevolent behavior in today's world – from the threats of war to the senseless violence in the streets – I do not find that this evil is inherent in human nature"

What is cruel, malevolent behavior?

Sounds like “survival of the fittest” What is the basis for calling that evil? Its just the stuff in the box

If Man is Good, Why is there Evil?

Maslow –

“Sick people are made by a sick culture; healthy people are made possible by a healthy culture.”

But, who makes up the culture?

Rogers –

“ experience leads me to believe that it is cultural influences which are the major factor in our evil behaviors.”

Something else must bring on evil, not man, because he is basically good.

Culture of blame.

Interesting Question(s) for the world

(feeling bad about evil questions)

Why does evil bother you?

Why do you feel bad about evil?

Isn't evil, as you described it, simply the natural outworking of the evolutionary process?

In a “survival of the fittest” world evil should have been “selected” out by now.

Is it not our responsibility to “destroy” the weak?

Our Culture's Anthropology – Basic Assumptions

-man, by nature is good

-mental health and happiness come through self-actualization and getting in touch with ones real “good” self

-social institutions (authority structures) are responsible for man's evil actions

Theodore Dalrymple – Life At The Bottom

Not a professing Christian – Seen the reality of the consequences of a worldview that is destroying our culture.

“Rousseau's idea was that all the imperfections of man were attributed to social causes and that man was naturally good...and if you got rid of all the artificialities that there were in society, man would return to a natural state...he would be very good.”

“Well this, of course, is a very convenient idea because all you have to do to be good is to be your true self. And since your true self is really doing exactly what you like then doing what you like, exactly what you like, becomes virtue.”

“One patient said to me I had to kill her doctor or I don't know what I'd have done...and what he really means by that is that unless he lets out his inner emotions, in this case by killing his wife, something really terrible would happen to him...so the mere death of his wife was not very important by comparison with what might have happened to him if he had not killed his wife.”

I've actually, as I have told many of my patients, you don't need to find yourself, you need to loose yourself. You need to love something which transcends yourself in order to make your life meaningful. And it is impossible if you are constantly referring to yourself as the be all and end all of your existence. And I think actually Francis Bacon said it and it makes sense, it is a poor sense man's life himself.”

See that no one takes you captive..

Postscript:

One must understand the truth claims of “who is man?” If one is to understand the concept of evil.

If man is made of just the stuff in the box – the question must be asked: can he really do anything evil?

If we answer the question correctly it helps us make sense of a lot of things. If we answer it wrong, the way the world wants us to answer it, it leads to devastation.

Key Terms Lesson 3

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) : psychologist who developed the theory of Hierarchy of Human Needs in 1943 (portrayed as a pyramid shaped structure that illustrates human needs, where self-actualization is the top of the pyramid). Not surprisingly, there is no clinical evidence to support his theory.

Anthropology: the study of mankind, its nature, behavior, origin, physical, social, and cultural development.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987): influential American psychologist who, along with Abraham Maslow, was the founder of the humanistic approach to psychology. Popularized the idea that "evil is not inherent in human nature" (i.e., people are basically good by nature).

Dualistic: Biblical view of man that he is comprised of both natural and supernatural elements, both flesh and spirit.

Imago Dei: Created in the image of God. Biblical perspective of man that we bear the divine image of God as his created beings (see Genesis 1:26). Though created in God's image, man is fallen by nature and in need of redemption.

Imago Goo: Del's way of expressing the humanistic perspective of man that maintains human beings are simply random products of the stuff in the box. Views man as monistic, good by nature, and in need of self-actualization.

Monistic: Humanistic and naturalistic view of man that man is simply material, made of one substance, and has no spiritual dimension. Man was not created but has evolved and is a product of chance. In religion monism is the view that all reality is one, such as in certain forms of Hinduism.

Self-actualization: Humanistic psychology theory that advocates getting in touch with one's inner-desires in order to help develop or achieve one's full potential.

States of man: May be referred to as "modes" of man. The different states through which man has passed or in which he currently exists: innocence, fallen, redeemed, and death (hell or glorified).

Dichotomy & Trichotomy

The Essence of Man: 1 part, 2 parts, 3 parts, 4?

In our three, Anthropology, we examined the two opposing views about the essence of man. On one side was the view from naturalism that man is merely a material beast, a product of the stuff in the box, of one substance. This is called "monism."

On the other side was the biblical Christian view that man is different than the other creatures, that he is both flesh and spirit. We referred to this in our tour as "dualism"; it is more formally known as "dichotomy".

Not surprisingly, several have raised their hands and asked: "But I thought that man was made up of three parts—body, soul and spirit. Isn't he more of a triad than dualistic?" This view, by the way, is called "trichotomy".

Great question. It is one that I deal with in my seminary class, but chose not to wade into in the short time frame of the Truth Project. Our intent was to high-light and examine the great contrast between the two opposing views of man in our culture. Is man merely a material beast, no different than any other product of evolution? Or, is he a created being with a spiritual element that will survive physical death? This, I believe, was the key issue to deal with, not the more complex argument regarding dichotomy versus trichotomy.

However, we do find both of these latter positions within Christian thought, and several have asked...so, let's briefly survey them.

Trichotomy.

Both trichotomy and dichotomy understand that man consists of flesh and spirit. But the trichotomist sees the spiritual element of man consisting of spirit and soul, separate entities. The spirit is...well, spirit—that which is closest to God. The soul is usually associated with the mind, the emotions and the will. The strongest argument, I believe, for trichotomy lies in the following four passages where both the soul and spirit are mentioned:

*I will speak out in the anguish of my **spirit**, I will complain in the bitterness of my **soul**. (Job 7:11)*

*My **soul** yearns for you in the night; in the morning my **spirit** longs for you. (Isaiah 26:9)*

*May your whole **spirit**, **soul** and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)*

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing **soul** and **spirit**, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)*

The argument is that if the Scripture uses different words to describe the essence of man's nature, then they must be distinctly different parts.

Dichotomy.

Dichotomy, or anthropological dualism, rests primarily upon the argument that the Scripture uses soul and spirit interchangeably and synonymously. For example, if this were the case, we might see the

Scripture refer to those who have already died as either “souls” or “spirits”, but not both. This is, in fact, what we find.

In Revelation 6:9, John writes of seeing “the *souls* of those who had been slain for the Word of God,” but in Hebrews 12:23 they are referred to as “the *spirits* of just men made perfect.” Again, in Revelation 20:4, John sees the “*souls* of those who had been beheaded” come to life and reign for a thousand years with Christ, yet in 1 Peter 3:19, we are told that after Christ’s death, He went and preached to “the *spirits* in prison” and in 1 Corinthians 5:5, Paul states that he has handed a man over to Satan, “so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his *spirit* saved on the day of the Lord.”

One time those who have died are referred to as “*souls*” and another time they are referred to as “*spirits*.” Is the Scripture describing a separate piece of the dead in this verse and another piece in that verse?

The dichotomy perspective would say “no”; that “soul” and “spirit” refer to the same single, spiritual element of man that lives after death. Again, notice that they were not described as “souls and spirits” but each term is used as referring to the totality of the individual.

More evidence? In Genesis 35:18, it is Rachael’s “*soul*” that departs upon death, yet in John 19:30 we read that Jesus bowed His head and “gave up His *spirit*” and Stephen, as he was being stoned to death, prayed “Lord Jesus, receive my *spirit*” (Acts 7:59). In 1 Kings 17:21, Elijah prays for the “*soul*” of the dead child to return and when it does the child comes back to life. Yet in James 2:26 we read that “the body without the *spirit* is dead” and Ecclesiastes 12:7 says that it is the *spirit* that returns to God at death. The dichotomist would ask, if the soul and spirit are separate, then why do we not read that Rachael’s *soul and spirit* departed; why didn’t Jesus pray for God to receive His *spirit and his soul*; why does Elijah pray for only the soul to return when James says that it is the absence of the spirit that makes the body dead? Nowhere do we read of the soul *and* the spirit departing from a person at death; nowhere do we read of descriptions of the dead as souls *and* spirits. The dichotomist would argue that this is evidence that the soul and the spirit are synonyms of the same spiritual part of man. And so, we see this continually in the Scripture, such as Galatians 5:17 referring to the conflict between the desires of the sinful nature and the “*spirit*,” yet 2 Peter 2:11 says the war is between sinful desires and the “*soul*.”

But what about the trichotomist’s four verses that seem to imply a separate soul and spirit? How does the dichotomist respond to that? Well, let’s look.

*I will speak out in the anguish of my **spirit**, I will complain in the bitterness of my **soul**. (Job 7:11)*

If one believes that the weight of Scripture shows the two terms are used interchangeably, then this verse would be understood as a common way of using synonyms to bring forth an emphasis. For example, the poet might say, “Draw near; come close; pull up a chair...” using the repetition of synonymous terms and phrases to emphasize the point.

*My **soul** yearns for you in the night; in the morning my **spirit** longs for you. (Isaiah 26:9)*

The same could be said for this verse—synonyms used for emphasis. Otherwise, what are we to think...one part of man yearns at night and another part longs in the morning? This doesn’t make a lot of sense, but it does if one reads it as the totality of my spiritual being both yearning for God in the night and longing for Him in the morning. This “parallelism” is very common in Hebrew poetry. One can see the beauty of the language when this use of synonyms is employed by looking at how the passages would read without it, just repeating the same word. (Try it with Job 7:11 and you will see what I mean.)

So, this brings us to what I believe are the two most difficult passages to deal with and in which the trichotomist would have their greatest argument.

*May your whole **spirit**, **soul** and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)*

This passage should cause the dichotomist great pause, for at first blush, it appears as if there is here a list in which we find the three elements of man: spirit, soul and body. However, the dichotomist would argue that if this were the correct understanding of the verse, all of the other passages would then become a problem. The proper approach to studying complicated issues is to understand what the preponderance of Scripture teaches and use that to clear up the one or two passages that seem to say something different. So, the explanation would look something like this: there are many places where the Scripture lists things and they are not necessarily all different pieces. For example, most trichotomists would say that the soul includes the mind and the heart, but in Matthew and Luke, Jesus says that we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart and mind and soul...a list. If these are each separate pieces, then we now have man consisting of a body, a spirit, a soul, and a heart and a mind—five. But if the spiritual aspect of the heart and the mind are really part of the soul, then why not understand the list in 1 Thessalonians the same way? Why not understand the literary use of these synonyms to emphasize the totality of my spiritual being and my physical being kept blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? That would certainly reconcile all of the passages.

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing **soul** and **spirit**, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)*

The dichotomist would state, again, that in light of the weight of the Scriptural evidence, where *soul* and *spirit* are used interchangeably and are referring to the totality of the spiritual aspect of man, then this passage, too, is using these synonyms for emphasis as in someone encouraging you to fight with all of your strength and all of your might. Rather than looking at the passage as listing six individual pieces: spirit, soul, joints, marrow, thoughts, attitudes, look at the passage as listing two things that the Word of God can penetrate and divide: the spiritual part of man (soul/spirit) and the physical part of man (joints/marrow); followed by a third action: judging the heart (thoughts/attitudes).

Now, the trichotomist may not find all of this convincing and may continue to believe that 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 are giving us evidence of separate elements of man's makeup.

But that is okay. Let each one be convinced by the weight of Scripture and not swayed by our preconceptions or desires. Both dichotomists and trichotomists can live in great harmony and fellowship while having great discussions over the Word of God.

You have probably already figured out that I lean toward dichotomy. This isn't easy for me because I do so while resisting my deep desire to see things in threes! However, there is some comfort within my thinking that no man is truly complete until his dualistic nature is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That gives me the three I needed and so I end up happy!

Additionally, it may be possible that through further study we may find that there is a reason why the Scripture refers to the spiritual element of man as "spirit" sometimes and as "soul" another. There may be some real distinction here, not in essence, but in role that lies behind the different use of the words.

However, we must all acknowledge that there is a great deal of mystery associated with this topic, and it would be wrong to think of these elements of man as completely separate “pieces.” Man is to be viewed as an integrated whole. But how the physical and the spiritual interlock and work together is very mysterious and complex. You cannot dissect the brain and somewhere find the heart or soul or spirit or mind or will or conscience or any of the spiritual aspects of man. Yet, the spiritual aspects of man are somehow intricately linked and embedded and use the physical. The brain stores memories. Yet how does the physical memory of man, our experiences and learning, which make up so much of who we are spiritually, work together with our spiritual element? These are deep and profound mysteries that sprang into reality when God formed man and then breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living “soul.”

Being made in the image of God is not only magnificent, but it is also mysterious.

[For those who wish to pursue the issue further, I recommend the great Systematic Theology works of Dr. Wayne Grudem and Louis Berkhof from which I have drawn here.]

[All quotations NIV unless otherwise specified.]