

CREATOR

VOLUME 23

NUMBER 1

WITH ALL YOUR MIND

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37).

The most loving thing we can receive from Jesus is Himself. The next finest gift He bestows on us is our brain. Even His Word (the Scriptures) can have no meaning apart from our mind. The human brain is the most complex thing in the physical universe, a clear testimony to *God’s greatness*. To say that the brain is impossibly complex would not be an overstatement. As you read this sentence, your mind is actively rewiring itself, changing its electrical pathways from moment to moment so you can learn (something a computer cannot do). And your brain is always trying to improve itself, if it can.

Our wonderful Lord Jesus—along with His Father and the Holy Spirit—wove the tapestry of your brain using 100 billion nerve cells called *neurons*. This number is equivalent to all the trees in the Amazon rainforest or stars in an average-sized galaxy. If you could count each of your neurons, at a rate of one neuron per second, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, it would take you *over 3,000 years* to count them all.

The following are just a few amazing facts about your brain:

- There are 100 trillion constantly-changing connections in your brain, making it a million times more complex than the world’s greatest supercomputer.
- The brain of an eight-month-old fetus possesses twice as many neurons as are found in an adult.
- Twenty five percent of your body’s oxygen and sugar (glucose) stores are used by your brain.
- The brain weighs only three pounds (1.4 kg), yet can calculate the weight of the universe!
- Your brain is always working, even when you sleep.
- A healthy 90-year-old adult has lost relatively few brain cells in his lifetime—seven percent at most.



If we could peer into our minds and observe the electrical activity there, we might conclude that a lightning storm rages in our head. But looks can be deceiving. What might seem like utter chaos is actually a divinely organized “electrical ecosystem,” where each neuron supremely cooperates with other neurons for the benefit of the whole.

THE MYTH OF MULTI-TASKING

Contrary to popular opinion, research has shown that we can concentrate on only one thing at a time. It has been found, for instance, that someone who is able to solve math problems in his head, if he drives a car through an obstacle course, can either drive safely or do math well, not both. When the driver applied himself to solving a math problem, he ran over cones. If he concentrated on driving, he made errors in math. Our ability to truly do only one task at any given time also greatly affects our worship. People can transition from one task to another very quickly, but we can't focus simultaneously upon Christ and the things of this world.

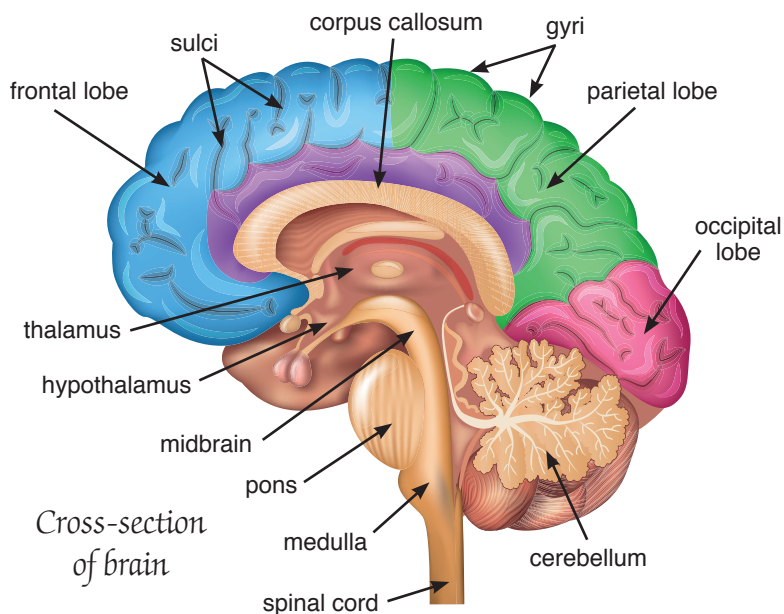
YOUR BRAIN'S ANATOMY

“For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb” (Psalm 139:13).

Let's take an imaginary trip up your spinal cord and into your brain. Your *spinal cord* is what connects your mind to the rest of your body, allowing you to sense and move through the physical environment in which you live. (You might think of the spinal cord as a long “taproot” that goes deep into your body.) Traveling up the spinal cord we encounter a thickening at the base of your brain called the *brain stem*. As its name implies, it is the structure on which the rest

of your brain sits.

The brain stem is composed of three parts. Moving upward, we encounter the *medulla oblongata*, or *medulla* for short, the *pons*, and finally the *midbrain*. Each of these have been assigned very specific responsibilities by our Lord. Collectively, this three-part brain stem controls your heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, and many other vital body functions.

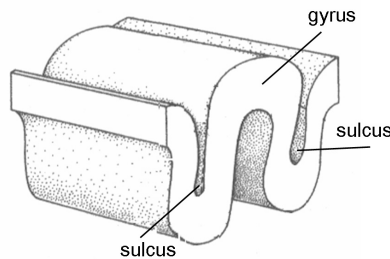


If we make a “right turn” at the pons, moving toward the back of your head, we find the *cerebellum* (Latin for “little brain” and pronounced ser - eh - BEL - um). Among other things, it is your cerebellum that allows you to remember how to tie your shoes and ride a bicycle. Above the brain stem is the *diencephalon* (dye - en - SEF - ah - lon), which includes your *hypothalamus* and *thalamus*. These function as vital communication centers within the brain.

Leaving the diencephalon, we enter the mysterious world of the *cerebrum*. We pass through white matter, eventually reaching the surface layer of your brain, the *cerebral cortex*. It is in the cerebral cortex, or gray matter, where you experience conscious thought, and where you feel, reason, and ponder the deep things of life.

Neuroscientists¹ have divided the cerebral cortex into four regions: the *frontal*, *parietal*, *temporal*, and *occipital* lobes. In love, our Lord Jesus maximizes your ability to think and worship (John 4:24) by making many folds in your cerebral cortex layer, thus “packing” more brain tissue into your skull. The ridges of the brain are known as *gyri* (JYE - rye) and the furrows as *sulci* (SUL - sigh).²

Deep within the brain, God also placed several collections of neurons, called *nuclei* (NOO - klee - eye), which act as faithful servants, helping your brain carry on its many complex tasks.



BUILDING BLOCKS

For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God (Hebrews 3:4).

A better understanding of how Jesus knit our minds together requires us to return to the brain’s 100 billion neurons. Like bricks of a house, microscopic nerve cells are the building blocks of the brain and nervous system. But unlike bricks, each cell in our body is a highly complex, living thing—in itself a miracle of divine design. The neurons that compose our brain form a stunningly beautiful “ecosystem,” reflecting the incomparable skillfulness and loveliness of our Lord Jesus.

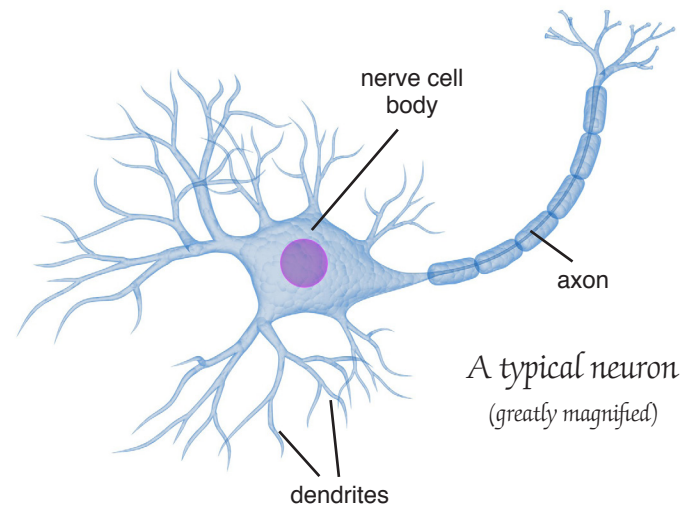
Neurons come in different shapes and sizes, but all possess the same basic parts:

- (a) As with all cells, the neuron has a *cell body*, which functions like a factory and control center.
- (b) God also provides each neuron with a single “tentacle,” known as an *axon*. The axon is a long extension of the cell body

that makes contact with other neurons, like an “arm” reaching out to touch the “shoulder” of another nerve cell.³ And the end of the axon forms a “hand” of sorts, branching out with “fingers” in order to contact many other neurons.

(c) In addition, most neurons are covered with numerous microscopic “hairs” called *dendrites*. The job of an axon is to conduct electrical impulses away from the cell body and toward other neurons. The reason Jesus provided the cell body with dendrites is to give them a means of detecting the electrical signals arriving from other nerve cells.

The point of contact between an axon and a dendrite is called a *synapse* (SIN - aps). At the synapse, the axon does not actually touch another neuron; Christ Jesus placed an extremely small gap or cleft between them. In order for information to pass from



*A typical neuron
(greatly magnified)*

one neuron to another, a tiny amount of a chemical substance (neurotransmitter) is released into this gap every time an electrical signal reaches the end of the axon. The neurotransmitter then briefly attaches itself to the cell membrane of the other neuron and triggers an electrical signal within it.

¹ Scientists who study the nervous system

² A single gyri is a gyrus, and a single sulci is a sulcus.

³ If a neuron cell body were the size of a tennis ball, its axon would extend a mile and a half (2.4 km).

NEUROTRANSMITTERS

Neuroscientists have discovered more than 100 neurotransmitters thus far, but three in particular are found in abundance within our brain:

serotonin
dopamine
norepinephrine

Serotonin is important for maintaining mood, promoting memory and sleep, and assisting in our day-to-day thought processes. *Dopamine* is vital for the smooth, fluid movement of our arms and legs, and for memory. *Norepinephrine* helps us to stay alert when we're tired, assists in forming memories, and is the chief chemical involved in the "fight or flight" response to danger.

The brain also produces *endorphins*, which are especially important when we're injured because endorphins decrease the severity of pain. Oh, how kind our sweet Lord Jesus is!

In addition, some very unusual chemicals can be found in our brain that occur in nature as well. Among them are *hydrogen sulfide*—a toxic gas produced by volcanoes—and *carbon monoxide*—a toxic gas given off by fire. God uses these chemicals to help us remember things. As we consider Christ's application of tiny amounts of poisonous gases to assist us in learning and memory, we can be reminded of the biblical truth that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made."

The use of chemicals to relay information from one neuron to other neurons, however, poses a potential problem for the brain (but also reveals the genius of our Triune God). Our brains are 75 percent water, and it's well

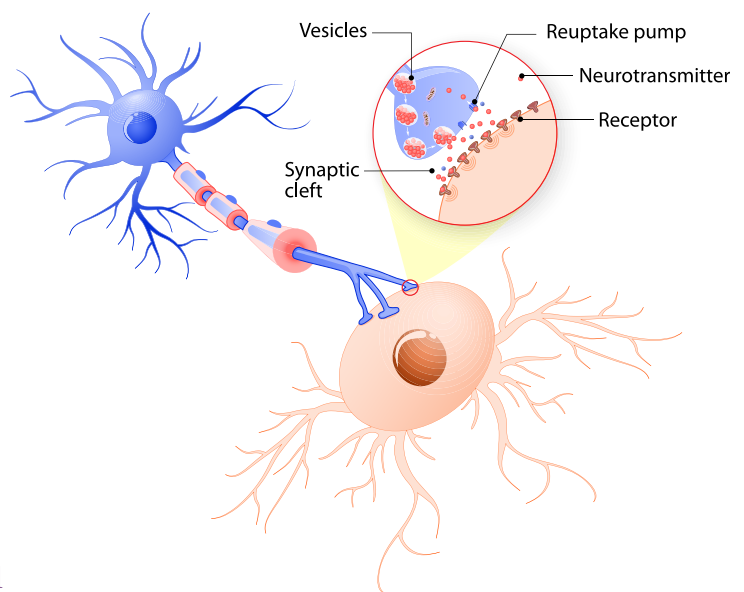
known that any substance dissolved in water can freely move about by a process known as diffusion, meaning that chemicals dissolved in water tend to spread out over time.

If this happened in our brain to any extent, it would prove disastrous! The neurotransmitter chemical produced by one neuron is only meant to trigger electrical activity in a select number of other neurons. The internal environment of our brain must be tightly controlled, so that the chemicals released don't accidentally trigger cells in nearby areas of the brain.

The difficulty of this problem can be illustrated with vegetable soup. When salt is added to soup cooking on a stove, it seasons all the ingredients—onions, potatoes, carrots, and celery. If we season the soup in this way, it would be virtually impossible to salt only the carrots and not the other vegetables because salt dissolves throughout the broth.

Thankfully, our brain is not composed of vegetables, and our Lord Jesus, as God, can do the impossible! He created a unique set of cells—known as glia (GLEE - ah)—that surround and protect all 100 trillion synapses in our brain. Glial cells form a "wall" around each synapse and help prevent

CHEMICAL SYNAPSE



neurotransmitters from leaking into other synapses, causing a disruption in our minds' circuitry.

Glia serve the brain by nourishing the neurons and keeping the environment near each nerve cell clean. Jesus also uses individual glial cells to guide developing neurons to their proper places in the fetal brain.

A LIVING ORCHESTRA

"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11).

There is no one way to best describe the complexity of our brain, but we might think of it as a vast orchestra composed of 100 billion musicians (neurons). An even greater number of orchestra assistants (glial cells) help guide the musicians to their proper seat on stage when the symphony is first being formed in the fetus.

The number of musicians "seated" by the time we are one year old does not change throughout most of our lives. (As people age and become elderly, they lose relatively few neurons.) What does change is the way these musicians interact with each other as we learn and gain knowledge. The cellular composition of our minds remains fairly stable the rest of our lives, but the "music" we learn and the "symphonies" our brain performs are always changing and increasing in number.

Each musician (neuron) has hundreds or thousands of "ears," which are the dendrites surrounding the nerve cell body. We can think of the axons—and the electrical signals they carry to other neurons—as the "music" produced by each member. Using its ears (dendrites), each neuron "listens" to the music played by a thousand other musicians, and



together form a wonderful harmony of mind and purpose.

If a person suffers damage to their brain, as with a stroke, they experience a loss of some neurons, but the orchestra plays on! In the case of a stroke, surviving neurons simply "switch instruments" and take over the parts of those musicians who were lost.

All of this illustrates that God made our minds quite stable and very flexible at the same time. It is this flexibility that allows us to learn throughout our lives. Only the genius of our loving and infinitely creative Triune God could have composed and orchestrated something so impossibly grand (Romans 11:33).

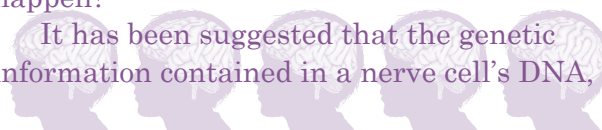
AN "IMPOSSIBLE" TASK

"For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

We all begin life as a single cell. Over the course of nine months, this cell divides and divides, eventually becoming the 70 trillion cells that make up our body.

In the case of our brain, some of these cells—starting at about three weeks of pregnancy—transform into nerve cells. During the next year, the nerve cells multiply and form the complex organ of our brain with its 100 billion neurons. How does this all happen?

It has been suggested that the genetic information contained in a nerve cell's DNA,



plus the influence of the internal environment of the growing fetus, is what directs the creation of the living mind. The problem with this view is that there simply isn't enough information in the DNA of any cell to provide an adequate blueprint of our brain. And the chemical environment inside our head has no means of weaving the beautiful tapestry of our mind, with its many specialized parts.

I don't mean to sound harsh, but this theory is intellectually unsatisfying. It's like saying that simple water molecules form endlessly complex and stunningly beautiful snowflakes out of thin air. If someone knits a sweater, they follow a pattern. Water must have a pattern to follow, but none has been discovered in nature.

Without the tireless hand of our Creator, neither our brain's amazing architecture nor a snowflake would be possible. This is what I mean when I say that our brain is "impossibly complex." It could not have been created by natural means alone, but only by a God who can do the impossible (Matthew 19:26)!

THE SPECIALISTS

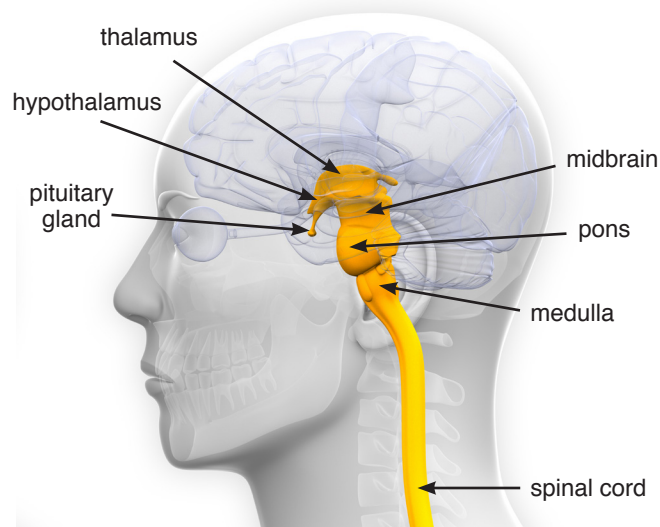
*"My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth"
(Psalm 139:15).*

It is right for us to think of our brain as an organ that functions as a whole—like an orchestra. But it's also important for us to understand that our Lord gave the brain many parts, each with a specific job. Let's take a short survey of those jobs.

The brain stem has been called "the hardest-working part of the brain." All nerve impulses to and from the rest of the body pass through this portion of your mind. The brain stem oversees control of a hundred or more activities within your body, activities you never need to think about—blood pressure, heart rate, breathing, etc.

The midbrain portion of the brain stem

receives visual information from your eyes, and auditory information from your ears. It organizes these signals in some mysterious way and then sends them on to the thalamus, where they are relayed to other regions in the brain. The midbrain also helps control your reflexes and, along with the cerebellum, assists in maintaining your posture and coordinating your body's movements, allowing you to walk, talk, and eat without

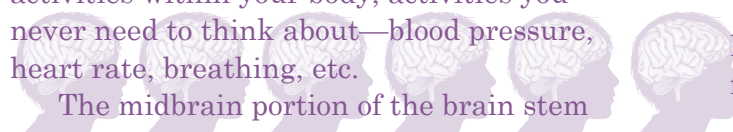


thinking about the mechanics of these activities.

There is a medical condition known as Parkinson's disease that results from damage to a portion of the midbrain (the substantia nigra). Synapses in this area lose their ability to release dopamine. A patient with advanced Parkinson's usually has a stooped posture, walks with a shuffle, and has little or no arm movement.

The thalamus—located above the midbrain—acts like the brain's "grand central station," because sensory input from all over the body is sent here. It then relays information about touch, cold, heat, pressure, pain, and the position of your joints, to the thinking part of your mind.

Just beneath the thalamus is the hypothalamus (the prefix hypo- is Greek for "below"). The hypothalamus is that part



of the brain that is in contact with your bloodstream. It is the “weather station” that monitors your body’s temperature, heart rate, salt and sugar levels, etc. It has the job of “telling” the pituitary gland when to release hormones into your blood so that the “weather” of your body remains stable.

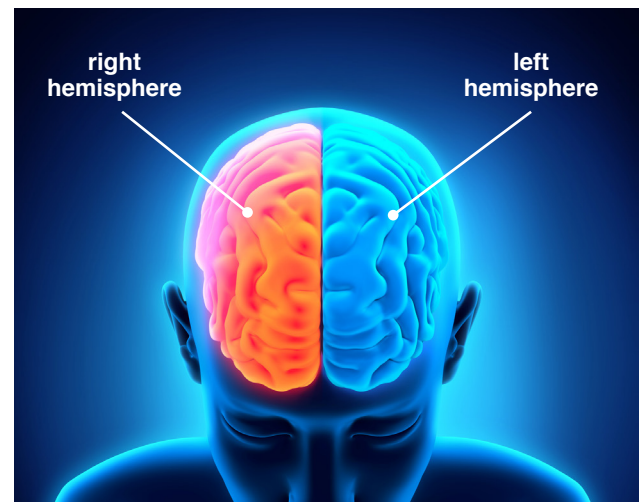
Sitting behind the pons is the cerebellum. Despite its small size, the cerebellum possesses fifty percent, or half, of your brain’s neurons. It coordinates muscles and complex body movements. Without the cerebellum, you would be unable to walk, leap, jump, participate in sports, play a musical instrument, or a thousand other things that require motion.

As we learn complex skills—like throwing a ball or riding a bicycle—it is the cerebellum that permanently remembers these skills. (This is why someone is able to ride a bicycle even if they have not done so in 10 or 20 years.)

The largest part of the brain, by far, is the cerebrum and cerebral cortex. It is in the cerebral cortex that you think, reason, imagine, process language, and solve problems. Here, you also see and hear, make conscious decisions—like walking across a room to pick up a book—and feel all the sensations of your body.

The cerebrum is separated into the *right* and *left cerebral hemispheres*. I mention this because some of your mental skills are located primarily in one or the other hemisphere, although research has found that even this is far more complicated than we once thought. These two halves are joined by a bundle of nerves called the *corpus callosum*, which allows the right and left hemisphere to “talk” with each other to some degree.

The left hemisphere is the center for processing spoken and written language; however, both hemispheres are actively involved in understanding language. Creativity—such as artistic thought—often originates in the right hemisphere. It has



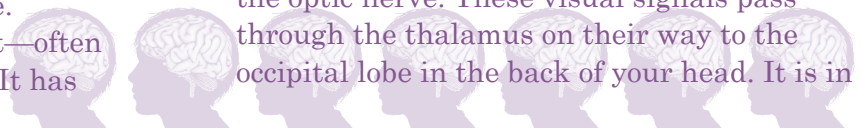
been said that your “Aha!” moments, when you have some stroke of genius, are found on the right. Brain scans have shown that feelings of depression are often localized to the right side as well. This may explain why artists are more prone to depression. But it is also believed that creativity is a “whole-brain” process, and that the right hemisphere—by itself—probably contributes only 25 percent to creativity. All this suggests that although some mental abilities or problems can be localized in the brain, most of the time it works as a whole.

THE UNITY OF DIVERSITY

*“I will give thanks to You,
for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well” (Psalm 139:14).*

Having briefly considered the functions of different parts of the brain, we return to examine how our brain works as a whole. Let’s consider vision.

When you see an object—like a tree, your eye sends out 126 million bits of information from the rods and cones in your retina via the optic nerve. These visual signals pass through the thalamus on their way to the occipital lobe in the back of your head. It is in



the occipital lobe that different aspects of the tree—such as color, shape, and movement—are analyzed, but you don't yet truly “see” the tree. For many years it was assumed that vision was primarily processed in this lobe. It is now known that a great deal of visual information is also sent to at least two dozen other areas in the cerebral cortex for processing.

Our Lord Jesus somehow, and quite mysteriously, brings the image of the tree to your conscious thought in the frontal lobes located just above your eyes. How He accomplishes this, we simply do not know. We can say—given the number of places throughout your brain that process visual information—that “you see the tree with your entire mind.”

The same is true for other brain functions—hearing, language, memory, learning, etc. There are no lone neurons in your mind. They work in concert with each other continuously to make you who you are, with all your likes and dislikes, talents, education, and aspirations.

AN ENIGMA

Neuroscientists now believe that visual stimulation is necessary for the circuitry in our brain to develop properly so that we can see. But this kind of stimulation cannot occur until a baby is born and opens his or her eyes. Yet, it's also been discovered that the circuitry needed for development of normal vision starts before birth, in the fetus. How does this complex circuitry of our brain begin to take shape without visual stimulation? No one really knows . . . apart from God.

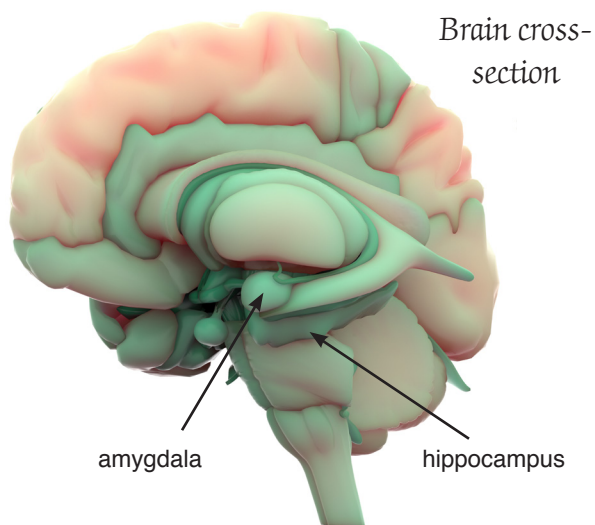
THE WHOLE OF OUR EMOTIONS

“Set your affection on things above,
not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2 KJV).

Have you ever been sad and not known why, or reacted emotionally to some unexpected news and were not sure why you responded in that particular way? These feelings are common and hint at how mysterious and complex our emotions can be.

Human emotions are not easily understood, but neuroscientists have discovered certain portions of the mind that appear to be seats of emotional reaction. One such part of the brain has been labeled the *limbic system*. It is here that our Lord Jesus has planted, deep within our minds, an area full of “wonder and fear.”

The limbic system includes the *amygdala* (ah - MIG - dah - lah), the *hippocampus* (hip - poe - CAMP - us), and two or three other regions.⁴ It is this area of the brain that causes you to react very quickly in a dangerous situation. What would you do if you saw a baby fall off a dock and into a lake? You would rush to his or her help, right? Your ability to do this quickly is rooted in your limbic system.



⁴ Please read HIDDEN TREASURES Volume 2 Number 4.

But what would you do if you came across a bear while walking in the woods? (This second question is a bit more tricky.) Your “gut reaction” may be to drive the bear away with a stick, or to run—yet neither of these options would probably be safe. In this situation, your limbic system is trying to force you to respond with either “fight or



flight.” But let’s say you are an experienced hiker and, despite shaking on the inside, you decide to remain still and not react, in hopes that the bear moves on—which it does. This third option demonstrates the highly complex interaction between your emotions and your thinking. Despite the urge to fight or flee, other parts of your mind take over and rationally choose a safer course of action.

Gut reactions occur in the limbic system, but your emotions are not limited to this area of your brain. We can train ourselves to suppress the visceral tendency of the amygdala—with all its angst—so that we can make well-informed decisions. This is precisely what seasoned soldiers learn to do on the battlefield.

The world is full of disturbing and aggravating things—events that often trigger our limbic system. But not all of these are “life or death” situations. If we are soldiers of Christ (2 Timothy 2:4), our Lord Jesus permits us to use our limbic system when

appropriate (when a baby falls into water), but He also teaches us to be like Daniel as we face the “lions” of this world. We need not be slaves to raw emotion, but with His help (Philippians 4:13), we can become self controlled (Galatians 5:23), and make emotion our servant (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Although the limbic system plays a vital role in survival, it is in our right cerebral hemisphere that we find more refined emotions and feelings. As an example, it has been said that the left side of our brain is where we *learn* the Word of God—because here Christ placed our language skills—but the right side of our brain is where we *love* the Word of God. This may be a bit of an oversimplification, but the important thing for us to realize is that our Lord has indeed given us a great capacity to enjoy and worship Him!

There has long been a debate whether our worship should be doctrinal (truth applied to reason) or emotional. God desires us to worship Him *in spirit and truth* (John 4:24)⁵—using both our mind as well as our emotions. Yet, there’s something more. Our Sovereign Lord commands us to gratefully love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Neuroscientists have come to believe that our emotions are more than simply an interaction between the limbic system and the right cerebral hemisphere, but involve the whole person, both body and mind. Add to this our soul or spirit, and we as Christians have been blessed with a tremendous capacity for worship!

MEMORY AND LEARNING

*“So teach us to number our days,
that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”
(Psalm 90:12 KJV).*

The limbic system, especially the hippocampus, is also important in helping us to remember things over a long period of

⁵ This can also be translated “in Spirit and truth.”

time. It does not store memories, as such, but assists in converting short-term memories into long-term memories. And it is here that positive or negative emotions are intimately linked to these memories (like coming face to face with a bear, something one is not likely to forget). This explains why some of our strongest and most vivid childhood memories are often tied to a deeply emotional experience.

What is your clearest childhood memory? Though not my earliest recollection, I distinctly remember what I was doing when I heard that President Kennedy was shot.

Where exactly in the brain are memories stored? Along with the hippocampus, it is now known that the diencephalon (thalamus and hypothalamus) is vital for creating memories. Damage to these areas can result in amnesia. Once memories are thus created, it is believed that they are stored in *many areas of the cerebral cortex*.

All memories are not the same. There is, for instance, *short-term memory*—we remember what we had for breakfast. And we possess *long-term memory*—we remember the names of our closest relatives. There is also something called *working memory*, which is especially important in the reasoning part of our brain, the frontal lobes. Without working memory—which lasts only seconds—we would be unable to understand where we’ve been or where we’re going.

Procedural or *muscle memory* is yet another type of recollection that allows us to perform complex skills without thinking about them—like riding a bicycle. When you first learned to ride a bicycle, you needed to concentrate very hard on peddling, steering, and keeping your balance. As you practiced, you got better and it became easier. As your conscious mind (cerebral cortex) mastered riding, the memory of these skills was transferred to the basal ganglia and cerebellum, more or less permanently.

Another type of muscle memory is learning how to throw a ball. Here, the

difference between a child tossing a rubber ball to another child and a baseball player throwing a ball can be huge. A child’s throwing ability is mostly automatic (a procedural memory) and is, therefore, often fun. The professional baseball player also possesses procedural memory, but because of the demands of the game, must continually learn to improve or he won’t be employed for long.



Each time a baseball pitcher faces a batter, he must decide—with the help of the catcher—what kind of pitch he will throw. This decision is initiated in his frontal lobes. If he chooses a curve ball, for instance, electrical signals proceed from the front part of his frontal lobe to a place called the *motor cortex* in the back of his frontal lobe.

Instructions for the curve ball are then passed on to the cerebellum, where tactical decisions are subconsciously made based upon his prior experience throwing a curve ball (procedural or muscle memory). Finally, electrical impulses travel to the brain stem and spinal cord in order to execute the complex series of muscle contractions in his legs, torso, and arms to successfully get the batter to swing and miss the ball. As the pitcher throws, he is also receiving visual information from his eyes, informing him of what the batter is doing. Is he taking a practice swing? What is his posture? Is he crowding the plate?



If the pitcher successfully strikes out the batter, he adds that learning to his memory of how to throw a baseball. If the batter hits a home run, the pitcher will consciously and subconsciously make fine adjustments to procedural memory. As with vision and emotion, complex movement requires the whole of the mind.

Of course, memory and learning do not just involve movement, though motion is often tied into them—many people claim that they do their best thinking while pacing or taking a walk. There is simply not enough space here to flesh out all that is known about learning. We do know that higher-level learning is a unique God-given gift. (A computer can be programmed, but it can never learn as humans do.) And it is commonly accepted that we continue to learn until the day we die.

DOES GOD LEARN?

There are some theologians and pastors who teach that God actively learns. They say, for instance, that God does not know what “free creatures” will choose to do or say at any moment of time until they do or say it. The Bible teaches that God already knows all things (Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 46:9,10; 1 John 3:20). To say that God learns, as people learn, is to imply that He changes. Again, the Bible teaches otherwise: “I, the Lord, do not change” (Malachi 3:6). He is thus unchanging or immutable. We must always compare what someone teaches about God with the Word of God. If the two don’t agree, then believe the Bible (Romans 3:4)! (Please study Genesis 3 to see what happened to Adam and Eve when they did not believe God’s Word.)

THINK ON CHRIST

“Fix your thoughts on Jesus” (Hebrews 3:1).⁶

How important to God is our thinking and learning? If we consider Christ’s work in creating our brain, it’s importance is obvious. (Please read Genesis 24:63a; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-2; Philippians 4:8.)

Sadly, there are many in society who deemphasize these things. Even some Christians wrongly assume that “walking by the Spirit” means that we don’t fully use our minds to critically evaluate our lives and practice discernment. This may be due to a misunderstanding of Scripture—like Proverbs 3:5—or a lack of personal initiative. Either way, I am convinced that our Lord places a high premium on thinking and education, because they are intimately linked to a right worship of Him! (Please prayerfully read Romans 12:1-2).

This “dumbing down” of our society, as many call it, is a recent phenomenon. It wasn’t always this way. Our forefathers greatly valued education. The American pastor and theologian, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), entered college at the age of 13, having a thorough command of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. It is said of the godly Puritan, Thomas Vincent (1634–1678), that he memorized the entire Bible during his lifetime—all 31,102 verses! Although our minds are finite, no one really knows the upper limit to what we can learn.

Please allow me then to challenge us with another thought. Since most of us can honestly say that we have not stretched our minds to the degree that Jonathan Edwards or Thomas Vincent did, and since God’s character is infinite, there will always be more for us to learn about Him. Let us regularly set aside time to contemplate Christ who is above (Colossians 3:1-4). Of course, our learning should never be divorced from our

⁶ Scripture quotation taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

affection toward God in Christ. But it can be used to stoke its flames! I am convinced of the old adage, “to know Him is to love Him.” And we should never allow anyone to encourage us to “empty our minds” while we worship God. The Apostle Paul teaches exactly the opposite, encouraging us to fill our hearts and minds with a sweet knowledge of Christ (Philippians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 2:2).

The greatest knowledge in the universe is the knowledge of Jesus Christ; it is what gives a Believer’s life true meaning. Richard Baxter, in his book *Walking With God*, rightly concludes that, “If God be not in all your thoughts, they are all in vain.”⁷ And without this knowledge, it is impossible to be saved (Romans 10:14). If you have little or no interest in Christ, you are in a very dangerous place—far more deadly than if you came face to face with a bear (Amos 5:18-19).

The sin of unbelief is like a “virus” that seriously disrupts the soul’s ability to see reality as it is (Jeremiah 17:9). It causes a “raging infection” that leads to a warped view of the world. The angels in Heaven clearly observe God’s character shining throughout His creation (Romans 1:20), but sin blinds people to this revelation of His glory, and the glory of His Gospel.

Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to see Christ and His majesty, and only Christ’s blood can cure us of the contagion called sin. It is sin that stains the tapestry of our minds and our hearts. Christ not only died for sin, but He also rose from the dead to pave the way to Eternal Life. God requires that we repent of our sins and believe in His Son to be saved from His coming wrath (Mark 1:15). If you reject the Spirit’s offer, you will suffer horribly in Hell forever. Our Creator has mercifully gifted people to understand these basic truths with their minds. Please pray that He also gives you His Spirit that you may embrace them and receive Christ as Lord and Savior.

The brain is the most complex thing in the universe. With it, we see, hear, feel, think,

reason, love, and worship. Our minds are a living tapestry, fearfully and wonderfully woven together by our Lord Jesus Christ. He causes our brain to function with mysterious precision and flexibility, while providing for its well being. He is certainly the One we can trust to help us with daily decisions and the stressful trials of life. Though God expects us to practice wisdom and discernment, He never designed us to handle life on our own.

Let us pursue a growing love and knowledge of God in Christ with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)! Let our minds be renewed and transformed by His Word (Romans 12:2). And let us use our minds—with the Spirit’s help—to honor God in all that we think, say, and do, that He might be glorified in all (1 Corinthians 10:31).

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).



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⁷ Richard Baxter (1615 – 1691) was a Puritan pastor/theologian.