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## Understanding the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Model



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# Understanding the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Model

We read in *Psalm 139:14*, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” Truly, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. God made human beings at the pinnacle of His creation. From the miracle of life seen in a newborn baby to the latest advances in scientific research, God’s design continues to bring us to awe.

God created human beings with four primary aspects of life: the biological, psychological, relational, and spiritual. Understanding these facets allows us to be better stewards of each area and helps us honor God’s design. Personal stewardship in these areas consists of the care and maintenance of our lives, for which God has made us responsible. In today’s society, it is common for people to either neglect or become consumed with the care and keeping of these areas. The concept of stewardship reminds us we are ultimately God’s and are called to take care of what He has given us - neither neglecting nor idolizing it. Below is a brief description of each facet and a few examples for each area.

**Biological/Physical.** The Bible calls our bodies the temple of God (*1 Corinthians 3:16*). God wants us to be good stewards of our bodies and treat them as the place He resides. The biological area deals with doing what is within our control to keep our bodies healthy through exercise, rest, and nutrition. Everyone’s physical makeup, metabolism, genetics, and general health are different. Our health needs may vary greatly from someone else’s needs. Sometimes it is easy to forget about taking care of our bodies when we’re feeling good, only thinking about our health when we’re sick. Taking reasonable preventative measures, such as a regular checkup, are great ways to steward our bodies.

- **Get adequate sleep and rest.** We need adequate sleep to think clearly and handle the tasks of our days. Realize that not getting enough rest may make us more susceptible to sin. The difference between an adequately rested body and a sleep deprived or chronically stressed body is great.
- **Start small and get started.** Let’s say a physician has asked a middle-aged man to exercise and lose some weight because of high blood pressure. He may feel unsure of what to do or defeated before he even starts. However, other times people make such ambitious plans they are unable to sustain them and meet their goals. It is important to be reasonable, start small, but get started. Remember there will never be a convenient time to get started. Don’t be afraid to ask others for assistance and accountability.

**Spiritual.** *Genesis 2:7* says God made human beings “a living soul.” Unbelievers sometimes try to deny or downplay the spiritual aspect of their lives while other times they seek out “spirituality” that is separated from biblical truth. Regardless of how much an unbeliever tries to stay away from God’s laws, there is no rest for his soul anywhere other than Christ. For believers, the spiritual aspect is focused on the process of sanctification and growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (*2 Peter 3:18*). This includes staying rooted in God’s Word, worship (personal, family, and corporate), prayer, service, recognizing and dealing thoroughly with sin and so on. The goal is for our whole life to be under the Lordship of Christ.

- **Deal with issues directly.** Dealing with issues such as pride, inferiority, lack of forgiveness, covetousness/lack of contentment or poor stewardship will not only help one’s spiritual growth, but will positively affect other areas of life as well. For example, if a woman deals with lack of contentment and grows by God’s grace into living a grateful life, she will impact others through expressing gratitude and viewing what she has with thankfulness.

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- **Focus on God's promises.** We have been given “*exceeding great and precious promises*” by God (2 Peter 1:4). Memorizing and meditating on verses of the promises of God will help us have a lively hope (i.e., a confident expectation) and live our lives with a Heavenly perspective.

**Psychological/Emotional.** *Proverbs 23:7* says, “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. . .*”. The psychological domain refers to our patterns of thinking, which directly impact how we behave and handle our emotions. We are all familiar with people whose thinking patterns lead to a joyful outlook on life, while others have a gloom-and-doom mindset. Scripture teaches us to train our thinking toward certain things (*Philippians 4:8*) and away from others (2 *Corinthians 10:5*). Consider the practical, daily benefit to our lives and those around us when we live out the spiritual truth found in *Philippians 4:8*, “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*”

- **We all experience stress.** In this life we all go through times of stress, struggle, and grief. Thankfully, we can take these things to God as well as receive support from one another. Periodically dealing with stressors is a common occurrence for nearly everyone. However, chronically high stress eventually leads to a wearing down of our emotional and physical health.
- **At times, more help is needed.** When clinical symptoms of depression and anxiety occur, special attention is needed. Satan would like to use shame and embarrassment to keep us isolated during these times. We must fight against that isolation and reach out for help and support. There is help!

**Relational.** God made human beings in His image (*Genesis 1:27*), and being relational is one of the attributes of that image. He knew already in the Garden of Eden that human beings needed to connect with Him and with one another. He also knew that isolation isn't good for us; we grow and heal best in relationships. As *James 5:16* says, “*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*”

- **Relationships are blessings.** Having good relationships is certainly one of the greatest joys of life. In *Romans 12:5* Paul explained that the Body of Christ was made up of individual people who were connected to one another, “*so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*” While life can be hard at times, God knew having supportive relationships would be an encouragement to us. *Ecclesiastes 4:9-10* states, “*Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.*”
- **Relationships can be painful.** Difficulties relating to other people, marital problems, dysfunctional families, etc. can sometimes be the source of great pain. Remember that while God expects us to do our part in relationships, we can only control our behavior. *Romans 12:18* says, “*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*” Also, God knows how badly bitterness harms human beings. That is why God speaks so clearly about the need to handle hurts in relationships with forgiveness. Remember, the Bible teaches us to forgive as Christ forgave, not based on whether other people deserve it. *Ephesians 4:32*, “*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*”

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**Final Thought.** It is important to note all of the areas are interconnected. Strengths in an area can serve to bolster other areas, while problems in an area can impact and cause issues in other areas. For example, let's say a man was hurt deeply by someone who betrayed him (a relational wound). He then experienced strong emotions of sadness, anger, frustration, and loss (emotional effects). He often had difficulty sleeping as he replayed the situation in his mind and then was less focused at work due to lack of sleep (physical effects). Unfortunately, he didn't work through those emotions and the hurt moved into deep bitterness and a hard heart (spiritual effects).

The bio-psycho-social-spiritual model helps us be aware of four primary aspects of human life. Through greater understanding, we become better stewards of our lives in a God-honoring manner. Hopefully this article has been an encouragement and example of how we can continue to improve this stewardship.