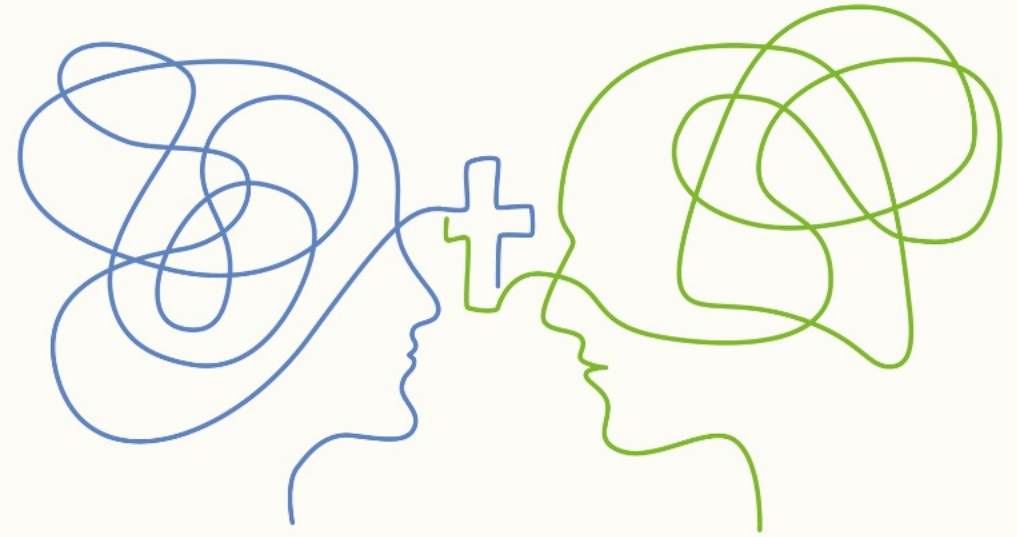


Session 1

Thinking biblically about mental health

Steve Midgley



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Impressions from the past...

- Patrick
- Susie



Thinking biblically about mental health

1. A connection to make
2. A model to explore
3. Ambitions to set



A connection to make

Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

1 Timothy 5:23



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A connection to make

Psychology – the science of mind and behaviour

Fundamental questions:

- What is a person?
- What goes wrong with us?
- What puts us right?
- What is the goal of life?



Considering mental health

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.

World Health Organisation



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Considering mental health

Mental health is a basic human right.

World Health Organisation



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Considering mental health

[Mental health] exists on a complex continuum, which is experienced differently from one person to the next, with varying degrees of difficulty and distress and potentially very different social and clinical outcomes.

World Health Organisation



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Considering mental health

For a person who suffers from or has to endure a woe, a label of mental illness can be confusing. Their woe becomes an 'it', an object that must be passively accepted rather than understood and confronted as something that can be changed.

Richard Hallam, Abolishing Mental Illness:

Rethinking the nature of our woes



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Cautions and concerns

Psychiatry is in trouble. Its diagnoses are an increasingly frail reed upon which to rest its claims to expertise. Making matters worse, its recipes for intervention in the most serious forms of mental illness are at best Band-Aids.

Andrew Scull, *Desperate Remedies:
Psychiatry and the Mysteries of Mental Illness*



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Cautions and concerns

Today one is hard-pressed to find anyone knowledgeable who believes that the so-called biological revolution of the 1980's made good on most or even any of its therapeutic and scientific promises....It is now increasingly clear to the general public that it overreached, overpromised, overdiagnosed, overmedicated and compromised its principles.

Anne Harrington, *Mind Fixers: Psychiatry's Troubled
Search for the Biology of Mental Illness*



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Cautions and concerns

While I think succeeded in getting lots of really cool papers published by cool scientists at fairly large cost – I think \$20 billion – I don't think we moved the needle in reducing suicide, reducing hospitalizations [or] improving recovery for the tens of millions of people who have mental illness.'

Thomas Insel, *National Institute of Mental Health*



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Cautions and concerns

*We psychiatrists have been given an impossible task.
Our medications are sometimes able to alleviate
symptoms, though they often come with side effects.
But we cannot give people what they really need.
People need meaning and relationship.*

Steven Hyman, former director
of the *National Institute of Mental Health*



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A connection to make

Depression..... Despair..... *and hope*

Anxiety..... Fear..... *and a father who cares for us*

PTSD..... Insecurity..... *and the security of the Lord*

Addictions..... Powerlessness..... *and slavery to sin*



A connection to make

Creation: all of life lived before the face of God

Fall: every struggle connects to this breach

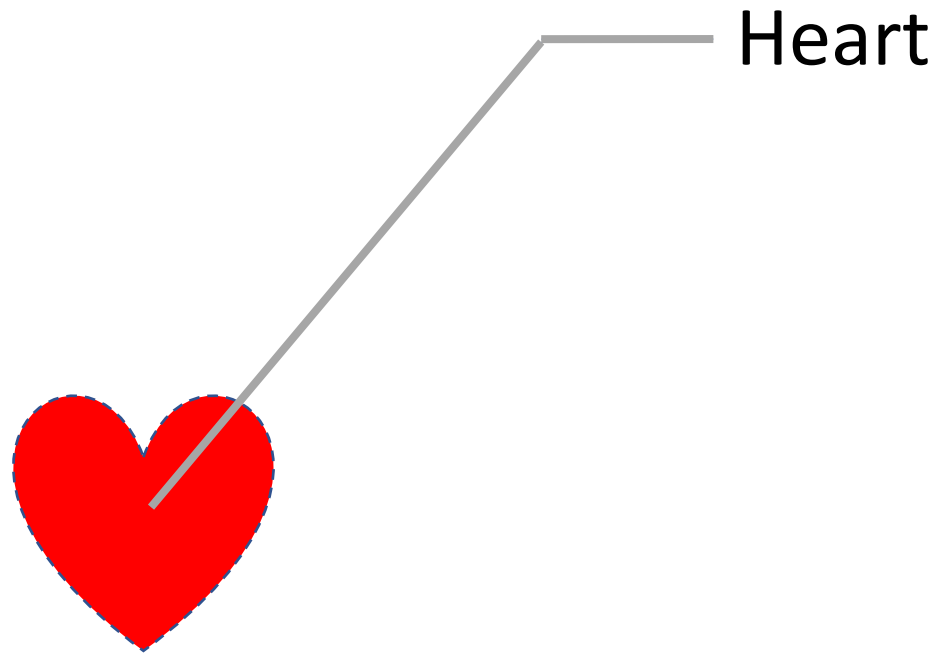
Redemption: that must impact our well-being

Restoration: suffering and struggle is gone



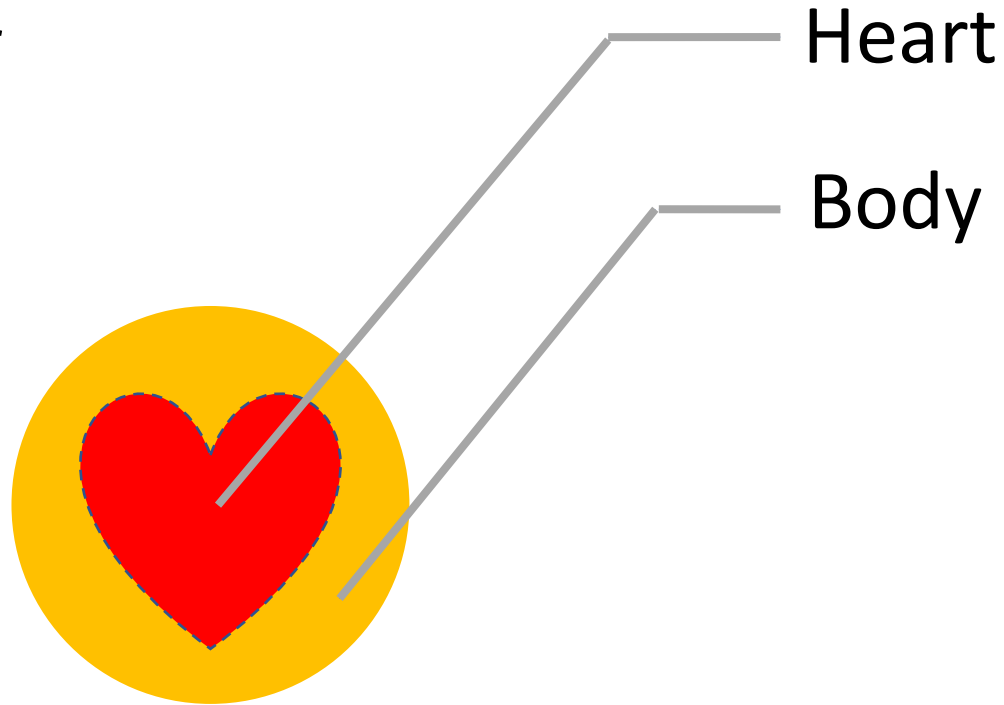
A model to explore: the heart

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.
(Luke 6:45)

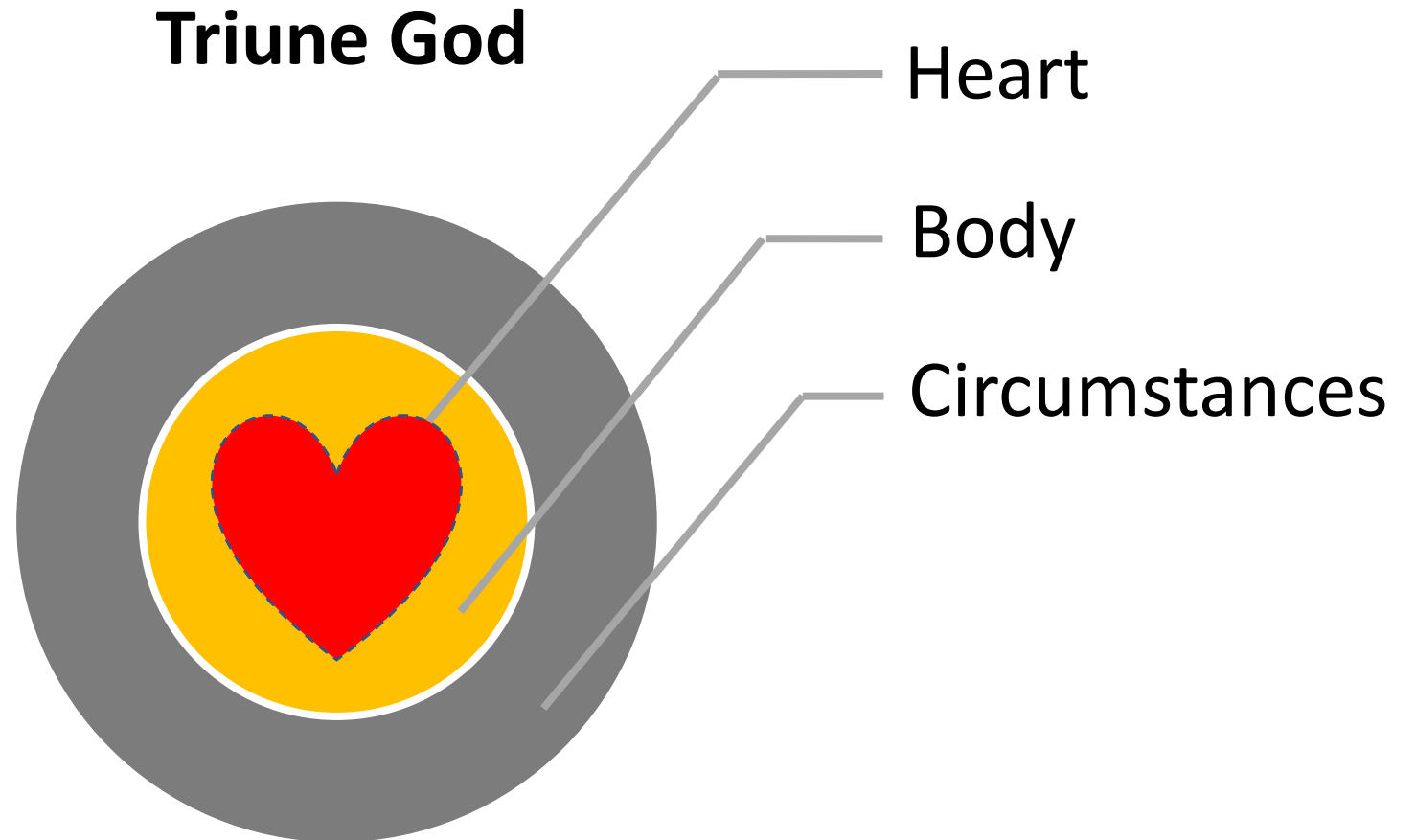


A model to explore: embodied

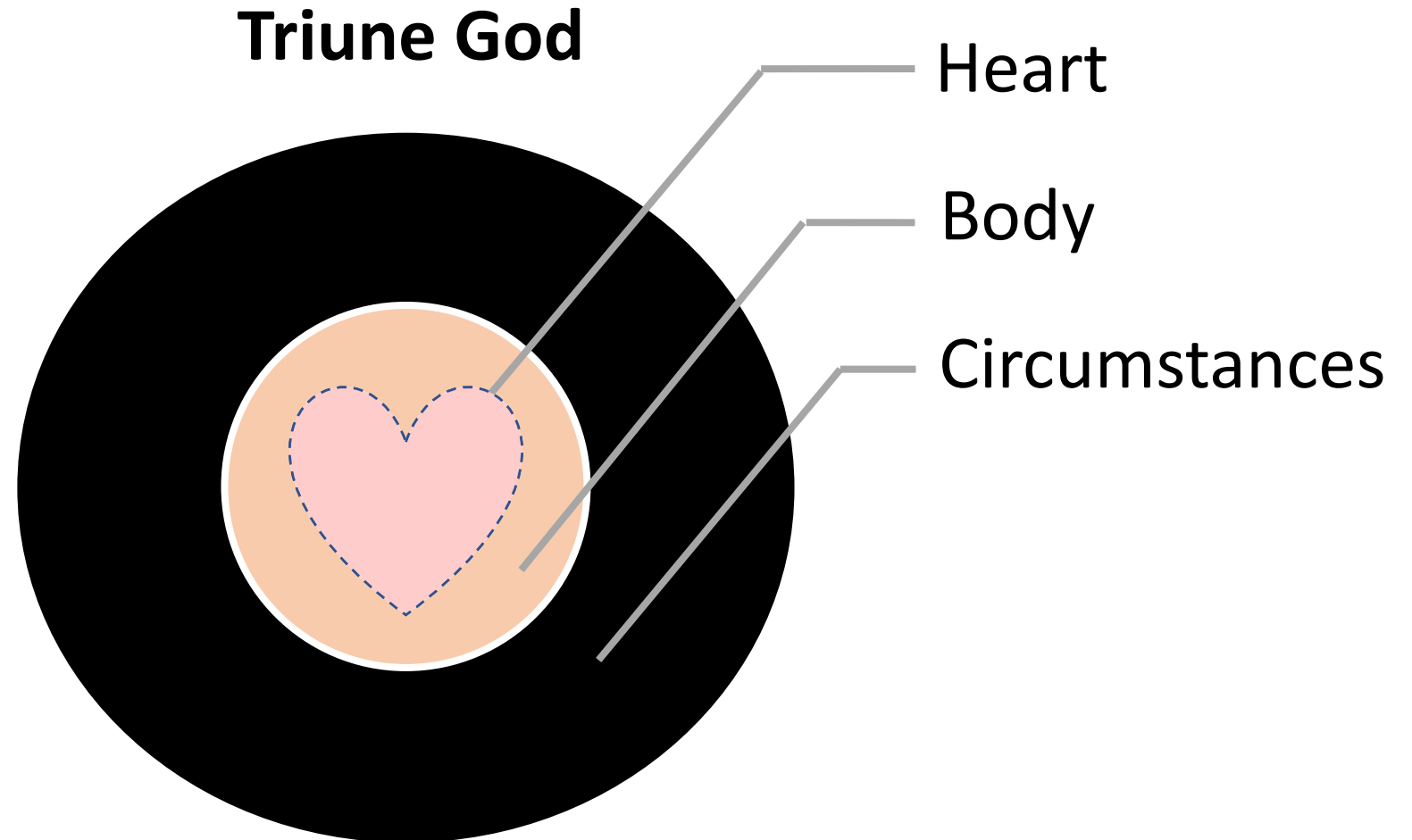
*So we do not lose heart.
Though our outer self is
wasting away, our inner self
is being renewed day by
day.*
(2 Corinthians 4.16)



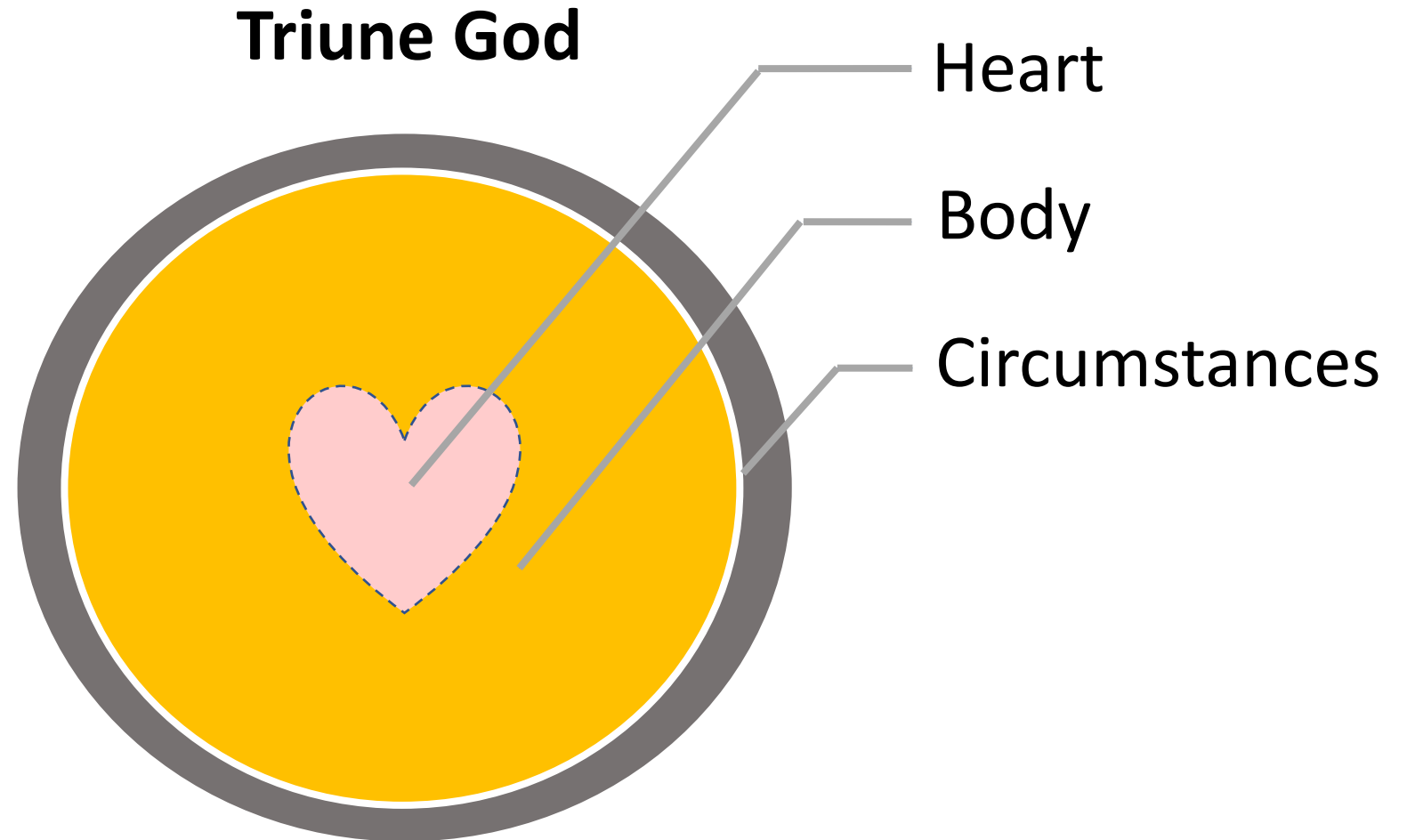
A model to explore: embodied and embedded



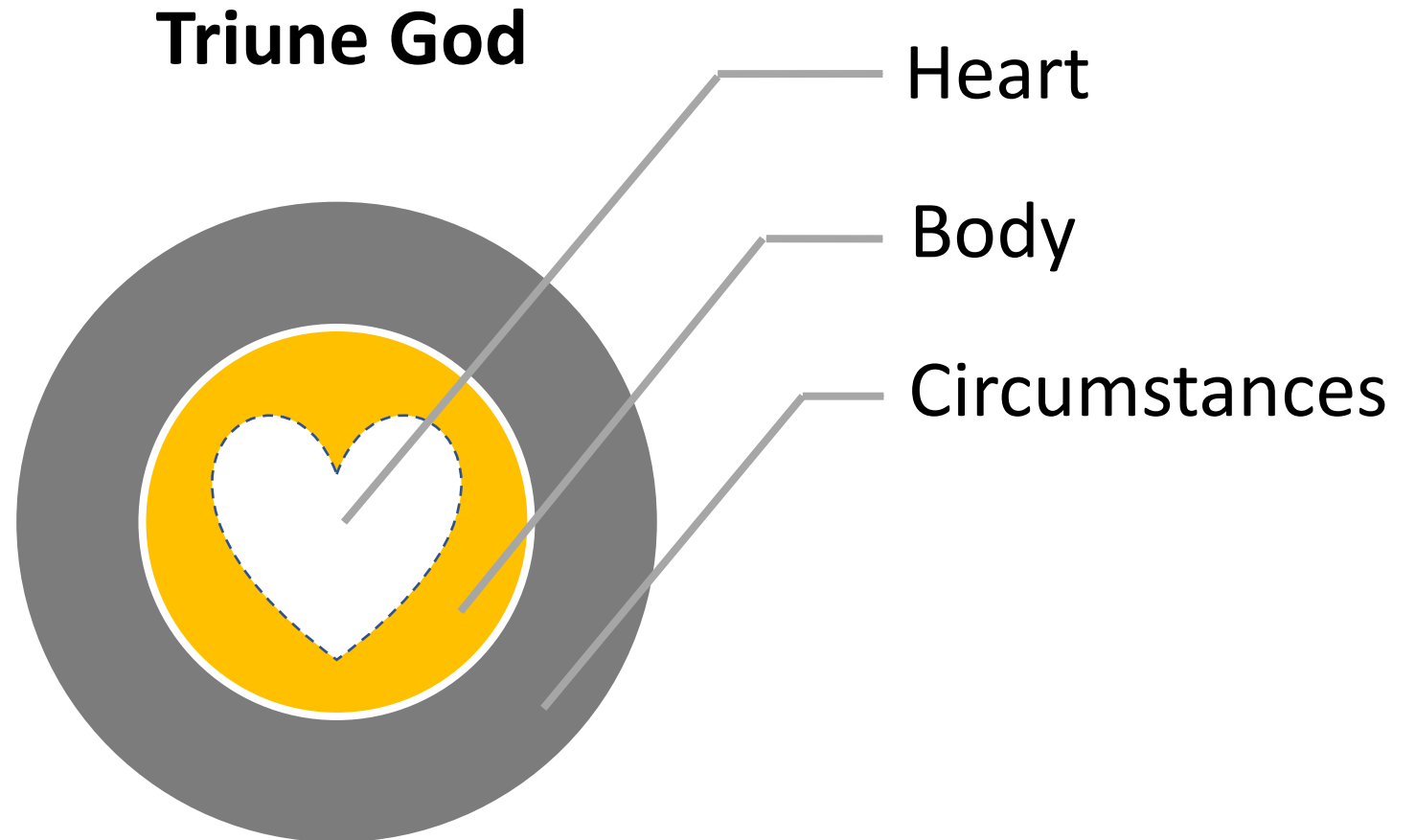
Emphasis on circumstances



Emphasis on body / biology



A strange omission of the heart



Ambitions to set

- **Resist biological reductionism**
- **Resist 'us and them'**
- **Be confident of our contribution**
- **Be compassionate in our churches**
- **Keep Christ at the centre**

