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## A SPIRITUAL ECG

Last week, we were encouraging a spiritual self-examination so that we would take account of our spiritual health. A strong desire for the word of God is a good sign of a healthy spiritual life. However, it is not the only indication of a strong spiritual life.

There are other ways of detecting a spiritual heart problem. Doctors use an ECG (electrocardiogram) to see if there is a sign of abnormality. We should use the scriptures as our instrument of spiritual heart detection.

### A CHECK-UP FROM THE NECK UP

One test we need to run is examining how we speak. In **Matthew 12:34**, Jesus said the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart. The words that we speak reflect the spiritual condition of the source of those words—the heart.

First of all, what do we like to talk about? I remember a friend of mine who talked about inviting a friend of his to spend some time with him and some other young people from the church. After a few days, his friend asked my friend, “Why don’t you talk about Jesus? I’ve spent several days with you, and I’ve heard about cars, I’ve heard about sports, I’ve heard about movies, I’ve heard about school, but I haven’t any of you talking about Jesus.”

That is the first indication of spiritual-mindedness. Our hearts should be so full of God’s love that we can’t help but tell others about it. That is the idea in **Romans 10:8-10**. If the word is really in the heart, then it will be in the mouth as well. We will not keep silent but express our faith. This expression will become second nature to us. The context of **Romans 10** is talking about confession unto salvation with the mouth just as belief is unto righteousness with the heart. As Christians, we must continue believing and therefore speaking (evangelism—**2 Corinthians 4:13**). But our speaking should not be limited to episodes in which we are devoting special time and effort in proclaiming our faith; we will proclaim our faith naturally in everyday situations if we love God with all our heart, soul and mind (**Deuteronomy 6:5-7**).

On the other hand, a fear of talking to others is a symptom of spiritual heart disease. **1 John 4:18** says that perfect love casts out fear. Our love for God and our love for the person who needs to know about Jesus should overcome our fear of rejection or fear of not giving a perfect presentation. If it is from the heart, and we have already demonstrated that we care, then people will sense that in us when we talk earnestly to them.

### THE PRAYER TEST

We can check our spiritual heart condition by examining our manner of praying. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**). This does not mean that we must have our eyes closed, hands folded, heads bowed 24 hours a day; it means we should be persistent in prayer as taught in the rest of the New Testament. The example of Jesus praying in **Luke 11** provoked the disciples (who were not praying) to ask the Lord to teach them to pray. He then taught them what to say (**v.2-4**), but He also taught them in a parable (**v.5-8**) to pray with persistence that shows faith, love, and diligence in our hearts. Epaphras labored fervently as in prayer for the Colossians (**Colossians 4:12**).

Jesus was very busy preaching and healing people. Whenever He got a chance, He went to be alone so He could pray and commune with His Father (**Luke 5:16**). Luke in particular mentions His habit of praying in the major times in His ministry. He prayed when He was baptized (**Luke 3:12**). He was praying when He was transfigured (**Luke 9:29**). He prayed before facing the cross (**Luke 22:44**). He

prayed on the cross (**Luke 23:34**). Even His dying breath was a prayer (**Luke 23:46**). He also gave thanks before He fed the 5000 (**Luke 9:16**). He prayed all night before He selected the apostles (**Luke 6:12**). He prayed much for them the last night before His death (**John 17**). As we look to Jesus in order to become more like Him, let us try to imitate His manner of praying. More than this, let us first imitate His manner of thinking that will motivate this kind of praying!

### THE STRESS TEST

I have a stress test scheduled next month. I knew a man who died taking a stress test in a cardiologist's office, so I am not underestimating the importance of such a test. The stress test is a vital test in indicating the condition of our spiritual hearts, too. How do *you* react to pressure? Your response is an indicator of what is going on inside your heart.

The world does not react well to pressure or stress. Some *oppress* others when stressed. These kinds of reactions often destroy relationships with loved ones as well as destroy one's soul. Others *repress* the stress, yet still feel a great amount of anxiety inside. This can wreak havoc on the physical body as well as the soul.

As usual, God shows us a more excellent way in His word. And, let's face it; we will face many causes of stress in our lives. **James 1:2-4** tells us how to react to them: "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*" Much of James is reflective of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus did say something similar in the eighth beatitude, "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (**Matthew 5:11-12**) Remember two "great" things: your great reward and the great company you are a part of.

We should gladly face every stress and count it as an opportunity to suffer for the Lord and glorify *Him*. Paul did (**2 Cor. 12:7-10**). He specifically mentioned *stress* in his list. After giving his proof of his faith in this passage, he then challenges the Corinthians to examine themselves and prove themselves in the same manner (**2 Cor. 13:4**). How is your heart?