

Spiritual Wellness



Sermon Outlines Examining Our Spiritual Wellness

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To God Be The Glory!

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Spiritual Wellness

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Spiritual Wellness

How Well Do You Hear?

INTRODUCTION

1. This lesson is the first in a series entitled “**Spiritual Wellness**”...
 - a. Just as we may have periodic checkups to gauge our physical well-being
 - b. So we should frequently examine our spiritual wellness in regards to serving God
 - c. Our spiritual checkup begins with checking our **hearing**
2. We often find Jesus saying, “**He who has ears to hear, let him hear!**”...
 - a. During His earthly ministry - **Mt 11:15; 13:9,43**
 - b. In His letters to the churches of Asia - **Re 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22**
3. What is the point of these sayings...?
 - a. What is being said is important, so you had better pay attention! - cf. **Mk 4:23-25**
 - b. It suggests a problem that often exists today: many simply do not hear so as to understand
4. I am convinced that many do not appreciate the importance of good listening...
 - a. It certainly concerned Jesus
 - b. So I believe it is appropriate to ask, “**How Well Do You Hear?**”

[Let's begin by pointing out there are...]

I. DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEARERS

A. THOSE HARD OF HEARING...

1. Isaiah wrote of such people, and Jesus applied it to many in His day - **Mt 13:13-15**
2. People are this way because they are dull of heart and have closed their eyes to truth
-- **This prevents one from understanding God's grace and being saved by Him**

B. THOSE DULL OF HEARING...

1. Some of the Hebrew Christians were like this - cf. **He 5:11**
2. When a person has this problem, it is hard for others to explain things to them!
-- **The fault is not with the subject material, nor the presenter, but the hearer!**

C. THOSE WITH ITCHING EARS...

1. Such people will listen only to that which is pleasing - **2Ti 4:3-4**
2. They don't like **sound doctrine** (which often requires negative preaching) - **2Ti 4:2**
-- **Many today are often afflicted with this hearing problem!**

D. THOSE WITH GOOD AND NOBLE HEARTS...

1. Jesus spoke of these in His parable of the Sower - **Lk 8:15**
2. The Bereans were hearers of this kind, receiving the word with readiness - **Ac 17:11**
-- **This is the kind of hearer we all should be!**

[Why is it so important to be this kind of hearer? There are several reasons...]

II. IMPORTANCE OF GOOD HEARING

A. TO BEING BLESSED...

1. For those willing to hear properly, there are wonderful things to learn - **Mt 13:16-17**
2. Things which great people (David, Daniel, etc.) did not have the opportunity to learn
-- **We miss out on these blessings if we do not carefully hear!**

B. TO SAVING FAITH...

1. God has ordained that we be saved through faith in Christ - cf. **Ro 1:16-17**
2. Such faith comes through the gospel, often involving listening to a preacher - cf. **Ro 10:14,17**
-- **Does your hearing hinder the development of your faith?**

C. TO BEARING FRUIT...

1. In the parable of the Sower, the soil bearing fruit was the one which heard properly - **Lk 8:15**
2. That is because bearing fruit comes from **understanding** the grace of God! - cf. **Col 1:6**
-- **By hearing well we understand God's grace, and thus motivated to bear fruit!**

D. TO PREVENT APOSTASY...

1. There is a real danger of drifting, by neglecting "so great a salvation" - **He 2:1-3**
2. The only solution is to "give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard"
-- **Poor hearing is often the first step to apostasy!**

E. TO AVOID REJECTION...

1. If unwilling to hear, those teaching God's Word have a right to reject us - cf. **Mt 10:14-15**
2. We are judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life - cf. **Ac 13:44-49**
-- **Unwilling to hear leads to fewer opportunities to learn the truth!**

F. TO ESCAPE CONDEMNATION...

1. By the men of Nineveh who repented after one lesson - **Mt 12:41**
2. By the queen of the South who traveled a great distance to hear Solomon - **Mt 12:42**
-- **Unwilling to hear the Son of God brings condemnation by others!**

[Hopefully, we better appreciate the opportunities we have to hear God's Word, and the importance of good hearing! How then can we improve our ability to hear? Here are some ...]

III. STEPS TO BETTER HEARING

A. MAKE HEARING AN ACT OF WORSHIP...

1. How you listen to God's word being read or preached is as much an indication of your devotion to God as to how you pray or sing
2. When you have opportunities to hear the Word of God, do it with "a worshipful attitude"
-- **Does not the proclamation of God's Word deserve our rapt attention?**

B. LISTEN FROM FIRST TO LAST...

1. I.e., pay attention all the way through
 - a. Do you expect to understand a novel by simply reading a sentence here and there?
 - b. So it is with listening...to understand we must hear the full context
2. Speakers must follow certain rules of speech so as to be understood:

- a. Introduce the subject
 - b. Present main points with supporting arguments
 - c. Conclude with a summary
- **So hearers must listen to ALL the parts to truly understand**

C. LOOK AT THE SPEAKER...

1. This greatly aids your concentration
 2. This requires self-discipline, but it is conducive to developing a longer attention span
- **Try it, and see if it doesn't make a difference!**

D. LEAN FORWARD IF NECESSARY...

1. Your sitting position can impact your ability to hear
 2. A too relaxing position makes it easier for your mind to wander (or sleep!)
- **Try this too, and see if it doesn't make a difference!**

E. READ ALONG IN YOUR BIBLE...

1. You remember more of what you both see and hear over what you simply hear
 2. Your knowledge of the Scriptures can be greatly improved by doing this
- **We want our children to do this, shouldn't we provide the example?**

F. HEAR WITH FAITH...

1. I.e., listen with a willingness to accept and believe what is shown in God's Word
 2. Notice **He 4:1-2**; those who died in the wilderness did not hear with faith!
- **If we don't hear with faith, we will fall short of our heavenly rest!**

G. HEAR WITH A MIND TO ACT...

1. Are we like the people in Ezekiel's day? - cf. **Eze 33:30-32**
 2. Hearing must be accompanied by doing to be of any profit - **Jm 1:22-25**
- **As important as hearing may be, the blessedness comes only if we are doers as well!**

CONCLUSION

1. How important, then, is good hearing...?
 - a. When it comes to hearing God, very important! - **Isa 55:2-3**
 - b. It is essential for the good of our soul!
2. Is there ever a time when **God** does not hear...?
 - a. Yes, when our sins are between us and God - cf. **Isa 59:1-2**
 - b. But we can take care of that problem by receiving God's Mercy - cf. **Isa 55:6-7**

Today, that mercy is offered through Jesus Christ, God's Son. And as God said:

"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Lk 9:35)

Have you heeded Him by obeying His word? Or does the following cry of Jesus apply to you...?

"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Lk 6:46)

Next in our **"Spiritual Wellness"** checkup, we shall ask **"How Well Do You Read?"**...

Spiritual Wellness

How Well Do You Read?

INTRODUCTION

1. This lesson is the second in a series entitled “**Spiritual Wellness**”...
 - a. In which we examine our spiritual wellness in regards to serving God
 - b. Our spiritual checkup began with checking our **hearing**
 - c. It continues with checking our **reading**

2. On several occasions we find Jesus saying, “**Have you not read...?**”
 - a. In defense of His disciples - **Mt 12:3,5**
 - b. Answering questions regarding divorce - **Mt 19:4**
 - c. Defending children who praised Him in the temple - **Mt 21:16**
 - d. Regarding the prophecy of His becoming the chief cornerstone - **Mt 21:42**
 - e. Responding to the Sadducees about the resurrection of the dead - **Mt 22:31-32**

3. The question “**Have you not read?**” suggests a major failing...
 - a. That plagued the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees
 - b. That likely affects people today, including Christians

[The problem: many do not read the Word of God as they should, and that affects our “**Spiritual Wellness**”. So let’s raise the question, “**How Well Do You Read?**”, considering first that there are...]

I. DIFFERENT TYPES OF READERS

A. THOSE WHO NEVER READ...

1. Who have never read the Bible, the Word of God
 2. This includes most people in the world, and sadly, some Christians
- **It is bad enough for people to Biblically illiterate, but for Christians?**

B. THOSE WHO READ SPARINGLY...

1. Who may possess a Bible, but read only a passage here and there
 2. This includes most people who have Bibles
- **The Bible may be the #1 bestseller, but it is often the least read book in the world!**

C. THOSE WHO READ SELECTIVELY...

1. Who read only certain parts of the Bible
 2. For example, the Psalms or the Gospels
- **Such people read only to soothe their conscience or calm their troubled heart**

D. THOSE WHO READ DEFENSIVELY...

1. Who read to prove others wrong
 2. Looking for anything that supports what they already believe
- **One should not read to prove one’s positions, but to improve one’s position before God**

E. THOSE WHO READ REGULARLY...

1. Who read to learn, to understand, to obey God's Word
2. The Ethiopian and the Bereans seem to have been such readers - **Ac 8:27-34; 17:10-12**
-- **Shouldn't we be as dedicated to reading the Word of God as they?**

[Why is it important to be readers like the Ethiopian and the Bereans? There are several reasons...]

II. IMPORTANCE OF GOOD READING

A. TO BE BLESSED...

1. The blessed man is one who meditates on the Word - **Ps 1:1-3**
2. The one who reads God's word is blessed by his reading - **Re 1:3**
-- **All spiritual blessings begin by reading the Word of God**

B. TO BE CHALLENGED...

1. By that which is living and powerful, a discerner of thoughts and hearts - **He 4:12**
2. By words that are spirit and life - **Jn 6:63**
3. By that which effectively works in those who believe - **1Th 2:13**
4. By that which can cause one to be born again - **1Pe 1:23**
-- **All spiritual life and growth depends upon reading the Word of God**

C. TO GAIN UNDERSTANDING...

1. In the fear of the Lord, the beginning of wisdom - **Deu 31:10-13; Pr 1:1-7**
2. In the mystery of Christ - **Ep 3:3-5**
3. In the salvation of Christ - **2Ti 3:14-15**
4. In the will of God - **2Ti 3:16-17**
-- **Wisdom, truth, grace, guidance, they all come from reading God's Word!**

D. TO GROW IN HOPE...

1. Through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures - **Ro 15:4**
2. Because we learn about the grace yet to come - **1Pe 1:13**
-- **Reading the Bible sustains hope in this life for the life to come**

[These are just a few of the many benefits of God's Word, and the importance of being good readers! How then can we improve our ability to read? Here are some ...]

III. STEPS TO BETTER READING

A. READ REGULARLY...

1. As Paul instructed Timothy - **1Ti 4:13**
2. Read God's Word everyday, whether it be a chapter or few verses at a time
-- **Read the Bible as it was written: book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse**

B. READ DEVOTIONALLY...

1. Begin and end with prayer - e.g., **Psa 119:18,10**
2. Read for your personal benefit (not to prove others wrong)
-- **Bible reading should be an important part of your daily devotions**

C. READ WITH INTENT...

1. To learn, to do, to teach - cf. **Ezr 7:10**

2. To be a doer of the Word, not a hearer only - **Jm 1:21-25**
- **We should read to learn what God wants us to do, how to live**

D. READ AND MARK...

1. Use highlighters or fine pens to mark key phrases and passages
2. I find this often helps me to focus on the text as I read
- **Use whatever helps you to give close attention to the Word**

E. READ ALOUD...

1. This is another way to maintain focus when your attention drifts
2. It also reveals one's comprehension of the text
 - a. "...one of the most basic tests of comprehension is to ask someone to read aloud from a book." - **Verlyn Klinkenborg, "Some Thoughts On The Lost Art Of Reading Aloud"**
 - b. "It reveals far more than whether the reader understands the words. It reveals how far into the words - and the pattern of the words - the reader really sees." - **ibid.**
3. You increase your opportunity for retention by 100% - **Jeff Gregory, World Languages Lab Coordinator**
 - a. "When you read silently you use just two parts of your body (you guessed it - your brain and your eyes).
 - b. "But when you read out loud you use four parts of your body (brain, eyes, ears, and voice.) This doubles your retention possibility."
 - c. "You not only think about the language and see it written, but your hear it and say it."
- **A simple suggestion, one with great potential for comprehension and retention!**

CONCLUSION

1. The Word of God and the words of Jesus are indeed precious gifts...
 - a. A lamp to our feet and a light to our path - **Ps 119:105**
 - b. The words of eternal life - **Jn 6:68**
2. Yet might Jesus one day say to us, "Have you never read...?"
 - a. About the gospel plan of salvation? - **Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16**
 - b. About the need to remain faithful? - **Re 2:10**

May we take the charge given to Joshua and diligently apply it ourselves to all of the Word of God...

"This Book . . . shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." - Jos 1:8

Next in our "Spiritual Wellness" checkup, we shall ask "How Well Do You Pray?"...

Spiritual Wellness

How Well Do You Pray?

INTRODUCTION

1. This lesson is the third in a series entitled “**Spiritual Wellness**”...
 - a. In which we examine our spiritual wellness in regards to serving God
 - b. Our spiritual checkup so far has checked our **hearing** and **reading**
 - c. It continues with checking our **praying**
2. Jesus told a parable about a persistent widow... - **Lk 18:1-8**
 - a. His purpose: “that men always ought to pray and not lose heart” - **Lk 18:1**
 - b. His concern: “when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” - **Lk 18:8**
3. Our **prayer life** is an important indicator of spiritual wellness...
 - a. It is an expression of our faith in God
 - b. It reveals if we have lost heart in our service to God

[So as before, I raise the question, “**How Well Do You Pray?**”, observing first that there are...]

I. DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYERS

A. THOSE WHO NEVER PRAY...

1. This includes atheists and agnostics
2. But also Christians who have lost heart and faith - cf. **He 3:12-13**
-- **Jesus was concerned that people not reach this point**

B. THOSE WHO PRAY SPARINGLY...

1. A 2007 Pew Forum U.S. Religious Landscape Survey revealed that 60% pray once a day
2. That means that 40% of Americans do not pray on a regular basis
-- **This demonstrates that Jesus’ concern was not unwarranted**

C. THOSE WHO PRAY SELF-RIGHTEOUSLY..

1. Like the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable of two men who went to pray - **Lk 18:9-14**
2. Who take pride in how much they pray, or the length of prayers - **Mt 6:5-8**
-- **These are hypocrites that give religion a bad name**

D. THOSE WHO PRAY SELFISHLY...

1. People who use prayer only to make personal requests
2. When prayer is to be made for all men - **1Ti 2:1**
-- **Many people use prayer only as a personal “gimme” tool**

E. THOSE WHO PRAY EARNESTLY...

1. Vigilant in thanksgiving, praying for others - cf. **Col 4:2-3**
2. Like Epaphras - **Col 4:12**
-- **This is the kind of praying Jesus Himself did, and wants us to do!**

[Why is it important to pray like Epaphras and Jesus? There are many reasons...]

II. IMPORTANCE OF PROPER PRAYING

A. FORGIVENESS OF SINS...

1. The Christian can find forgiveness through the blood of Christ - **1Jn 1:7-10**
 2. Thus the erring Christian is told to repent and pray - **Ac 8:22**
- **Don't we want the assurance of knowing that our sins are forgiven?**

B. PEACE OF MIND...

1. The antidote to anxiety is prayer - **Php 4:6**
 2. Christians will find their hearts and minds guarded by the peace of God - **Php 4:7**
- **Don't we want the peace of mind and heart that surpasses understanding?**

C. STRENGTH TO LIVE...

1. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might be strengthened in the inner man - **Ep 3:14-16,20**
 2. When we need to be strong, Christians can likewise pray for themselves!
- **Don't we want the power that is beyond our comprehension?**

D. OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE...

1. Paul realized God provided him opportunity to teach others - **1Co 3:5** (NASB)
 2. He therefore requested prayer that such opportunities would continue - **Col 4:3**
- **Don't we want the Lord to give us opportunity to lead others to Christ?**

E. BOLDNESS TO SPEAK...

1. When the apostles needed boldness, they prayed and God delivered - **Ac 4:23-31**
 2. When Paul needed boldness, he asked for prayers in his behalf - **Ep 6:19-20**
- **Don't we want boldness when we speak to others about Christ?**

F. WISDOM TO GUIDE...

1. Wisdom is not knowledge, but insight that makes the best use of the knowledge one has
 2. The Christian is promised wisdom through prayer without doubting - **Jm 1:5-8**
- **Don't we want the wisdom that comes from above?**

G. HEALING FROM SICKNESS...

1. Those who are sick should ask elders to pray for them - **Jm 5:14-15**
 2. Those who have sinned should confess, and we should pray for one another - **Jm 5:16**
- **Don't we want the aid of God when in need of physical or spiritual healing?**

H. TRANQUILITY AND PEACE...

1. The Scriptures proclaim God has ultimate control over the nations - **Dan 4:17; Ro 13:1-7**
 2. Thus we are to pray, that we may lead quiet (tranquil, ASV) and peaceable lives - **1Ti 2:1-4**
- **Don't we want to live in peace and tranquility, and for others to as well?**

[The benefits of prayer are many! How then can we improve our prayer life? Here are some ...]

III. STEPS TO BETTER PRAYING

A. PRAY SYSTEMATICALLY...

1. Consider the practice of two great men of God - **Psa 55:17; Dan 6:10**
 2. They made it a habit to pray at set times during the day
 - a. It would not hurt to imitate them
 - b. For example: three times daily - morning, noon, and evening
- **At the very least, make time each day to spend in prayer**

B. PRAY SPONTANEOUSLY...

1. Prayers should not be limited to set times
 2. Paul and Silas prayed when faced with trying circumstances - **Ac 16:25**
 3. Nehemiah prayed silently on the spur of the moment - **Neh 2:4-5**
 4. The Israelites prayed to God in the heat of battle - **1Ch 5:20**
- **We should pray whenever and however the occasion calls for it**

C. PRAY SECRETLY...

1. As Jesus taught by precept, in His sermon on the mount - **Mt 6:5-6**
 2. As Jesus taught by example, in finding solitary places to pray - **Mk 1:35**
- **Not that public prayer is wrong, but secret prayer is strong!**

D. PRAY SIMPLY...

1. Many words are not necessary - **Mt 6:7**
 2. Our Father already knows our needs - **Mt 6:8; Ro 8:26-27**
 3. Jesus illustrated how simple prayer can be - **Mt 6:9-13**
- **Prayer need not be long and complicated**

E. PRAY STEADFASTLY...

1. As taught by Jesus - **Lk 11:5-10; 18:1-8**
 2. As taught by Paul - **Ro 12:12; Col 4:2**
- **Steadfastness in prayer was a major concern of Jesus and His apostles**

F. PRAY WITH POSTURE...

1. The Bible describes various praying postures - e.g., **Lk 18:13; Ac 20:36**
 2. While there is no official posture for prayer, posture reflects humility, reference
- **Prayer is a state of mind, which can be enhanced by bodily position**

CONCLUSION

1. Prayer is...
 - a. A wonderful privilege, a powerful privilege
 - b. A needed privilege, an often neglected privilege
2. Prayer ought to be practiced...
 - a. “always with all prayer and supplication...” - **Ep 6:18**
 - b. “earnestly...being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” - **Col 4:2**

Indeed, we should “pray without ceasing” (**1Th 5:17**). As an indicator of spiritual wellness, “**How Well Do You Pray?**”

Next in our “**Spiritual Wellness**” checkup, we shall ask “**How Well Do You Sing?**”...

Spiritual Wellness

How Well Do You Sing?

INTRODUCTION

1. This is our fourth lesson in a series entitled “**Spiritual Wellness**”...
 - a. In which we examine our spiritual wellness in regards to serving God
 - b. Our spiritual checkup so far has included **hearing, reading, and praying**
 - c. It continues with checking our **singing**
2. Singing spiritual songs was something that Jesus did...
 - a. As foretold in the book of Psalms - **Ps 22:22**; cf. **He 2:11-12**
 - b. As seen following the Last Supper - **Mt 26:30**
3. Our **singing** can be an important indicator of spiritual well-being...
 - a. As an expression of our faith and joy in God
 - b. As a means to encourage one another in our service to God

[So let me ask, “**How Well Do You Sing?**” It should be apparent that there are...]

I. DIFFERENT TYPES OF SINGERS

A. THOSE WHO NEVER SING...

1. I’ve seen a few Christians who never sing, even though they attend regularly
2. But this is a direct violation of Scripture - cf. **Ep 5:19; Col 3:16; Jm 5:13**
-- **Christians are commanded to sing, to not sing is not an option**

B. THOSE WHO SING BEGRUDGINGLY...

1. They may sing, but out of a sense of duty or obligation
2. Obligatory singing, as with giving, is not be pleasing to God - cf. **2Co 9:7**
-- **If we sing begrudgingly, we may as well not sing at all**

C. THOSE WHO SING HALF-HEARTEDLY...

1. Their mouths may sing, but their hearts are not in it
2. This type of worship Jesus described as hypocritical - **Mt 15:7-8**
-- **It is easy for us to fall into this kind of singing**

D. THOSE WHO SING TO IMPRESS OTHERS...

1. Perhaps because they have been blessed with talent or training
2. But like praying, singing to be praised by others does not please God - cf. **Mt 6:5**
-- **Talented or trained individuals should sing, but to please God, not man**

E. THOSE WHO SING WITH MELODY AND GRACE IN THEIR HEARTS...

1. To praise the Lord
 - a. As did the singers of Israel - **Ps 95:1-3; 96:1-4**
 - b. As did those imprisoned for the name of Christ - **Ac 16:25**
2. To edify others

- a. As Paul instructed the Ephesians - **Ep 5:19**
 - b. As he also instructed the Colossians - **Col 3:16**
- **These are the kind of singers we should aspire to become**

[Why aspire to become the singers God wants us to be? Consider these reasons...]

II. IMPORTANCE OF PROPER SINGING

A. TO AVOID SINNING...

1. By refusing to sing, or doing so inappropriately
 2. By making false promises with what proceeds from our mouths
- **We must sing, but it must be the right kind of singing!**

B. TO OFFER ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICES...

1. Singing praises is a spiritual sacrifice that we offer to God - **He 13:15**
 2. From Malachi we learn what God thinks of mediocre sacrifices - **Mal 1:6-14**
 3. **Note:** this is not to suggest that poor singing due to lack of talent or aging voices is not acceptable, for the kind of singing that pleases God comes from the heart (see below)
- **We must consider whether our spiritual sacrifices please God**

C. TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS...

1. We speak not only to God in song, but to one another - **Ep 5:19**
 2. We teach and admonish one another in our songs - **Col 3:16**
- **We must consider whether our singing affects others in a positive way**

D. TO BE RICHLY BLESSED...

1. Singing can be a way of making “melody in your heart” - **Ep 5:19**
 2. Singing can be a way of letting “the word of Christ dwell in you richly” - **Col 3:16**
- **Singing can be a major source for our spiritual happiness and well-being**

[Indeed, singing is a three dimensional activity: **upward** (praising God), **outward** (encouraging others), and **inward** (edifying self). That we might truly benefit from singing, here are a few...]

III. STEPS TO BETTER SINGING

A. INVOLVE YOUR MIND...

1. We should sing with understanding - cf. **1Co 14:15**
 2. It is the words, not the music, that should be our primary focus of our singing
 3. We must be careful that our enjoyment of singing is not like how many enjoy their popular music (i.e., liking the music without necessarily understanding the words)
- **Give careful attention to the words**

B. INVOLVE YOUR HEART...

1. When we sing, we must do so...
 - a. “with grace in your hearts” - **Col 3:16**
 - b. “making melody in your heart” - **Ep 5:19**
 2. This assumes that we involve our ‘heart strings’ (emotions) as we sing!
 3. To sing without emotion is hypocritical, and condemned by Jesus! - **Mt 15:7-8**
- **Put your heart into your singing**

C. INVOLVE YOUR VOICE...

1. Not to be too obvious, but singing involves our mouths and lips - **Psa 63:5; 71:23**
 2. Sing out as you are able (age, allergies, etc., may hinder, but do one's best)
 3. Enunciate your words (aids comprehension by self and others)
- **Does not God (and brethren) deserve the best our voices have to offer?**

D. SIT NEAR THOSE WHO LOVE TO SING...

1. Sitting alone or spread out discourages many from singing as they might otherwise
 2. We are more uplifted, edify others better, by sitting together and closer to the song leader
- **One of the first steps to enjoy singing is to sit with others who love to sing!**

E. UTILIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN TO SING...

1. Singing is more enjoyable when we are able to read musical notes, sing different parts
 2. Churches often provide singing classes, special song services
 3. Indeed, every opportunity to sing is an opportunity to learn
- **Take advantage of any opportunity to improve your ability to sing**

F. EXPAND THE SPHERE OF YOUR SINGING...

1. Is your singing limited just to the public assemblies, on the first day of the week?
 2. Singing, like prayer, ought to be spontaneous, arising whenever the circumstances call for it
- cf. **Ac 16:25; Ps 34:1-3**
 3. Take advantage of special opportunities to sing, such as monthly and annual singings
 4. As a spiritual exercise, it should be done in private devotions as well as in public worship
 - a. Sing while you work, travel, or alone in your private meditations
 - b. Make use of hymns on tapes or CDs when traveling or meditating
- **Increase your opportunities to sing at other times with others, and when alone**

CONCLUSION

1. David, "a man after God's own heart", loved to sing...
 - a. "I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me." - **Ps 13:6**
 - b. "I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations." - **Ps 57:9**
 - c. "I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."
- **Ps 104:33**
2. He called upon others to sing praises both in public and in private...
 - a. "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the assembly of saints."
- **Ps 149:1**
 - b. "Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds." - **Ps 149:5**

Dare we, as followers of the "Son of David" (Jesus), love to sing praises to God and spiritual songs to one another any less?

How well we sing (not musically per se, but spiritually speaking) can be a powerful indicator of our spiritual well-being.

Next in our "Spiritual Wellness" checkup, we shall ask "How Well Do You Talk?"...

Spiritual Wellness

How Well Do You Talk?

INTRODUCTION

1. Now for lesson five in this series entitled “**Spiritual Wellness**”...
 - a. In which we examine our spiritual wellness in regards to serving God
 - b. A checkup which has included **hearing, reading, praying, and singing**
 - c. Now we shall talk about our **talking**
2. Jesus said we should take our speech seriously...
 - a. We shall give an account for every idle word in the day of judgment - **Mt 12:36**
 - b. We will be justified or condemned by our very words - **Mt 12:37**
3. Sobering thoughts, yes? For this reason...
 - a. We ought to give careful thought concerning the words we use
 - b. It is imperative that our speech be in keeping with God’s standards

[So let me ask, “**How Well Do You Talk?**” There are certainly many....]

I. DIFFERENT TYPES OF TALKERS

A. THE IRREVERENT...

1. Who use the Lord’s name in vain - **Exo 20:7**
 2. That is, without an attitude of sincere respect
 3. One can be guilty of this in two ways:
 - a. Using the Lord’s name in swearing or cursing
 - b. Using vain repetitions of His name carelessly
 - c. Applies also to the name of Jesus, for His name is to be held in honor - **Php 2:9-11**
- **Common in everyday speech, especially in entertainment**

B. THE EVIL...

1. Speaking words that are evil - **1Pe 3:10**
 - a. Lying words - **Pr 6:19**
 - b. Deceitful words - **Ro 16:18**
 - c. Filthy words - **Ep 5:4**
 2. Speaking evil of others - **1Co 6:9-10** (revilers)
 - a. Those in authority - **Exo 22:28; Jude 8**
 - b. Those around us - **Mt 5:21-22**
- **Common in everyday speech, especially in business and politics**

C. THE CARELESS...

1. The overuse of words
 - a. Speaking too often - **Jm 1:26; Pr 10:19**
 - b. Speaking too hastily - **Pr 29:20; cf. Jm 1:19**
2. The misuse of words
 - a. Flattery - **Ps 12:1-4; cf. Ro 16:18**

- b. Rash oaths - **Mt 5:33-37; Jm 5:12**
 - c. Unwholesome words - **Ep 4:29**
 - 3. Including euphemisms
 - a. An inoffensive expression substituted for one considered offensive
 - b. Some examples (darn, shoot, gosh, gee)
 - c. What is wrong with such expressions?
 - 1) They mean the same thing as the more offensive words
 - 2) It is the same wrongful emotions behind the euphemism or its equivalent
 - 3) They reflect an attitude contrary to the spirit of Christian conduct - cf. **Ep 4:31-32**
- **Common in everyday speech, even among many Christians**

E. THE GRACIOUS...

- 1. Whose speech leads to edification
 - a. That which encourages and builds up - **Ep 4:29**
 - b. That which extends grace to others - cf. **Col 4:6**
 - 2. Whose speech expresses thankfulness
 - a. Which is fitting saints - **Ep 5:3-4**
 - b. An attitude of gratitude befits saints - **Col 1:12; 2:7; 3:15,17; 4:2**
 - c. Not befitting saints is complaining - **Php 2:14**
- **Uncommon in everyday speech, but should be common among Christians!**

[Why aspire to become the gracious talkers God wants us to be? Besides being judged by our words in the day of judgment (**Mt 12:36-37**), consider some more reasons for the...]

II. IMPORTANCE OF PROPER TALKING

A. WORDS REVEAL OUR HEARTS...

- 1. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks - **Mt 12:34**
 - 2. Speech reveals the sort of treasure stored in our heart - **Mt 12:35**
- **Have you considered what your words reveal about you?**

B. WORDS OFTEN HURT OTHERS...

- 1. Lying and flattery can be destructive - **Pr 26:28**
 - 2. Gossip creates strife, destroys friendships - **Pr 16:27-28; 17:9**
 - 3. Neighborly relations can be destroyed - **Pr 11:9**
 - 4. The tongue can indeed be a destructive fire and a powerful poison - **Jm 3:5-8**
- **Contra the childhood ditty, "Sticks and stones...", words can hurt!**

C. WORDS CAN BLESS OTHERS....

- 1. By cooling down heated conversations - **Pr 15:1**
 - 2. By comforting the anxious - **Pr 12:25; 16:24**
 - 3. By delighting those who hear - **Pr 15:4,23; 25:11**
 - 3. By offering grace to the hearers - **Ep 4:29; Col 4:6**
- **Do our words impart grace to the hearers?**

[The potential for much harm but also much good should encourage us to take our speech seriously. With that in mind, here are some...]

III. STEPS TO BETTER TALKING

A. GUARD YOUR HEART...

1. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." - **Mt 12:34-35**
2. "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life." - **Pr 4:23**
3. "The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips." - **Pr 16:23**
4. As often said today, "Garbage in, garbage out."
-- **Be careful what you allow into your heart and mind**

B. GUARD YOUR LIPS...

1. "He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction." - **Pr 13:3**
2. "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles." - **Pr 21:23**
3. "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth..." - **Ep 4:29**
-- **Be careful what you allow to come out of your mouth**

C. THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK...

1. "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil." - **Pr 15:28**
2. "Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another." - **Napoleon Hill**
3. "Think before you speak. You might need to remember what you said." - **Rain Bojangles**
-- **Give thought as to the consequences of what you say before you say it**

D. PRAY ABOUT YOUR SPEECH...

1. "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips." - **Ps 141:3**
2. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer." - **Ps 19:14**
-- **Pray that the Lord help you to speak with grace and kindness to others**

CONCLUSION

1. We should never forget the power of speech...
 - a. To hurt others, to hurt ourselves
 - b. To bless others, to bring glory to God
2. As we examine our spiritual well-being...
 - a. Let us not only give attention to how well we **hear, read, pray, and sing**
 - b. But let us also give prayerful attention to how well we **talk**

May the prayer of David be our own...

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. - Psalms 19:14*

Next in our "Spiritual Wellness" checkup, we shall ask "How Well Do You Give?"...

Spiritual Wellness

How Well Do You Give?

INTRODUCTION

1. In this series entitled “**Spiritual Wellness**”...
 - a. We are examining our spiritual wellness in regards to serving God
 - b. A checkup which has included **hearing, reading, praying, singing and talking**
 - c. Now we shall examine the matter of **giving**
2. Jesus often taught on the subject of giving...
 - a. In the course of a sermon - e.g., **Lk 6:38**
 - b. When the occasion called for it - e.g., **Lk 21:1-4**

[He spoke of the blessedness of giving (**Ac 20:35**). That we might experience such blessedness, let us raise the question, “**How Well Do You Give?**” There are certainly...]

I. DIFFERENT TYPES OF GIVERS

A. THOSE WHO GIVE RARELY...

1. Because of greed and covetousness
 2. Who hurt themselves by their stinginess - **Pr 14:21; 19:17**
- **Selfish in not giving, but hurting self by not giving**

B. THOSE WHO GIVE BEGRUDGINGLY...

1. Only out of a sense of obligation or duty
 2. If done begrudgingly, it matters not how much one gives - **2Co 9:7**
- **Such giving may benefit others, but it does not benefit oneself**

C. THOSE WHO GIVE GRACIOUSLY...

1. Sacrificially - **2Co 8:1-3**
 2. Joyfully - **2Co 8:2**
 3. Freely - **2Co 8:3**
 4. Persistently - **2Co 8:4**
 5. Who first give themselves to the Lord - **2Co 8:5**
- **Such giving is indicative of God’s grace at work in both giver and recipient**

[As we consider the different types of givers, we can appreciate...]

II. IMPORTANCE OF PROPER GIVING

A. GOD BLESSES THE GIVER...

1. It is more blessed to give than to receive - **Ac 20:35**
 2. The Lord blesses those who give - **Ps 41:1-3; Pr 19:17**
 3. The grace of God is at work in those who give - **2Co 8:1-2,6-7; 9:8,14**
- **Giving blesses the giver more than the recipient!**

B. GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER...

1. As Paul reminded the Corinthians - **2Co 9:7**
 2. A cheerful giver therefore need not worry - **Mt 6:30-33**
 3. For God watches over those whom He loves - cf. **Lk 12:6-7**
- **Giving cheerfully makes one a recipient of God's care and love!**

C. GOD PROVIDES SEED FOR THE SOWER...

1. Those who sow bountifully will reap bountifully - **2Co 9:6**
 2. Not for personal consumption - **2Co 9:8-9**
 - a. But to have 'all sufficiency in all things'
 - b. But to have 'an abundance for every good work'
 - c. As confirmed by a quote from Psalms - cf. **Ps 112:5-9**
 3. To multiply the seed for even more good - **2Co 9:10-11a**
 - a. To 'increase the fruits of your righteousness'
 - b. To be 'enriched for all liberality'
- **Giving liberally will be blessed to give even more liberally!**

D. GOD IS PRAISED BY GIVING...

1. Thanksgiving is offered by those whose needs are supplied - **2Co 9:11-12**
 2. Glory is given to God for His grace in the lives of the givers - **2Co 9:13-15**
- **Giving liberally leads to God being praised liberally!**

E. BROTHERLY LOVE IS INCREASED BY GIVING...

1. By brethren who witness God's grace in the givers - **2Co 9:14**
 2. Causing them to love and long for their brethren - e.g., **Php 1:3-8**
- **Giving liberally strengthens the bonds of brotherly love!**

[We certainly have good reasons to give, and examples like the Macedonians inspiring us to give. Finally, some quick thoughts on...]

III. BECOMING BETTER GIVERS

A. THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO GIVE...

1. Giving is not limited to money
 2. God may empower us to give in other ways - **1Pe 4:10-11**
 - a. Our talents to teach or serve
 - b. Our time can be a great gift
 3. Whatever our abilities and opportunities...
 - a. We are stewards of the manifold grace of God
 - b. We should minister our gifts to one another
 - c. We should do so with the ability God supplies
- **However you give, let it truly reflect God's grace in you!**

B. PLANNED GIVING LEADS TO CHEERFUL GIVING...

1. Purposeful giving is the key to giving cheerfully - cf. **2Co 9:7**
2. One is less likely to give 'grudgingly or of necessity'
 - a. Because they have already set aside what they want to give
 - b. They are not caught off guard when someone asks them to give
3. This is how Paul instructed the Corinthians in their giving

- a. To lay by in store on the first day of the week - cf. **1Co 16:1-4**
 - b. To prepare their gift beforehand, so the resources were ready - cf. **2Co 9:5**
 4. An early Christian apologist wrote of how slaves were able to give cheerfully through purposeful planning: “And if there is any that is a slave or a poor man, they fast two or three days and what they were going to set before themselves they send to them (Christians in prison), considering themselves to give good cheer even as they were called to give good cheer.” - **Aristides, Apology 15**
- **So plan your giving if you wish to give cheerfully!**

C. SUGGESTIONS FOR GIVING...

1. Plan your giving to help the needy
 - a. We saw where Paul instructed planned giving to produce cheerful giving
 - b. As you prosper, set so much aside for individual benevolence
 - c. Start a separate account into which you put aside a certain amount each pay period
 - d. Or send that amount to some charitable organization
 2. Plan the use of your talents and time
 - a. Don't wait till someone asks you for help on the spur of the moment
 - b. Look at your schedule, and budget your time to offer your abilities (e.g., teaching)
 3. Give to be seen of God, not man - **Mt 6:1-4**
 - a. Like prayer and fasting, giving should be done to please God, not man
 - b. Through planned, frequent giving, it soon becomes second nature to which we give little thought
- **It is much easier and more blessed to give when you plan to give!**

CONCLUSION

1. Giving can be an expression of true spirituality...
 - a. As seen in the case of the Macedonians - **2Co 8:1**
 - b. As seen in the example of Jesus Himself - **2Co 8:9**
2. As we give of our money, our time, our talents...
 - a. Let us be careful that we be **gracious** givers
 - b. Motivated by the **grace** of God in our lives

So that however we give, we might be able to say as did the apostle Paul:

...by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

- 1Co 15:10

Next in our “**Spiritual Wellness**” checkup, we shall ask “**How Well Do You Love?**”...

Spiritual Wellness

How Well Do You Love?

INTRODUCTION

1. We have been examining our spiritual wellness in regards to serving God...
 - b. Our checkup has included **hearing, reading, praying, singing, talking, and giving**
 - c. Now we shall examine the matter of **loving**
2. Jesus spoke of love in mentioning the two greatest commandments of the Law...
 - a. The love of God - **Mt 22:34-38**
 - b. The love of neighbor - **Mt 22:39-40**

[He taught many other things related to love. So let us ask, “**How Well Do You Love?**” There are certainly...]

I. DIFFERENT KINDS OF LOVERS

A. THOSE WHO ARE LOVED FIRST...

1. People who love, but only in response to love shown toward them
 2. They are willing to love, but others must take the initiative
- **Many base their relationships on this kind of love**

B. THOSE WHO ARE LOVED IN RETURN...

1. Some may take the initiative, but continue their love only when reciprocated
 2. Jesus observed this kind of love among sinners - **Lk 6:32**
- **Many only show love if it is a two-way street**

C. THOSE WHO LOVE REGARDLESS...

1. Who take the initiative, and persist even when not reciprocated
 2. Jesus commanded this kind of love - **Lk 6:35**
- **Rare among men, but required of Jesus' disciples!**

[Why would Jesus demand that we love others regardless, even those who are our enemies...?]

II. IMPORTANCE OF PROPER LOVING

A. THE GREATEST OF COMMANDMENTS...

1. As we saw earlier, the two greatest commands of the Law - **Mt 22:34-40**
 2. As Paul wrote often, loving your neighbor fulfills the Law - **Ro 13:8-10; Ga 5:14**
 3. As James described it, it is the “royal law” - **Jm 2:8**
- **Nothing surpasses love when it comes to obeying God!**

B. THE MARK OF TRUE SPIRITUALITY...

1. That we have passed from death to life - **1Jn 3:14**
2. That we are born of God - **1Jn 4:7-8**
3. That we are the disciples of Christ - **Jn 13:34-35**

-- **Nothing surpasses love when it comes to true spirituality!**

C. THE GLUE OF RELATIONSHIPS...

1. Friendships depend on love - **1Sa 18:1**
 2. Families depend on love - **Ep 5:25,28; Tit 2:4**
 3. Churches depend on love - **Php 2:1-2; Col 3:14**
- **Nothing surpasses love when it comes to binding people together!**

[Since the right kind of love is so important in our relationship with God and others, how can we excel in this virtue...?]

III. BECOMING BETTER LOVERS

A. LET GOD TEACH YOU...

1. Just as the Thessalonians were taught of God - **1Th 4:9-10**
 2. God loves by giving that which is most precious to Him - **Jn 3:16**
 3. God loves before He is loved - **1Jn 4:9-10; Ro 5:8,10**
- **Let the Father be our role model when it comes to love**

B. LET JESUS TEACH YOU...

1. Jesus would have us love one another as He loved us - **Jn 13:34**
 2. He certainly demonstrated the full measure of love - **Jn 15:13; 1Jn 3:16**
 3. Paul encourages us to emulate Christ's love - **Ep 5:1-2,25**
- **Let the Son be our mentor when it comes to love**

C. LET THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACH YOU...

1. Who through Paul taught the necessity of love - **1Co 13:1-3**
 2. Who taught the meaning of love - **1Co 13:4-8**
 3. Who taught the permanency of love - **1Co 13:9-12**
 4. Who taught the preeminence of love - **1Co 13:13**
- **Let the Holy Spirit be our instructor when it comes to love**

CONCLUSION

1. Who can deny the importance of **love** to our spiritual well-being...?
 - a. It is evidence of **spiritual regeneration**
 - b. It is necessary to **spiritual happiness**
2. Let us therefore make sure that our love...
 - a. Is not carnal, self-centered
 - b. But is spiritual, God-centered and other-centered

The best way we can ensure this is true in our lives, is to love as Christ loved us:

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. - Ep 5:1-2

Finally in our “**Spiritual Wellness**” checkup, we shall ask “**How Well Do You Hope?**”...

Spiritual Wellness

How Well Do You Hope?

INTRODUCTION

1. Our checkup regarding spiritual wellness has asked, “**How Well Do You...**”
 - a. Hear? e. Talk?
 - b. Read? f. Give?
 - c. Pray? g. Love?
 - d. Sing?

2. Finally, we ask “**How Well Do You Hope...?**”
 - a. From the Greek, **elpis**, which means “favorable and confident expectation”
 - b. A popular definition: desire plus expectation of the unseen - cf. **Ro 8:24-25**

[Hope is an important aspect of what it means to be a Christian (cf. **1Co 13:13; 1Th 1:3**). The degree of hope one has reveals much about the state of their spiritual wellness...]

I. DEGREES OF HOPE

A. THOSE WITH NO HOPE...

1. Such as the Gentiles without God - **Ep 2:12**
2. Who sorrow greatly over the loss of loved ones - **1Th 4:13**
- **Which describes many in the world today**

B. THOSE WITH LIVING HOPE...

1. Such as those in Christ - **1Pe 1:3-5**
2. Who have been given good hope by grace - **2Th 2:16**
3. Enabling them to rejoice in hope - **Ro 12:12**
- **Which ought to describe every Christian today**

C. THOSE WITH LITTLE HOPE...

1. Who may actually have reason to hope
2. But rarely think about their hope
3. Because they are weighed down with worldliness and worldly cares - **Lk 21:34**
- **Which sadly describes many Christians today**

[Yet just as faith and love are critical to our spiritual well-being, so also is our hope...]

II. IMPORTANCE OF HOPE

A. FOR MOTIVATION...

1. We have the hope of one day being like Jesus - **1Jn 3:2**
2. This hope serves to motivate one to purify oneself - **1Jn 3:3**; cf. **2Co 7:1**
- **Without a vibrant hope, we have little or no motivation to grow spiritually**

B. FOR STRENGTH...

1. Hope produces patience (endurance) - **1Th 1:3**
2. Hope leads to eagerly waiting for that which is come - **Ro 8:24-25**
- **Without a vibrant hope, we have little or no strength to persevere to the end**

C. FOR JOY...

1. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God - **Ro 5:2**
2. Such joyful hope leads to patience in tribulation - cf. **Ro 12:12**
- **Without a vibrant hope, our Christian lives are joyless, sometimes filled with despair**

[Since hope is so important to our spiritual well-being, what can we do to increase our hope...?]

III. INCREASING OUR HOPE

A. BY READING THE SCRIPTURES...

1. The Scriptures are intended to produce hope - **Ro 15:4**
2. Paul had reference to the OT, how much more true regarding the NT - e.g., **1Pe 1:3-5**
- **Just as faith comes by the Word of God, so hope comes by the Word of God!**

B. BY FOCUSING ON THE GRACE TO COME...

1. Resting our hope fully on the grace to come when Jesus returns - **1Pe 1:13**
2. What is the grace to be brought to us when He comes?
 - a. The resurrection from the dead - **1Co 15:50-58; 1Th 4:13-18**
 - b. The revealing of our glory together with Christ - **Col 3:4**
 - c. The heavenly city whose builder is God - **He 11:10,16; 13:14**
 - d. Which includes a new heavens and new earth - **2Pe 3:13-14; cf. Re 21:1-7,10-11**
 - e. With access to the water of life and tree of life in the presence of God - **Re 22:1-5**
- **Rest our hope fully on the grace to come by contemplating it often!**

CONCLUSION

1. Our spiritual health is reflected by the quality of our hope...
 - a. Do we possess a favorable and confident expectation of things to come?
 - b. Does our hope for the future look beyond the difficulties and end of this life?
2. God and Jesus has given us every reason to have a vibrant hope, but that is affected by...

a. How well we hear	e. How well we talk
b. How well we read	f. How well we give
c. How well we pray	g. How well we love
d. How well we sing	h. How well we hope

As we conclude this series, I do so with these two prayers of the apostle Paul that certainly relate to **spiritual wellness...**

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. - Ro 15:13

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1Th 5:23