

WISDOM UNIVERSITY

PROVERBS 4

SPIRITUAL HEALTH CHECK-UP



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

Doctors encourage all of us to get regular health-check-ups, especially those of us who are older.

Despite the proven benefits of such regular check-ups many of us are very reluctant to get them.

Same goes for spiritual health check-ups. Yet, some of us are even more reluctant to get a spiritual health check-up than a physical check up.

Solution

Let me try to motivate you to undergo regular spiritual health check-ups with Dr Wisdom in Proverbs chapter 4.

CONTEXT

Chapters 1-3 have been all about Solomon trying to persuade his children to enroll in Wisdom University. Chapter four assumes that he has been successful and that the son is now entering the school. As he does so, the father pleads with his son to undergo a regular spiritual check-up for his continued health in the school (4:1, 10, 20)



**Why should I have a spiritual check-up?
Because they are so helpful.**



1. SPIRITUAL HEALTH CHECKS ARE HELPFUL

We'll take a look at eight benefits of getting regular spiritual health check-ups and then, by way of application, we'll demolish some of the ridiculous reasons we use to refuse this. Here, though, are eight benefits of spiritual health check-ups.

- Reduced risk of getting spiritually sick
- Early detection of spiritual problems
- Increased chances of successful interventions
- Monitor existing conditions to prevent complications
- Reduced spiritual costs
- Longer and livelier spiritual life
- Stop behaviors that are damaging spiritual health
- Reminder of the importance of healthy spirituality

APPLICATION

Joe was in his mid-forties and hadn't been to see his doctor for many years despite his wife, Lisa, repeatedly urging him to do so. One hot summer day, Joe had a bit of chest pain while working in the yard. Lisa saw him holding his chest and rushed out to see if he was OK. He was a bit breathless, but in a few minutes told Lisa he was feeling better and started digging again.

Lisa: Stop, you must go to the doctor and get a check up

Joe: I don't have the time.

Lisa: But if you don't take the time now, you may have no time left.

Joe: But the questions and examinations are uncomfortable.

Lisa: Maybe, but greater discomfort lies ahead if you don't do it.

Joe: But, I'd rather not know anything is wrong.

Lisa: You're crazy. Not knowing something is wrong just delays finding out.

Joe: But I feel fine now.

Lisa: Many people feel fine but they are far from fine and they will feel terrible eventually.

Joe: But, I don't have a doctor.

Lisa: Joe, don't be stupid. There are five doctors within a mile of us.

Joe: But, doctors just want to make money.

Lisa: Don't be ridiculous. They care for you and want your good.

Joe: But, we can't afford it.

Lisa: We can't afford not to. Anyway, under our plan everyone can get a free annual check-up.

Joe: But, but, but.....OK, I'll do it for you.

Now re-read this, substituting Dr Wisdom for Lisa, your own name for Joe, and a spiritual check-up for a physical. Any objections left? You've got multiple good reasons to get a spiritual check up and only ridiculous reasons to refuse one.

SPIRITUAL CHECK-UPS MAKE YOU FEEL SICK
BUT THEY'RE NEEDED TO MAKE YOU WELL.



**OK, but what kind of health check should I get?
Get the best one, which is an extensive one.**



2. SPIRITUAL HEALTH CHECKS ARE EXTENSIVE

If we're going to get a check-up, we might as well get a good and thorough one, and that's what we have here. Look at how many areas are examined.

Retentive memory: "Let your heart retain my words...do not forget the words of my mouth" (4-5).

Wise love: Love Wisdom, and she'll keep you, promote you, garland you, and glorify you" (6-9).

Receptive ears: "Hear, my son, and receive my sayings" (10, 20).

Safe feet: "When you walk, your steps won't be hindered, when you run, you won't stumble" (12).

Sound sleep: Unlike the wicked who "do not sleep unless they have done evil, and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall" (16).

Peaceful diet: Contrast with wicked who "eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence" (17).

Bright lifestyle: "The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day" (18).

Truthful mouth: "Put away a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you" (24).

Straight eyes: "Let your eyes look straight ahead" (25; Ps. 119:37; 101:3; Job 31:1).

Clear purpose: "Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil" (26-27).

APPLICATION

"Why are you examining my eyes, and my ears, and my nose, and everything, when it's a heart problem?" Joe protested to Dr Green. "Because you're not a doctor and therefore you're not in the best position to judge what's wrong with you," Dr Green explained. He went on, "Even if it is primarily a heart problem, we need to look at the whole you. There's no point in focusing on the heart if we leave other areas unexamined and miss other problems."

How thorough are your spiritual health checks? Do you hold any parts of your life back from examination? Why? Ask God to help you submit every part of your life to Dr. Wisdom for examination. Don't hold anything back. Dr Wisdom wants to make you whole in every way.

IF YOU WANT TO BE A HOLY CHRISTIAN
YOU MUST BE WHOLLY EXAMINED



That certainly covers a lot of area. But what about my inside?
This check-up focuses on the inside too.



3. SPIRITUAL HEALTH CHECKS ARE INTENSIVE

If you were alert, you might have noticed that I missed out the most important part of the spiritual health check. What was it? "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (23). The Proverbs expert Kenneth Kitchen said, "If there were one verse I could give to Christian young people, it would be this one. Nothing is more essential than guarding the heart." While we must be extensive in our check-up, we must also be intensive. We not only go wide, but deep. Why?

The heart is the most **important** possession you have, because it is the inner you, the real you, the core you. It is the most **valuable** possession, because it is the immortal part, the part that never dies and the part that can unite and commune with God. It is the most **influential** possession, because it determines who you are, what you do, and where you go (Matt. 12:34b-35; Mark 7:21-23; John 7:38). The heart is your CPU, your HQ, your Ground Zero. It is far more influential on our happiness than our circumstances.

Guard it **first** and **most and always**. Guard it from attacks from **outside** and the treacherous citizens **inside**. Guard it from **hardening** and **weakening**. Guard it by **examining** it. Guard it by **cultivating** it. Guard it by **tuning** it. Guard it by **uniting** it. Guard it by seeking **regeneration**.

APPLICATION

"Well Joe, you definitely have a heart problem. The good news is that it can be treated and we'll begin that today. However, you will have to watch out for certain times that pose special risk to the health of your heart. Keep a special watch for stress at work, conflict at home, yard work on a hot day, hill-climbing, and playing soccer like a 20-year-old!" By now Joe was totally sober and deadly serious about his life. He was listening to the Doctor Green as he had never listened before and was also listening to his own body carefully too.


John Flavel was also a skillful heart doctor. In his little book on Proverbs 4:23, *Keeping the Heart: Maintain your Love for God*, he highlighted special seasons of special heart challenges which required special heart guarding:

Times

- Prosperity
- Adversity
- Persecution
- Danger
- Poverty
- Trials
- Temptation
- Doubting
- Dying

Dangers

- Proud heart
- Rebellious heart
- Weak heart
- Fearful heart
- Independent heart
- Impatient heart
- Wandering heart
- Despairing heart
- Earthly heart

 Let's worship Dr Wisdom, not just because he is such a good doctor, but because as the Lord Jesus, he had a perfect bill of health. And when I say perfect, I'm talking about his spiritual health. Inside and outside he was holy and healthy. Because of that we can look forward to future perfect health of soul and body like him.

YOU CANNOT GUARD YOUR HEART FOR GOD,
UNLESS YOU'VE GIVEN YOUR HEART TO GOD



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: Heavenly Doctor, use Proverbs 4 to give me a spiritual check-up so that I can get necessary treatment and improve my spiritual health.

FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [12 Helps for a Hard Heart](#) by Mike Leake
- [A Call to Self-Examination](#) (Ligonier)
- [A Method of Self-Examination](#) by Mark Johnston

Books

- [Keeping the Heart: Maintain your Love for God](#) by John Flavel
- [With All Your Heart: Orienting Your Mind, Desires, and Will toward Christ](#) by Craig Troxel
- [An Honest and Well-Experienced Heart: The Piety of John Flavel](#) by Adam Embry
- [Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sufferers and Sinners](#) by Dane Ortlund.

Discussion Questions

1. What excuses do you use to put off a spiritual health check? Why?
2. Using the checklist of symptoms on page four, which areas are you concerned about and what will you do about it?
3. Which areas of your life do you hold back from examination?
4. How would you describe the state of your heart today?
5. Why do you think Kitchen described Proverbs 4:23 as the one verse he would give to young people?
6. What seasons do you find good for heart-health and bad for heart-health?
7. Describe Jesus's heart.

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SPIRITUAL HEALTH CHECK-UP

"IF THERE WERE ONE VERSE I COULD GIVE TO CHRISTIAN YOUNG PEOPLE, IT WOULD BE PROVERBS 4:23. NOTHING IS MORE ESSENTIAL THAN GUARDING THE HEART"
KENNETH KITCHEN



No regular check-ups

Biblical answer?



Spiritual health check-ups are helpful

- Reduce risk of sickness
- Early detection
- Improved outcomes
- Monitor conditions
- Increase lifespan
- Stop bad choices

SPIRITUAL CHECK-UPS MAY MAKE YOU FEEL SICK, BUT THEY'RE NEEDED TO MAKE YOU WELL

What kind of check-up?



Spiritual health check-ups are extensive

- Memory
- Love
- Feet
- Sleep
- Diet
- Lifestyle
- Mouth
- Eyes
- Purpose

IF YOU WANT TO BE A HOLY CHRISTIAN YOU MUST BE WHOLLY EXAMINED

Inside?



Spiritual health check-ups are intensive

- The heart is important
- The heart is valuable
- The heart is influential

YOU CANNOT GUARD YOUR HEART FOR GOD, UNLESS YOU'VE GIVEN YOUR HEART TO GOD

Action?



Get regular spiritual check-up to improve quantity and quality of spiritual life

