

Several years back, Donald Whitney wrote *Ten Questions To Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*. Due to the importance of this topic and its impact to our spiritual lives, and as an additional takeaway, I want us to take just a few minutes to consider these questions.

Chapter One: Do You Thirst for God?

Meditate on Scripture. Note that we are to “meditate,” not merely read. Many languishing souls are assiduous Bible readers. Without the addition of meditation, warned the great man of prayer and faith George Müller, “the simple reading of the Word of God” can become information that “only passes through our minds, just as water passes through a pipe.”

Pray through Scripture. After you read through a section of Scripture, pray through part of that same passage. Whether you read one or many chapters of the Bible per day, afterward choose a portion of your reading and, verse by verse, let the words of God become the wings of your words to Him.

Read thirst-making writers. After the God-breathed words of the Bible, read the time-tested works of those Christian writers who wrote with a thirst-making pen. If you can find the collection of Puritan prayers and devotions called *The Valley of Vision*[18] you will be blessed by reading it meditatively. Don't neglect John Bunyan's classic *Pilgrim's Progress*. Read the more devotional pieces of Puritan writers such as John Owen, Richard Sibbes, Thomas Brooks, John Flavel, and Thomas Watson. Enjoy the books and sermons of Jonathan Edwards and of Charles Spurgeon for they will be treasured as long as the church is on the earth. For more recent publications, A. W. Tozer's small books are both convicting and exhilarating; John Piper's writings are a burning blend of spirit and truth.

Chapter Two: Are You Governed Increasingly by God's Word?

Many professing Christians bump along from Sunday to Sunday, year to year, with no recollection of changes in beliefs or practices as a result of new discoveries in the Word. They would tell you they believe the same as they did years ago. They carry a Bible to church, but they couldn't tell you the last time their daily life was altered by it. They may even be daily Bible readers, and they have heard one or more sermons per week for years. Yet with all their exposure to the Bible, generally its inspired words leave no more imprint upon their minds than spoken words do upon the air. It could never be said of them that they deliberately govern their daily lives by God's Word.

Deepen your desire for God's Word.

Do you “desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2: 2)? Without spiritual food there is no spiritual growth.

Make time for God's Word.

If you can't do this, you aren't dependent on Scripture—and never will be. Just as we schedule times to eat our physical food, so we must do the same for our spiritual food.

Read the Bible daily and do not close it until you know at least one thing God would have you do in response to your reading. This response might involve something new to believe, a habit to begin or break, a prayer to offer, a conversation to initiate, a letter or E-mail to send, a phone call to make, a spiritual discipline to practice, or something else. Read the Bible for application, not merely for information.

List at least five areas you have not recently considered from a biblical perspective. Then search the Scriptures and prayerfully consider one area each day for the next five days. Here are five major areas or segments of life: church, discipleship, family, money, and work.

Train yourself to ask “How does the Bible speak to this?” To do this is a manifestation of love for God and love for His will. This is to see wisdom and sweetness in the ways of God. God made us to be governed by His Spirit through His Word. Let us learn to find His glory and our joy by living in accordance with His loving design.

Chapter Three: Are You More Loving?

JESUS SAID THAT LOVE IS THE clearest mark of a Christian. “A new commandment I give to you,” He announced in John 13: 34-35, “that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” If you are growing in your love for others—especially in your love for Christians—then you are growing as a Christian.

Chapter Four: Are You More Sensitive to God's Presence?

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU THOUGHT, “GOD IS HERE”?

How often are you aware of the presence of God? If we take the teaching of the Bible seriously, perception of the presence of God should not be an occasional experience. I do not mean that we should frequently feel a supernatural presence, for that can be extremely unreliable. Nevertheless, it should not be unusual for us, wherever we are, to recognize that “God is here.” As we grow closer to Him, generally speaking, we should discern His immanence more readily and more often.

Chapter Five: Do You Have a Growing Concern for the Spiritual and Temporal Needs of Others?

Christianity is a religion of concern for others. Among what are called the “great religions of the world,” Christianity has no parallel when it comes to demonstrating concern for people and for their needs. Whether the needs are temporal or eternal, felt or unperceived, no other religion is known for its love and compassion, not only for those within its ranks, but particularly toward those outside its circle of adherents.

Meeting needs is the way of Jesus. And those following Jesus can trace their progress toward His likeness by tracking their growth in their concern for the spiritual and temporal needs of others.

Chapter Six: Do You Delight in the Bride of Christ?

Delighting in Christ's people is normal, healthy Christianity. So permit me to ask you this question to help you diagnose your spiritual health: Do you delight in the bride of Jesus Christ? Do you take pleasure in those who bring pleasure to Him?

In one sense I'm asking if you delight in the church as a whole, not in each Christian in particular. After all, the bride of Christ is the church, not individual Christians.

And yet, although Jesus' joy is in one bride, she is made of millions of individual Christians with faces and names, including those of people where you live. It would be very strange to say that you love Christ's church but dislike the people in her.

In short, delighting in “the saints who are in the earth” means finding irresistible joy in the presence and the ministry of Christ's people, both in their congregational form and as individuals. Does this describe you?

Chapter Seven: Are the Spiritual Disciplines Increasingly Important to You?

Nothing contributes to the growth of spiritual heat and light more than the persevering practice of the Christian spiritual disciplines. The disciplines are the bellows and the iron poker—tools in God's hands through which He stokes and blows upon the eternal fire He Himself ignites in His people.

Devote yourself more to the pursuit of Christlikeness and the enjoyment of God through the spiritual disciplines than to the pursuit of efficiency and the completion of to-do lists.

Chapter Eight: Do You Still Grieve over Sin?

The fact that there is a struggle with sin, and a sense of grief because of sin, is good. Unbelievers have no such struggles or griefs. They may disappoint themselves for not living up to their own standards or to the standard of someone they respect. But they do not agonize over being unholy before God—a God who is holy and who calls them to holiness (see 1 Peter 1: 15). As A. W. Pink explained, “It is not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors [of faith].”

There are two ways to evaluate your life—proximity to the ideal or progress toward it. You can look at what you ought to be—Christlike—and be discouraged because you are so far from it. Too much measuring yourself by the perfection of Jesus will dishearten you. Too little can breed spiritual pride. But you can also look at how far by God’s grace you’ve come, and be hopeful. In the life of the growing Christian, there are times for both.

Chapter Nine: Are You a Quicker Forgiver?

The testimony of Martyn Lloyd-Jones should be the heartcry of every Christian: “I say to the glory of God and in utter humility that whenever I see myself before God and realize even something of what my blessed Lord has done for me, I am ready to forgive anybody anything.”

Notice Lloyd-Jones’ phrase, “I am ready to forgive anybody anything”.

What Christians should always do, as Jesus exemplified in His prayer, is be ready to forgive. And then, when forgiveness is sought, forgiveness can be extended.

Do you love forgiveness? Many professing Christians are too easily offended. Some almost seem to take pride in their ability to hold a grudge or in their refusal to humble themselves or in their resistance to seeking or extending forgiveness. True Christians love forgiveness. Because of God’s forgiveness of them, they think it beautiful and Godlike to give or get forgiveness. That’s why the ready willingness to forgive is such a clear mark of growth in godliness. As the godly and persecuted fifth-century preacher John Chrysostom concluded, “Nothing causes us to so nearly resemble God as the forgiveness of injuries.”

Chapter Ten: Do You Yearn for Heaven and to Be with Jesus?

The nearer I get to my destination the more I anticipate it. The closer my longing comes to reality the more I think about what and who awaits me. You are nearer the end of your journey than you were when you began this book. Are your thoughts increasingly homeward nowadays? The closer he gets to his heavenly home, the growing Christian will—for the right reasons—think more about what and who awaits him in Heaven. And he will yearn.

The second coming of the Lord is not a mere curiosity or just a matter of theological deliberation for them. All those who are sincerely longing to see a holy Christ appear are growing more like Christ. How do I know? It’s because each one “purifies himself, just as He is pure.” In other words, you are in the grip of the groan. Your longings for holiness in Heaven pull you toward holiness now. You can’t just wait for holiness; you have to pursue it. As theologian J. I. Packer wrote, “The hope of a holy Heaven, to be enjoyed in the company with our holy Savior, is a potent motive to holiness now.” Do you have “this hope” to “see Him as He is”? How has it affected you? How does it cause you to purify yourself? How are you growing in Christlikeness because of your view of Christ’s return?