



Heart Risk Assessment

The Office of Congregational Development
South Georgia Conference

It's time for a Heart Risk Assessment!

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States.
- In 2014, the annual total cost of Cardiovascular Disease in the U.S. was estimated at \$351.2 billion.
- About 6.2 million American adults had heart failure between 2013-2016.

These are just a few of the latest statistics from the American Heart Association on the devastating effects of heart disease in the United States. As devastating as these statistics are, take a look at another set of statistics from the Fuller Institute of Church Growth.

- 75% of pastors report being “extremely stressed” or “highly stressed”
- 78% were forced at some point to resign from their church, most commonly because of church conflict
- 80% of pastors will not be in ministry ten years later and only a fraction make it a lifelong career
- 91% have experienced some form of burnout in ministry
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend

What if we could fight back against these statistics with a focus on heart health? Not only physical heart health but spiritual heart health?

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. - Ezekiel 36:26

God told Ezekiel He would give the nation of Israel new soft hearts. These revitalized hearts would be cleansed and whole - tuned to His direction and leading.

What if we could examine our hearts of stone and soften them once again to the prodding of His Spirit and the whisper of His still, small voice?

Use this assessment as an opportunity to examine your risk for spiritual heart disease and learn how to soften your heart to make it more open to Him.



Heart Health Tips

Use your rating in the assessment to determine which areas of heart health need improvement in order to soften your heart and make it more open to Him.

Questions 1 & 2: Complaining Frequently

Many people view their complaining as the gift of problem finding. However, the key difference between problem finding and complaining is motive. Why are you finding problems? Is it really for the betterment and improvement of *others* or is it for the betterment and improvement of *yourself*? Is it because the situation is that dire or is that all you're looking for? Does pointing out problems make you feel better than others or like you are more significant? We see what we seek – if we're looking for problems we will find them.

Heart Health Tip #1: Acknowledge the goodness around you and in others. When you're tempted to complain or point out a problem or imperfection, ask yourself the following questions:

What greatness can I find in this person or situation?

Will pointing out this problem bring others closer to Christ and to each other?

Is this problem hurting others or preventing them from living out God's purpose in their lives?

How will I feel about this problem in a week? In a month?

Are my expectations realistic?

Questions 3 & 4: Comparing with Arrogance

Comparison is a trap that can steal our joy. When we compare out of a spirit of competition, we seek to make ourselves winners and others losers. We either over-value ourselves or under-value



ourselves based on our understanding of others worth. Galatians 6:4 says, "Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else."

Heart Health Tip #2: Compare to grow, not to show.

When comparing yourself to another person, ask how you can grow, not what you can show. Allow other people's examples to inspire you to discover Christ in them in new ways and motivate you towards increased intimacy and maturity in your own spiritual walk.

Questions 5 & 6: Critical of Others' Styles

We often make the assumption that my experiences, circumstances and personal make-up should be or are the same for everyone else. This assumption leads us to be critical of others preferences and ways of operating in the world.

Heart Health Tip #3: Look and learn from others.

When you discover a difference in someone else's opinions, preferences, thoughts and feelings, press in and ask questions:

What experiences have they had that lead them to this conclusion?

How does their personality differ from mine? How does this difference lead us to form different opinions?

What can I learn about myself and others from these differing perspectives?

What might it be like to see things from a different point of view?

Questions 7 & 8: Callous to God's Work

When we can't recognize God working in and around us, we often become cynical and dismissive of His work in others as well. This often happens when we are busy working for God forgetting



that we are called to work in and with God. When we spend more time doing instead of abiding, we begin to think that God couldn't do it without us. When serving God becomes a "have to" instead of a "get to" our hearts get hard and calloused.

Heart Health Tip #4: Reignite curiosity and wonder.

To see where God is moving and become aware of what He's doing in the world, engage your sense of curiosity. Move through life expecting His presence and seeking evidence of His work. When you discover Him at work spend time in worship and amazement at what He is doing. Ask how you can join Him in His work, not how He can join you in yours.

Questions 9 & 10: Compromised morals, ethics, values

When we start to look for short cuts, justify wrong choices and no longer feel a sense of conviction when we go against our values, we are compromised in one way or the other. Even just compromising ourselves in small ways leads toward a hardened heart and makes it easier to justify more drastic departures from our beliefs in the future. Eventually we find ourselves far away from God's plan and purpose for our lives.

Heart Health Tip #5: Seek accountability.

James 5:16, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." When we are under the spell of sin and compromising behaviors, we want nothing more than to hide and tell ourselves we're not "that bad." The more we hide, the more we compromise. Conversely, when we come out of hiding into the open and reveal our struggles and sin to others, we take away the power of sin and expose it to the light. Find someone you can meet with for regular accountability and be willing to ask and receive the tough questions that will enable you to grow and thrive.



Questions 11 & 12: Chaotic with time

When we're unaware of God's purpose for our lives, are unwilling to schedule our time based on set priorities and seek the approval of others, we can find ourselves being controlled by our calendars. This causes us to lose sight of what matters most and instead jump from one task to the next, never really accomplishing what God intends for us to do. When we get in this place we often say yes to things we should be saying no to.

Heart Health Tip #6: Prioritize your life and align your

time. When you say yes to something, you say no to something else. Every "yes" has a "no." If our lives aren't aligned by our priorities, we find ourselves saying "no" to eternal investments and saying "yes" to temporary wins. Determine what's most important and make the sacrifices necessary to align your life and time.

Questions 13 & 14: Concerned about the acceptance of others

The need for acceptance and belonging is one of our basic human needs. We all need a place where we feel safe to truly be ourselves and experience love and affection from others. As Christians, while we recognize this deep need within ourselves, we cannot let our actions and choices be driven by the acceptance or approval of others. While we seek authentic community, we cannot allow ourselves to become consumed and motivated by what others will think.

Heart Health Tip #7: Seek to accept, not to be accepted.

Heart healthy followers of Christ, seek to accept others and provide a place for them to belong instead of seeking to belong themselves. When you switch your focus from gaining acceptance to offering acceptance, you welcome others into a place where they can be themselves authentically and truly be the people God created them to be.



Looking for more resources to help you grow in your leadership? Reach out! E-mail the Congregational Development team for more information:

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