

# Lenten Check-Up Challenge

## *Time for a Check-Up?*

You may get a card from your doctor or dentist reminding you that it is time (or you are overdue) for a check-up of some sort. Dentists suggest twice a year for cleaning, with x-rays one of those visits for a 'deeper' view of what is going on. Doctors want you there at least once a year. But how often should we do a spiritual check-up? When was the last time you *had* a spiritual check-up?

If you had a check-up, have you grown since that time? How would you know, unless you took *another* check-up to compare? And if you have never had a spiritual check-up (didn't know there was such a thing) would you like to take one now? Why not? It won't cost you anything and could be the start of a life-long habit of examining and measuring your spiritual health.

Does the Bible say anything about examining ourselves, looking at our spiritual lives in any way? As a matter of fact, it does? From at least two angles—we are to examine/search ourselves and we are to ask God to search and examine our hearts and minds. In the Old Testament the prophet Jeremiah encouraged self-examination and in the New Testament the Apostle Paul does as well—

*“Let us EXAMINE our ways and test them...”* (Lamentations 3:40)

*“If we would EXAMINE (judge) ourselves, we will not be examined/judged by God.”* (1 Cor 11:31).

One Bible commentator suggests that the words 'distinguish ourselves' is a fitting translation for 'examine ourselves', and that Paul/the Scriptures are asking us to “distinguish or discern between WHAT WE ARE (a snapshot of spiritual condition at the moment) and WHAT WE OUGHT TO BE.” When we see an area of need, we can make an adjustment—repent, pray and seek to grow in that area, etc.

We are also to ask God to look at our lives, to search deeply as only His Holy Spirit can. In Psalms 139 and 62 we hear the writer say to God—

*“Search me O God and know my heart, test me and see if there is any offensive (spiritually unhealthy) way in me.”* (Ps 139:23).

*“Test me O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind.”* (Ps 62:2)

Life has so many DISTRACTIONS that work against spiritual health and growth, and against our being faithful in examining ourselves. Over the centuries people have formed communities where they sought to encourage one another to keep moving to maturity. Sometimes it was a monastery for monks, or nuns, other times it was groups of families retreating to live apart from the world (as much as they could).

For most of us today, that is not a practical solution (and may not even be the best way to grow). The local church community can be a place to grow (was designed by God to be so!). That is why WGBC has been calling itself a *Spiritual F.I.T.ness Training Center*. Spiritual F.I.T.ness is a Biblically-based concept which asks for a Spirit-led commitment.

A few years ago we built into our Mission/Purpose statement that our goal is--

**“To be a community of believers with a Spirit-led, God glorifying ministry, COMMITTED to leading persons to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and TRAINING everyone to live a spiritually F.I.T., more totally healthy LIFE!style in Christ;”**

One way to help fulfill that mission/purpose is to help people to do what the Bible asks and challenges us to do—EXAMINE our spiritual lives, and to do so on a regular basis, which is what Bible scholars say is what Paul was meaning—regular, periodic, examining of ourselves. How? Attached to this

letter you have two different spiritual check-ups that are a part of the Spiritual F.I.T.ness training program. They are designed to provide us a way to do what God asks of us. But what are they based on? How do we know what to examine? What are we checking-up on? Good question!

The first Check-up, *Spiritual F.I.T.ness Check-Up*, is based on the concept that to be spiritually fit is to be growing in godliness and maturity in the Christian faith/life—to be letting the power and love of God to be working For, In and Through our lives. For, In and Through is further broken down to include the 7 basic spiritual exercises/disciplines—Worship/Prayer/Study/Fellowship/Serving/Witnessing/Giving. Questions have been designed that have us examining/searching ourselves in these areas.

When we look at the very beginning of the church in Acts 2, we see the new converts COMMITTING or DEVOTING themselves to certain spiritual tasks—“*the apostle’s teaching (Study), fellowship...breaking of bread (Worship) and prayer.*” (Acts 2:42) Later on in Acts, we see them beginning to Serve, Witness and Give of their treasures/finances. Before we get too far into Acts there is clear teaching on what the spiritual life—the mature, godly, Christ-like Christian life is to look like. In many ways, much of the rest of the New Testament is fleshing out, or putting meat on those bones.

The *Relational Health Check-Up* is based on Mark 12, where we are told by Jesus where our love is to be directed—To God, Others and Our Own selves. Since LOVE is at the center of the Christian life, it makes sense, we feel, to take some time to EXAMINE our love toward God, others and our own selves (since poor self-love can interfere with our love of God and others, as can an unbalanced *over* self-love!).

The hope is that we would all take the time during this Lenten season to take STEP ONE toward making a COMMITMENT to Spiritual F.I.T.ness training, which is to DISCOVER, the best that we can, WHERE WE ARE now in our journey toward Christ-likeness and maturity in the faith. In many ways it is the KICK-OFF or JUMP START of our major focus on being a Spiritual F.I.T.ness Training Center. We have called it the Lenten Check-Up Challenge, but it is every bit as much an OPPORTUNITY to jump start your own life-long commitment to spiritual growth that is *regularly* examined and measured by a biblically-based standard. There are two sets of check-ups so you can do it again after the Lenten season.

What is STEP TWO? Just like a physical fitness trainer will go over your initial exam and then help you to design SPECIFIC goals for you, so too, Pastors Jean Marie and Tony will be your Spiritual F.I.T.ness trainers to help you interpret the results, whether individually or in a group meeting. But first... Here is a suggested plan on how to proceed—

1. Read back through this letter slowly, focusing on the Scriptures listed and considering carefully the case that is being made for self-examination as well as for the concept of Spiritual F.I.T.ness.
2. Then look over the check-ups (before answering a single question). Get a feel for what they are getting at, get an idea of what you are considering doing.
3. Then come back here to the prayer at the bottom of this page and read it through. If you feel you can pray it, then do so and then begin your journey of self-examining and of asking God to help. (*Please note*, that if you are not *moved* by the Spirit to do the check-ups, even in some small way, you may *not* be able to do them honestly and carefully. Much like the 4<sup>th</sup> step in the 12 Steps program, they are meant to be a “*Searching and fearless...inventory*”—only they are a spiritual disciplines inventory, focused on the spiritual exercises of the Christian life.

## PRAYER

“*Holy Spirit, it seems clear that the Scriptures teach me/encourage me to examine myself, and to ask you to do so, also. Therefore, with You to guide me, I will make a commitment to go through these check-ups and to answer honestly, seeking only to SEE where I am now, so that I may SEEK to grow and mature to where you want me to be. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*”

# Spiritual F.I.T.ness Check-Up

Please circle the number [0 to 4] that best fits how you would answer the question to the left. Above all else, be honest. Please pray before you begin, asking God to help you to make a correct assessment of where you are in your spiritual life. No test like this can be completely accurate, but if you read each question carefully and answer honestly, you will be able to get a fairly good picture [snap-shot] of the present state of your spiritual life.

The three categories, For, In and Through, are taken from the Spiritual F.I.T.ness model. They make up the three essential components of a healthy [FIT] spiritual life. It is a life that has the believer *growing in gratefulness* for what God has done **FOR** him/her, *opening up more* to let God work **IN** his/her life to transform it, and *allowing God* to live out His love and power more **THROUGH** his/her life. The questions relate to those three areas.

## F O R [Being grateful & thankful]

	Most of the time	Often	Sometimes	Not very much	Never
1. "I thank God for giving me life..."	4	3	2	1	0
2. "I appreciate the little things that come my way and brighten my day..."	4	3	2	1	0
3. "I thank God for the people who love me and make my life happier..."	4	3	2	1	0
4. "I am thankful to God even when times are difficult and uncertain..."	4	3	2	1	0
5. "I thank God for watching over me and keeping me and protecting me from things that could go wrong..."	4	3	2	1	0
6. "I thank God for the salvation He made possible for me..."	4	3	2	1	0
7. "I look forward to participating in public worship of God [at church, etc.]..."	4	3	2	1	0
8. "I am grateful for the lessons I learn from trials and times of failure..."	4	3	2	1	0
9. "I am grateful for the forgiveness and mercy of God..."	4	3	2	1	0
10. "Other people would say I was a grateful and thankful person..."	4	3	2	1	0

## I N [Open to change and transformation]

	Most of the time	Often	Sometimes	Not very much	Never
11. "I start my day asking God for strength to live pleasing to Him that day..."	4	3	2	1	0
12. "I ask for more patience and self-control in dealing with other people and life..."	4	3	2	1	0

## Spiritual F.I.T.ness Check-Up

<u>IN</u> [Open to change and transformation]	Most of the time	Often	Sometimes	Not very much	Never
13. "I pray for the needs of others..."	4	3	2	1	0
14. "I get help from the Bible and elsewhere about how to grow and be transformed..."	4	3	2	1	0
15. "I look out for temptations so that I can recognize and resist them..."	4	3	2	1	0
16. "I am inspired by the lives of others growing in faith & want to be like them..."	4	3	2	1	0
17. "I trust that God will take care of my needs [so I don't worry & fear]..."	4	3	2	1	0
18. "I get encouragement from talking with other believers about spiritual things..."	4	3	2	1	0
19. "I am seeking to yield more of my life over to God, and to not be so self-willed..."	4	3	2	1	0
20. "I listen and talk to God throughout the day, seeking to get closer to Him..."	4	3	2	1	0

<u>THROUGH</u> [Open to be used of God]	Most of the time	Often	Sometimes	Not very much	Never
21. "I am aware of God's seeking to touch other people's lives through me..."	4	3	2	1	0
22. "I look for opportunities to share my faith and talk of God's faithfulness..."	4	3	2	1	0
23. "I seek to give and support the work of God's Kingdom, aware that all I have has been given to me by God..."	4	3	2	1	0
24. "I actively seek to discover God's will for my life, and what gifts and abilities He has given to me..."	4	3	2	1	0
25. "I look for opportunities to 'do good' things for others, serving them..."	4	3	2	1	0

>>>> The best way to interpret your 'Check-Up' is to have a *Spiritual F.I.T.ness Trainer* go over it with you. He or she can help you focus in on specific areas [questions] that may reflect your spiritual health and fitness more than others. However, you can certainly get some idea by looking at the number of times you said 'Most of the time' and 'Often' [4's & 3's], as opposed to 'Sometimes', 'Not very much' and 'Never' [2's, 1's & 0's].

# Relational Health Check-Up

Relational Health—*“To have relationships with God, others and your own self marked by love, intimacy, unity, harmony and growth”.*

**LOVE**—“Strong affection, warm attachment, devotion; to desire actively; warm regard.” To be ‘loving’ towards.  
(Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary--WCD)

	Very little		Somewhat			Good amount			Very much	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I feel strong affection for God and am devoted to seeking a deeper connection with Him.”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I show strong affection and warm regard to others who are in my life—family, friends, neighbors, co-workers.”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I show strong affection and have feelings of warm regard, (am loving) towards myself”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**INTIMACY**—“Very close association, contact or familiarity; to make known, communicate” (WCD)  
Sharing ones innermost and deepest thoughts and feelings.

	Very little		Somewhat			Good amount			Very much	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I share my deepest, innermost thoughts and feelings with God. I feel close to Him.”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I share and make known my deepest thoughts and feelings to others in my life.”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I am familiar with (in touch with) my deepest thoughts and feelings, am very close to myself.”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**UNITY**—“Oneness. Quality or state of being as one. A condition of harmony.” (WCD) Togetherness.

	Very little		Somewhat			Good amount			Very much	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I feel a sense of oneness in my relationship to God.”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“My relationships with others are marked by oneness.”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I feel like I am ‘at one’ with myself”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**HARMONY**—“Marked by accord in sentiment {feeling} or action. Balanced relationship. Reconcile. Agreeably related.” (WCD)

	Very little		Somewhat			Good amount			Very much	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“There is harmony in my relationship with God”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“There is harmony in my relationship with others”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“There is harmony in my relationship with myself”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**GROWTH**—“To increase. A progressive development. To spring up and develop to maturity. The process of growing.” (WCD)

	Very little		Somewhat			Good amount			Very much	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“My relationship with God is growing toward maturity”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“My relationships with others are growing/maturing”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
“I am growing/maturing in my relationship with myself”	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

NOTE—On the next page you will find a way to look at your totals and are given some ‘educated’ estimates of where your ‘Relational Health’ lies at present. It is not a scientific study, but if you have answered carefully and honestly you can gain a sense of where you are. It would also help to have someone else look it over with you. T.T. 2/11

# Relational Health Check-Up

## Analyzing your responses to the check-up questions.

Remember, this check-up was not a scientifically devised instrument or tool. It was designed to help you TAKE AN INVENTORY of your present relationships with God, others and your own self. It is best to look at each question individually; something a *Total Health Encourager* can do alongside of you. However, it is by no means completely off base to use the scoring ranges below and the 'Analysis, suggestions' in order to gauge your relational health at this moment (like a snapshot).

Place your 'total' score from the five questions relating to each relationship focus (God, others and yourself) in the empty brackets to the left of the correct scoring range, then look at the 'Analysis, suggestions' to the right.

### Questions concerning your relationship to GOD:

<u>Total of scores</u>	<u>Analysis, suggestions.</u>
5-15 [ ]	Unhealthy, needs much work, ask someone for help.
16-25 [ ]	Some health, but struggling; also ask for help.
26-40 [ ]	Healthy and growing, keep SEEKING God more.
41-50 [ ]	Very good health! Others can use <i>your</i> help, SHARE with them.

### Questions concerning your relationship to OTHERS in your life:

<u>Total of scores</u>	<u>Analysis, suggestions.</u>
5-15 [ ]	Unhealthy, needs much work, ask someone for help.
16-25 [ ]	Some health, struggles somewhere; identify them, work on them.
26-40 [ ]	Healthy and growing, keep learning and maturing.
41-50 [ ]	Good health! Others can use <i>your</i> help, SHARE with them.

### Questions concerning your relationship with YOURSELF:

<u>Total of scores</u>	<u>Analysis, suggestions.</u>
5-15 [ ]	Unhealthy, needs help now! Ask someone for guidance.
16-25 [ ]	Some health, need to become a better friend to yourself! Seek help.
26-40 [ ]	Healthy and growing, keep in touch with yourself.
41-50 [ ]	Good health! You have a good friend. Help others 'befriend' themselves!

How do you feel about what you discovered from your 'check-up'? Did it just confirm what you already knew, or are you surprised at what your answers are telling you? Would you be open to exploring further the 'Total Health' model from which 'relational health' is just one component? Below is a description of the Total Health model, read it carefully and ask yourself if you could use more of what God offers us through it.

### God's Total Health Care Plan!

If you have trusted Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, then you need to make a decision to let the Holy Spirit cause the power and love of God to work *For, In and Through* you. You do this by committing to building the seven spiritual exercises of, *worship, prayer, study, fellowship, serving, witnessing and giving* into your daily/weekly routine of life.

When you do that, you will discover that you will have more *love, peace, faith, joy, courage, trust, purpose, wisdom, forgiveness and hope* in your life. These, in turn, will bring greater *emotional, mental* and even *physical health* to you, positively affecting your *personality, character and attitudes*, as well as your *thoughts, speech and actions*. That makes sense when you think about it, doesn't it? But that is not all.

The healthier you are in all of these areas, the deeper and healthier your relationships will be with *God, others and your own self*, leading those relationships to be marked by greater *love, intimacy, unity, harmony and growth*. As all of these wonderful things are happening, you will be experiencing more and more LIFE!, the LIFE! Jesus came, died and rose again, in order for you to have—a more totally healthy LIFE!style in Christ..