

Final thoughts...

I DIDN'T KNOW when I started this study, that my aunt would have a heart attack before I finished it. But she did. I didn't enjoy getting the call informing me that she was in the hospital. It was a horrible feeling not knowing the extent of her condition until we arrived where she had been flown by helicopter. Waiting on tests to determine the cause and extent of damage was not fun. She's at home now, doing as well as she can under the circumstances. Doctors determined that she has congestive heart failure due to various other health-related problems and heredity. Several members of our family have had heart problems. Where does that leave me? (Needing a check-up soon, I think, to see if there are any potential problems lurking unbeknownst to me!) Ladies, heart attacks are serious. I can't say that loud enough. Take good care of your hearts. Just as heart disease can be deadly if left untreated, sin disease can also kill. Schedule heart checkups annually and stay committed to the original Heart Doctor. He is the One who searches our hearts and knows all about us. We're in the best of care when we follow Him.

—Carolyn



Heart Check
Study by Joan Shields
Guide by Carolyn Michael

Beginning thoughts...

I FEEL kind of hypocritical writing about exercise when the most I usually get is loading the washer and buying groceries. It's not that I *wouldn't* be willing to exercise, it's just that I don't. Paul said in regard to sin, *"For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."* That's the way I feel about exercising. I should but I don't. I don't want to be inactive, but I am. Hopefully, these studies will motivate me to action, to get my heart more healthy, both physically and spiritually. Notice, I said *me*. Yes, that's where it starts. No one can make me do anything. I have a choice. My husband walks nearly every morning. I don't go with him, but I could. It's my decision to stay in the house. Grocery stores offer excellent healthy foods, but I choose to buy either juice or soft drinks. My Bible sits in plain sight. It's up to me to pick it up or just let it gather dust. You get the picture?

A FRIEND'S MOTHER recently suffered a heart attack. She survived, but millions do not. I've had family members who died from heart attacks, loved ones who survived heart attacks, and friends and family who underwent heart surgery. Did good doctors and medical procedures save them or did God have a hand in their survival? Can we really prevent our heart from stopping or not providing the life-giving blood we need? Unless the Lord returns soon, we're all going to die. Our death may not result from a heart attack or even be health-related, but our heart will stop at some point. Will your heart be diseased from a lack of effort on your part or will it remain strong until the end?

WHAT OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM? Is your heart healthy, seeking the things of God, wanting to know Him better? Have you dedicated yourself to living as a Christian? Does your heart pump prayers of praise, petition, and thanksgiving? For our hearts to be pure and faithful, we must allow the Spirit's daily searching and renewal. Only then, can He flow freely in and through us providing us with power, strength and wisdom to live life as we should. Allow God to speak to you through this study. Determine that you will do something to change, so that you have a better chance of living the life God intends for you to live. We're in this journey together; let's get started.

HEART CHECK

RECOGNIZE

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Before we can begin a regimen of spiritual fitness and growth, we must examine our lives and admit to spiritual problems.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened"* (Matthew 7:7-8).

- ♥ Write the Core Development verse in a notebook or journal for memorization.
- ♥ Have you had a physical recently?
- ♥ Do you keep your body in shape?
- ♥ How does your heart react to exercise? *(Beats erratically, faster but controlled, enough to pump blood to your tissues, or like a skipping jump rope)*
- ♥ Does God expect you to keep yourself fit and healthy? *(As much as possible. Our bodies are the temple of the Lord-I Corinthians 3:16, 17)*
- ♥ Go over the questions and answers on page 13 in *Treasure*.
- ♥ What is your favorite verse of Psalm 139? *(Mine is verse 23.)*
- ♥ Have you or someone you know ever had a serious medical heart condition?
- ♥ Did you (or that person) recognize the problem quickly or did a doctor point it out to you? *(For some it takes a heart attack or some type of spell that requires emergency care for the problem or condition to even be detected.)*
- ♥ Once you realize there is a medical problem what might be the plan of attack? *(Follow the doctor's advice, change old habits and seek a healthy solution.)*
- ♥ Could this apply spiritually as well? *(Yes-Joel 2:12, Proverbs 3:5; Psalm 119:2,34; Matthew 22:37)*
- ♥ When we recognize a heart problem (spiritually), how do we correct it?
 - (1) Repent-Luke 13:3, Acts 8:22
 - (2) Return-Jeremiah 24:7
 - (3) Renew-Psalm 57:7
- ♥ Should we let others know the condition of our heart? (Romans 10:9-11)
- ♥ Sing the chorus "Search me, Oh God" [*Rejoice! The Free Will Baptist Hymn Book*, page 481.
- ♥ Dismiss with a prayer asking God to search our hearts and help us recognize that we need Him.

HEART CHECK

IDENTIFY

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Identifying a Savior as our greatest need and accepting His gift of salvation are the first steps to spiritual wholeness, health and abundant life.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10).

- ♥ Write the Core Development verse in your journal.
- ♥ Assign the Roman Road verses to different ladies. Then have each read in order they should be used. These are found on page 15 of our study.
- ♥ Allow time for a couple of women to share their salvation experiences.
- ♥ What does the "abundant life" John mentions consist of? *(It is speaking of Spiritual abundance. If we know God, then he will give us grace and supply our needs to do His work. II Corinthians 9:8, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:19)*
- ♥ Is it possible to be sick physically and not know? Should we have regular check ups? What causes heart disease? *These questions are just part of learning to identify possible problems with our bodies.* Does your doctor ask you questions when you go for a physical?
- ♥ Why is heart disease called the "Silent Killer"? *(It can sneak up on people unaware. It's the #1 killer of Americans.)*
- ♥ How can we protect ourselves? *(Get regular check-ups, eat right, exercise, stay aware of our body changes, keep blood pressure under control, avoid stress)*
- ♥ Read the insert on page 14 aloud. "Identify salvation as our biggest need."
- ♥ Once we've identified a spiritual problem, what are some steps to take to find a cure? (1) Salvation-Acts 2:21; Titus 2:11; (2) Return to the Lord-Isaiah 55:7; (3) Confess sins-I John 1:9; and (4) Strengthen faith-Ephesians 6:16.
- ♥ Three helpful words in identifying heart problems:
 - (1) Acknowledge-Proverbs 3:6; Jeremiah 3:13;14:20 *(admit our problem)*
 - (2) Seek-Jeremiah 29:13; Isaiah 55:6; Psalm 53:2 *(actively seek to locate problems)*
 - (3) Knock-Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9 *(once identified, work to find a solution)*
- ♥ Determine to get fit this year in all life areas. Identify hindrances that keep your heart from tip-top shape: (1) Lack of prayer (2) Lack of Bible reading (3) Irregular church attendance (4) Poor tithing habits (5) Unconcern for others.
- ♥ Add things that will strengthen you: (1) Daily Bible reading, (2) Prayer (3) Giving, (4) Church Worship/Attendance (5) Witnessing (6) Visiting others.
- ♥ Close in prayer. Ask God for wisdom in leading a healthy life both physically and spiritually.

HEART CHECK

REASSESS

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Reassessing heart motives and habits as prompted by the Holy Spirit and in the context of a local church promotes lasting transformation.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: “...Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

- ♥ (Go over questions/answers on page 17 together.) These answers give ways for a complete makeover, a heart transplant so to speak. Do you agree?
- ♥ Do you like the idea of being a new person? (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 11:19)
- ♥ Can heart problems be reversed? (Yes, both physically and spiritually.) **Physically**-Get blood pressure and cholesterol down, start exercising, eat healthy, replace unhealthy habits with good ones. **Spiritually**-Go to church, join a Bible study, pray more, be accountable for past sins, but determine to move forward.
- ♥ When we hear of someone’s heart attack, how do we feel? (Afraid, helpless, sad, distressed) Why? (Usually, there’s nothing that we can do to help this person. We’re not in control of life or death matters.)
- ♥ What are some heart treatment techniques? (Hospitalization; medication; surgical procedures such as a **heart catheterization**—hollow flexible tube inserted into the heart for diagnostic purposes; **stent**—slender thread, rod or catheter inserted to open blockages; **angioplasty**—repair of a vessel either by inserting a balloon tipped catheter to unblock it, reconstructing or replacing part of the vessel, **open heart surgery** to repair; or **heart transplant**.)
- ♥ Are heart problems hereditary? (Many times, yes. Check your family background.)
- ♥ Write the Core Development verse in your journal. Why do we need to keep our hearts strong and pure? (So that sin won’t enter in.)
- ♥ Name some characteristics of evil hearts. (1) Stubbornness-Psalm 32:9; 78:8; (2) Depravity-Jeremiah 17:9; (3) Madness-Ecclesiastes 9:3; (4) Evil thoughts-Mark 7:21; and (5) Unbelief-Hebrews 3:12.
- ♥ Can anyone hide from God? (No-Jeremiah 23:24; Psalm 44:21) What does He do? (He looks at our hearts-1 Samuel 16:7; He provides a complete heart checkup-1 Chronicles 28:9.)
- ♥ With of the habits listed in Ephesians 4:21-32 (page 17) casues you the most trouble? Is this a heart problem? What can you do about it? (Go to the only “Heart Doctor” who can handle your kind of problem.)
- ♥ Close in prayer. Allow God to search hearts for signs of weakened conditions and ask for guidance in correcting these.

HEART CHECK

RESOLVE

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Righting heart issues and spiritual problems requires commitment to Christ and His body (the Church) and a resolve to action.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: “Let your heart therefore be perfect with [wholly devoted to, fully committed to] the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day” (1 Kings 8:61).

- ♥ Wouldn’t it be great if someone found a cure for heart disease? Do you believe this will happen in our lifetime?
- ♥ Write the Core Development verse in your journal.
- ♥ Resolve by definition is: *To make a firm decision about; Firmness of purpose.* A synonym for resolve is **decide**: *To settle all uncertainty about.*
- ♥ Go over questions and answers on page 19 together. Note especially the “Muscle Toning” question. (Some of my answers are: Lack of morality, lack of integrity, no strength of character, not caring about others, and sin filled lives.)
- ♥ When you watch a sporting event, let’s say the Olympics or women’s golf, do you ever wish that you were fit enough to be participating? What would it take for you to be an athlete? (A miracle, you might say!)
- ♥ If you are physically fit, what sacrifices did getting in shape require? (less time with family/ friends, less sleep, TV or computer time, money, certain foods, etc.)
- ♥ Were the things you gave up more important than your health? How did you get started on the path to physical fitness or lack thereof?
- ♥ Now, I’m asking the question again, “What would it take for you to be physically fit?” (1) Resolve to do something beneficial for your body, (2) See a doctor for an exam before you exercise, (3) Start out small/maybe walking short distances and increase to longer distances, (4) Eat right/Learn some new healthy recipes, (5) Find a friend to be your exercise buddy (Misery loves company!)
- ♥ What will it take to get spiritually fit? (We can’t go over these answers enough—ask for forgiveness daily, pray continually, read the Word, go to church, listen to the Holy Spirit, love your neighbor, and commit your life to God’s control.)
- ♥ Why should we carefully guard our hearts? (It is the center of life- Proverbs 4:23, 23:7; Luke 6:45; Romans 10:10.)
- ♥ Don’t let your heart be imprisoned by things of this world. They will keep you in bondage and chains by dragging you away from things of God. (Hebrews 3:13; Psalm 95:8; Proverbs 28:14, 29:1)
- ♥ Do you want a hardened heart or a tender heart responsive toward God?
- ♥ Close in prayer. Ask God to help you resolve/decide to guard your heart. Pray for wisdom to keep your heart healthy.