

Unclogging Your Spiritual Arteries

What if you found out you had a **heart** condition? No doubt you would make it your highest priority to find out why. You would see a doctor, who would run tests to determine what's going on. Those tests might reveal one of the most common reasons—clogged arteries. The heart is pumping, but for some reason arteries become clogged and slow down the heart's ability to pump life-giving blood to the rest of the body. This is a serious, life-threatening problem.

The same way this happens in our physical bodies can also be true in our spiritual life. If we're not careful to pay close attention to what is going on inside of us, we may someday find that in the midst of the everyday business of life, our **spiritual** arteries are clogged and the life that Jesus desires for us is being hindered. On the other hand, if our heart is right, it won't matter what the circumstances are. The real issue is what's happening on the inside. So what is the attitude of *your* heart?

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep and guard your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life" (AMP). In order to stay spiritually healthy, it is extremely important that we maintain a watch over our innermost being—the heart. It is vital that we guard our lives against negative attitudes and mindsets that can rob us of a healthy relationship with God. At the same time, we must also guard and protect the good things—like positive thoughts based on the Word, and our compassion for others—that come from our **relationship** with Him.

Bad attitudes, negative thinking and disobedience are just a few things that can easily hinder the life of Christ in us. Jesus taught, in His **Sermon on the Mount** (see Matthew 5-7),

that anger or hatred toward someone in your heart makes you subject to the same judgment as a murderer; or to lust after another's spouse is just as if you committed adultery. That proves why we need to be so vigilant in maintaining a pure and healthy spiritual life.

If our spiritual arteries are clogged, the life of Christ cannot flow freely in us—or to others *through* us. But learning to control our emotions and maintain a pure heart toward God will help increase His power in our lives. We have the ability to follow our feelings or to exercise our will. I believe it is easier to focus on capturing our thoughts early than to try to clean up the damage after the enemy has influenced them. And every time we override negative feelings and choose to do the right thing, we grow stronger in Christ.

For example, keeping a **stirred-up heart** helps **strengthen our faith** in God. Sometimes we need to encourage ourselves in the Lord like David did on many occasions in the Psalms. We need to stir ourselves up, or rekindle the fire within, to keep our zeal and fervor for the Lord like Paul told Timothy (see 2 Timothy 1:6). Let's stay amazed and not allow ourselves to get so used to the things of God. He is too awesome to be taken for granted!

Choose a **generous heart** over selfishness. Take as many opportunities to give as possible. Every time we choose to give willingly and generously, it enhances somebody else's life. It's not always about giving money; we can give our time to help someone with a project, give a compliment or hug to someone, and we can always pray for someone who's going through a tough time.

Generosity can be fueled by a **tender heart**, a heart that is moved with compassion for others. We should strive to spend as much time with God as we can. Regularly "marinating" in His presence will surely help keep our heart tender and **compassionate**.

A **confident heart** is extremely vital. I don't mean confidence in our money, education or the things we own, but I'm talking about confidence in Christ alone. When we are confident in who we are in Christ, we will be comfortable in our own skin, which frees us from the trap of comparing or competing with others. We can share our gifts and talents and also enjoy the God-given skills of others as a blessing in our own life. This God kind of confidence is not pride or arrogance; it is simply doing our best and leaving the rest up to Him.

As many chances as there are to get offended in one day, it's good to maintain a **merciful, forgiving heart**. We need to quickly let go of offenses and forgive—more for our own good than anything. When we do this, it allows God to deal with the offender according to His will while He heals our pain. The main thing is to release bitterness and resentment from our heart and keep those spiritual arteries clear!

What we need to remember is that our hearts will always be in *some* condition, but it's important for us to know we can choose *what* condition. If we will work with the Holy Spirit and be honest about our life, He will help us to keep our hearts pure and healthy and **flowing** with the life of Christ.

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