# Heart Health

by Mark Cole

I was recently reminded of the importance of keeping my heart spiritually healthy. What does that look like in your daily life? It is such an important practice. Solomon said it this way, "*Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.*" ~ Prov. 4:23 NLT




Here are some things that I do to help keep my heart and attitudes on track.

**1. Read the Bible daily**

One of the best habits that I've developed is to get up early every morning and read a couple of chapters from the Old Testament, a chapter from the New Testament, one Psalm and one Proverb. This takes me through the whole Bible every year and helps me to constantly learn from the greatest book that was ever written.

**2. Turn off media that damages my psyche.**

I'm daily exposed to movies, TV, books, the internet and ads. I simply try to turn off the bad stuff and only watch the good stuff. That is highly subjective, but you have to start somewhere. I try to listen to the still small voice that warns me when I'm viewing something that is harmful.

**3. Keep my heart pure by repenting of sin.**

I wish I was perfect, but unfortunately none of us is. So repentance (telling God I'm sorry and turning away from sin) is very important. God is faithful and just to cleanse us from every sin and to forgive us from all the things that we have done wrong.

**4. Surround myself with family, friends and children.**

I tend to be a bit introverted so it is very important for me to constantly make a point of being with my family, friends and my grandchildren. They are a good balance in my life. I need to have the feedback of family, the interaction of friendship and the joy and innocence of my grandchildren to keep my attitudes and heart fresh before God and man.

**5. Get outdoors and enjoy God's creation.**

I love to go for hikes and bike rides in God's creation. I live beside a great park that I love to be in. I also live close to the Rocky Mountains and I love to get into the mountains and be reminded of the greatness and grandeur of my Creator.

**6. Go to church weekly.**

It is good to be with other Christians on a weekly basis: to sing songs of worship together, to hear God's word taught and to fellowship with other believers. That interaction is so healthy. There is power in community.

**7. Pray daily.**

My wife and I regularly pray together. We try to make our prayers honest and direct. I'm not one to talk a long time and I believe Jesus model prayer (The 'Lord's Prayer' has only 66 words) teaches us about the value of not being long winded. We all need to find time daily to pray, to talk to God about our concerns, needs, frustrations and desires… P.S. It's good to just listen also! :-)

**8. Love the Lord with my whole heart, mind, soul and strength.**

In life, love can slowly dissipate if we don't make a consistent effort to fan the flame. My goal is to be passionately in love with God my whole life. I don't want to lose my first love. I don't want my love for God to become lukewarm. I want to love the Lord more with every passing year.

**9. Learn to love my neighbor as myself.**

It's too easy to become self-absorbed. It's too easy to ignore people who are going through a bad time. In Jesus' example, the Good Samaritan went out of his way to help someone he personally came across and spent the time and money to help that person. That challenges me.

**10. Worship God.**

I needed to be constantly reminded of the greatness and faithfulness of God in my life. Yesterday I was practicing some music and singing about the greatness of God. There is something about singing our praises and worship that is so powerful.

**11. Forgive quickly and often.**

Offenses do happen. But, I am determined not to allow bitterness to stay in my heart. It is too easy to get bitter and jaded. But that is not how I want to live my life. I want to live my life with an open heart and hands.

**12. Learn to control my tongue.**

What you speak has consequences. They can be good consequences or bad consequences. The older I get, the more I want to be careful about what I speak. It is too easy to get angry and say the wrong thing.

**13. Remind myself of God's faithfulness in my life.**

This summer I started to blog and write stories of what God has done in my life. That has been so healthy. To remember the countless times that God has moved on my behalf and to remember His faithfulness and love has been such a valuable practice.

**14. Be thankful**

When and if discouragement comes, I make a point of remembering all the things to be grateful for. I thank God for our health, our family, our country and His faithful supply and grace. God loves a heart of gratitude.

**15. Get exercise.**

There have been times in my life that have been very stressful. One of the values of sports for me is that it clears my mind. When I play an intense game of squash or tennis, I find it empties my mind of clutter. It helps keep my mind and heart healthy, literally.

**Question**: Which of these points resonate with you? What else do you do to guard your heart?

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The article above and many additional insights may be found on Mark's blog at http://markcole.ca/

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