

Bermudian Church of the Brethren

WEDNESDAY'S WORD – a midweek thought from Pastor Larry M. Dentler

to share a word of inspiration ... encouragement ... challenge ... a smile ... in the middle of your week

July 25 in the year of our Lord 2018 - #750

Heart Check-Up

I spent last Wednesday evening in the hospital after a trip to the Emergency Room at Hanover Hospital. Many of you reading this know that I have a bad family history for heart problems. My Mom died so young of heart issues and her father and grandfather. So my family doctor has always kept kind of 'close tabs' on my heart since much of heart disease is genetic. I've always been fine. I think my Dad's longevity genes have helped overcome my poor Mom's bad heart genes. But my doctors have always said, *"Larry, if you have any heart attack symptoms, do not mess around ... get to the hospital!"*

So when I woke last Wednesday with some pressure in my chest, and a real heaviness in my legs as I went for my morning walk, and then a bad case of indigestion when I hadn't eaten anything odd ... well, it got my attention! By the afternoon I still had the pain in my chest. I was fairly certain it was nothing to worry about, but thought perhaps I better go get checked out.

I thought I could sneak in ... get an EKG to rule out any problems ... and be home by supper ... and not even have to worry Cathy. Wrong! When you are old and mention chest pain and then tell your family history ... boy do you get a lot of attention real quick! They swarmed over me! They poked and prodded, started IVs, drew blood for lab work, did a chest x-ray, and yes, the EKG. After a couple hours the ER doctor told me that all tests looked OK, but that they wanted more tests tomorrow including a stress test. I said, that that would be OK, I'd come back in tomorrow for those tests. He said absolutely not! They were admitting me. With a heart monitor. And new blood work every 4 hours. So ... my sneaky plan failed and I had to call the family. *"Hey guess what? I'm in the hospital!"*

Settled into a room, about every time I got comfortable it was time for another blood draw. In the morning I had a stress test, echocardiogram, CAT scan, and ultrasound. I passed everything with flying colors, still with a pain in my chest that the doctors think was likely a strained chest muscle. And I was home by noon. The stress test technicians were impressed how well the old guy did on the treadmill. My family was not impressed with my sneakiness.

When discharging me the cardiologist said, *"At your age and with your family history, having this baseline on your heart condition is a very good thing."*

When's the last time you had a heart check-up ... I mean a Spiritual heart check-up? The Bible makes it clear that our hearts hold the 'base line' for our Spiritual condition. When Jesus says in Matthew 6:21, **"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,"** the implication is a lot more than money! What do we value? How do we invest our time? What do we read? What do we enjoy doing? And yes how do we handle our money? All these can be signs of where our heart really is Spiritually!

And have you had a Spiritual stress test lately? A health crisis? A relationship strain? A financial crisis? A problem at work? How our faith holds when we are under stress is a brilliant picture of where we really are Spiritually!

Maybe it's time, dear sister or brother, for a Spiritual heart check-up. As King David wrote,

“God, examine me and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any bad thing in me. Lead me on the road to everlasting life.” Psalm 139:23-24 NCV

Just like heart issues can kind of sneak up on us and gradually, so gradually, become worse. In the same way Spiritual Heart Failure can also sneak up on us gradually. A little less time in prayer. A little neglect of time in the Word. Missing Church a little more often. Ignoring making time for Sunday school and/or a small group study. A bit of carelessness on the types of entertainment (print or TV) that we take in. A bit of harshness towards those we love. A loss of discernment on the things we post on social media.

The prophet Isaiah warned of Spiritual Heart Failure, and Jesus quoted Isaiah's warning,

“For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”

Matthew 13:15 quoting Isaiah 6:9-10

So my dear ones, the Great Physician, Jesus would like to examine your heart today. Don't be sneaky ... welcome His examination, correction & treatment! He loves you so!

Heart healthy! Pastor Larry <><