

Spiritual Health Check: It's Not About You

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning and welcome here for Sunday, June 5th. Thanks to everyone who was able to be here yesterday for the Work Bee.
- I got home yesterday and I said to Michelle, I bet I could list everybody. And I said, but I'm not gonna because I'm going to forget someone. And that would be bad. So thank you so much to everyone for giving your time and your sweat equity and your joy.
- I think we had a good time interacting with one another as we whistled while we worked. So blessings on each of you. We had a huge to-do list that we, I think, I'll have to check with Shaylin, but I think we got probably 90, 95% of it done, which is huge.
- So thank you so much. Our grounds, our building, our, do you smell the citrusy smell in here? That's freshly oiled pews. If you look around the grounds, the weeds are gone.
- There's so much stuff that's been done. Things that are obvious and things that are not obvious that needed to be done have now been taken care of. And so blessings on everyone. And we will enjoy the fruits of that labor.
- [1 : 1 2] So moving on now, it seems to be a pressing question for some folks. Did he pass? Connor came back last Sunday, came home and said, I got asked by a couple of people, did you pass?
- Did he pass? And I said, well, that's an interesting question. Because I said, technically, it's not a, oh, wait a minute. It could. I guess it could be. Because it is. Someone asked me yesterday at the work bee.
- There are three scenarios. One is green light. One is yellow light with some work to be done. And one is red light, unfortunately. And all of those things have happened in the past.
- So, Carol, do you want to just put up that one picture? So, there we go. So, Dennis Stone, our denominator, I always forget his title, our area minister.
- So, he's kind of the pastor's pastor. So, that's Dennis introducing me last Wednesday morning in Calgary before the ordination council. If you picture a room about the size of one side in the centre and about right where Sue is and Sue and Audrey are up to where Vern is, that's about the size of the seating.
- [2 : 3 0] So, there was maybe 40 people in the audience, probably, all of whom were able, most of whom were able to ask me questions. So, that next picture will show you, you'll hear the sound of sizzling, because that was, so Vern can tell you more, Michelle can tell you more, David will come up in a moment and give you a bit of a perspective.
- But I said, honestly, it's all a blur to me. So, I got asked a lot of questions. One of my pastor friends at the assembly meetings last week said to me, what kind of questions did they ask you?
- And I said, I don't really remember. I was able to gradually come up with some of them, but, yeah, it was quite a time. So, yes, I did pass.
- So, that's the good news. Thank you. Thank you. So, that was last Wednesday. So, next picture, Carol, if you wouldn't mind.

You know a few of those folks. So, that is Rob Ogilvie, who is our denominational lead. He is right on this end. Then you know Mr. and Mrs. Hall there, of course.

[3 : 46] You know Mr. Castle. Michelle and I. And then Dennis again. So, this was after all the pressure was lifted. I said to someone else yesterday, felt like a gorilla stepped off my shoulders because it really was quite a relief.

I didn't realize how much capacity and emotional weight it had on me. But once it lifted, I slept like a rock on Wednesday night, I'll tell you that much. So, David, would you mind?

David suggested, David and Vern suggested that maybe it would be good for you to get a perspective of someone who wasn't being grilled. Just to kind of get an audience perspective of what went down last Wednesday.

So, come on in. Good morning. I think none of us really knew what to expect. And I know it wasn't what I expected in terms of having experienced an ordination some many years in the past.

But Pastor Kent, I think, has given you the environment that we were in, a hotel conference room really. And people were seated in rows of chairs.

[5 : 01] And Pastor Kent was at the front. And the focus was all on him. Right? And not in a good way, necessarily. Well, I must say that all of the members of the council using the paper that you wrote, and maybe other things, too, I don't know.

But their questions were very perceptive in terms of reading between the lines in what Pastor Kent wrote.

And coming up with questions that were very pointed. They were very piercing. And they were also very deep.

So, if you felt wounded, you should. Because they really did grill you, if I can put it that way.

I must say that you performed, if I can use that word, extremely well. I would not have wanted to be any of the following four candidates or ordinance, because I think you set the bar pretty high.

[6 : 21] So, it was a real pleasure for Wendy and I to be there. And for me to say that Pastor Kent performed extremely well under a lot of pressure.

And I think that I'm a bit confused now as to whether to call you Pastor Kent.

Yeah. Yeah. Or Reverend Dixon. I can explain that part next, if you like. Well, that's up to you. So, so... Never call me Reverend.

Never call you Reverend. Okay. I'll explain. So, I have friends who have their PhD who are academics. And I have friends who are medical doctors.

And some of them say, call me doctor because I earned it. And I have friends who say, don't ever call me doctor because I don't want to be recognized by that title.

[7 : 24] So, I'm in the latter camp. So, my ordination work is complete. So, we're going to have a formal service here at Braemar in September.

So, there'll be more details coming than that. And that's leadership of Braemar and the denomination working together to put that service together. So, after that point, yes, I have the title of Reverend.

But don't. Don't ever. You don't have to. Please don't. Yeah. I told my two older brothers they absolutely must call me Reverend. But other than that, no one else is.

But, yeah. So, that ordination piece, Larry asked me yesterday. So, it's reverent. That's the title. So, that comes after ordination. All right.

Thank you, sir. So, those are my comments. And I think we should be extremely proud of our pastor. Thanks, David.

[8 : 24] Yeah. The experience of the affirmation of it from God through so many people was quite something. I was also telling leadership as we're talking about my ordination service coming in the fall.

One of my fellow candidates. Oh, next picture, actually. One of my. There we go. One of my fellow candidates, who I won't point out, actually sent out invitations for their ordination service before Wednesday happened.

And a few of us kindly, but just said, maybe that's a bad choice. But that's all right. It worked out. So, those are the four candidates.

You can't quite see Tim. He's in the dark there. Not literally, but figuratively. So, that was the four of us. Diana and I, of course, were not paying attention while we were supposed to be praying.

But, yeah, so that's the group of five from this year. And that's people praying for us at assembly on last Thursday night. So, there you go.

[9 : 28] She's done. Well, this morning, we're continuing in our sermon series, Spiritual Health Check. And in this series, we've been considering week by week the importance of a baseline.

Setting a baseline and a healthy standard by which we can measure our health into the future. Measure things as they happen. And as Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, it's important for us to recognize, and I've said this before, that our spiritual health is largely more important to us, for us, than our physical health.

And over the weeks, as we continue in this series, we're taking a closer look at some of the ways we can assess our spiritual health. And identify some of the important things that we need to pay attention to.

And our sermon this morning is titled, It's Not About You. And so, don't read anything nasty into that title. Well, this is not going to be a sermon about making you feel guilty, or you're a bad person, or you're selfish, or you're prideful, or inadequate, or any of those things.

In fact, my hope is that this sermon will help you give you a bit more clear vision of your calling, of our calling as followers of Jesus. So, I got certified, I don't think I've ever told this story.

[10 : 55] I got certified as a scuba diver several years ago, quite a few years ago now. And I quickly came to the conclusion in my training that it was a huge pain in the neck to wear glasses under a dive mask.

Huge pain. But I also recognized that wearing contacts wasn't a great idea either, because a few times my mask flooded, partly because that's part of your training.

But you have to clench your eyes shut, so your contacts don't float away. So, Michelle and I made the decision at one point to have laser vision correction done.

So, I was just about 40, so that was 25 years ago. So, anyone who's had it done, had laser vision correction done, laser surgery, you know the process is a bit scary and uncertain, because you have how many sets of eyes?

One. I actually had a friend of mine call me the night before, the night before I went for the surgery, and she said, you know that your vision grays out when they do the procedure, right?

[11 : 59] And I said, what? And she said, yeah, your vision will just gray right out to nothing. And I said, okay, that's not something they shared and might have been a good idea.

She said, don't panic, it'll come back, it'll come back, but, you know, it's good information. So, the process of having your vision corrected, whether you've had it done or not, it takes time.

So, I had it done, and I had to put drops in my eyes almost constantly. They were bone dry for a week or more. And I remember thinking to myself, what have I done?

Was this worth it? Will this ever settle out? Does, you know, what's going to happen? So, I came to recognize over time that it just takes patience.

It takes patience for your perspective to change, for your vision to change. And so, the kind of perspective that we're talking about this morning is quite similar.

[12 : 57] It takes time and patience as well. So, it's not about you. Without question, the journey of being a follower or a disciple of Jesus Christ is absolutely about you.

It's about your relationship with him. It's about your journey towards becoming more like Jesus as you seek to become more spiritually healthy.

But we also need to recognize that the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ must be very other-focused.

In Matthew 22, verses 35 to 40, we read about Jesus being tested by the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the time, one of the groups.

And they're seeking here to test and trap him. Here's what we read there. Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, another religious group, the Pharisees got together.

[14 : 00] One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question. Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus replied, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.

Love God and love your neighbor. You probably know this as the great commandment. That's how it's often referred.

And it's also referenced in Mark chapter 12, verses 28 to 34. And then again in Luke chapter 10, verse 27. So where the Pharisees were holding to obey God's word to the letter.

This is what their goal was. Understanding God's word, understanding God's commandment, and then following it to the letter. Jesus simplified things.

[15 : 12] By loving God first. And loving others next. We'll naturally be ensuring that we're following, that we're keeping his commandments.

Jesus made it that simple. If your perspective, if your priorities are correct, all the rest will follow naturally. It's not about you.

It's not about me. It's about seeking God first. And by serving others. By seeking to help them to meet their needs.

So just as I shared that it took my vision time to come into proper focus after that surgery. I also believe that our perspective on caring for others may need to be clarified or corrected at times.

Can you recognize that there are actually two distinct and equally important ways we can care for each other, for other people, and to seek to meet their needs?

[16 : 16] Two kinds of needs. There's the temporal needs, the physical needs. And maybe these are the most noticeable. If you're driving down the street, you see someone holding a cardboard sign on the median.

Temporal needs right before your eyes, right? I was sitting in the food court at West Edmonton Mall. And a gentleman was in the food court, had a KFC bucket.

Most people know what that looks like. He was taking containers out of the garbage in the food court. Sifting through the contents that remained in the containers and putting some of it into his bucket.

I think that was his daily meal. So what did I do? I didn't have any cash on me. I didn't think until afterwards. I should have gotten him a combo and given it to him.

But I didn't think that well. But there's the temporal, physical needs, right? Right before our eyes. And as created beings with physical bodies and eternal souls, we also have needs that can be physical or temporal, as well as spiritual.

[17 : 24] So we recognize that, sure, we need shelter. We need clothing. We need all of those things. Those are temporal needs.

But as human beings, we also have temporal needs that can be psychological or emotional as well. And to me, the pandemic has really laid a lot of those bare.

We may have a need or a sense of security. We need security. A sense of belonging. A sense that we matter to someone else.

A sense that we are loved or valued. Those are all valid temporal needs that we don't often think of. We can feel like many of our physical needs have been met.

And yet we may still feel real, aching needs that people don't perceive. But that doesn't make them any less important.

[18 : 24] We may also have temporal or physical needs that, under other circumstances, we could maybe meet ourselves. Donna could have swept her walk until she broke her kneecap, right?

And she and I have had conversations. There's things that she would have liked to still be doing. And there's things that she was doing that I told her she shouldn't be doing. But still, right, based on our circumstances, based on an injury or health or age or any of those things, our capacity can be diminished.

And those things, those circumstances, can create temporal needs for us as well. So for some of us, we may feel most comfortable stepping in to meet temporal or physical needs.

It's right before my eyes. It's obvious. That's what I'm going to do. We may be doers. We may be people who like to do things, who like to provide.

We may be keen to lend a hand in practical ways when someone has a need like that. And that's part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

[19 : 34] Looking for needs like that and seeking to help others meet those needs. And even if it takes sacrifice on our part, and it just might.

So we need to be aware to not shy away from sacrificial service of others. So hopefully it's also not a surprise to any of us, here this morning particularly, that we have spiritual needs as well.

Shouldn't be a surprise, right? As created beings of both flesh and spirit, our spiritual needs and our spiritual health are critical.

Which is in fact why we're spending time together in this series. Because if someone is living their life without Jesus Christ, that is our greatest calling and opportunity.

To change their lives today. And to change the course of their eternal destiny. So as we've often considered, seeking to fulfill, seeking to fill or satisfy our needs with the things of this world, will always leave us feeling thirsty.

[20 : 57] Feeling hungry. And you've likely experienced that yourself. We've talked about it before in this series. It's only a relationship with God, made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that we can truly, deeply be satisfied within our soul.

So maybe that is your personal comfort zone. Your personal calling. As you consider the needs of someone else. Maybe it's sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Evangelism. That's your natural tendency when you have that opportunity. I know some people who deeply resonate with it. And I know some people who go, I'll get him a burger.

I can't do that. Or that's not me. Or that's not my comfort zone. And maybe that resonates with you. But my friends, it's critical that we remember that each of us, and everyone we meet, has both temporal and physical needs that need to be met.

Meeting someone's practical physical needs is important and necessary. Absolutely. But we can't neglect the fact that they have spiritual needs as well.

[22 : 16] Making sure someone is fed and clothed, feels loved and valued, has help with yard work, or getting to an appointment. They're all things, all ways that you can put others first, that you can care for someone.

But we must not prioritize those things and neglect spiritual needs in the process. So it's likely, maybe you've thought of this before, it's likely the Holy Spirit at work in our lives that helps us to recognize the physical needs of others.

The Holy Spirit gives us that awareness, gives us that radar, that compassion for other people, and a desire to help them. But let's not meet here and now needs without seeking to help others with their eternal needs as well.

Does that make sense? Similarly, let's not be in a rush to evangelize and move on. Right?

Maybe you've had that experience. Had someone come to you and say, do you know Jesus? Because I'm going to tell you about him and then I've got other people to talk to. But we're more than just spirit.

[23 : 39] I've met people who have a priority to evangelize and then move on. Let someone else do the other stuff or may perceive that one evangelism is more important than the other physical needs.

But they're equally important. So let's take care to not forget about the day-to-day needs for help and provision for people that can be missed when we don't stop and listen.

So if you share the gospel of Jesus Christ and then forget to help someone in their day-to-day immediate needs, we've missed it a bit there.

So finally, have you ever considered the question of whose needs we should be seeking to be more aware of? That really struck me as I was preparing this sermon because I've talked to you about filters before, right?

We all have filters that we bring to our lives through our experience, through many different things that we go through in our lives. We bring filters. So do you focus on the needs of people within your comfort zone?

[24 : 59] Do you focus on the needs of people that you already know, that you're already friends with? Or do you sincerely ask God to show you, to direct you to the people he most wants you to serve?

Maybe you can guess that's what I'm challenging us to do. Absolutely, we have people within our circle that we can care for and should care for. But let's be aware of the others that may not be on our radar.

My friends, Jesus Christ is our example in this. We can recognize that he didn't solely focus on the needs of his disciples, did he? Well, he definitely cared for their needs, cared for their physical needs, their spiritual needs.

He was always seeking those on the margins who had been forgotten, who society or leaders or religious people had given up on, had discounted, didn't see any value in.

Jesus saw them. And the model he gave us was to meet physical needs when they presented them. We see Jesus doing that over and over.

[26 : 18] People were hungry. He fed them. There was no wine at the wedding. He met that need. He healed people who had physical ailments and physical challenges.

But, do you recognize that he did those things while pointing people to himself as the son of God?

He pointed people to the opportunity to find spiritual satisfaction in relationship with his father.

Physical need, spiritual need, unified. Similarly, for those who were comfortable in their physical needs, rather, we hear lots of stories throughout scripture.

The rich young ruler, for example, had everything he needed, probably, in his physical life. Jesus challenged people like that to come to see their physical needs through a spiritual lens.

[27 : 22] Can you see that? He challenged them to recognize that there is more to our existence and our purpose than this life. Just as he challenges us in the same way in our own lives and our own calling.

Ultimately, when it comes to your calling to meet needs, it's not about you. Friends, let's be people who put others first, put their needs first, trusting that God will provide and care for us as well as his beloved children.

And that he will very likely use others to make that happen as well. Amen.