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Heart health is important. The heart is the organ that pumps blood throughout the body. The blood is what carries life for our flesh. Therefore, the heart is essential to life, and a *healthy* heart is essential to a *healthy* life. There are a number of resources available to help us take care of our physical hearts. How, though, do we develop and maintain healthy hearts spiritually—hearts that are connected to God? Where do we start?

Proverbs 4:20-22:

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

In order to gain healthy hearts, we start by reading and studying God’s Word because His words and His sayings are life and health for us. God’s Word declares unto us His will. God wants us to keep His Word in the midst of our hearts for *our* benefit! Having a plan is one way to make sure that we are maximizing the time we have to direct our hearts and our thoughts to God. Let’s consider some questions we can ask and answer in developing a “heart healthy” plan for our study time.

The first question we will consider is, *what* should we study? II Peter 1:3 says that God “hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him [God]...” We find the knowledge of God in His Word. With all things pertaining to life and godliness contained in His Word, deciding where to start in our study of God’s Word can almost seem overwhelming at first.

One way to simplify this decision is to determine a goal for studying, and then choose topics in the Word to help us accomplish that goal. For example, let’s say we want to grow in staying peaceful regardless of circumstances. We could search for scriptures mentioning peace. There are resources to help us in our search. For example, we

could use a concordance or Bible software. We could use the search function in the digital edition of *The Way Magazine* or thewayinternational.com to find articles mentioning peace. We could also ask others in our home fellowships for additional suggestions. Any of these methods would direct our study to God's Word regarding peace and help us accomplish our goal. No matter which method we choose, the point is to have a plan that gives our study time purpose.

After deciding *what* to study, let's consider *when* to study. In thinking about when, it's good to factor in our peak times of mental energy. Personally, I feel most mentally alert and able to focus in the morning and in the early evening. Knowing this about myself, I *could* choose those parts of the day to spend my time with God studying His Word, rather than midday or the hour or two before I go to bed. If you aren't sure of your peak times, it may take some experimentation for you to discover when they are. Have fun finding them!

In determining the best time to study God's Word, it's also important to consider our responsibilities of daily life. For me, although I am alert and able to concentrate well in the early evenings, there is often a lot of activity going on in my home at that time of day. That can distract me from my intention to focus on God's Word. With this in mind, I choose to use mornings for my primary study time. When can *you* expect the fewest interruptions?

The amount of time we want to study is good to consider as well. Knowing how much time we can devote to studying God's Word can even help us tailor our plan of what to study. If we have more time on one day of the week than others, that is when we can do something more involved. If we only have a few minutes, we could plan to read a few verses from the Bible or a section of an article in *The Way Magazine*. God says in II Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God...." Whatever time we are able to devote to studying God's Word, the important thing is to maximize it by having a study plan that we can be faithful to follow.

The next question to ask is, *where* should we study? Deciding on a location may also take some thought and experimentation. Making the most of our study time takes focus. Consider the focus involved in attending to God's words, inclining our ears to His sayings, keeping them in the midst of our hearts (as we read earlier in Proverbs).

In considering the best place to study, it can be helpful to find or make an environment that is relatively distraction free. Is noise or the movement of people in the room going to be a distraction? Will seeing a pile of paper on your desk or e-mails waiting to be read in your in-box cause you to shift your focus? These questions and

similar questions can be a great way to decide where to study and can also help us find simple ways to make an area conducive to our plan.

Knowing what, when, and where we want to study are all parts of a “heart healthy” study plan. Have fun as you set up and then execute your plan to direct your thoughts to God’s Word, developing a heart connected with our heavenly Father!

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