

# Three steps for diagnosing spiritual health

## by Steve Gladen

When was the last time you made an appointment with your doctor for a physical examination? Have you avoided it because you thought he might tell you something you wouldn't want to hear, something like, "You could stand to lose a few pounds," or maybe, "A little exercise would do you some good," or "Your cholesterol is looking a bit high, time to cut out the bowl of ice cream before bedtime"?

Like our physical health, our spiritual health needs to be assessed and managed so it can continuously grow and mature into all that God desires it to be.

### **Getting a picture of spiritual health**

So what does spiritual health look like? At Saddleback we believe health is based on living a life that balances the five purposes of God: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. Too many times we tend to major in one aspect of health while ignoring the others. For some, spiritual health is measured by having the right answers to theological questions. For others, spiritual health is demonstrated by acts of service. While these are good things, our spiritual life suffers if we do not balance all five of God's purposes in our lives.

### **Assessing our spiritual health**

In order to help people get a better sense of how well they're doing this, we put together a tool called [The Purpose Driven Spiritual Health Assessment](#). This self-assessment tool is designed to help a person take a snapshot of his life and see how well he is balancing the five purposes. Our goal is not to measure and score spiritual health. Rather, we want to provide a starting point from which people can begin to pursue a healthier spiritual life.

The process of balancing the five purposes in our lives takes time and reflection. First, we need to evaluate where we are. Once we have a picture of where we are we then need to determine where we need to grow by focusing on one or more of the purpose areas.

Once we've targeted a specific growth area, we need a plan. By answering the questions under each purpose, the user will see where their strengths are and identify where they need to focus more of their attention for growth.

Another aspect of the tool is the ability to get valuable feedback from a few people that know us best, such as a spouse, a small group member, or a mentor, by having them complete the same assessment on us (called a Friend Feedback Assessment). We don't always see ourselves as others do. The valuable, godly relationships in our lives can pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses that we may not identify in ourselves.

### **Setting a plan for growth**

After taking the Health Assessment and evaluating where one currently stands in their spiritual journey, it is time to chart a course for personal growth by setting up a Health Plan. The Health Plan is designed to provide a practical next step that a person can take for each of the questions on the assessment. Each of these areas are broken down into what we call a Crawl step (a goal easily attained within 30 days), a Walk step (a goal that stretches you, attainable within 60-90 days), and a Run step (a Holy Spirit-inspired goal). As the user chooses their next step(s) they begin to move progressively toward attaining the growth goals that have been laid out before them.

## **Applying the tool to small groups**

The Health Assessment is not only a great tool designed for individual evaluation, but it can also be used as a small group tool to determine the overall health and balance of a group. Because we are better together, individuals that strive for personal spiritual health make for a stronger foundation when it comes to building the health of a small group. It is through a lifetime of spiritual practices like utilizing the Health Assessment that we begin to develop and live out fulfilled purpose driven lives.

## **Getting started**

I started using the Health Assessment back when we were piloting the pros and cons, almost seven years ago. In the years since, the Lord has challenged me in many ways. I think you'll find the same challenges if you follow these easy three steps.

First, before you begin to take the Health Assessment, PRAY! Pray for an open mind to the Holy Spirit and how he wants to use this Health Assessment. This is not a test you do one time and then move on to something else. This is a living document that starts with the Health Assessment and has its accountability in the Health Plan. As D.L. Moody says, "Discipleship is not in the information, but the transformation."

Secondly, since this is a living document, think in process steps for the Health Plan. What I mean by this is as you put down goals you feel the Lord wants you to improve on, think in the crawl, walk, run frame. Let me give you a personal example. The first year I did the Health Assessment I gave my best shot at the Health Plan. I soon found my goals were so high that I didn't see progress in the first month. Discouraged, I procrastinated on the very goals I felt the Lord wanted me to grow towards. So through the process of developing my Health Plan I decided to develop a crawl, walk, run version of those same goals to help me see an attainable process of reaching my goals. It is through this process of intentional "baby steps" that the Lord will move you towards a more balanced spiritual life.

Finally, share your Health Plan with a few trusted people. If no one knows what you have on your Health Plan, it's easy for you to procrastinate. The devil seeks to defeat our plans by isolating us. But the loving accountability of others will bring great results.

As you start this journey, follow these three easy steps and watch what the Lord will do!

## **-Purpose-Driven® -**

**[Purpose Driven Spiritual Health Assessment and Spiritual Health Planner](#)**: This tool will give you a snapshot of your spiritual health, pinpoint areas that may need attention, and help you develop a plan to bring God's five purposes for your life into balance.