

## Dimensions of the Heart

Without your heart, you cannot survive. It is governed by the autonomic nervous system and beats about 100,000 times a day, an average of 72 beats per minute. Your heart pumps approximately 2,000 gallons of blood each day or 5 quarts each minute pushing a droplet of blood throughout your whole body in about 20 seconds.

February is known as “Heart Month” for a variety of reasons. I encourage you to broaden your perception of *heart-healthy* and consider the following wholistic dimensions of *heart*.

- ♥ **Physical:** We measure heart health by a set of numbers; blood pressure and cholesterol. The healthy numbers are: B/P < 120/90, Total Cholesterol < 200, LDL < 130, Triglycerides < 150. If your numbers are above those listed, your chances of having a stroke or heart attack are increased. A good number is HDL cholesterol > 35. Do you know your numbers?
- ♥ **Relational:** Valentines’ Day honors and celebrates the people we love and those who love us. How do we keep our relationships healthy? I suggest that your daily relationship habits include: courtesy and civility, attentive listening, moments of focused quality time, caring and appropriate touch, smiles and humor, words of affirmation and acts of service. When people feel loved, their whole outlook on life is improved.
- ♥ **Spiritual:** Within ancient texts, *Heart* often refers to that still place deep within oneself where the Divine Holy is recognized and encountered. Spiritual habits include; prayer, journaling, worship, formational scripture reading, small study groups and agape caring through out-reach to others. Ponder how you are nurturing your heart-connection to God.
- ♥ **Emotional:** We often speak of our *heart* when referring to our emotions. The old Hebrew word, *nephesh* refers to the seat of our appetites—hunger, thirst, longing, craving and the seat of our emotions—desire, loathing, sorrow, joy, love, hate. Look at your emotional well-being and balance. Are you able to feel the whole range of emotions; contentment, joy, anger, fear, love? Do you respond with appropriate emotions in your daily living? Consider how you “feel” most days and explore if you would like something to be different.
- ♥ **Intellectual:** We cannot think or reason clearly without the heart pumping oxygen-rich blood to the brain. When a person’s thinking is “foggy” they cannot process information, make good decisions, or respond relationally. Health habits that improve both heart and brain function include aerobic physical activity. Therefore, each day make plans to physically move your body briskly, improving your heart strength and effectiveness.

*I pray that... Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are rooted and grounded in love. (Eph 3:17 NRSV)*

As you ponder the above dimensions, I invite you to consider improving your heart-health within one of them. With Christ’s love in our hearts, we are able to accomplish far more than we can alone.

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