

## REFLECTION | *Sphygmology*

**Sphyg·mol·o·gy** noun [ sfig' mäləjē ]

Sphygmology is not a word we use very often; in fact most of us have probably never even heard of it, but it's the study of the human heartbeat, or pulse. A healthy adult heartrate should be somewhere between 60-100bpm.

Our hearts pump blood, oxygen, hormones and other nutrients to every part of our bodies to keep us alive and to ensure our health and well-being. And one of the best ways to check your heart is by feeling your pulse.

I don't know how much attention you pay to your physical health, or your physical heart, but there's another kind of heart we all have, one that also requires intentional care, although many of us may pay little attention to it. That's the symbolic or spiritual heart we refer to when we say things like "from the bottom of my heart" or "broken-hearted."

It is the core of our being and the centre of our feelings, values and motivation. And this morning, it's *that* heart we want to take a few moments to consider together.

The Bible says:

***"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."***

Proverbs 4:23

In other words, everything that we do, say and think, flows out of the condition of our spiritual centre, or our *heart*. If that's true, the important question for all of us to ask is, *how is my heart?*

That can be a difficult question to answer. How many of us really know how we're doing? As with our physical health, sometimes it can be hard to notice the warning signs of distress until it's too late.

So it's important, from time to time, to 'check the dashboard' and gauge how our heart is doing. And much like how our pulse gives us a window into the strength of our physical heart, the Bible suggests that there are ways to "check our pulse" spiritually, as well.

So, if you're willing, I'd like to guide you through a bit of a self-examination. This will require participation from you, but I promise I won't ask you to do anything too strange or anything you probably haven't done before.

## TEMPLES | *The Pulse Of Your Thoughts*

To begin, using the analogy of "checking our pulse", I'd like to invite you to place your fingers on your temples. (You can do this with both hands or just one, if that's more comfortable.) It may take a moment to find your pulse – you may need to close your eyes, become still and quiet to focus your attention.



As you (continue to) feel the pulse of your heart, beating in your temples, I want you to consider your mind. Your thought-life is one of the ways you can check the pulse of your spiritual heart. What kinds of things dominate your thought-life, your focus and attention? What do you allow yourself to dream about, worry about, obsess about? These might be really good things or maybe unimportant or even unhealthy things, but as you think about what consumes your attention and dominates your thinking, ask yourself, ***what does my thought-life indicate about the condition of my heart these days?***

I'll give you a moment to reflect.

[Allow 15-20 seconds of silent reflection]

## NECK | *The Pulse Of Your Words*

Next, go ahead and check your pulse in your neck by placing your hand over your throat and feeling under your jaw with your fingers.



As you (continue to) hold your hand over your throat, the place where your voice lives, think about the words you speak. Jesus once said that, ***“What you say flows from what is in your heart.”*** (Luke 6:45) So, what about you? Have your words been full of gratitude, humility, kindness, honesty, or have your words been angry, hurtful, unkind or dishonest?

We're all guilty of using our words inappropriately at times, so this is not about feeling judged or ashamed; it's about having the courage to be honest with ourselves. Pause again and ask yourself: ***What do my words tell me about the condition of my heart these days?***

[Allow 15-20 seconds of silent reflection]

## WRIST | *The Pulse Of Your Actions*

Now, find your pulse in your wrist.



Our hearts pump blood and oxygen to the very extremities of our bodies – our hands and feet – in a way that can be felt in our pulse. In the same way, our hands and feet – or what we do and where we go – can tell us a lot about the condition of our interior hearts.

If everything we do in life flows from our heart; then our work, our hobbies, the way we shop, the way we drive, the manner in which we live, is actually evidence of the condition of our hearts.

Take a moment and consider your actions these days. How are you treating people? What are you spending the bulk of your days working on? How are you investing your one-and-only life?

Let's take one more pause to ask ourselves: ***How is the condition of my heart reflected in my actions?***

**[Allow 15-20 seconds of silent reflection]**

## CONCLUSION

Finally, I want to encourage you to simply put your hand over your heart.

Your heart is precious. It is the core of who you are and everything you think, say and do flows from it. It's important to keep your heart healthy and in good condition.

Even if you're not sure about this whole faith or church thing, even if you don't totally buy into the Jesus story, our encouragement to you this morning is simply to pay attention to your heart. Take care of yourself, not just physically but spiritually. Take time regularly to reflect on how you're doing.

If your heart is full of life, keep doing the things necessary to protect and nurture that growth. If your heart is broken these days (many of ours are), do the kinds of things that can bring healing to that brokenness.

If your heart has grown hard and cynical, try to soften it. If you're someone who is on the verge of losing heart, discouraged and disappointed, maybe even giving up altogether, know that your heart has the immeasurable capacity to heal and recover. But you have to give care to it. (And you might have to let others give care to it, as well)

In our community, we really believe (and have experienced) how God's love and grace has the power to heal broken hearts, to open us up and lift us out of despair, to breathe life into our hearts again. This is the hope and comfort we've found in Jesus. And on this Easter Sunday, we want you all to know that, like the heart of Christ that began to beat again on this day 2000 years ago, your heart can also beat again, stronger and more fully alive than ever before. This is the power of resurrection. This is the power of Jesus. And he longs to be everything you need, if you'll just open your heart to Him today.