



INTRODUCTION

How are you doing?

I hadn't seen my friend in a while, so it was a natural question for him to ask. And it was an easy question to answer. I talked about my job. My family. Our church. Our holiday. Everything was going fine. I was doing well. Some things were going great.

"No, I mean, how are you doing in your faith?" he said.

Oh.

I didn't know, really. I was still a Christian, which was, well, a good start. Maybe that qualified me to answer, "Fine". Perhaps it even allowed me to say "Doing well". Probably it didn't mean I could say, "Going great".

How would you answer that question? How are you doing in your Christian life? Some of us are worried when we don't need to be. Others of us are confident when we have no reason to be. Most of us know we

should be growing as Christians, but aren't sure what that means exactly, or how to go about it.

You may have had a job that involved setting goals and hitting targets. It was easy to check your progress. You might enjoy gardening, where you plant and tend and enjoy the growth, or fight the weeds (or both). You may have had some kind of healthcheck, where an expert assessed you against several criteria and recommended a few changes in your diet or lifestyle in order to get healthy or stay healthy.

The Christian life is the same—we are called to make progress and grow up and stay healthy. The apostle John wrote to one of his Christian friends that he was praying “that you may enjoy good health ... just as you are progressing spiritually” (3 John v 2). And that's what this little booklet of 16 short Bible studies is about. It's a spiritual healthcheck:

- *It'll help you to diagnose your own level of Christian health—to know how you really are doing in your faith.*
- *It'll show you what vitamins God has provided you with to enable you to grow healthier and “progress spiritually”.*
- *And it'll point you to the doctor whom God has provided to enable you to get on with going great in your Christian life.*

The studies first appeared as part of the *Explore* daily Bible-study series, and they proved really popular—so we thought it'd be a good idea to make them available in their own booklet, which is what you're reading right now.

For each study, you'll need to set aside 15-20 minutes to read, answer the questions, and think about what God is saying to you. Each day will take you into the Bible, and encourage you to apply it to yourself and respond to what God is saying by speaking to him in prayer. You can do it on your own, or with a friend, or in a group. Perhaps your whole church is working through it.

And here's what I'm praying for you. I'm praying that by the end of this spiritual healthcheck, you'll be able to answer the question, "How are you doing in your faith?"—and that the answer you'll be able to give really will be: "Going great".



1. SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY?

How are you doing in your Christian life? Really thriving... barely surviving... or somewhere in between? How can you even know how you're doing?

Welcome to your spiritual healthcheck. Over the next 16 studies, we'll move through some diagnostic questions, then identify some spiritual vitamins that will help improve your Christian health, and finish by thinking about the doctor who helps us answer the questions and enables us to self-administer the vitamins.

But first, before we get to diagnosis, we need to ask: What actually *is* a spiritually healthy Christian?

➤ READ ROMANS 8 v 28-31

Who does God work for the good of (v 28—they are described in two ways)?

What has God decided (predestined) he will do for those people (beginning of v 29)?

Why can we be confident that this will happen (v 31)?

When I was four, I decided to be a fireman. When I was seven, I wanted to become a footballer. When I was nine, I was aiming to be a librarian. I failed in all three aspirations. When I was 19, God called me to faith in his Son, and I came to love him—and God decided that I would become like his Son, Jesus. And I may have changed my mind since I was four, seven and nine—but God will not change his mind, nor falter in his determination, nor fail in his ability, to turn me into someone who is just like Jesus, the perfect person.

So to be perfectly spiritually healthy is to be just like Christ Jesus. And to be growing more spiritually healthy is to be growing more like Christ Jesus.

Think about what Jesus was like during his time on earth. Kind. Compassionate. Courageous. Brave. Loyal. Wise. Thoughtful.

How do you feel about being like that?

➤ **READ 1 JOHN 3 v 1-2**

When will we be completely conformed to the image of Christ (v 2)?

Spiritual health is being just like Christ—and, until Christ returns, you won't be in full spiritual health.

Sin-sickness will cling until the day he comes. But God is working for your good—for your Christ-likeness—in all things: the ups and the downs, the thrilling parts and the mundane parts, of normal life. None of us are completely Christ-like—but God is at work to make us more Christ-like. He is not content simply to save us through Christ; he has decided to make us like Christ.

⊕ PRAY

Adapted from John Newton:

Lord, I know I am not who I one day will be, but I thank you that I am not who I used to be. Please make me more like Christ today than I was yesterday—and please answer that prayer each day until the day I stand before him. Amen.