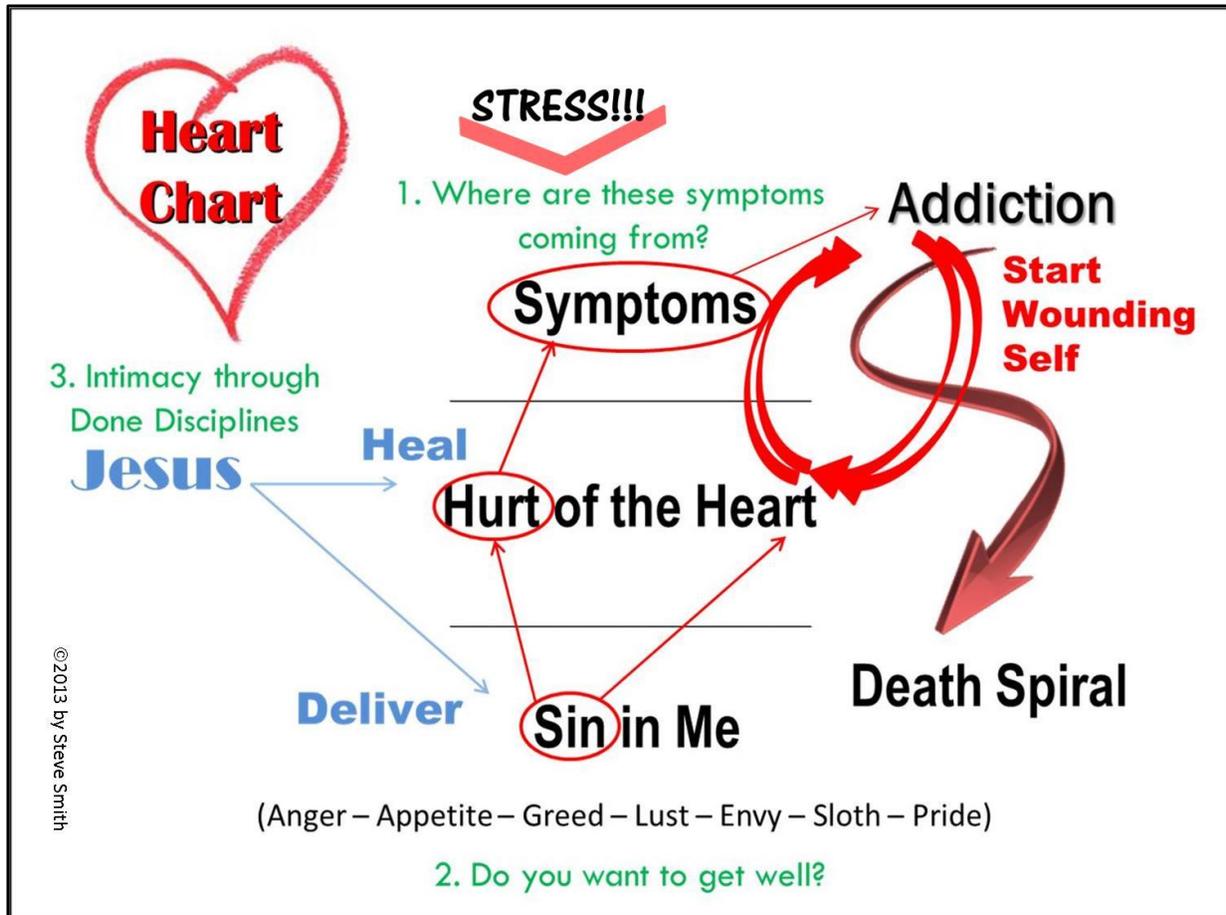


The Heart Chart



The Heart Chart is a simple tool that is used to help people discover what is going on under the surface of their outside life—what is going on in their heart that causes them to be stuck on their faith journey. This chart can be drawn using two parallel lines on a piece of paper, a napkin, a whiteboard, etc. and may open a whole world of understanding for any person. In brief, the Heart Chart follows this pattern:

Introduction: It is important that you understand that only God can heal you. This chart cannot fix you. It can give you wise direction, show you why you are stuck on your faith journey and guide you toward the path of health, but it cannot give you the power to be healed, nor free you from the addictions you have.

Symptoms: The issues of your life are either causing you pleasure or pain, and possibly turning people off to you. Pleasure symptoms are the idols of your life that people can admire in you, but actually hold the place of God in your desires. You may not seek help for these symptoms until these idols begin to cause you pain. Pain symptoms (which are also idols because of wrong focus) are those that are already hurting

you and are driving you to seek help from someone more mature in the faith than you. (Examples: marital conflicts, rebellious children, financial losses, relationship ruptures, emotional crisis, etc.) All symptoms can be identified by attitudes or character issues that are not matching what is seen in Jesus' life.

First Question: Where are these symptoms coming from? All symptoms appear as a result of something unhealthy within your heart according to Jesus (Matthew 15:18-20). The "heart" in the Bible is the place where life decisions are made: "What will I do?" So whatever conscious or unconscious decisions your heart is making are appearing in your life where others can see or hear them, and you can feel them as they become painful, unless you develop what the Bible calls a "hard heart."

Hurt of the Heart: Since you live in a world full of people who have been affected by The Fall, you are being wounded as they exercise their right to make decisions that are best for them. These decisions often are not intended to wound you, and come from people to whom you are vulnerable—family, friends, teachers, etc. Unfortunately, these wounds do not go away. They hurt and stay raw years after the wound was inflicted. And as long as you live, you have the opportunity to be wounded more and more. The pain of these wounds damages your emotions so that, when the heart seeks to make a will decision by balancing rational thought and emotions, these emotions gain weight in the decision making process. The resulting decision is an irrational action or attitude, although you often cannot see this for yourself. In addition, when you hurt, you go looking for ways to stop the hurt because you were not created to live with pain.

The danger for you at this point is to believe that you are defined solely as a victim. Everyone is a victim of the harmful choices of other people. You do not have to own their choices as if you deserved what happened to you. But what is important is that you own the choices you made to comfort the hurts that you received from them. This is the most important step you can take to become well.

Sin in Me: Paul tells us that the sin in us explains why we do what we do not want to do and do not do what we know we should do. When you go looking for comfort for your wounds, sin offers a temporary release from pain. The *sin in me* available for you to choose is one or more of the seven deadly sins—anger, lust, greed, envy, appetite, sloth, pride—and they are deadly because when you choose them, they start robbing you of life. Yet you have done just that. Perhaps you have chosen several to comfort the same wound or multiple wounds you have received over the years. The result is that when *sin in me* has bonded with the *hurt of the heart*, it produces the symptoms that have appeared.

Stress: Most people manage their symptoms fairly well, especially if they know the destructive nature of letting them run wild in their lives. But what cannot be controlled is stress in life. Things happen beyond a person's control that make life hard—a job loss, financial reversals, health issues, marriage, more children, etc. When stress becomes too great, the person often turns to one of his or her symptoms to find comfort through the tough stretch, often doing this unconsciously.

Addiction: When symptoms are not challenged early after they appear or if they are used for comfort in times of stress, they progress to addictions, because all sin is additive. Then you cannot stop the behavior because it now has taken over your will. The further result is that you begin to wound yourself. And

because you have a new wound, you choose *sin in me* to comfort it. If this pattern continues, you will find yourself in a vicious circle—wounding, comforting, feeding the additions.

Death Spiral: There may come a time when the addiction has stripped you of everything you held dear and you experience a devastating public personal crash. You lose relationships, wealth, your job, your marriage, children, you name it. People will wonder if you even know Jesus.

Second Question: Do you want to get well? This is the question Jesus asked the man who had been for thirty-eight years stuck by the Pool of Bethesda in John 5. Before your life comes to a death spiral, do you want something else—the wholeness that you saw was promised through the gospel, the promise that you would become like Jesus? Sometimes people do not want to own their *sin in me* choices and blame others for their addictions. They will never go forward until they get past this. Sometimes people are not ready to say “yes,” to this question and they continue to try to find other ways to get well on their own. They pursue books, seminars, counseling, step programs—religious activity! Or they become convinced that now they know, they are supposed to fix their addictions with Jesus’ help. None of these tactics will work. The truth is quite different and you have to answer the question to go on.

Jesus: You need two things from Jesus you cannot get anywhere else. You need him as the Great Physician to heal your *hurt of the heart*. At the same time you need him as your King to deliver you from the *sin in me* addictions. It is both, not one or the other. The harder of the two will be to let Jesus heal, as people are very protective of their pain, fearing they will have to experience it again alone. To receive healing from Jesus, you have to look at *Him*, not the addiction. As you become intimate with Him, He heals and delivers so that your symptoms go away all by themselves.

Intimacy through Done Disciplines: A Done Discipline is one that allows you to better access what God has done for you through the death and resurrection of Jesus. There are three:

- 1) **Rest:** Be with Jesus without an agenda so you can know him better
- 2) **Appropriation:** Recognize and put to use what you have already received as a result of salvation—the hope, the riches and the power mentioned in Ephesians 1:18-19
- 3) **Meditation:** Contemplate the love of Christ for you that deepens your sense of security and trust in him. In this way your desires are changed and you find that you want to obey, and then find you can. This is salvation from the power of sin.

Goal: The goal of The Heart Chart is to help people move from being addicted to freedom and wholeness through intimacy with Jesus. The tool is used to open the mind of the person who is seeking help, to give him or her fresh perspective and hope. The **next steps** of this process will be about teaching the person to discover *hurt of the heart* and *sin in me* choices, then to learn the Done Discipline of being with Jesus and growing in a real relationship with him so the person will trust His love and His work in his or her life.