

HEART TROUBLE

Natalie was born with a heart defect.

- HLHS; Her heart was not complete.
- There was no “fix”.

Natalie needed a new heart.

- Without a new heart, she had only a few weeks of life in her and only with constant hospital supervision on life support.
- The alternative was ... unthinkable.
- The solution of heart transplant was entirely out of her control, even our control. This was something required the intervention of highly trained surgeons.

Natalie got a new heart!

- Made possible by:
 - The skill and expertise of highly-trained surgeons.
 - The death of another child with a heart perfectly suited to Natalie’s body.
 - And A LOT of money!

The good news: the results were successful!

- Immediately after the surgery, Natalie was visibly improved. She had a pink color that we’d really never seen in her up to that point.
- She now has a vibrant, complete heart beating in her chest. She can now live a full life more or less like any other child.

The bad news: she needs medicine daily

- In order to avoid rejection, Natalie must take medicine every day for the rest of her life.
- She can never forget to take the medicine or her heart may get weak and/or fail.

And now, part 2...

As Natalie was born with a heart defect, I had a heart defect.

- My heart is sick, withered like grass, and I have lost my appetite. Because of my groaning, I am reduced to skin and bones. (*Psalm 102:4-5*)
- The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly perverse and corrupt and severely, mortally sick! (*Jeremiah 17:9 (Amplified)*)
- Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (*Genesis 6:5*)
- "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." (*Matthew 15:18-19*)
- Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD. (*Proverbs 16:5a*)

Problem: we have a terminal disease called sin. There is no cure. Our hearts are beyond repair.

As Natalie needed a new heart, I needed a new heart.

Solution: heart transplant

- Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. (*Psalm 51:10-12*)

Just as only the highly-trained medical professionals knew exactly what Natalie needed, only God knows exactly what we need for our heart health. Think of that as you look at this next verse:

- For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (*Hebrews 4:12*)

As Natalie got a new heart, I got a new heart!

- Made possible by:
 - The miraculous power of God
 - The death of the only perfect person to walk this earth, Jesus Christ
 - The incalculable grace of God

- "I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and ... they will return to Me with their whole heart." (*Jeremiah 24:7*)
- "I'll give you a new heart. I'll put a new spirit in you. I'll cut out your stone heart and replace it with a red-blooded, firm-muscled heart." (*Ezekiel 11:19 (Message)*)
- A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil. (*Psalms 101:4*)

The good news is, as Natalie's heart transplant was a success, the result of our spiritual heart transplant is life everlasting!

- Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. (*Psalms 24:3-4*)
- A tranquil heart is life to the body. (*Proverbs 14:30a*)
- My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises! (*Psalms 57:7*)

That's the end!

No wait, it's not!

That much of the story is salvation 101.

Just as Natalie needs medicine daily for the rest of her life to keep her heart health, I need medicine, too. Actually, I need the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, we still have to live in this sinful body. Yes, we have the new nature granted to us by the Holy Spirit upon salvation, but we also still have the old nature in us, competing for attention.

Paul knew very well that this was true:

- For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. (*Romans 7:18-19*)
- So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. (*Romans 8:6-8*)

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. (*Romans 8:9-13, NLT*)

- Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered. (*Proverbs 28:26*)
- But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. (*Galatians 5:16-17*)

So we need to do the daily work of re-orienting our hearts, minds, and attitudes toward God and His word, which is life.

- Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad. (*Proverbs 12:25*)
- A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones. (*Proverbs 17:22*)
- My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (*Psalms 73:26*)
- Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (*Proverbs 4:23*)

But haven't we seen that we can't guard our own heart? What a tall order! Could Natalie protect her own heart from rejection without the medicine? So what can we do?

- Be anxious for nothing.... [T]he peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts ... in Christ Jesus. (*Phillipians 4:6-7*)