

**Sermon:** *A Graduate's Check-up*  
**Text:** *I Corinthians 11:31*  
**Date:** *May 18, 2008 AM*  
**Place:** *Jesup FUMC*

There was once a man in the hills of Kentucky who developed a severe rash. So, he went to see the doctor in the big city and the doctor asked him a lot of questions and put him through a series of tests and came back and told the man: "Sir, I'm sorry, but I think you're allergic to your dog and I would advise you to get rid of it." Well, the man thought about that for a moment and then, he got up and started to leave. The doctor said: "Sir, I'm just curious; are you planning to sell that dog or just give it away?" And the man said: "Neither one. I'm going to get me one of them there second opinions I've been reading about. It's a whole lot easier to find a doctor than a good hunting dog."

What would we do without our doctors? When I moved to Wrightsville, I asked around for the best doctor in town and they sent me to Dr. Kitchens for a checkup. Well, that night, I went to the Church for Bible Study and somebody asked me, "Well, what did the doctor tell you?" I said: "He told me I was fat." Mr. James said: "That's what you get for going to the skinniest doctor in town."

Well, I was thinking about that this week as I prepared this sermon. You see, this morning, we've come to honor God and to recognize our graduates. And I was thinking: What can I say to our graduates and their families, what can I say to the people of God on Graduate Recognition Sunday? And I couldn't escape the feeling that each of us needs a checkup!

We all need a checkup to make sure we are where we need to be. Now, this isn't the kind of checkup you get at the doctor's office; and hey, I'm not even sure we need a second opinion, but we do need to stop from time to time, especially on those special occasions and take our vital signs and make sure that we are where we need to be. So this morning, I want to ask our graduates three questions; in fact, these questions are for everybody.

## **1. HOW ARE YOU DOING SCHOLASTICALLY?**

That's the question of the hour, isn't it? You've taken all the classes; you've passed all the tests. And the state of Georgia has given you their stamp of approval. They've said: "Give him a cap and gown" or "give her a diploma; she's ready. Their minds are ready."

You know, the human mind is an awesome thing. We think computers are wonderful, but the human mind is so awesome that we really haven't even scratched the surface of understanding how it works.

You've got the brains; you've done all the work, but I wonder if there isn't another side to this question: How am I doing scholastically? You see, one day, a lawyer came up to Jesus and said: "Good teacher, what is the greatest commandment?" And Jesus said: "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; this is the first and greatest commandment."

Did you catch that? You will love the Lord your God with all your mind. A lot of times we think of what happens at the Church and we immediately think about emotions and feelings, but God created the human mind for a purpose. And your intelligence, your academic achievement, is meant to do more than get you out of high school and into college; it is one way that you bring glory to God. God wants you to think. My daddy used to say: "Son, use your head for something besides a hat rack." God says: "Use your mind to glorify me."

So, how are you really doing scholastically?

## **2. HOW AM I DOING SOCIALLY?**

You and I were made to live in relationship with other people. We need friends; we need family. And part of what it means to be a child of God is living in relationship with one another. I John 1 says: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another."

Some time ago, a newspaper in England had a contest to find the best definition of a friend. Thousands of people submitted responses. Someone said: "A friend is one who

*understands your silence.” Another said: “A friend is a volume of sympathy bound in cloth.” But the winning entry said: “A friend is someone who is coming in when the rest of the world is running away.”*

Breaking baseball's color barrier was no easy for Jackie Robinson. He was jeered and booed everywhere he played, even in his home stadium in Brooklyn, New York. One day, the Dodgers were playing at home and Jackie committed an error. Immediately, the crowd started ridiculing him. Jackie hung his head and stood here alone; and then, Pee Wee Reese, the short stop, came over and stood next to him, and put his arm around Jackie's shoulder. And the fans stopped booing. Years later, Jackie was asked about that day, and he said: *“Pee Wee Reese saved my career by his one single act of kindness.”*

Soon, all of your relationships will change. Your relationship with mom and dad will undergo a transformation. You will lose some friends and make a few new ones. And the truth is: if you make it through life with one truly friend, one person who will come in when the rest of the world is going out, you'll be very blessed.

So, let me ask you: how is your relationship with your family? How is your relationship with the people that God has placed in your life? How are you doing socially?

### **3. HOW AM I DOING SPIRITUALLY?**

I Timothy 4:7 says: **“Take the time and the trouble to keep yourself spiritual fit.”** Now, everybody understands the importance of keeping ourselves physically fit. And we understand what it takes to get us there. We have gyms and rehab places where you can go and work out; and if you don't want to go to the gym, there all kinds of exercise equipment that you can buy for your home. We want to be physically fit.

We understand the importance of mental and emotional health too. We know what to do when we're feeling down; we know what to do for depression and even some forms of severe mental illness. But very few people seem to give much thought to spiritual health?

Friends, God cares about our spiritual health. And Paul told Timothy: **“Take the time and the trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit.”** Now, how do we do that?

**Well, first, Spiritual fitness begins with a good diet.** Jesus told Satan: **“It is written, ‘Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”** Everyone needs to develop a regular pattern of reading, studying, and meditating on the Word of God.

**Second, spiritual fitness requires regular spiritual exercise.** This means that we simply have to live out in our daily lives what we've learned in God's Word. It means that we have to do some knee bends; spend a lot of time on our knees in prayer. Paul said that we should always **“Pray without ceasing.”**

You'll be healthier spiritually if you develop a prayer life.

It means that we need to put our faith into action. Faith is like a muscle that only increases in strength when it is used. When the disciples asked Jesus for more faith, Jesus said: **“If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this tree be uprooted and thrown into the sea and it would obey you.”** In other words, it's not how much faith you have; it's how you use the faith you have.

You'll be healthier spiritually if you exercise your faith.

It means serving God by serving others. In the Upper Room on the last night of His life, Jesus sat patiently waiting for one of His disciples to take on the role of a servant. And when they didn't, He took the towel and wrapped it around Himself and went from person to person, washing their feet. And when He finished, He said: **“You don't know what I have done for you. If I, your teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, so you ought to wash one another's feet.”**

You'll be healthier spiritually if you serve those around you.

Spiritual health requires the right diet and the right exercise. So, how are you doing spiritually?

You know, there are certain times in our lives when we need to stop and have a checkup. Believe me, I've reached the age where every time I go to the doctor, he wants to poke me and prod me somewhere where I don't want to be poked and prodded.

But the good thing about a self exam is that it is less painful. And that's what I'm encouraging you to do this morning: stop and do a check up on yourself. How are you doing scholastically? How are you doing socially? How are you doing Spiritually?

I'm so proud of your accomplishments; and I want pray for you right now.