

2018 Message Series: May 27 - June 17, 2018

Message Series: "Turning 21 with Wesley: 21 Questions for becoming Mature Christians"

Book: *The Wesley Challenge: 21 Days to a More Authentic Faith*, by Chris Folmsbee, Abingdon Press in March 2017.

Background: In 1729 John Wesley, the leader of a small group at Oxford University called "Methodists," posed 21 questions to help the group pursue a more mature Christian faith.

Series Text: "God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ." -Ephesians 4:13b

Series Theme: Growing up and becoming mature Christians.

Series Blurb: Join us for the Wesley Challenge, built around 21 questions that John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, encouraged the first Methodists to ask one another. Through weekly sermons and daily reflection questions, we're going to explore how we can develop the spiritual habits, practices and actions that can lead to a thriving Christian life.

Daily Devotions: Provide daily devotions for people for the dates May 27 - June 16. Call the devotional "21 Questions for 21 Days: Turning 21 with Wesley!" Provide a schedule of 21 daily Bible verses and Wesley questions to reflect upon. This would also serve as the Church at Home devotions for adults. The Daily Devotions will be drawn from the GPS daily guides from <https://cor.org/leawood/sermon-series/21-questions>

Series Sources: *The Wesley Challenge: 21 Days to a More Authentic Faith*, by Chris Folmsbee, Abingdon Press in March 2017.

Also Adam Hamilton's message series "21 Questions" at:

<https://cor.org/leawood/sermon-series/21-questions>

SUNDAY, MAY 27: Memorial Day Sunday

Message Title: Turning 21 with Wesley: 21 Questions to Christian Maturity

Message Theme: First question: "Is Jesus Real to Me?" Pursuing spiritual maturity. Give your whole selves to God, seek Him with all your being. God is near us all the time, in all we do. We need mindfulness to know He is close. Spiritual exercises to keep our spiritual selves fit.

Message Scripture: Acts 17:26-28

Memory Verse: "God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ." -Ephesians 4:13b

Kids Activity: The Hot Seat ("Kids Say the Darndest Things") interview of the week's 7 questions

Blurb: We've read through 1 John together, and we've heard the calling to holiness. Holiness is essentially becoming a mature Christian. This Sunday we begin our next series, "Turning 21 with Wesley." Over the next 21 days, we'll ask ourselves 21 different questions that John Wesley first asked the early Methodists to help them grow into maturity. It's time to grow up. It's time to become mature. It's time to "turn 21" as Christians!

Daily Devotional: Each Sunday a daily devotional will be provided for the upcoming week that engages each day's question. This devotional is attached in the weekly email blasts, is available in the bulletin, at the Welcome Center, on the church website, and on Facebook.

Opening Song: Hymn Sing (Andrew and Rebekah)

Welcome: -Pastor David

Memory Verse

“God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.” -Ephesians 4:13b

Worship Music Set: - Sanctify

Fill My Heart

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

Restoration

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Prayers: Memorial Day (Andrew)

Offering: *The Standard* (Sanctify)

Love Offering

The Hot Seat: Engaging the 21 Questions (David, Ezra and an adult)

Wesley's 21 questions in 1729 among Oxford Methodists

1. “Is Jesus real to me?”
2. Am I enjoying prayer?
3. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
4. Did the Bible live in me today?
5. Did I disobey God in anything?
6. Do I pray about the money I spend?
7. Do I give time for the Bible to speak to me every day?

Message: Turning 21 with Wesley: 21 Questions to Christian Maturity

Message Bumper

PP#1: Turning 21 with Wesley: 21 Questions to Christian Maturity

“God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.” -Ephesians 4:13b

Turning 21 with Wesley: 21 Questions to Christian Maturity. Ephesians 4:13b “God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.”

We're in the middle of our Jubilee year here as a church, and we're spending this year restoring our primary relationship with our God. In January we met with Jesus at the prayer rail. In Lent we chose to give up what was keeping us from a deeper relationship with God. Since Easter we read through 1 John, and heard God's calling to holy love and to grow in holiness. So now, it's time to “grow up,” in our faith. It's time to leave behind the easy, childish ways of thinking about our faith, the simple beliefs that keep us from being challenged into holiness. In our culture, turning 21 marks our full entrance into the “age of majority.” Church, it's time we turn 21 in our faith!

A key element of maturity is self-reflection. It's being honest with ourselves, allowing ourselves to be challenged, to be wrong, and to set aside former ideas and constructs. It's moving away from self-centeredness and toward self-sacrifice.

So, since spiritual maturity requires spiritual reflection, we're going to spend the next month reflecting together as a church. And to do that, we're going back into our Methodist spiritual heritage and use 21 questions that John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, posed to the earliest Methodists.

John Wesley went to college in Oxford. After he got his master's degree, his father became frail, and could not continue all of his pastoral duties. So, Wesley left Oxford to go help his father pastor his churches. During that time, John's younger brother, Charles, also went to Oxford. He and a couple of friends—one being the famed George Whitefield—found the worldly atmosphere of Oxford troubling, and they began meeting as a small group together to read the Bible and pray together. In opposition to the free lifestyle of the other college students, they agreed to hold to a regimented daily schedule. Incidentally, this also allowed them time to go out and volunteer at schools, hospitals, prisons, and poor houses. They called it their "Holy Club." The other college students teased them with other names, like "Bible moths" because they read the Bible every day, and "Methodists," because they held to a method of schedule and spiritual growth. The latter name stuck...and that's why we're called United *Methodists*!

PP#2: *Image of John Wesley and the Holy Club in Oxford.*

Well, in 1729 John Wesley returned to Oxford to teach and tutor, and when he arrived, his younger brother asked him to chaperone the little Holy Club. They told John they wanted to grow spiritually, and so John said that when they met together, he would pose them questions to reflect on and discuss, to help them grow spiritually. Over the course of time, John posed 21 different questions, and the little group grew in spiritual maturity, and in numbers!

This can be our example. Over the next 21 days, let's use these questions for our own spiritual growth. We'll take one each day. There's a brief Bible reading and reflection questions for you to use, handed out in your bulletin today. They are also available at the Welcome Center, on the church website, and in the weekly emails sent from the office. Daily devotions and reflection time.

So, we're spiritually "turning 21" by reflecting on Wesley's 21 questions over the next 21 days. It's a way to grow in holiness, to grow in faith, and become mature.

PP#3: John Wesley's 21 questions for the Oxford Methodists

1. Is Jesus real to me?
2. Am I enjoying prayer?
3. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
4. Did the Bible live in me today?
5. Did I disobey God in anything?
6. Do I pray about the money I spend?
7. Do I give time for the Bible to speak to me every day?

So today, we start with the first question. And this question sets the foundation for all the rest. Is Jesus real to me? Being a Jesus follower is not just something you believe or understand. It's a relationship, a personal relationship with Jesus. God is real, and Christians talk about experiencing this God in a personal relationship. And this relationship affects our daily lives. Did you notice how Wesley poses the questions not just as "Are you performing the religious rituals, tasks, and

obligations?” But, if Jesus is real to you, then prayer becomes an experience of God, not a duty. Do you do it out of enjoyment and love? Is His Spirit in you pushing you one way, but is there also a stubborn defiance within you urging a different way? Do you see the personal application of faith here? It’s real in your life when you live it out. Your love for God is action!

Rather than just reading the Bible, do you let it change how you live? Is there something keeping you from sold-out obedience to God? Spending money is an act of prayer. Do you visit with God before you spend His money that He’s entrusted to you? Do you expect God to speak to you as you read the Bible? If so, that requires time. God is a jealous lover. He wants time with you!

PP#4: Is Jesus Real to Me?

1. The purpose of life is to RECEIVE, RECIPROCATE, and REFLECT God’s love.

You see, our real God wants a real relationship with us. The purpose of life, we say as Christians, is to love and enjoy God. We receive and reciprocate God’s love, and we reflect it to others. Our reality is one of relationship, and sin is independence from that dependence.

St. Augustine from the 4th century so famously put it in the first chapter of his *Confessions*, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until we find rest in you.”

PP#5: Acts 17:26-28 (CEB)

26 From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God made the nations so they would seek Him, perhaps even reach out to Him and find Him. In fact, God isn’t far away from any of us. 28 In God we live, move, and exist. As some of your own poets said, ‘We are His offspring.’

The Apostle Paul traveled to Athens, and on one of the hills in the city, Mars Hill, spoke to the people there. He explained, as recorded in acts 17:26-28, “From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands. God made the nations so they would seek Him, perhaps even reach out to Him and find Him. In fact, God isn’t far away from any of us. In God we live, move, and exist. As some of your own poets said, ‘We are His offspring.’”

Paul is saying that God just doesn’t regulate people, but that He actually made people to search for God, to reach out for Him, and to find Him. Then Paul says, “Take heart!” God is not hidden, hard to find, far off. And then he quotes one of their own ancient philosophers, Epimenides, saying that in God, “we live, and move, and have our being.”

Is Jesus real to you? It’s not just if you know about Him. Do you know Him personally? We are embarking on a journey for how Jesus can be more real to you in your everyday life.

Evelyn Underhill was an Anglican who died in 1941. She wrote a little booklet called *The Spiritual Life*. It’s about growing into Christian maturity by having a real relationship with God.

PP#6: Picture of Evelyn Underhill on the left, and this quote on the right:

“So many Christians are like deaf people at a concert. They study the program carefully, believe every statement made in it, speak respectfully of the quality of the music, but only really hear a phrase now and again.

She wrote, “So many Christians are like deaf people at a concert. They study the program carefully, believe every statement made in it, speak respectfully of the quality of the music, but only really hear a phrase now and again. ...”

PP#7: *Picture of Evelyn Underhill on the left, and this quote on the right:*

“So they have no notion at all of the mighty symphony which fills the universe, to which our lives are destined to make their tiny contribution, and which is the self-expression of the Eternal God.” -Evelyn Underhill

“... So they have no notion at all of the mighty symphony which fills the universe, to which our lives are destined to make their tiny contribution, and which is the self-expression of the Eternal God.”

God is everywhere, but we don’t experience Him enough. We keep our faith in our heads!

The deep, spiritual life is not just for the most holy, the monks, the deeply religious, those with a special bent to the spiritual. It’s intended for everyone! And it’s pursued in the midst of every life, no matter what your job or duty.

PP#8: *Picture of Evelyn Underhill on the left, and this quote on the right:*

“What is asked of us is not necessarily a great deal of time devoted to what we regard as spiritual things, but the constant offering of our wills to God, so that the practical duties which fill most of our days can become part of His order and be giving spiritual worth.”
-Evelyn Underhill

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It’s praying about every time you spend money. It’s about praying as you drive to work. It’s about listening to the disagreement on the inside about something you’re doing.

PP#9: Is Jesus Real to Me?

2. Do everything as though Jesus is next to you

“So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you should do it all for God’s glory.” -1 Corinthians 10:31

“Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through Him.” -Colossians 3:17

Paul talks about this as “whatever you do, do it for God’s glory.” That means sweeping the garage so God would be proud. It means working with that coworker like she is God’s daughter. It means giving up that unhealthy anger about the political news. “Whatever you do, in speech or action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus.” That means your Facebook posts. Ouch! Do your posts show Jesus? Think about that! You’re turning 21. Time to clean up what you’re sharing! That means your emails at work. It means the attitude with which you do what you do. Come on: grow up!

PP#10: *First image from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brother_Lawrence*

And below: The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence

There was poor French man in the 1600s named Lawrence. As a young man he had to join the army. After fighting in the 30 Years War, he served as a butler. But then, he felt the calling of God to show his love for others. So, he approached a monastery in Paris and asked what they needed done. They told him they needed a cook. So, he moved into the monastery and cooked for the monks. When he had time, he mended the monk's sandals.

Now, Brother Lawrence wasn't a holy man. But everything he did, he did for God's glory. He said that as he was peeling potatoes, he would talk with God. As he washed the dishes, he would pray. God was close, all the time! And had such wonderful experiences with God, that the monks, when they came to have their sandals mended, would ask him about his experiences with God. He wrote a book, now considered a Christian classic, called *The Practice of the Presence of God*. You can get it as a cheap download.

To this day, no one remembers any of the monks of that monastery, or any of the important people he served, but Brother Lawrence continues to show people how to find God in everyday life.

PP#11: Is Jesus Real to Me?

3. Mindfulness - paying attention - seeing God all around you

The key to spiritual maturity is self reflection on our Christian faith, and our personal relationship with Jesus. It's a mindfulness of the relationship of love we have with God, to receive, respond, and reflect that love. Its doing everything as though Jesus is right next to you. It's about having an open life, open to God. Sin is a self-centeredness, a self-focus. It's being independent. Living a fully, rich, and meaningful life is giving up your independence and letting God fill that God-shaped hole in your heart! It's seeing God everywhere. All creation evidences God's glory. The animals are recipients of God's love. The birds sing about it, although they don't know why they sing. We people, we receive and respond.

When Wesley crafted his 21 questions, he was pulling from a spiritual giant of the 1500s: St. Ignatius of Loyola in Spain. He was a Jesuit and wrote another Christian Classic, *Spiritual Exercises*. He said that growing spiritually was like the exercising we do for our bodies: it requires spiritual exercises, spiritual workouts that tone our spiritual cores. Hmmm...sound familiar? One of those daily workouts, he suggested, was the Daily Prayer of Examen. It was a prayer to pray at the end of each day.

PP#12: St. Ignatius of Loyola: "Daily Prayer of Examen"

1. What are the blessings in my life? - Give thanks!
 2. Where did I meet God or see God at work today? - Reflect.
 3. What happened in my day? What did I learn, How did I feel? -Reflect.
 4. Where did I fall short of God's will today? -Confess. [You can do better.]
 5. Offer tomorrow's plans and myself to God. -Petition.
 6. Pray for the needs of others.
 7. Close with the Lord's Prayer
- Use a journal!

It included seven either questions or prayers. Each night, reflect on your day.
 Reflect: 1. What are the blessings in my life? - Notice. Name them. And give thanks!
 Reflect: 2. Where did I meet God or see God at work today? - Reflect. He was there. Did you see Him?

Reflect: 3. What happened in my day? What did I learn, How did I feel? -Reflect. Wisdom is learning by experience, when we reflect on it and apply it.

Reflect: 4. Where did I fall short of God's will today? -Confess. [You can do better.]

5. Offer tomorrow's plans and myself to God. -Petition.

6. Pray for the needs of others. -Petition.

7. Close with the Lord's Prayer

One idea would be to use a journal to record your reflections and prayers, so you can see evidence of God in your life.

You know, during Lent, we gave up stuff for God. Then, we read our daily book together on 1 John. Now we are doing the 21 daily questions. When we're done with that, I'm going to suggest we use the Daily Prayer of Examen for a month. Then, we will be in our summer series on prayer, and we'll have another practice to try.

PP#13: Is Jesus Real to Me?

Picture of someone seeing God in a common, everyday experience.

But for now, as we pursue Christian maturity, we do that through daily reflection, and in seeing God in the everyday. Jesus is real and shows up in our lives every day. We just have to see Him. I'll share just one quick experience. Where did I see God at work this past week? On Wednesday I went to visit Bob Bullard. He's declining in health. And as I was going in to visit him, a neighbor was coming out. She turned to me and said, "Bob's declining. It's hard because he was doing so well. We all wanted him to get better. Bob is just such a wonderful man. Everyone here loves him. He's been through so much, and still he makes our day. The staff here say how they fight over who gets to go help him. He makes everyone's day brighter. He's a good member of your church. He lives his faith every day."

I saw God that day. He was right there. And He was there when I prayed with Bob. It's not in the big sermons or always having the right answer. It's in making other people feel like they are God's kids, too. You can do that. When you reflect, you grow. You see it happen, around you, and in you.

21 days of 21 questions to turning 21. Christian maturity. "God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ."

Amen.

Closing Song: *My Lighthouse* - Sanctify

Memory Verse

"God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ." -Ephesians 4:13b

Announcements:

Benediction: -Pastor David