

# DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR JUNE 10 - 16

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.

## FAMILY ACTIVITY:

John Wesley's rule stated, “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can.” As a family, talk about each of these phrases. What does the word “all” mean? Are there any exceptions? Compare Wesley's rule to Jesus' greatest commandments found in Matthew 22:37-40. Identify ways your family can grow to follow Jesus' and John Wesley's rules more completely. Share and celebrate your stories at the dinner table or at bedtime. Pray and ask God to help you love others as God loves you.

## Sunday, June 10

Scripture: Colossians 3:12, Luke 18:9-14

Wesley's question, “Do I thank God that I am not like others?”

We can draw many insights from Jesus' story in Luke 18. Chief among them is this: we are not to compare ourselves to others. Comparing our situation to others' is not healthy. Whether thanking God for not being like others, or wishing God would give us what others have, we are discrediting God. We need to come before God in a similar spirit as the tax collector in Jesus' story.

- To whom do you most often compare yourself? Is there one particular person, or group of people, that most often draw this tendency out in you? Why is that the case? When you compare yourself to others, are you more likely to find

yourself lacking in some way, or do you tend more to feel superior and grateful that you are not like them?

- Identify the “triggers” for the times you compare yourself to others. Perhaps certain contacts' Facebook posts leave you feeling somewhat self-satisfied, or conversely feeling inferior to them. Perhaps a club you're involved in causes you to feel “less than” others in some way. Remove these triggers from your life for a period of time, and assess the result. Does not comparing yourself to others impoverish your life, or make it better?

Prayer: God, teach me to see others as you see them—through a lens of love, compassion and mercy. I pray that I might always remember that we are all lost without you. Amen.

## Monday, June 11

Scripture: Philippians 2:5-8, 2 Timothy 1:6-9

Wesley's Question: “Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?”

This is a hard question to ask yourself, but Wesley prompted it for a very good reason. Faking it—pretending to be better than we are—actually keeps us from knowing who we are and how we are doing. You don't need to create an impression that you are better than you are. God's grace says that you, as you are, with all your cracks and flaws and blemishes, are amazing.

- Who do you have in your life who knows the real you? Seek one or more trustworthy people who knows you honestly and caringly, and can give you honest feedback and guidance. Also remember that you need to do all you can to know the “real you” yourself. Write a letter to yourself identifying three areas of your life you would like to see grow. Seal it and save it.
- Are there particular environments where you feel as though you have to fake it? What are the factors that make you feel that you have to hide some part of the real you in those settings or

relationships? Identify two or three steps you could take to be more real with people, either in seeking different settings or in challenging some of your own inner fears.

Prayer: God, help me to see myself as I truly am. Keep me from creating false versions of myself, and let me surround myself with people who I can be real with. Amen.

## **Tuesday, June 12**

Scripture: Proverbs 11:11-13, Daniel 6:3-4

Wesley's Question: "Do I confidentially pass on to others what was told to me in confidence?"

We know that trust is fundamental to establishing and sustaining strong relationships. So why do we feel the need to break trust by sharing matters told to us in confidence? Usually we feel the urge to relay private information because information is power. Humans love to let others know that we have access to powerful information. But when as Christians we cannot keep secrets or hold confidential matters private, we sabotage the very sense of community Jesus came to create.

- Has anyone ever betrayed your confidence? What happened after you discovered that your trust was broken? How did that experience affect that specific relationship, other relationships (especially if they were touched by the information wrongly shared), and your overall willingness and ability to trust others?
- Have you ever betrayed someone's confidence? What were the circumstances? If you have ever betrayed someone's confidence, how did you feel after you shared that person's confidential information? Are you still in a relationship with that person? Why or why not? If you have never betrayed someone's confidence, how was this principle of trust instilled in you?

Prayer: Help me, God, to control my desire to reveal information that was told to me in confidence. Guard my tongue, and help me to think before I speak and act. Amen.

## **Wednesday, June 13**

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 7:1, Proverbs 14:29-32

Wesley's Question: "Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?"

The behaviors John Wesley named in this question live inside all of us. We don't like that we possess these types of behavior, but we do. We work on becoming less of all of the above, because when we express them, they have an adverse impact on our life and the lives of others around us. That's why God calls us to grow in our capacity to live above and beyond the above characteristics, and ones like them.

- Do you know people who "fly off the handle?" What drives their behavior? Do you have a close relationship with anyone who displays any of these behaviors regularly? What is the impact of that person on you when they behave in these ways? How do you manage your interactions with them?
- Which of the characteristics John Wesley calls out in today's question do you struggle with most? The next time you find yourself reacting irritably, or feeling jealousy towards another person, take the time to question yourself and understand what is triggering your negative responses. Then identify healthy outlets for your negative feelings—like exercise (even a quick walk around the block), breath prayers, meditation, a gratitude journal, or playing with your dogs.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, breathe in me so that my thoughts may be pure. Move in me so that my work may be pure. Pull me into your love so that I love only what is pure. Give me strength to guard my heart so that all I do is pure. Amen.

## **Thursday, June 14**

Scripture: Colossians 3:9-11

Wesley's Question: "Am I honest in all my actions and words or do I exaggerate?"

Wesley's question can help you evaluate your level of contentment with life. It can help you be true to your identity in Christ, remembering that Christ loves you for who you are

as a child of God, not for what you do or have. And it can challenge you to reflect on your character, to discover how free you are to be content, be grateful, be you—and live inspired by your heavenly worth!

- The next time you are tempted to lie or exaggerate, stop to notice what is driving this temptation. Are you intimidated by the group or person you are with? Do you feel “less than” them in some way? Are you trying to impress someone? As you think about your giving plans (graduations, weddings, birthdays, etc.), are any of them at least partly meant to implicitly exaggerate your wealth and ability to give?
- Is there a truth about yourself that you need to tell someone? Is there something you need to “come clean” about, some exaggeration or falsehood that takes more and more energy to maintain? Set aside some private time with that person or group, confess your truth honestly, and set yourself free.

Prayer: Jesus, you modeled honesty—from your birth to your death, burial and resurrection. I pray that honesty may become one of my most valued and tangible virtues. Amen.

### **Friday, June 15**

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Wesley’s Question: “Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard?”

Today’s question covers a lot of ground. Taking into account the people we fear, those we feel disdain or indifference towards, and the people we resent can add up to a few people, or for some of us, many. We cannot fully live the Christian life, as Jesus meant us to, until we are at peace not only with God and our self, but also with others.

- Have you created a separation between yourself and another person because you simply don’t like them? If so, ask yourself what is driving this dislike. More broadly, would you say you are at peace with God, self and others? Why or why not?
- Read Romans 12:9-17 (aloud if possible). Reflect on how living out those Scriptural principles can produce a positive response to

today’s question. As first steps, sometime in the next week, if the occasion presents itself, speak with a person who “rubs you the wrong way.” Find a moment today to say something kind to someone you dislike or have intentionally steered clear of.

Prayer: Lord, change me. Replace comparison with compassion in my heart and mind, and make me more like Christ is—loving to all. Amen.

### **Saturday, June 16**

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20

Wesley’s Question: “When did I last speak to someone about my faith?”

When John Wesley challenges us with the question, “When did I last speak to someone about my faith?” he is directly encouraging us to take up the challenge Jesus gave His disciples in Acts 1:8ff, to be His witnesses or storytellers. In Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-49, and John 20:21-22, we also read that Jesus challenged His followers to continue the mission and message of God’s work. To respond faithfully to Wesley’s question is to live a life of going, obeying and listening to the Holy Spirit, realizing that each one of us is sent into the world to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

- When did you last speak to someone about your faith? Do you show your faith more through your words or deeds? How can you balance both of those sides of the gospel “coin” in your day-to-day life? Think through your story of personal transformation. How has your faith in God changed your life and made you a better person, who has a better effect on the lives of others? Spend some time writing your story down.

Prayer: God, you sent Jesus to show us the way. I pray that I would profess my trust in the saving grace of the gospel with courage and direction from the Holy Spirit, helping you draw my family and friends to your transforming love. Amen.