

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR JUNE 3 - 9

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:

Did you know that God wants us not only to care for others, but to also care for ourselves? Prepare a piece of paper with the headings Physical, Emotional, Spiritual and Mental. Down the left side of the paper, write the name of each family member. First, talk together about how we can each care for ourselves. Are we getting enough rest and eating healthfully? Do we express our emotions in helpful ways? Are we reading our Bible, attending worship and praying? Have we learned any new information recently? Encourage each person to choose one way from each category to commit to growing this year. Pray and ask God to help each of you as you better care for yourselves.

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

Sunday, June 3

Scripture: Psalm 139:13-14, Ephesians 2:4-10

Wesley’s question, “Am I proud?”

We all know those who walk around as if they were puffed up with air, proud of their wealth, their title, their looks, their ability. Sometimes, we’re even those people! St. Augustine once said that pride is “the love of one’s own excellence.” This goes beyond simply healthy self-esteem: it’s believing that we are somehow superior. Take comfort in the fact that you are valuable and precious to God. But so is everyone else.

- What are your strengths, from God’s perspective? Are you ever tempted to think and act as though those strengths make you superior to other people? Are there places in your life where you are masking insecurities with pride? Are you able to be happy when someone else succeeds or gains praise, or does it make you feel threatened?
- What’s the difference between healthy self-esteem and pride? Can you recall a time when you successfully overcame a sense of unhealthy pride? If so, what helped you to do that? Do you have anyone in your life who can honestly challenge you on pridefulness? If anyone does challenge you, do you tend to immediately become defensive?

Prayer: Creator of the universe, thank you for the gift of life you’ve entrusted to me. Help me find security in you and free me from the need to feel superior. Amen.

Monday, June 4

Scripture: John 16:33, Romans 7:21-25

Wesley’s Question: “Am I defeated in any part of my life?”

To admit that we are defeated is an act of courage. To admit that we need help is bravery. To admit that our stability, strength and sustainability come from God is an act of worship. We honor God when we declare our need for God’s help. The Psalms were filled with constant cries for help and support. The apostle Paul memorably wrote, “I’ll gladly spend my time bragging about my weaknesses so that Christ’s power can rest on me....when I’m weak, then I’m strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

- In what areas of your life do you often feel defeated? What are the warning signs in your life that help you see your need for help and support? Is there anything that you could change, such as personal habits like healthier eating or exercise, that would help you overcome feeling defeated?
- Read the following verse every day for the week to remind yourself where your strength to overcome comes from: “The Lord is my solid rock, my fortress, my rescuer. My God is my rock—I

take refuge in Him!—He’s my shield, my salvation’s strength, my place of safety” (Psalm 18:2). Consider printing the verse and putting it in a place where you will see it regularly.

Prayer: God, help me, when I feel defeated, to center my thoughts on the many blessings in my life instead of my current or past circumstances. Grow my capacity for hope and trust. Amen.

Tuesday, June 5

Scripture: Genesis 2:2-3, Psalm 3:3-6

Wesley’s Question: “Do I go to bed on time and get up on time?”

This question is about being rested for the work of God in the world. However, it also points out our tendency toward being undisciplined in general. And that decreases our usefulness to God. This question is basically asking, “Are you rested and at your best to meet the challenges of the day, and ultimately represent God well and help make the world a better place?”

- Think about a time you’ve felt exhausted and depleted. What was your behavior like at that time? How good were the decisions you made when you were in that state of exhaustion? How would you answer John Wesley’s question, both on the surface level (adequate hours of sleep) and on its deeper level (rested enough to make the world a better place)?
- Choose a reasonable bedtime this week, one that will provide you with a good amount of rest, and stick to it. Perhaps it’s a half hour earlier than usual, or perhaps it’s a lot earlier than that. Don’t allow emails, television, or anything else that really can wait until the next day to interfere with that time you’ve set.

Prayer: God, help me be disciplined in my sleep and in my times of rest and recreation. I pray that I’ll be willing to stick to a schedule that allows me to be my best for your Kingdom’s sake. Amen.

Wednesday, June 6

Scripture: Philippians 2:14-16

Wesley’s Question: “Do I grumble or complain constantly?”

Do you have a tendency to complain? What would people around you say? When we complain, we think we are just making observations about reality. But constant complaining creates an alternative reality that leads us to shirk responsibility and blame others for our discontent. Wesley called us to ask ourselves and one another this question so that we can replace negative with positive thoughts, and start developing new habits marked by hope and optimism.

- Do you think you are optimistic or pessimistic by nature? Do you believe it is possible to reframe your approach to circumstances to view them in a positive rather than negative light? What could you do to start doing this?
- Think about any constant grumblers you know. What choices might be driving their negative outlook? Who do you know who is consistently a “glass half-full” person? What decisions and practices seem to help them live their lives this way? Think about times you have made conscious decisions to be more positive about a particular situation, or about life overall.

Prayer: Holy God, you always work for my good. May I honor you by avoiding complaining and replacing it with rejoicing, even when things do not go my way. Amen.

Thursday, June 7

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:7-9

Wesley’s Question: “Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?”

The underlying principle behind this question is simply: Who or what owns me? What consumes me? Who or what do I allow to control our life? When we are a slave to something or someone, it clearly means that we take our direction from a controlling person or object that is not God. We are called toward a healthy, balanced life of serving the Kingdom virtues we see in the life of Christ.

- What controls your life? Be honest with yourself. What is the focus of most of your thoughts? What preoccupies you? How much time, effort and focus would be available for your participation in the mission of God if this factor did NOT

preoccupy your life? Ask your spouse or a trusted friend to alert you when they notice you “feeding” this preoccupation in a way that limits God’s control in your life.

- One of the best ways to control or curb your enthusiasm for unhealthy things in your life is to consistently serve others. Find a place to serve regularly, to help rebalance the priorities in your life. Don’t wait for the ideal service situation to present itself. Try out a variety of service opportunities to find the place that captures your attention and focus.

Prayer: God, help me resist the desire to collect things I do not need, to resist the temptation to allow my impulses and obsessions to direct my decision-making. Help me to give you all I am and have. Amen.

Friday, June 8

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Wesley’s Question: “How do I spend my spare time?”

A 2014 Bureau of Labor Statistics survey said that, on average, employed Americans age 25-54 with children average 2.5 hours of leisure time, what we might assume Wesley meant by “spare time.” It is essential to determine where in your day you have spare time. You must also find what you should do with that time. This is not a time to answer emails you didn’t get to during your hours of work! It is time we often spend on empty social media or pursuing shallow entertainments. Wesley proposed this question as key for Christians so that we can determine which activities help us be refreshed, renewed and refocused on the essential priorities of our lives.

- Wesley (and Jesus) both want to make sure that we are not wasting time that we could use to strengthen our daily pursuit to Christian maturity. What activities bring you deeper joy and make you feel the most refreshed and energized? How much of your spare time do you spend on these pursuits? If it’s less than you would like, how can you restructure your time so that you are spending it in ways that bring you life?

- Make a spare time “map” of your week. For one week, record everything honestly, (for only your eyes). Be specific enough so that you can spot spare time patterns to help you evaluate your map. Use the calendar or notes functions on your phone to help you, or jot down notes in your desk calendar or portfolio, if that works best for you.

Prayer: God, may I use my spare time in ways that please you. Help me develop the consistent practices needed to use the time I have wisely. Amen.

Saturday, June 9

Scripture: Philippians 2:3-4

Wesley’s Question: “Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?”

It is healthy to be self-aware. However, being too aware of self can also make us self-absorbed. Wesley wanted us to reflect on this question so that we confront our human tendency to be so concerned with “self” that we lose sight of the “others” in our lives. Do yourself a favor. Reflect carefully and act swiftly on the core of what Wesley was getting at in today’s question. Watch it change the way you see the world and also the way others see you.

- How often do you attempt something you will be “bad” at? If your answer is “rarely,” why do you think that is? Are you afraid of being embarrassed or looking foolish to others? Are you worried about criticism, or is it because you have an excessive need to always be the “best”? Has anyone ever told you that you are self-absorbed, self-pitying, or self-justifying? What were the circumstances of that encounter? What, if anything, did you learn about yourself as a result?

Prayer: God, teach me to serve you first and to seek your kingdom. Help me to be less concerned about myself and more about you and your mission for this world. Help me not to be so concerned with myself that I forget your purpose for me. Amen.