

THREE SIMPLE RULES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Rule 3: Stay in Love with God

Focus Question

Christians love God. What does it mean to stay in love with God?

While the first two rules are important, they are difficult to sustain if we don't practice the third rule.

Reflection 1

What is your initial impression of the rule to stay in love with God?

What images or ideas come to your mind when you hear the rule?

Disciplines order our lives. To be a good musician one needs to be disciplined and practise regularly in order to improve. Disciplines order our lives so that we remember what is important. The term "Methodist" was initially a derisive term used for the members of the Oxford University "Holy Club" who observed in a 'methodical way' certain spiritual disciplines, or ordinances, or means of grace.

Reflection 2

What disciplines are you currently observing in your own life?

What disciplines have you observed in the past?

What challenges or benefits resulted from these disciplines?

Essential spiritual disciplines, or practices, include: daily time of prayer; reflection upon and study of Scripture; regular

participation in the life of a Christian community, including weekly worship and participation in the Lord's Supper; doing acts of goodness or mercy; and taking opportunities to share with and learn from others who seek to follow the way of Jesus. To this could also be added 'fasting and abstinence'.

Such practices are essential to loving God and loving one's neighbour.

Reflection 3

Which discipline appeals most to you? Why?

How do you respond to the idea that consistent practise of these disciplines keeps us in touch with Christ's presence and power?

Prayer

It is said of John Wesley that he "*lived to pray and prayed to live.*" Wesley called prayer the "*grand means of drawing near to God.*" Prayer helps maintain our relationship with Christ. Wesley's habit for over 50 years was to rise at 4.30am – 5.00am for private prayer so that his first thoughts of the day would focus on God. His diary tells us that he would use the changing of the hour to pray throughout the day. In the evening his prayer-time was a review of the day and included confession, resolving to make amendments, and entrusting himself to God's care through the night.

Public prayer is also essential as we meet with others in small groups or in congregational worship.

Reflection 4

How do you respond to Wesley's discipline for personal and public prayer? Does it appeal to you? Why or why not?

Worship and the Lord's Supper

Wesley had no patience with people who thought they could live as Christians without being in community. He wrote:

“Holy solitaires’ is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.”

Life in Christ means a life lived in the body of Christ. It is the duty of the Christian to receive Holy Communion as often as one can. When we receive the bread ‘in remembrance’ it is more than recollection. It means recalling an event so completely that it is made present to us. In the communion meal the risen Christ is present.

Reflection 5

How do you experience the presence and power of Christ when you take the bread and cup?

Bible Reading and Study

The Bible has the unique ability to bring people to encounter God. For devotional purposes it is best to read the Bible slowly. It is helpful to have a good Bible guide or help – and it is even better if one can join a Bible study group on a regular basis.

Reflection 6

What is your experience of reading and studying the Bible?

What benefits do you see in this practice?

How might it be challenging?

Fasting

Wesley advocated a balanced approach to this discipline – recommending that one fasts for one day a week from food, but not from water. He saw the benefit as bringing people into a temperate way of living and to provide more time for prayer and encountering God.

Reflection 7

What is your response to fasting as a spiritual discipline?

How might it challenge you?

How might it be beneficial?

What does the Bible say?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – *the command to be faithful in loving God.*

Matthew 22:34-40 – *the most important commandment.*

1 Kings 8 – *Solomon’s dedication of the great Temple, a place of worship affirming God’s presence in the world.*

John 4 – *Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman and the conversation about worship as a means of encountering God.*

