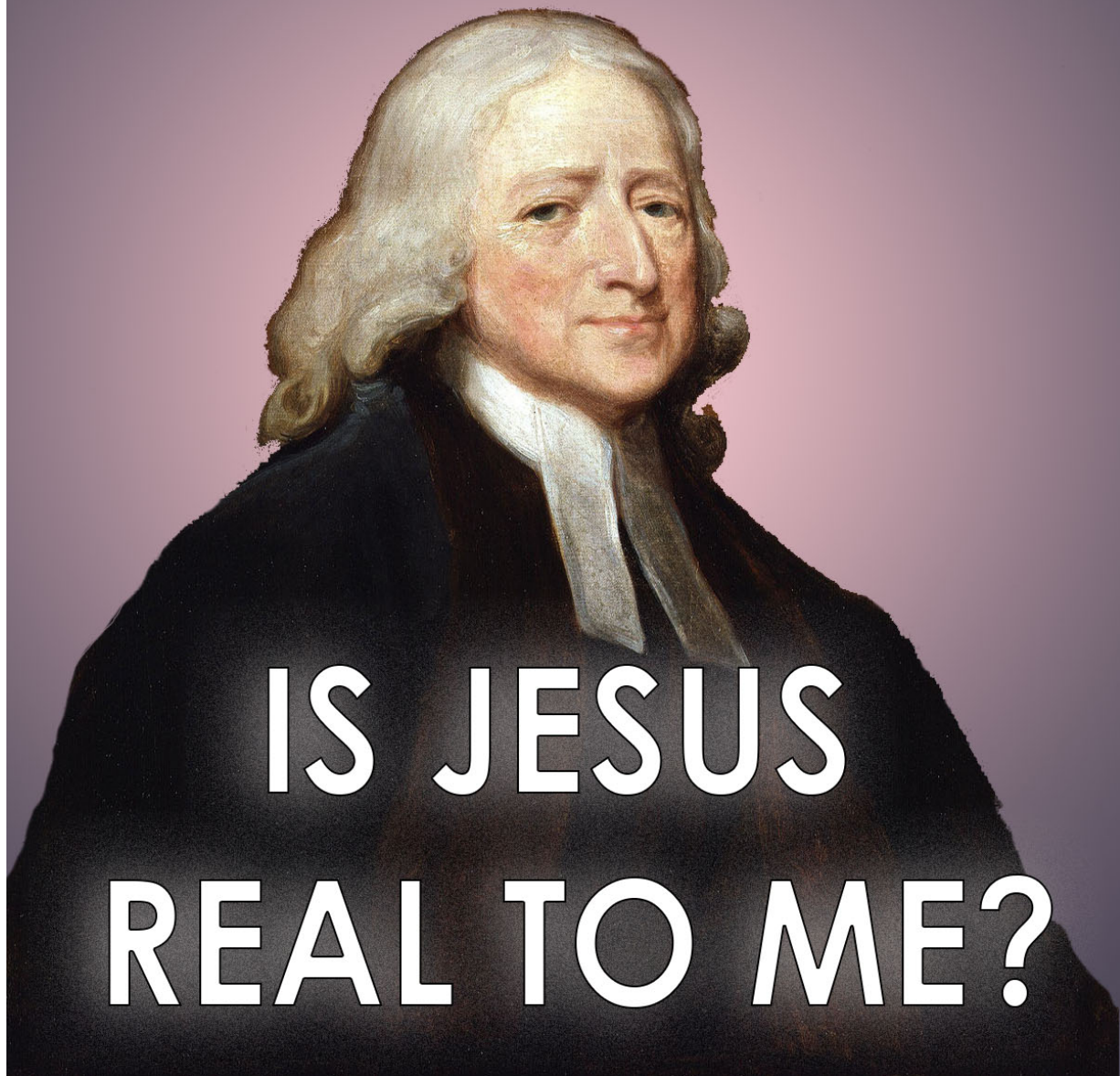


20 QUESTIONS

EXCERSISES FOR A HEALTHY SPIRITUAL LIFE



A Devotional Guide by Pastor Tim Hunsinger

20 Questions: Exercises for a Healthy Spiritual Life

The Christian spiritual life is about one thing, our relationship with God. It begins with God's love in the form of grace. John Wesley understood God's grace as God's love in action, hard at work in our lives even before we come to know and trust in God. Grace draws us into relationship with God through Jesus Christ. When we come to accept the healing power of God's love and forgiveness we begin a journey of growing deeper in relationship with God through grace, experiencing the power and presence of the risen Christ growing us in holiness of heart and life, filling us with the love of God.

Our work as Christians is to pay attention and to be intentional in our response to God's desire to be in relationship with us. As we do, Jesus becomes more real to us. The health of our spiritual life, our relationship with God, is evidenced by the presence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23 NRSV).

While we tend to focus on the items of this list that involve our relationship with others, it is important to notice that the first three describe the fulfillment that we find in our relationship with God. In thinking about the health of our spiritual life it is also vital to remember that we should experience increasing joy and peace as we are filled with God's love.

Wesley's twenty questions arose from his desire to be intentional about growing in his faith in a small group of Christians at Oxford seeking to do the same. Like physical exercises they not only help to make your relationship with God grow stronger they also work to reveal your current level of health. In the pages of this study, Wesley's twenty questions have been arranged with scripture, quotes from Wesley, and prompts to encourage journaling.

We close with a quote from John Wesley in which he envisions a vital and healthy spiritual life. We invite you to return to it often as a point of personal reflection and encouragement.

“After being filled with love, there is no more interruption of it than the beating of their hearts. And continual love bringing continual joy in the Lord, they rejoice evermore. They converse continually with the God whom they love, unto whom in everything they give thanks. And as they now love God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind and with all their strength, so Jesus now reigns alone in their heart, the Lord of every motion there.” JW Sermon “On Patience” (1784), 10 (Works, 3:175-76)

Wesley's 20 Questions

1. Am I enjoying my prayer life?
2. Do I pray about the money that I spend?
3. How do I spend my spare time?
4. Do I go to bed on time and get up on time?
5. Do I give the Bible time to speak to me? Did the Bible Live in me today?
6. Did I disobey God in anything?
7. Am I honest in all my actions and words or do I exaggerate?
8. Am I proud?
9. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
10. Do I thank God that I am not like others?
11. Do I grumble and complain about others?
12. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, or distrustful?
13. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
14. Is there someone I have yet to forgive? Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard?
15. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
16. Do I confidentially pass on to others what was told to me in confidence?
17. When did I last talk to someone about my faith?
18. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
19. Is Christ Real to You?
20. Am I defeated in any part of my life?

The Daily Examine

The daily examine provides a guide that you may find useful in organizing your daily prayer practice. Each day take some time to work through the questions before prayer. A journal may prove to be helpful to record your reflections.

1. What are the blessings in my life? Give thanks for the blessings.
2. When did I meet God or see God today? Reflect upon these questions and give thanks.
3. What happened today? How did I feel? What did I learn? Reflect and offer your experiences and insights to God.
4. Where did I fall short of God's will today? Reflect, and confess your shortcomings to God.
5. Offer tomorrow's plans to God. Offer yourself to God.
6. Pray for others.
7. Close with the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give me this day my daily bread.

And forgive my trespasses, as I forgive those who trespass against me.

And lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, Forever.

Amen.

Week 1

Monday February 19th

Am I enjoying my prayer life?

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice...The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

John Wesley

“After being filled with love, there is no more interruption of it than the beating of their hearts. And continual love bringing continual joy in the Lord, they rejoice evermore. They converse continually with the God whom they love, unto whom in everything they give thanks. And as they now love God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind and with all their strength, so Jesus now reigns alone in their heart, the Lord of every motion there.” JW Sermon “On Patience” (1784), 10 (Works, 3:175-76)

Journal Reflection

- Compare Paul’s comments on prayer with those of Wesley: What common themes, images, or words stand out to you? Make a list. Be specific.
- How would you describe your prayer life? What words would you use?
- In Wesley’s quote, what is the reason for the Christian’s continual conversation with God in prayer?
- What does our enjoyment (or lack thereof) of our prayer life reveal to us about our relationship with God?
- Are you enjoying your prayer life?

Tuesday February 20th

What are the blessings in my life?

Regular reflection on the things that we are grateful for is a practice that helps us to learn to live from a perspective of gratitude.

Luke 17:11-19 (NRSV)

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, 13

they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” 14 When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? 18 Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to write each blessing down, be specific.
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Wednesday February 21st

Do I pray about the money I spend?

The Apostle Paul went on three missionary journeys establishing Christian churches in the non-Jewish nations of the Mediterranean World. Paul’s New Testament letters are written to these churches. As part of Paul’s missionary work he sought to take up a collection from the non-Jewish churches for the severely persecuted Christian church in Jerusalem. For Paul this offering was an opportunity for non-Jewish believers to show their unity with Jewish Christians through an act of charitable giving. In the following passage Paul writes to the church he established in the large and prosperous city of Corinth about Christian financial stewardship and the spiritual practice of generous giving.

2 Corinthians 8:7-14 NRSV

7 Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. 8 I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. 9 For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

10 And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— 11 now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. 12 For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. 13 I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between 14 your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.

John Wesley

Having, First, gained all you can, and, Secondly saved all you can, Then "give all you can." JW Sermon "The Use of Money" (1760)

Journal Reflection

- Why is it important to Paul to make sure the Corinthian believers understand that he is not commanding them to give in verse eight?
- Why should Christians be generous if it is not a command? What is the source of the Christian's desire to give? What is it reflective of?
- How does the quote from John Wesley help you think about Paul's advice in verses eleven through fourteen?
- What does this teach us about the spiritual practices of Christian Stewardship?
- How does prayer help answer the "question of a fair balance" in verses thirteen and fourteen?
- Do you pray about the money you spend?

Thursday February 22nd

Where did I meet God or see God at work this week?

Taking time to recognize the ways that God is at work in your life and the world is a practice that builds hope.

Proverbs 13:12 (NRSV)

12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to prayerfully reflect and record the ways in which you have seen God at work this week. Where has God shown up?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Friday February 23rd

How do I spend my spare time?

Psalm 39:4-5

4 “Lord, let me know my end,
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.
5 You have made my days a few handbreadths

James 4:13-15

13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.” 14 Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that.”

Psalm 31:14-15

14 But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, “You are my God.”
15 My times are in your hand

Do I go to bed on time and get up on time?

Genesis 2:2-3 (NRSV)

2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Exodus 20:8 (NRSV)

8 Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.

Journal Reflection

Today we look at two of Wesley’s twenty questions, both of which help us to reflect on the nature of the time we have, and how we chose to spend it.

- How do the first two passages help us to think about the amount of time we have? How would you describe it? What is important to recognize?
- How does the passage from Psalm 31 help us to think about James’ instruction in verse fifteen?

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- What does it mean to entrust God with the time we have?
- Does Christian stewardship apply only to money? How might it also apply to our time?
- Reflect on the passage from Genesis and Exodus. Was Sabbath rest made for God or for us? How is getting adequate rest important as a spiritual practice?
- How do you spend your spare time?

Saturday February 24th

Taking time to look back and reflect on your journal entries is an important exercise in the practice of journaling. Space is made each Saturday for this exercise.

Journal Reflection

Prayerfully read through each journal entry that you have made. The questions below are provided as prompts that you may find helpful in guiding your reflection.

- What themes or topics keep emerging for you?
- What has God revealed to you this week?
- What is God inviting you to do?
- Who is God inviting you to be?
- What is God leading you to question or consider?
- What wisdom have you received?
- What **“up to now”** has surfaced for you? What **“from now on”** are you being invited to consider?

Week 2

Monday February 26th

Do I give the Bible time to speak to me? Did the Bible Live in me today?

Psalm 1:2-3 NRSV

2 but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.
3 They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.

Psalm 19:7-14 NRSV

7 The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple;
8 the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
9 the fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

12 But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.

13 Keep back your servant also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Journal Reflection

- How would you describe the psalmist's experience of scripture in Psalm 1 and 19? What images and words stand out to you? Make a list. Be specific.
- In what ways did scripture speak to the psalmists?
- How did the psalmists experience scripture living in them?
- Write down in your own words the ways that scripture has spoken to you. How have you experienced scripture living in you?
- How can you give the Bible time to speak to you each day?
- Did the Bible live in you today?

Tuesday February 27th

What are the blessings in my life?

Regular reflection on the things that we are grateful for is a practice that helps us to learn to live from perspective of gratitude.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to write each blessing down, be specific.
- Compare today's list to your list last week. Is it different? If so how?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Wednesday February 28th

Did I disobey God in anything?

Hebrews 4:12 NRSV

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

1 John 1:9 NRSV

But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we've done wrong.

Psalms 51:10 NRSV

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

Journal Reflection

The passage from Hebrews paints an extremely vivid picture of the living word of God actively working in the life of the believer.

- Have you experienced scripture working in your life in this way?
- How did reading scripture bring to awareness the change that was needed?
- How did you respond?
- What assurances do we receive from 1 John about God's response to our desire to change?
- Have you disobeyed God in anything?

Thursday March 1st

Where did I meet God or see God at work this week?

Taking time to recognize the ways that God is at work in your life and the world is a practice that builds hope.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to prayerfully reflect and record the ways in which you have seen God at work this week. Where has God shown up?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Friday March 2nd

Am I honest in all my actions and words or do I exaggerate?

Colossians 3:9-10,12,16-17 NRSV

9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices 10 and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator...12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The passage from Colossians uses the image of changing our clothes to speak about our new way of life in Jesus, taking off our old practices of “word and deed (Verse 17)” and putting on new ones that reflect the image of our creator personified by Jesus.

- What are the practices that reflect our new life? Make a list? Be specific.
- What are some reasons that you might exaggerate?
- How is exaggeration related to actions and words of the old life? How is it contrary to the list you made for the first question?
- Not all exaggeration is a sin. We can exaggerate to make a point, which can be good. When does exaggeration become dishonest or a lie?
- What does it mean to live a life of integrity?
- Are you honest in all your actions and words or do you exaggerate?

Saturday March 3rd

Taking time to look back and reflect on your journal entries is an important exercise in the practice of journaling. Space is made each Saturday for this exercise.

Journal Reflection

Prayerfully read through each journal entry that you have made. The questions below are provided as prompts that you may find helpful in guiding your reflection.

- What themes or topics keep emerging for you?
- What has God revealed to you this week?
- What is God inviting you to do?
- Who is God inviting you to be?
- What is God leading you to question or consider?
- What wisdom have you received?
- What “**up to now**” has surfaced for you? What “**from now on**” are you being invited to consider?

Week 3

Monday March 5th

Am I Proud?

Proverbs 13:10 MSG

10 Arrogant know-it-alls stir up discord, but wise men and women listen to each other's counsel.

Romans 12:3-6 CEB

3 Because of the grace that God gave me, I can say to each one of you: don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you. 4 We have many parts in one body, but the parts don't all have the same function. 5 In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other. 6 We have different gifts that are consistent with God's grace that has been given to us.

Proverbs 11:2 NRSV

2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with the humble.

Journal Reflection

- How does Proverbs 13:10 help you understand Paul's instruction to "be reasonable" in the passage from Romans?
- How does taking time to listen help to overcome pride?
- How does pride keep someone from gaining wisdom (Proverbs 11:2)?
- How have you experienced the brokenness that pride causes in human relationships? Be specific.
- What does it mean to be humble? Describe what it looks like in practice.
- When was the last time that you "simply listened" to someone?
- Are you proud?

Tuesday March 6th

What are the blessings in my life?

Regular reflection on the things that we are grateful for is a practice that helps us to learn to live from perspective of gratitude.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to write each blessing down, be specific.
- Compare today's list to your list last week. Is it different? If so how?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Wednesday March 7th

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?

Matthew 23:25-28 NLT

25 "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! 26 You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too...Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. 28 Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

1 Corinthians 13:4 CEB

4 Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant

Psalm 17:10 NIV

10 They close up their callous hearts, and their mouths speak with arrogance.

Journal Reflection

- On what were the Pharisees focused?
- How is pride related to hypocrisy?
- How can pride deceive us, leading us to hypocrisy?
- Read 1 Corinthians and Psalm 17. How is arrogance contrary to love? What does it cause?
- What is love focused on?
- On what is God focused?
- What should be our focus as Christians?
- Are you a hypocrite?

Thursday March 8th

Where did I meet God or see God at work this week?

Taking time to recognize the ways that God is at work in your life and the world is a practice that builds hope.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to prayerfully reflect and record the ways in which you have seen God at work this week. Where has God shown up?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Friday March 9th

Do I thank God that I am not like others?

Luke 18:9-14 NLT

9 Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: 10 "Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—

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cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! 12 I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'

13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' 14 I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Journal Reflection

- Describe the prayer of the Pharisee in your own words.
- Describe the prayer of the Tax Collector in your own words.
- What was the Pharisee focused on?
- What was the Tax Collector focused on?
- What did the Pharisee place confidence in?
- What did the Tax Collector place confidence in?
- What are we really doing when we thank God that we are not like others?
- Do you thank God that you are not like others?

Saturday March 10th

Taking time to look back and reflect on your journal entries is an important exercise in the practice of journaling. Space is made each Saturday for this exercise.

Journal Reflection

Prayerfully read through each journal entry that you have made. The questions below are provided as prompts that you may find helpful in guiding your reflection.

- What themes or topics keep emerging for you?
- What has God revealed to you this week?
- What is God inviting you to do?
- Who is God inviting you to be?
- What is God leading you to question or consider?
- What wisdom have you received?
- What **"up to now"** has surfaced for you? What **"from now on"** are you being invited to consider?

Week 4

Monday March 12th

Do I grumble and complain about others?

Luke 6:41-42 MSG

41-42 “It’s easy to see a smudge on your neighbor’s face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Do you have the nerve to say, ‘Let me wash your face for you,’ when your own face is distorted by contempt? It’s this I-know-better-than-you mentality again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your own part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor.

James 3:17-18 MSG

17-18 Real wisdom, God’s wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.

Journal Reflection

- Read through both passages above. What phrase or phrases stand out to you? Write them in your journal. Reflect on how those you selected speak to you today.
- How does the passage from James characterize God’s real wisdom? What does it look like? Why is it “hard work?” How does grumbling make it harder?
- At the core of the passage from Luke is the word contempt. Look up and write down a definition of contempt in your journal. How is holding someone in contempt related to grumbling?
- What is the condition of a grumbling heart? What is it focused on? What is it unable to see? What “wisdom” is it lacking?
- Do you grumble and complain about others?

Tuesday March 13th

What are the blessings in my life?

Regular reflection on the things that we are grateful for is a practice that helps us to learn to live from perspective of gratitude.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to write each blessing down, be specific.

20 Questions: Exercises for a Healthy Spiritual Life

- Compare today's list to your list last week. Is it different? If so how?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Wednesday March 14th

Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable or distrustful?

James 3:13-16 MSG

13-16 Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here's what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It's the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn't wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn't wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn't wisdom. It's the furthest thing from wisdom—it's animal cunning, devilish conniving. Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others' throats.

Luke 6:37-38 MSG

37-38 "Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier. Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity."

Journal Reflection

- The passage from James describes jealousy as "mean-spirited ambition." What action words does James use to characterize the presence of jealousy in relationships? What is the outcome?
- How does Luke's advice to "give away your life" help overcome distrust of others? What is the result of giving away your life?
- How is distrust linked to being critical and irritable with others? How does Luke explain this cycle in relationships?
- Are you jealous, impure, critical, irritable or distrustful?

Thursday March 15th

Where did I meet God or see God at work this week?

Taking time to recognize the ways that God is at work in your life and the world is a practice that builds hope.

Journal Reflection

20 Questions: Exercises for a Healthy Spiritual Life

- Take a moment to prayerfully reflect and record the ways in which you have seen God at work this week. Where has God shown up?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Friday March 16th

Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?

James 3:16-18 MSG

16-18 My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness.

Romans 8:5-14 MSG

5-14 Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life.

Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing...But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him...So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!

Journal Reflection

Google dictionary defines the state of being *self-conscious*, as feeling undue awareness of oneself, one's appearance, or one's actions; *self-pity*, as excessive, self-absorbed unhappiness over one's own troubles, and *self-justification*, as the justification or excusing of oneself or one's actions.

- What are the outcomes of a life overly focused on the self?
- How does the passage from James contrast the life of freedom in God's Spirit to the life focused on the self? What are the "compulsions" of focusing on the self? It may be helpful to make a list.
- How does the passage from Romans contrast trusting God's action within us to obsession with self? Where does focusing on God lead us? Where does focusing on the self lead us?

20 Questions: Exercises for a Healthy Spiritual Life

- Are you self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?

Saturday March 17th

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Journal Reflection

Prayerfully read through each journal entry that you have made. The questions below are provided as prompts that you may find helpful in guiding your reflection.

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- What has God revealed to you this week?
- What is God inviting you to do?
- Who is God inviting you to be?
- What is God leading you to question or consider?
- What wisdom have you received?
- What **“up to now”** has surfaced for you? What **“from now on”** are you being invited to consider?

Week 5

Monday March 19th

Is there someone I have yet to forgive? Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard?

Matthew 18:21-22

21 Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.”

Ephesians 4:31-32 NIV

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Journal Reflection

- Have you ever done anything for which you need forgiveness?

20 Questions: Exercises for a Healthy Spiritual Life

- Do you believe that God has forgiven you? If not, do you believe that your actions are beyond the power of God?
- Do you have any bitterness or resentment toward another person?
- What is the relationship between your ability to accept forgiveness and your ability to forgive others?
- Forgiveness is not a feeling we have. It is a decision we make. What keeps you from making the decision to forgive?
- Is there someone you need to forgive?

Tuesday March 20th

What are the blessings in my life?

Regular reflection on the things that we are grateful for is a practice that helps us to learn to live from perspective of gratitude.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to write each blessing down, be specific.
- Compare today's list to your list last week. Is it different? If so how?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Wednesday March 21st

Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?

1 Timothy 4:2 NLV

2 Those who teach this tell it as the truth when they know it is a lie. They do it so much that their own hearts no longer say it is wrong.

2 Timothy 3:16 NRSV

16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

1 Timothy 1:19 NLV

19 Keep a strong hold on your faith in Christ. May your heart always say you are right. Some people have not listened to what their hearts say. They have done what they knew was wrong. Because of this, their faith in Christ was wrecked.

Journal Reflection

20 Questions: Exercises for a Healthy Spiritual Life

- What warning do we find in 1 Timothy 4:2 about ignoring our conscience? What is the eventual result?
- How does scripture shape the Christian's conscience?
- How does scripture speak to the Christian's conscience?
- How can ignoring your conscience affect your faith or your prayer life?
- Do you insist on doing something about which your conscience is uneasy? If so, why?

Thursday March 22nd

Where did I meet God or see God at work this week?

Taking time to recognize the ways that God is at work in your life and the world is a practice that builds hope.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to prayerfully reflect and record the ways in which you have seen God at work this week. Where has God shown up?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Friday March 23rd

Do I confidentially pass on to others what was told to me in confidence?

Proverbs 11:13 MSG

A gadabout gossip can't be trusted with a secret, but someone of integrity won't violate a confidence.

Galatians 5:22-26

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control.

Journal Reflection

- What does it mean to be a person of integrity?
- How do the fruit of the Spirit shape the Christian understanding of integrity?
- How does integrity demonstrate love?
- How is breaking a confidence unloving?
- Do you confidentially pass on to other what was told to you in confidence?

Saturday March 24th

Taking time to look back and reflect on your journal entries is an important exercise in the practice of journaling. Space is made each Saturday for this exercise.

Journal Reflection

Prayerfully read through each journal entry that you have made. The questions below are provided as prompts that you may find helpful in guiding your reflection.

- What themes or topics keep emerging for you?
- What has God revealed to you this week?
- What is God inviting you to do?
- Who is God inviting you to be?
- What is God leading you to question or consider?
- What wisdom have you received?
- What **“up to now”** has surfaced for you? What **“from now on”** are you being invited to consider?

Week 6

Monday March 26th

When did I last talk to someone about my faith?

1 Peter 3:15 NIV

15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Luke 15:1-7 MSG

By this time a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, “He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends.” Their grumbling triggered this story.

“Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn’t you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Celebrate with me! I’ve found my lost sheep!’ Count on it—there’s more joy in heaven over one sinner’s rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.

Journal Reflection

- How would you describe the hope that you have in Jesus?
- Read the passage from Luke. How did Jesus find you? Who introduced you to Jesus? What is your faith story?
- How has your relationship with Jesus made a difference in your life? Make a list. Be specific.
- How can you share the reasons “for the hope that you have,” with “gentleness and respect?”
- What can we learn from Jesus’ practice of sharing meals with friends who have not come to faith in the passage from Luke?
- When did you last share your faith story with someone?

Tuesday March 27th

What are the blessings in my life?

Regular reflection on the things that we are grateful for is a practice that helps us to learn to live from perspective of gratitude.

Journal Reflection

- Take a moment to write each blessing down, be specific.
- Compare today’s list to your list last week. Is it different? If so how?
- Spend time in prayer giving thanks to God.

Wednesday March 28th

Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?

Matthew 6:24-33 MSG

“You can’t worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you’ll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can’t worship God and Money both.

“If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don’t fuss about what’s on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

20 Questions: Exercises for a Healthy Spiritual Life

“Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

“If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

Journal Reflection

- What does it mean to be a slave to something or someone?
- How can anxiety about dress, friends, work, or habits come to consume or control us?
- How does Jesus describe the life of Christian freedom in this passage?
- How does being “preoccupied with getting” prevent us from living the “life of God-worship” we are meant to live in response to God’s giving?
- Are you a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?

Maundy Thursday March 29th

Is Christ real to you?

The Christian spiritual life is about one thing, our relationship with God. It begins with God’s love in the form of grace. John Wesley understood God’s grace as God’s love in action, hard at work in our lives even before we come to know and trust in God. Grace draws us into relationship with God through Jesus Christ. When we come to accept the healing power of God’s love and forgiveness we begin a journey of growing deeper in relationship with God through grace, experiencing the power and presence of the risen Christ growing us in holiness of heart and life, filling us with the love of God.

Our work as Christians is to pay attention and to be intentional in our response to God’s desire to be in relationship with us. As we do, Jesus becomes more real to us. The health of our spiritual life, our relationship with God, is evidenced by the presence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23 NRSV).

20 Questions: Exercises for a Healthy Spiritual Life

While we tend to focus on the items of this list that involve our relationship with others, it is important to notice that the first three describe the fulfillment that we find in our relationship with God. In thinking about the health of our spiritual life it is also vital to remember that we should experience increasing joy and peace as we are filled with God's love.

1 John 4:9-12 MSG

This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

Galatians 5:22-26 NRSV

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

John Wesley

“After being filled with love, there is no more interruption of it than the beating of their hearts. And continual love bringing continual joy in the Lord, they rejoice evermore. They converse continually with the God whom they love, unto whom in everything they give thanks. And as they now love God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind and with all their strength, so Jesus now reigns alone in their heart, the Lord of every motion there.” JW Sermon “On Patience” (1784), 10 (Works, 3:175-76)

Journal Reflection

- We began this study with the quote above from Wesley. What insights have you gained into Wesley's vision of the vital spiritual life?
- How has this devotional helped you to evaluate the health of your spiritual life? How healthy is your fruit? How vital is your relationship?
- How would you describe God's love, joy, and peace, becoming complete in you through your relationship with God?
- In the passage from 1 John, how did God show his love for us?
- In the same passage, how do we know if “God dwells deeply within us?”
- How has this devotional helped Jesus to become more real to you?
- Is Christ real to you?

Good Friday March 30th

Am I defeated in any part of my life?

Good Friday is a day each year when we remember the time between the death of Jesus and his resurrection. A time in which the disciples grappled with the unthinkable reality that Jesus had been crucified. In our passages today the Apostle Paul helps Christians to realize that God promises to have the final word about our lives. While our faith does not guarantee that we will not experience hardships, nor that they will pass quickly, Paul reminds us that our victory is rooted in the love of God, that there is a power that is greater than our hardships, and that nothing can separate us from love of Jesus.

Romans 8:31-35,37-39 MSG

So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us...The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us.

Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture...None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us.

I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 MSG

If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus' sake, which makes Jesus' life all the more evident in us. While we're going through the worst, you're getting in on the best!

Journal Reflection

- Take some time to prayerfully read and reflect on both passages. What phrases or images stand out to you? How do they speak to you today?
- What hardships or defeats does Paul describe?
- What hardships or places of defeat are you facing in your life?
- How do the promises in these passages bring comfort and create hope? On what does that hope rest?
- How has your relationship with God, “convinced” you that nothing can separate you from the love of God?
- Are you defeated in any part of your life?

Holy Saturday March 31st

Take time to look back and reflect on all of your journal entries.

Journal Reflection

Prayerfully read through each journal entry that you have made. The questions below are provided as prompts that you may find helpful in guiding your reflection.

- What themes or topics keep emerging for you?
- What has God revealed to you this week?
- What is God inviting you to do?
- Who is God inviting you to be?
- What is God leading you to question or consider?
- What wisdom have you received?
- What “**up to now**” has surfaced for you? What “**from now on**” are you being invited to consider?

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