

Holiness of Heart and Life: A 31-Day Devotional Journey with the Wesleyan Holy Club

Embodying Early Methodist Disciplines for a Transformed Life



Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV)

By Cleve Murphy, MThS

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 1, 2025

Theme: The Spark of Holiness: A Call to Methodical Devotion

Scripture:

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

(Matthew 6:33 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

John Wesley, in his Journal, plainly reveals a deep desire for "inward and outward holiness." He recounts how, around November 1729, he and his brother, Charles, along with a few other young men at Oxford, began "regulating our studies" and then extended their method to "employing our time" in pursuit of a genuinely Christian life. This was not a departure from the faith but a "return to the very first principles of Christianity" by diligently practicing what they read in the Scriptures. He noted their systematic visits to prisoners, teaching children, and the weekly reception of the Lord's Supper, which he termed "means of grace." This methodical and diligent approach, which later earned them the moniker "Methodists" from their university peers, was truly born out of a profound dissatisfaction with mere nominal Christianity and a burning desire, as Wesley articulated, "to live by rule, and to be holy in all manner of conversation." The earliest "questions" they put to themselves were evident in their very actions and commitments, reflecting a deep conviction to embody their faith.

Reflective Question:

1. "Am I truly seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness above all else?"

Prayer:

Lord, renew in me a hunger for Your kingdom and righteousness. Grant me the discipline to prioritize spiritual growth in all aspects of my life.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 2, 2025

Theme: The Discipline of Self-Examination: Unveiling the Heart

Scripture:

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"

(2 Corinthians 13:5 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

As the Holy Club solidified its practices, self-examination became, as Wesley's Journal frequently illustrates, a truly "foundational practice" for all members. He details how they adopted a "rigorous schedule of introspection," believing that true holiness could not be achieved without a clear and unflinching understanding of one's own heart, motives, and actions, often probing their "inmost tempers and thoughts." This was not a morbid focus on sin but a "disciplined effort to align their lives more perfectly with Christ," understanding that "the root of sin lies in the heart." They saw daily self-examination, often conducted silently and with pen in hand, as "a vital tool," providing an ongoing, honest conversation with God about the state of their souls. This methodical approach was a direct precursor to the formal set of questions they would later use, reflecting a deep commitment to radical honesty before God.

Reflective Question:

2. "Have I been diligent in my spiritual exercises today?"

Prayer:

God, grant me the courage and discipline to engage in honest self-examination and reveal any areas in my life that need Your cleansing and transformation.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 3, 2025

Theme: The Call to Active Love: Hands and Feet of Christ

Scripture:

"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."
(James 2:26 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

Beyond mere personal piety, the Oxford Methodists, as John Wesley often documented in his Journal, were "deeply committed to outward acts of mercy and service." Wesley explicitly recorded their consistent practice of "visiting the prisons" in Oxford Castle and their regular efforts to aid "the poor." This was a radical departure from the passive, merely intellectual Christianity that was often prevalent at the time, which he frequently lamented. For them, faith was an "active principle," undeniably requiring "concrete works of love toward one's neighbor." As Wesley recorded, their "holiness" was demonstrated not only in their private devotions but equally in their public acts of service and self-denial for the benefit of others. Their subsequent questions, therefore, were designed to probe their engagement with the world around them directly, ensuring love was put into action.

Reflective Question:

3. "Have I committed any known sin, whether of thought, word, or deed?"

Prayer:

Lord, give me a heart sensitive to the needs of others. Open my eyes to opportunities to be Your hands and feet in practical ways, demonstrating Your love through service.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 4, 2025

Theme: Love for the Needy: Ministering to the Marginalized

Scripture:

"Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God."

(Proverbs 14:31 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

Deep compassion marked the Holy Club's early practices. Their deliberate efforts to visit the imprisoned and the impoverished extend practical help and spiritual guidance. This wasn't incidental but a central component of their pursuit of holiness. They saw Christ in the least of these and believed that true piety manifested itself in active love that society often overlooked. Their questions about service pushed them beyond mere sentimentality to concrete action, living out the Gospel in the tangible realities of human suffering.

By February 14, 1738, the morning of the execution, Wesley, still grappling, noted that his arguments against "justification by faith only" were, in reality, "fighting against God, and it was hard for me to kick against the [sharp pointed sticks that prodded cattle]." The condemned man's case, along with other examples Böhler presented, served as a stark and undeniable illustration that faith, independent of works, was indeed the path to peace and transformation. This practical demonstration, observed by Wesley in the face of death, deeply "shook my legal foundations," propelling him further toward the vital realization that justification is a gift freely given by God through Christ, received by faith alone. (JW Journal)

Reflective Question:

4. "Have I visited the sick or those in prison, or otherwise actively ministered to the needy?"

Prayer:

God, our Father please instilled in me a more profound love for the poor and the marginalized. Guide me to practical ways I can extend Your mercy and justice to those in need, honoring You through my service.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 5, 2025

Theme: Stewardship of Resources: Generosity from the Heart

Scripture:

"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

(1 Timothy 6:17-18 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

John Wesley and the Holy Club held a firm conviction about the stewardship of resources, believing that all they possessed belonged to God. Their methodical approach to life included systematic giving to the poor and needy, often beyond what was comfortable. Wesley famously advocated for simple living and generous giving, stating, "***Do all the good you can to all the people you can, by all the means you can, as long as you can, in all the ways you can, at all the time you can.***"

This was not merely a suggestion but a spiritual discipline woven into their pursuit of holiness. Their self-examination included asking if they had used their material blessings to honor God and alleviate suffering rather than for personal accumulation.

Reflective Question:

5. "Have I given to the poor, according to my ability, and managed my resources as a faithful steward?"

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, help me to be a wise and generous steward of all You've entrusted to me. Free my heart from greed and fill me with a desire to share my resources to bless others and advance Your kingdom.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 6, 2025

Theme: The Discipline of Time: Sanctifying Our Moments

Scripture:

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil."

(Ephesians 5:15-16 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

Wesley and the Holy Club were remarkably disciplined in their use of time, viewing it as a precious gift from God to be redeemed for His glory. Idleness was viewed as a perilous trap. He emphasized in various writings the importance of ordering one's day with intention, ensuring that time was spent productively, whether in study, prayer, or service. This methodical approach to every hour reflected a deep conviction that every aspect of life could and should be consecrated to God. Their questions became increasingly specific, probing into the minute details of daily life, including how time was utilized.

Reflective Question:

6. "Have I wasted any time today, or have I made the most of every opportunity?"

Prayer:

Lord, grant me wisdom to redeem my time for Your purposes. Help me to be intentional in how I spend each moment, ensuring my days bring glory to You.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 7, 2025

Theme: Guarding Our Speech: Words That Build Up

Scripture:

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what helps build others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

(Ephesians 4:29 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

The Holy Club members were keenly aware of the power of words. For them, careless or uncharitable speech was a serious impediment to holiness. John Wesley consistently warned against gossip, slander, and any form of communication that tore people down rather than building them up. Their rigorous self-monitoring extended to every utterance, striving to bring all under divine scrutiny. This discipline reflected a deep conviction that what came out of the mouth revealed the condition of the heart and that a truly holy life would be marked by speech that was gracious, truthful, and edifying to others.

Reflective Question:

7. "Have I spoken unadvisedly with my lips or given way to any angry or uncharitable word?"

Prayer:

Father, help me guard my tongue. May my words be gracious, truthful, and life-giving, building up others and honoring Your name.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 8, 2025

Theme: The Purity of Intention: A Heart for God Alone

Scripture:

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your unseen Father. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

(Matthew 6:6 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

For John Wesley and the Holy Club, the motivation behind their actions was as crucial as the actions themselves. They sought to root out any hint of pride, self-glory, or human approval in their spiritual practices and acts of charity. Wesley often urged his followers to examine their intentions, emphasizing that true devotion stemmed from a desire to please God alone, not to gain the praise of others. This deep concern for the purity of intention was a hallmark of their pursuit of holiness, reflecting a profound understanding that God looks upon the heart. Their questions were designed to strip away any pretense and confront the true motives of their souls.

Reflective Question:

8. "Have I taken care to guard against pride and self-sufficiency, and have I sought only the glory of God in all I do?"

Prayer:

Lord, purify my intentions. Help me to act from a heart wholly devoted to You, seeking only Your glory in all my thoughts, words, and deeds.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 9, 2025

Theme: The Practice of Humility: Learning from Christ

Scripture:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

(Philippians 2:3-4 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

Humility was a cardinal virtue for Wesley and the Holy Club. They understood that genuine spiritual growth was impossible without a deep sense of their dependence on God and a willingness to put others' needs before their own. Wesley consistently preached against the dangers of self-exaltation, urging a spirit of lowliness and service. The Holy Club's questions often probed their attitudes towards others, particularly those they might be tempted to look down upon. Their commitment to humility extended to their interactions, ensuring that their pursuit of holiness didn't lead to spiritual arrogance but to a profound sense of their unworthiness and God's boundless grace.

Reflective Question:

9. "Have I been truly humble today, acknowledging my dependence on God and valuing others above myself?"

Prayer:

Jesus, gentle and humble in heart, clothe me with Your humility. Help me see others through your eyes and serve them with a humble spirit.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 10, 2025

Theme: Generosity from the Heart, Fidelity in Little Things:

Pathways to Greater Grace

Scripture:

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."

(Luke 16:10 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

A core principle for Wesley and the Holy Club was the belief that faithfulness in seemingly insignificant matters was crucial for growth in holiness. He frequently emphasized that great spiritual victories often hinged on diligent attention to the "little things" – small duties, minor temptations, and seemingly trivial decisions. For them, every moment, every word, and every interaction presented an opportunity to honor God or to fall short. This meticulous attention to detail stemmed from a conviction that God was present in every aspect of life and that fidelity to the small things prepared one for faithfulness in greater responsibilities.

Reflective Question:

10. "Have I been faithful in the little things, attending diligently to all my duties, however small?"

Prayer:

Lord, help me recognize the importance of every small duty and decision. Grant me the grace to be faithful in all things, trusting that You use even the smallest acts of obedience for Your greater purposes.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 11, 2025

Theme: The Practice of Self-Denial: Crucifying the Self

Scripture:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'"

(Matthew 16:24 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

Self-denial was a non-negotiable discipline for John Wesley and the Holy Club, viewed not as asceticism for its own sake but as a vital means to holiness. Wesley understood that the unmortified self—our natural inclinations, desires, and comforts—could be a significant barrier to complete surrender to God. In his Journal and other writings, he frequently exhorted believers to embrace various forms of self-denial, whether in food, sleep, or personal comforts, all to bring the body into submission to the Spirit. This practice was intended to break the power of selfish appetites and cultivate a deeper dependence on God's grace, echoing Christ's call to take up one's cross daily.

Reflective Question:

11. "Have I practiced any degree of self-denial today, mortifying my own will or desires for the sake of Christ?"

Prayer:

Lord, reveal to me the areas where self-will still reigns. Grant me the grace and strength to deny myself, take up my cross daily, and follow You wholeheartedly.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 12, 2025

Theme: The Practice of Humility: Learning from Christ

Scripture:

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

For John Wesley and the Holy Club, prayer was not merely an occasional act but a constant posture of the soul. Wesley believed in "praying without ceasing," an ongoing conversation and reliance on God throughout the day. While they had set times for corporate and private prayer, their discipline extended to cultivating an inner spirit of devotion that pervaded all their activities. Wesley often spoke of lifting one's heart to God in every circumstance, whether in study, service, or daily duties. This constant communion was seen as essential for maintaining spiritual vitality and resisting the world's distractions, keeping their hearts continually turned toward Christ.

Reflective Question:

12. "Have I prayed without ceasing, lifting my heart to God in all circumstances?"

Prayer:

Almighty God, teach me to pray without ceasing. Help me cultivate a spirit of constant communion with You so that every moment becomes an opportunity to draw closer to Your presence and live in Your will.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 13, 2025

Theme: Integrity in Word and Deed: Living Truthfully

Scripture:

"Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

(Ephesians 4:25 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

Integrity was a cornerstone of the Holy Club's pursuit of holiness. John Wesley emphasized the importance of truthfulness not only in overt statements but in every aspect of one's life. He believed that inconsistency between one's profession of faith and one's daily conduct undermined genuine piety. For the Holy Club, living a life of integrity meant aligning their words, actions, and even their inner thoughts with the truth of the Gospel. This commitment extended to their interactions with others and their disciplines, ensuring that their pursuit of holiness was genuine and transparent, building trust and reflecting the character of Christ.

Reflective Question:

13. "Have I maintained strict integrity in all my words and actions, avoiding even the slightest deviation from truth?"

Prayer:

God of Truth, forgive me for any falsehood or inconsistency in my life. Empower me by Your Spirit to live with unwavering integrity so that my words and deeds may always reflect Your truth and righteousness.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 14, 2025

Theme: Cultivating Patience and Gentleness: Bearing the Spirit's Fruits

Scripture:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law."

(Galatians 5:22-23 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

While the Holy Club was known for its rigorous discipline, John Wesley equally emphasized the cultivation of inner virtues that flow from the Spirit, particularly patience and gentleness. He understood that outward acts of piety were incomplete without a corresponding transformation of character. In his Journal, Wesley often reflected on the need to bridle one's temper, to respond to provocation with forbearance, and to interact with others with kindness rather than harshness. These qualities, often tested in the daily grind, were seen as clear indicators of true holiness and a heart being conformed to the likeness of Christ, who was "gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

Reflective Question:

14. "Have I exercised patience and gentleness in all my interactions, especially when provoked?"

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, fill me with Your fruit of patience and gentleness. Help me respond with grace even when I am tested, reflecting the character of Christ to those around me.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 15, 2025

Theme: Diligence in Study: Growing in Knowledge and Grace

Scripture:

**"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
(2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)**

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

For John Wesley and the Holy Club, the pursuit of holiness was intrinsically linked to diligent study, particularly of the Scriptures and other *theological works*. They recognized that a robust faith was built not on emotional fervor alone but on sound doctrine and a deep understanding of God's Word. Wesley himself was a prodigious scholar, and he instilled in the Holy Club a commitment to systematic reading and learning. He believed that intellectual laziness was a spiritual snare and that Christians were called to grow in knowledge as much as in grace, thereby equipping themselves to better serve God and navigate life's complexities with wisdom. Their questions often probed their discipline in this area.

Reflective Question:

15. "Have I diligently improved my time in study, particularly of the Holy Scriptures?"

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, open my mind and heart to Your Word. Grant me diligence in study and a hunger for knowledge that draws me closer to You and equips me for Your service.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 16, 2025

Theme: Cultivating Christian Fellowship: Sharpening One Another

Scripture:

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

(Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

A cornerstone of the Holy Club's success, and later of the Methodist movement, was the emphasis on deep, accountable Christian fellowship, particularly in small groups known as "Bands" and "Classes." John Wesley believed that spiritual growth was not meant to be a solitary endeavor. He saw the need for believers to "spur one another on" in love and good works, confessing their faults, offering encouragement, and praying for one another. This kind of intimate community provided accountability and mutual support, helping individuals persevere in their pursuit of spiritual growth and holiness. Their questions often examined their participation in and the benefits they derived from such fellowship.

Reflective Question:

16. "Have I faithfully attended our appointed meetings for Christian fellowship and availed myself of the benefits thereof?"

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the gift of the Christian community. Help me to be a faithful participant in fellowship, both receiving and offering encouragement, and to grow in holiness alongside my brothers and sisters in Christ.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 17, 2025

Theme: Vigilance Against Temptation: Guarding Our Steps

Scripture:

**"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."
(1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV)**

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

The Holy Club members were acutely aware of the constant reality of temptation and the need for continuous vigilance. John Wesley often wrote about the subtle and overt ways in which sin seeks to gain a foothold in a believer's life. He encouraged a proactive stance against temptation, not merely reacting to it but identifying potential weaknesses and erecting spiritual safeguards to prevent them. This meant not only praying for strength but also actively avoiding situations or influences that could lead to sin. Their questions served as a crucial tool for self-awareness, helping them to recognize and address areas where they might be vulnerable.

Reflective Question:

17. "Have I watched against every known temptation, avoiding even the appearance of evil?"

Prayer: Gracious God, strengthen me against temptation. Help me to be vigilant, to discern the subtle approaches of sin, and always to find the way of escape You provide through Your faithfulness.

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Embodying Early Methodist Disciplines for a Transformed Life

A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 18, 2025

Theme: Responding to Rebuke: A Path to Growth

Scripture:

"Fools despise wisdom and instruction. Listen to advice and accept discipline. At the end of your life, you will find wisdom." (Proverbs 1:7b, 19:20 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

A distinctive and often challenging aspect of the Holy Club's discipline was the practice of mutual accountability, which included both offering and receiving rebuke. John Wesley, in his *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, frequently highlighted the importance of "watching over one another in love.". This meant not only encouraging good but also gently pointing out faults. For the Holy Club, receiving a rebuke was not an occasion for defensiveness but an opportunity for humility and growth. They understood that faithful friends, like iron sharpening iron, were essential for discerning blind spots and moving towards greater Christlikeness. This practice, although difficult, was viewed as a vital means of attaining holiness.

Reflective Question:

18. "Have I meekly received any rebuke or admonition, whether from God's Word or a fellow believer?"

Prayer:

Gracious Father, give me a humble spirit to receive correction, both from Your Word and from those You place in my life. Help me to see rebuke as a means of grace, leading me to greater conformity to Christ.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 19, 2025

Theme: Overcoming Envy and Malice: A Pure Heart

Scripture:

"You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have it because you do not ask God." (James 4:2 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

The Holy Club's deep self-examination extended to purging the heart of insidious sins, such as envy, jealousy, and malice. John Wesley taught that these inner attitudes were just as detrimental to holiness as outward acts. He emphasized that true Christian love is free from ill will, resentment, or covetousness towards others. In their methodical inquiries, the Holy Club members diligently scrutinized their thoughts and feelings, striving to eradicate any trace of bitterness or desire for what others possessed. This rigorous introspection was a direct effort to cultivate a heart that was truly pure and genuinely rejoiced in the well-being of others, reflecting the love of God.

Reflective Question:

19. "Have I harbored any envy, jealousy, or malice towards anyone today?"

Prayer: Lord, search my heart and reveal any hidden envy, jealousy, or malice. Cleanse me from these destructive emotions and fill me with Your pure love, enabling me to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 20, 2025

Theme: Diligence in Calling: Serving God in Every Sphere

Scripture:

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (Colossians 3:23-24 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

For John Wesley and the Holy Club, holiness was not confined to spiritual exercises but extended to every aspect of their lives, including their daily vocations or "callings." Wesley firmly believed that whether one was a student, a teacher, a tradesperson, or a parent, every task performed with diligence and excellence could be an act of worship. They sought to perform their duties not merely to satisfy human expectations but "as unto the Lord." This meticulous attention to their academic and other responsibilities was a direct outworking of their commitment to glorify God in all things, transforming ordinary labor into sacred service.

Reflective Question:

20. "Have I been diligent and faithful in my particular calling or duties today?"

Prayer:

Gracious God, help me to see my daily work and responsibilities as opportunities to serve You. Grant me diligence, integrity, and excellence in all my tasks so that everything I do may bring glory to Your name.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 21, 2025

Theme: The Power of Thanksgiving: A Grateful Heart

Scripture:

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

A deep spirit of gratitude permeated the lives of John Wesley and the Holy Club. Despite their rigorous disciplines and often severe self-examination, their pursuit of holiness was rooted in a profound appreciation for God's grace and mercy. Wesley consistently taught that a thankful heart was essential for true piety, recognizing that every good gift came from God. Their methodical reflections would often culminate in expressions of thanksgiving, acknowledging divine provision, spiritual growth, and the sustaining power of God's love. Cultivating gratitude was viewed as a deliberate act of faith, countering discontent and fostering a joyful acceptance of God's will.

Reflective Question:

21. "Have I cultivated a spirit of thanksgiving, acknowledging God's goodness in all things?"

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, open my eyes to Your countless blessings. Forgive me for moments of ingratitude. Fill my heart with a spirit of thanksgiving, that I may praise You in all circumstances, for this is Your will for me.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 22, 2025

Theme: Readiness for Death: Living with Eternity in View

Scripture:

"So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."
(Psalm 90:12 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

For John Wesley and the Holy Club, contemplating death was not morbid but a profound motivator for holy living. They lived with a keen awareness of eternity, understanding that earthly life was a preparation for what lay beyond. Wesley often encouraged serious reflection on mortality as a means of breaking free from worldly attachments and focusing on eternal realities. This perspective imbued their daily disciplines with a greater sense of urgency and purpose, ensuring that their actions were weighed not just by temporal standards but by their eternal significance. Their self-examination questions often culminated in this most ultimate of considerations.

Reflective Question:

22. "Am I prepared to die, having made my peace with God and man?"

Prayer:

Lord, teach me to number my days and live with eternal perspective. Help me to make peace with you and with others so that I may be found ready whenever you call me home.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 23, 2025

Theme: The Practice of Early Rising: Consecrating the Day's Firstfruits

(The following nine questions are key themes for further reflective thinking)

Scripture:

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." (Mark 1:35 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

One of the most characteristic and challenging disciplines of the Holy Club was early rising. John Wesley considered it a vital means of grace, a powerful way to set the tone for the entire day. He frequently noted in his Journal the struggle and yet the profound spiritual benefits of rising before dawn for prayer, study, and reflection. For Wesley, conquering the temptation of slumber was a victory over the flesh and a deliberate act of consecrating the day's first hours to God. This physical discipline was not an end in itself but a gateway to deeper spiritual engagement and a testament to their earnestness in pursuing holiness, mirroring Christ's practice of early prayer.

Reflective Question:

23. "Have I diligently seized the early hours for devotion, acknowledging God as the priority of my day?"

Prayer:

Lord, grant me the discipline to consecrate the start of my day to You. Help me to rise early, not out of duty, but out of a deep desire to meet with You and to set the course of my day under Your guidance.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 24, 2025

Theme: Mutual Accountability in Love: Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Scripture:

"Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
(James 5:16 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

The very heart of the Holy Club, and later the Methodist Bands and Classes, was an unprecedented level of mutual accountability. This was not a punitive system but a loving framework for spiritual growth. John Wesley emphasized that individuals genuinely committed to holiness needed a safe space to confess their struggles, receive honest feedback, and be prayed for by trusted brethren. He believed that the power of sin was often broken when exposed to the light of fellowship. This intimate sharing, though uncomfortable at times, was seen as essential for transparency, healing, and perseverance in the Christian walk, fostering a deeper authenticity in their pursuit of Christ-likeness.

Reflective Question:

24. "Have I sought or offered loving accountability today, fostering genuine spiritual transparency with a trusted believer?"

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of a Christian community. Give me the courage to be vulnerable and honest in my struggles. Help me to be a supportive and loving accountability partner for others, spurring one another on to holiness.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 25, 2025

Theme: The Spirit of Joy and Contentment: Rejoicing in All Things

Scripture:

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will repeat it: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."

(Philippians 4:4-5 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

Despite their rigorous disciplines, John Wesley and the Holy Club were far from somber. Wesley consistently preached and exemplified a deep-seated joy in the Lord, born not from circumstances but from a profound peace with God. He saw Christian holiness as leading to genuine contentment, freeing the believer from the anxieties and discontent of the world. Even amidst trials and external opposition, the Holy Club sought to maintain a spirit of rejoicing, understanding that true happiness was found in God alone. This joy was a powerful testimony to the transforming power of grace, distinguishing their earnest pursuit of holiness from mere legalism.

Reflective Question:

25. "Have I cultivated a spirit of joy and contentment today, rejoicing in the Lord regardless of my circumstances?"

Prayer:

Lord, fill my heart with Your joy that transcends circumstances. Help me find my contentment in You alone and be a witness to Your goodness and peace in a world that so often lacks both.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 26, 2025

Theme: Simplicity of Life: Freeing the Soul from Clutter

Scripture:

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."

(1 Timothy 6:6-8 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

While not embracing extreme asceticism, John Wesley and the Holy Club certainly leaned towards a life of simplicity, particularly as they matured in their faith and engaged with people experiencing poverty. Wesley preached against extravagance and the accumulation of wealth for its own sake, advocating for a simple living so that more resources could be freed for God's kingdom and those in need. He believed that excessive material possessions could become snares, distracting the heart from its primary devotion to God. Their methodical living often included careful stewardship of resources, reflecting a desire to live unencumbered by worldly desires and wholly devoted to spiritual pursuits.

Reflective Question:

26. "Have I practiced simplicity in my lifestyle today, ensuring my desires are for God's kingdom rather than worldly accumulation?"

Prayer:

Gracious God, detach my heart from the love of worldly possessions. Help me to live a life of simplicity and contentment, using all that I have to glorify Your name and bless others rather than storing up treasures on earth.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 27, 2025

Theme: Compassion for the Lost: Sharing the Good News

Scripture:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
(Luke 19:10 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

The Holy Club's focus on personal holiness was never an end in itself but a means to greater effectiveness in reaching out to the world. John Wesley's heart was deeply burdened for those outside of Christ, and this evangelistic fervor was a defining characteristic of his life and the movement he inspired. Even in their early Oxford days, their visits to prisons and the poor were often accompanied by efforts to share the Gospel. Wesley believed that true holiness would inevitably lead to a compassionate outreach to the lost, compelling believers to share the liberating truth of salvation with others. Their methodical nature extended to finding opportunities to speak of Christ's transforming power.

Reflective Question:

27. "Have I shown compassion for those who do not know Christ and sought opportunities to share the hope I have?"

Prayer:

Lord, burden my heart with compassion for those who are lost. Open my eyes to opportunities to share Your love and truth, and give me the courage and wisdom to speak of the hope found only in Jesus Christ.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 28, 2025

Theme: Dependable Trust in Providence: Resting in God's Care

Scripture:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

(Romans 8:28 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

A profound and unwavering trust in divine providence was central to John Wesley's life and a foundational belief within the Holy Club. Despite facing criticism, opposition, and personal hardships, Wesley maintained a deep conviction that God was sovereign and actively working all things for good. He taught his followers to rest in God's perfect plan, even when circumstances were complicated or unclear. This absolute trust freed them from anxiety and enabled them to persevere in their demanding disciplines, knowing that their lives were held securely in God's wise and loving hands. This quiet confidence was a powerful witness to their "Holiness of Heart," revealing a spirit at peace with God's will.

Reflective Question:

28. "Have I truly rested in God's providence today, trusting His plan even when things are uncertain or challenging?"

Prayer:

Almighty God, I confess my tendency to worry and control. Help me to surrender fully to Your wise providence, knowing that You are working all things for my good and Your glory. Grant me a spirit of profound rest in Your care.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 29, 2025

Theme: Valuing Spiritual Friendship: A Sacred Bond

Scripture:

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."
(Proverbs 27:17 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

The bonds formed within the Holy Club were not merely social but profoundly spiritual. John Wesley deeply valued spiritual friendship, recognizing its indispensable role in the pursuit of spiritual growth and holiness. He understood that journeying toward God was enhanced by companions who shared the same earnest desire for Christ-likeness and who could encourage, challenge, and pray for one another with genuine affection. These friendships were characterized by honesty, mutual support, and a shared commitment to God's glory. Wesley's relationships within the Holy Club exemplified how such sacred bonds could sustain and propel individuals forward in their spiritual journey.

Reflective Question:

29. "Have I cherished and actively nurtured my spiritual friendships today, allowing others to sharpen and encourage me?"

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of spiritual friends. Help me to be a faithful and loyal companion on the path of holiness, both giving and receiving the sharpening and encouragement needed for growth in Christ.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 30, 2025

Theme: Readiness for Suffering: Bearing the Cross with Christ

Scripture:

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

From their earliest days, John Wesley and the Holy Club faced ridicule, opposition, and even persecution for their earnest and methodical pursuit of faith. Wesley consistently taught that suffering for Christ was an expected part of the Christian life, not something to be avoided but to be embraced as an opportunity to share in Christ's cross. He prepared his followers to meet scorn and hardship with patience and joy, viewing it as a testament to their genuine commitment. This readiness for suffering was a profound mark of their "Holiness of Life," demonstrating a willingness to follow Christ faithfully, regardless of the cost, and reflecting a deeper conformity to His image.

Reflective Question:

30. "Am I prepared to face suffering or ridicule for the sake of Christ and His righteousness?"

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, strengthen me to stand firm in the face of opposition or suffering for Your name. Grant me, Your grace to bear my cross with joy, knowing that I am sharing in the sufferings of Christ and that my reward is in You.

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A Wesleyan Moment: Daily Devotional

Date: August 31, 2025

Theme: Continual Growth in Christian Perfection: A Lifelong Pursuit

Scripture:

“Therefore, let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.”

(Hebrews 6:1 NIV)

Wesley's Reflection/Holy Club Context:

The ultimate aim of the Holy Club's rigorous disciplines and the driving force behind John Wesley's entire ministry was the pursuit of "Christian Perfection" or "Scriptural Holiness." Wesley understood this not as absolute sinlessness in this life but as continual growth in love for God and neighbor, where the heart is purified from evil tempers and filled with the love of God. It was a dynamic, lifelong process of being "perfected in love," moving ever closer to the complete likeness of Christ. The Holy Club's questions and practices were all designed to facilitate this ongoing journey, instilling a deep hunger for entire sanctification—a heart entirely devoted to God.

Reflective Question:

31. "Am I earnestly pressing on towards Christian perfection, seeking to be perfected in love for God and all people?"

Prayer:

Almighty God, I long to be made perfect in love. Stir in me a deep hunger for Christian perfection and empower me by Your Holy Spirit to press on towards the high calling You have for me in Christ Jesus, for Your glory alone.

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Note: All scriptural passages used throughout this devotional are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Theological insights regarding John Wesley's 22 Questions, with citations from his journal on the Holy Club Meetings, have been drawn directly from his primary works.

Acknowledgment

This project was a collaborative effort between Cleve and Google Gemini Flash Pro 2.5, Google Gemini Gem (Deep Research on all things Wesley), Writing Gem, and Grammarly Pro.

About the Author

Cleve is retired and lives with his wife, Joanne, in Florida. Cleve Murphy has verified all scripture references and the Holy Club 22 Questions.

Dedication

This devotional is dedicated to all who believe in the Holiness of Heart and Jesus' prayer.

"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me."

(John 17:25)

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Epilogue: Continuing the Journey in Fellowship

The 31 days of this devotional have invited us into the profound yet practical pursuit of "Holiness of Heart and Life," a journey exemplified by John Wesley and the Oxford Holy Club. Through their questions and disciplined lives, we have seen that Christian reflective thinking is not a solitary endeavor but a vibrant path to a more profound transformation. Wesley himself found that while personal piety was essential, true and lasting holiness was nurtured best within the context of a loving, accountable community. His Holy Club, and later the Methodist "Bands" and "Classes," provided a vital framework for mutual support, honest confession, and earnest encouragement. It was in these intimate settings that individuals could honestly, according to John Wesley **"watch over one another in love,"** challenging, praying for, and spurring each other toward Christlikeness.

As you conclude this devotional journey, remember that the path of holiness is not meant to be walked alone. Consider forming or joining a small group—a "Band" or "Class"—where you can regularly gather with fellow believers. Share your struggles, celebrate your victories, pray for one another, and engage in the kind of transparent, loving accountability that characterized the Holy Club. It is in these intimate settings that true transformation takes place as we challenge, pray for, and encourage one another toward Christlikeness. True holiness flourishes in the rich soil of Christian fellowship.

May the following original 22 questions, plus a set of more profound reflective questions, which guided the Holy Club's pursuit of Holiness of Heart and Life, continue to be a touchstone for your ongoing reflection and growth. Let them serve not as a legalistic checklist but as a loving invitation to a deeper life in Christ. You are invited to join us in this journey, to grow and reflect together, and to experience the transformative power of Christian fellowship.

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The Original 22 Questions of John Wesley and the Holy Club

1. Am I truly seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness above all else?
2. Have I been diligent in my spiritual exercises today?
3. Have I committed any known sin, whether of thought, word, or deed?
4. Have I visited the sick, those in prison, or otherwise actively ministered to the needy?
5. Have I given to people experiencing poverty, according to my ability? Have I managed my resources as a faithful steward?
6. Have I wasted any time today? Have I made the most of every opportunity?
7. Have I spoken unadvisedly with my lips or given way to any angry or uncharitable word?
8. Have I taken care to guard against pride and self-sufficiency? Have I sought only the glory of God in all I do?
9. Have I been truly humble today, acknowledging my dependence on God and valuing others above myself?
10. Have I been faithful in the little things, attending diligently to all my duties, however small?
11. Have I practiced any degree of self-denial today, mortifying my own will or desires for the sake of Christ?
12. Have I prayed without ceasing, lifting my heart to God in all circumstances?
13. Have I maintained strict integrity in all my words and actions, avoiding even the slightest deviation from the truth?
14. Have I exercised patience and gentleness in all my interactions, especially when provoked?
15. Have I diligently improved my time in study, particularly of the Holy Scriptures?
16. Have I faithfully attended our appointed meetings for Christian fellowship and availed myself of the benefits thereof?
17. Have I watched against every known temptation, avoiding even the appearance of evil?
18. Have I meekly received any rebuke or admonition, whether from God's Word or a fellow believer?
19. Have I harbored any envy, jealousy, or malice towards anyone today?
20. Have I been diligent and faithful in my particular calling or duties today?
21. Have I cultivated a spirit of thanksgiving, acknowledging God's goodness in all things?
22. Am I prepared to die, having made my peace with God and man?