

C. Breaking of Bread / Holy Communion

- John Wesley believed every disciple should take Communion as often as possible because it is a tangible sharing in Christ.
- Before receiving, take a moment to confess your heart to God and ask God to empower you by Jesus' body and blood.
- One way you can take Communion more frequently is to attend our weekly Wednesday Worship service from 6:45-7:45 pm.

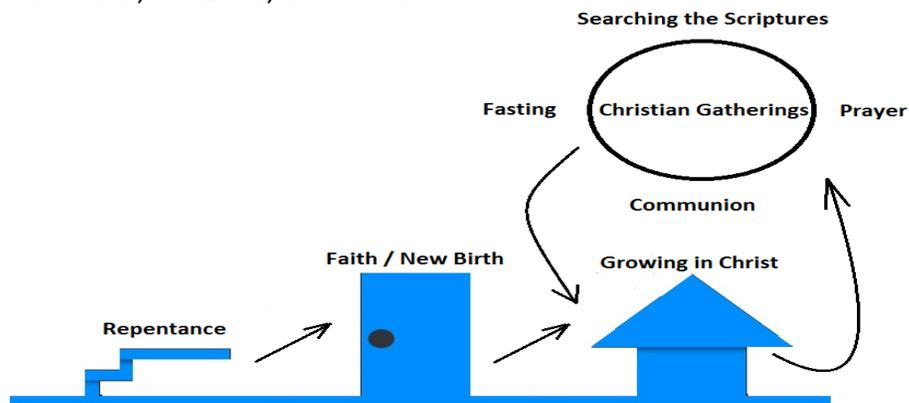
D. Prayer

- Set aside 10 minutes at the beginning and at the end of your day to be alone with God in prayer.
- Prayer means you and God are communicating. Make sure to have a balanced diet of spoken and silent prayer.
- Use the ACTS template: Adoration (for who God is), Confession, Thanksgiving (for what God does), Supplication.

E. Giving to Everyone in Need / Fasting

- John Wesley thought that serving others was also a means of grace; we call these works of mercy.
- Serving others and fasting go hand in hand since we need to empty ourselves to be filled by God for service.
- Ask yourself: what is the one thing in my life that I can't live without? Likely, that's what you need to fast from.
- Fast as God leads you so that God will be your greatest desire.

The Porch, the Door, and the House:



Sources Consulted: *Scripture and the Wesleyan Way* by Jones, *The Class Meeting* by Watson, and *Interpretation Bible Commentary: Acts* by Willimon.



sermon notes

A Closer Walk with God
July 7, 2019
Pastor Tony Arnold
CHRISTCHURCHVA.ORG/SERMONS

How can I connect with God?

- I. Recognize first that living in this world means that you are in _____ . A relationship with God is what your vulnerable and wandering heart needs the most.
 - What compounds our danger is our natural tendency to _____ our problems and _____ ourselves.
 - Jesus identifies four conditions of the heart in a parable that better defines the danger we face.

When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold."

Luke 8:4-8 (NRSV)

The Seed = _____

The Different Soil = _____

- The dangers Jesus named in his explanation were:
 - The Path: A heart hardened by Satan against God's love.
 - The Rock: A heart that receives but goes no further.
 - The Thorns: A heart that has grown complacent and distracted by the worries of life.

God created you to be like the good soil in the parable: **A heart seeking a closer walk with God.**

II. _____ tells us much of what we need to know to have a closer walk with God. For example:

- God gave the Israelite people the laws and commandments after the Exodus from Egypt.
- God instructed the people to construct a place of worship for the presence of God in the wilderness and in Israel.
- God sent the prophets, Spirit-filled messengers to guide the Israelites to the right path when they strayed.
- After exile, gathering in synagogues and observing the Sabbath became a primary way to connect with God.
- The early church observed baptism and Communion as central ceremonies in worship to connect with God.

Did you notice that God initiated every one of these examples? In our Wesleyan tradition, we call these relational pathways:

“ _____ ”

According to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, there are five essential means of grace to connect with God:

Public and Private Prayer
Searching the Scriptures
Holy Communion
Fasting
Christian Gatherings (Small groups)

The goal of these practices?
_____.

This end result was so important that John Wesley established the General Rules for all of the Wesleyan societies to follow. These are:

- I. Do no harm
- II. Do good
- III. Attend to the ordinances of God

Ordinances of God = The Means of Grace

III. The early church provides an example that illustrates how the means of grace actively form a _____.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

- The life of the early church clearly demonstrates exactly what Jesus called the “good soil” in his parable.
- Like a new marriage, the people of the early church had to develop rhythms to sustain their relationship with God.

IV. We grow in our relationship with God best by _____ the means of grace and by _____.
But how?

A. The Apostles' Teaching / Searching the Scriptures

- Start with the Gospel of John, read a chapter a day, and follow with the rest of the gospels.
- Alternatively, use one of YouVersion's many Bible reading plans.
- Consistency is the key, not necessarily what you read.
- A word of caution: reading isn't enough; you have to put what you learn into practice as God convicts you to do so.

B. Fellowship / Christian Gatherings

- Being part of a smaller community than the Sunday morning gathering is essential to your spiritual growth.
- There are typically three types of groups you can find in any church: affinity, informational, and transformational.
- Informational groups are useful, especially early on, but groups that focus on your relationship with God are best.
- Alpha can be a very good place to start.