

Homework for Lesson 35: A Faith to Live

Today we are going to be talking about living out our faith. We're going to start with thinking about perfection. Find a magazine in your home and find a picture that you think expresses perfection. The picture can be of someone who performs perfectly or looks perfect, of something that is perfect, or of somewhere that is perfect. Cut out this picture and glue it to a piece of paper.

On the piece of paper write words and phrases describing how the perfection in the picture is attained. For example, you could have a picture of a perfect wedding cake, and around that wedding cake could be words like: practice, baking classes, lots of time, expensive kitchen gadgets, talented baker, etc.

Circle the top 2 words or phrases that you think best describe how perfection is attained in your picture.

- Do you think perfection something that can be achieved? Why or why not?
- Why is perfection so enticing to some people?
- What are people willing to do, or be, or give up to strive for perfection?

Wesley thought and taught that Christian perfection was attainable. Seems kind of a daunting task for humans to be perfect. As we start talking about Christian perfection, keep in mind this list of our top ways to attain perfection.

In a writing that took several years to compile John Wesley answers the question, "what is Christian perfection?" this way, "The loving of God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love." For Wesley, being a "perfect Christian" means fully loving God AND your neighbor.

Wesley believed the journey to Christian perfection was a lifelong journey. It was a process by which human beings could become more like Christ. Wesley didn't just say we should be "going on toward perfection", he also gave people directions to grow toward Christian perfection. He called these directions "means of grace."

There are two categories of means of grace, first are Works of Piety which are things we do that help us personally connect with God and prepare us to be God in the world. Second are Works of Mercy which are things we do for others to let the world see God living in us. You can't do works of mercy without doing works of piety, and there's no point of doing works of piety if you're not going to follow it up with works of mercy.

Piety or Mercy?

In the left column is either a Work of Piety or a Work of Mercy. Place an X in the column that shows what type of Work it is; either Works of Piety: Connecting with God or Works of Mercy: Caring for others.

Work	Works of Piety: Connecting with God	Works of Mercy: Caring for others
Read Scripture		
Do Good Works		
Meditate on Scripture		
Visit the Sick		
Pray		
Visit Prisoners		
Fast		
Feed the Hungry		
Worship		
Give Generously		
Live Healthy		
Seek Justice		
Share your faith		
End Oppression		
Participate in Communion		
End Discrimination		
Study Scripture		
Help the Poor		

Remember we said earlier, Wesley believed that Christian perfection was, “The loving of God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength...so that all the thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love.” He didn’t come up with this on his own, this was a teaching that had been part of the Hebrew tradition, which Jesus Christ drew and expanded upon.

The journey to Christian perfection should not be understood as a way to make yourself better than others, or as an attempt to earn your way into heaven. We do not engage in the means of grace to prove to others how holy we are. This journey to Christian perfection is a response to the love that is given to you from God through Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is how believers act on the grace that God gives us freely. It is how believers say to Jesus, “I see and accept the sacrifice you made for me, and I am going to constantly work on my life to make it look more like yours.”

Take a few minutes to consider which of these works of piety and mercy you already do that bring you closer to Christ, and which you might want to start doing to bring you closer to Christ.