

ActNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Connect Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Connect Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

5 Marks of a Methodist (1): A Methodist Loves God

Matthew 22:36-38

Rev Adrian Ng

SERMON SYNOPSIS

- Defining Methodist Identity through Character:** Being a Methodist is not about the perks of church membership or simply attending services but is defined by the character of a disciple. The "5 Marks of a Methodist" are not rules to follow but character traits that a person develops as he/she follows Jesus closely and models his/her life after Him. The 5 marks of a Methodist are: Loves God, Rejoices in God, Give Thanks, Prays Constantly, Loves Others.
- The First Mark: A Methodist Loves God** – The first mark of a Methodist is a profound love for God, which is a direct response to the fact that God loved us first. It is very hard to be a Christian if we have not experienced God's love personally. When we, as Methodists, love God, we are obeying the first and greatest commandment in Matthew 22:36-38. 1 John 4 further emphasizes that our love for God and others is only possible because of the love revealed through Jesus' atoning sacrifice.
- God is the Heart's Joy and Soul's Desire:** John Wesley taught that a Methodist is a person for whom "God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul". In other words, a Methodist's or a disciple of Jesus's deepest delight *is* God Himself, and he/she *longs* and *yearns* for God above all other persons, pursuits and possessions. Hence, Methodists *order* our lives and *make* life choices around God who is our greatest joy and desire! It does not matter if we encounter challenges in life because we are rested in the all-powerful, all-loving & all-gracious God who loves us and cares for us. Each of us can thus contentedly say, "God, You are enough for me!"
- Loving God Authentically Wherever We Are:** We love God as a response to God's love. And because God loves people and we love God, we therefore love others too – in the world, society, our workplaces and families. Loving God should not start and stop in church. Love starts with God and goes everywhere. May TPMC's vision "*Encounter to Love*" be a continuing reminder to each of us to have *fresh encounters* with God & His love that we would in turn, love others around us beyond our friendship with fellow Christians in church.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RELATE

- Think of one thing that you naturally look forward to in a normal week.? Share with your CG members what is that one thing and why do you look forward to it.

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REFLECT

2. As Christians, we know that we are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. Jesus said this is the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37). But we don't always live up to this in our daily lives. Reflect on the following verses and take time to remember how good God has been to you. Share God's goodness with your CG as a way to remember & rekindle your First Love.

[Verses to help us go deeper: 1 John 4:10,19; Romans 8:35-39.]

RESPOND

3. God has been good to all of us. Today, if you feel that you have been distracted from your First Love because of the busyness of life, and God is no longer TOP priority in your life, take some time to pray. First, *confess & repent*. Then *ask God* to fill you with an unquenchable desire for His Presence. Lastly, *earnestly commit* to spend time with God every day with a S.M.A.R.T. goal – small, measurable, achievable, realistic & with a time frame (Eg. Commune with God through Lectio 365 for at least 15 minutes daily).

PRAYER POINTERS

- Worship God for loving us and dying for us even when we were still sinners who hated God. His generosity and grace have opened the way for us to return to God.
- Pray for one another in the CG as well as a church family in TPMC to desire God and to have a heart that is oriented towards God so that our lives are ordered around knowing and pleasing God.
- Pray that God would soften the hearts of those around us who have yet to receive Christ. Pray for their salvation to have the privilege of receiving God as the JOY of their hearts & the DESIRE of their souls and responding to His amazing love.

SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE ON

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." [1 John 4:10]