



SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND VITALITY WORKSHOP

Rev. Dr. Melanie Dobson, GBHEM 8 Year Assessment, Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2018
Coronado Springs Resort, Orlando FL

OPENING MEDITATION

- Mark 1: 35-39- In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Practice: Guided Imagery

OPENING MEDITATION

- "Take time to be separate from all friends and all duties, all cares and all joys; time to be still and quiet before God. Take time not only to secure stillness from [people] and the world, but from self and its energy. . . though at first it may appear difficult to know how thus quietly to wait, with the activities of mind and heart for a time subdued, every effort after it will be rewarded; we shall find that it grows upon us, and the little season of silent worship will bring a peace and a rest that give a blessing not only in prayer, but all day."
Anthony de Mello, *Wellsprings*

GOALS

- 1. Explore John Wesley's teaching on the significance of holistic salvation and the integrated nature of spiritual and physical wellness to provide historical and theological grounding to the assessment.
- 2. Learn insights into clergy wellness offered by the Clergy Health Initiative to ground the 8 year assessment in practical evidence and data
- 3. Learn about and create a Rule of Life, and explore the use of a Rule to structure the 8 year assessment on spiritual vitality
- 4. Provide resources for spiritual vitality

JOHN WESLEY ON SPIRITUAL VITALITY: HOLISTIC SALVATION



- Rejects salvation as primarily forgiveness of guilt as sinners
- “seek the benefits of truly holistic salvation” Maddox, *Responsible Grace*
- Christ as Great Physician heals body and soul (*salvus*)
- Therapeutic salvation-restoration of soul integrally connected to body Wesley, *Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*

JOHN WESLEY ON SPIRITUAL VITALITY: HOLISTIC SALVATION

- "It will be a double blessing if you give yourself up to the Great Physician, that He may heal soul and body together. And unquestionably this is his design. He wants to give you both inward and outward health." (Letter to Alexander Knox, in *Letters*, Telford.
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JOHN WESLEY ON SPIRITUAL VITALITY: INTEGRATED NATURE OF PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

- Both spiritual and physical health need intentional care

Letter to unidentified male—Oct. 1793—I am glad to hear that God is still carrying on his own work. But let not that induce you to kill yourself, by doing more than you can do. Allow yourself as much rest as nature requires. You must not offer murder for sacrifice.

- Spiritual heaviness can come from bodily disorders. Must address with diet/exercise/rest

Exercise, especially as the spring comes on, will be of greater service to your health than a hundred medicines. Wesley, Letter to Lady Maxwell. Every day of your life take at least an hour's exercise, between breakfast and dinner. If you can, take it in the open air. If you cannot ride or walk abroad, use within a dumb-bell or wooden horse. Let nothing hinder you. Your life is at stake. Make everything yield to this. Wesley "Thoughts on Nervous Disorders."

JOHN WESLEY ON SPIRITUAL VITALITY: INTEGRATED NATURE OF PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

- Hope strengthens against the most inveterate condition
- *Primitive Physic* offered hope for those with chronic disease
- Hope a powerful aid for recovery

To expect that God will do nothing but good both to your soul and body. “Look up! Is health not at hand, both for soul and body? You have no business with fear. It is good for nothing. We are ‘saved by hope.’” You have every good reason to bless God for the continuance of your health, and expect from him every good thing. That he may fill you with the spirit of a healthful mind.

Wesley, Letter to Alexander Knox(1775)

JOHN WESLEY: PRACTICES OF SPIRITUAL/PHYSICAL CARE

- Lay visitors (class meetings) offered care
- Circuit riders trained for primary care
- *Primitive Physic*-remedies for body/soul
- "I visited as many as I could of the sick...And that both for our own sake and theirs. For theirs, as it is so much more comfortable to them, and as we may then assist them in spirituals as well as temporals. And for our own, as it is far more apt to soften our heart and to make us naturally care for each other." John Wesley, 'Journal and Diaries IV'



SPIRITUAL VITALITY AND CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE

- "And Simon and His companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."
- Practice: Ignatian imaginative scripture reading
When have you experienced "everyone is searching for you?"

SPIRITUAL VITALITY AND
CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE
: OCCUPATIONAL
(OUTSIDE)

- Clergy feel
"searched for"
- Theology of sacrifice
- Cultural pressures of
overwork



// "THERE IS A PERVASIVE FORM OF CONTEMPORARY VIOLENCE. . . [AND THAT IS]
ACTIVISM AND OVERWORK. THE RUSH AND PRESSURE OF MODERN LIFE ARE A
FORM, PERHAPS THE MOST COMMON FORM, OF ITS MOST INNATE VIOLENCE. TO
ALLOW ONESELF TO BE CARRIED AWAY BY A MULTITUDE OF CONFLICTING
CONCERNS, TO SURRENDER TO TOO MANY DEMANDS, TO COMMIT ONESELF TO
TOO MANY PROJECTS, TO WANT TO HELP EVERYONE IN EVERYTHING, IS TO
SUCCUMB TO VIOLENCE. THE FRENZY OF OUR ACTIVISM NEUTRALIZES OUR WORK
FOR PEACE. IT DESTROYS OUR INNER CAPACITY FOR PEACE. IT DESTROYS THE
FULLNESS OF OUR OWN WORK, BECAUSE IT KILLS THE ROOT OF INNER WISDOM,
WHICH MAKES WORK FRUITFUL." //

Thomas Merton





SPIRITUAL VITALITY AND CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE : OCCUPATIONAL (INSIDE)

- Need to be liked and appreciated
- Lack of personal accountability
- Ecclesial competition
- Bias (racial/gender)
- Denial of personhood

SPIRITUAL VITALITY AND CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE : OCCUPATIONAL (STATISTICS)

Burn Out

- 21% lack of personal accomplishment
- 15% emotional exhaustion
- 6.3% depersonalization
- 8% thinking of leaving ministry



SPIRITUAL VITALITY AND CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE : PHYSICAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

- Clergy have alarmingly high rates of chronic disease
- 78% of clergy overweight or obese
- Clergy themselves report good physical health

SPIRITUAL VITALITY AND CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE : MENTAL/EMOTIONAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

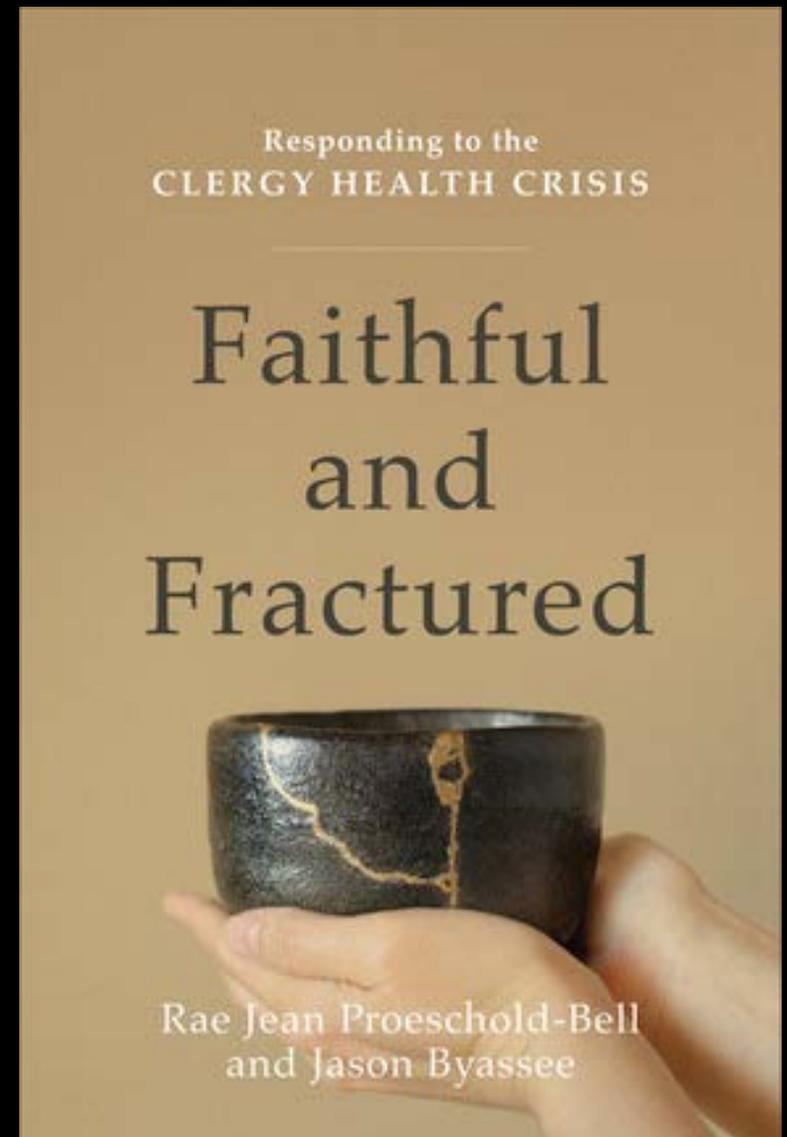
- Above average rates of depression, anxiety
- Sanctification theory
- Clergy need permission to take care of selves
- More stress for women/clergy of color
- Positive congregations and peer groups best predictors of positive mental and emotional health

SPIRITUAL VITALITY AND CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE: SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Clergy experience presence of God
most in sacraments and in crisis
intervention

Strong link between spiritual wellbeing
and mental health

Experience of presence of God a
strong predictor of greater satisfaction
in ministry and better quality of life



PRACTICE

He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Practice: Centering Prayer



PRACTICE

“The Spiritual heart is the true center of our being. It is the placeless place where divine Spirit and human spirit live together.” Tilden Edwards, *Living With God in the World,*



RULE OF LIFE: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

-“ by themselves the spiritual disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. . . . They are the means by which we place ourselves where God can bless us.” Joy is the keynote of all the disciplines” Richard Foster

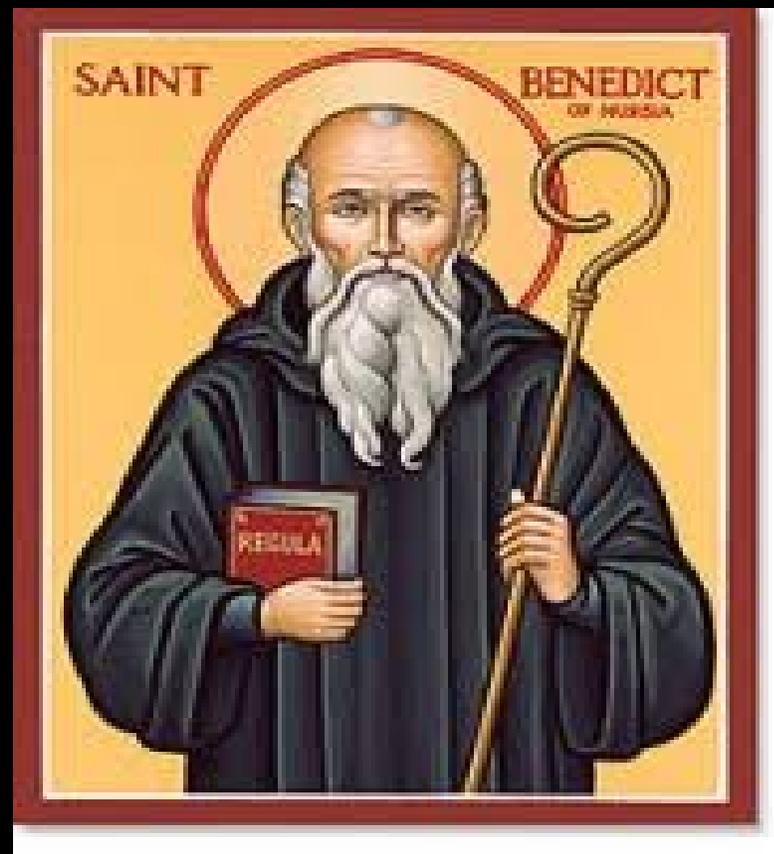


RULE OF LIFE: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- Spiritual reading (*lectio divina*)
- Contemplative prayer (*centering prayer*)
- Fasting
- Sabbath-Keeping
- Self-examination (Ignatian Examen)
- Spiritual direction
- Journaling
- Retreat/Solitude
- Embodied Prayer (labyrinth, prayer walking, yoga)

RULE OF LIFE

- Definition: a rule of life is a structure that supports our spiritual growth, a pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness. Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*, 149.
- Rule=*regla*—what is done regularly, in a rhythm of daily life
- Rule of St. Benedict the best known
- Some rules focus on inner attitudes and habits, others on practices



RULE OF LIFE: EXAMPLES

Pope John Paul XXIII

- 15 minutes of prayer upon rising
- 15 minutes of spiritual reading
- Before bed, examination of conscience followed by confession
- Arranging hours of day to make this rule possible, setting aside time for prayer, study, recreation, and sleep
- Making a habit of turning to God in prayer

Dorothy Day

- Eucharist daily
- Bible daily
- Journaling
- Seeing Christ in faces of poor

RULE OF LIFE: MARTIN LUTHER KING , JR.

Meditate daily on teachings/life of
Jesus

Pray daily to be used by God in order
that all might be free

Observe friend and foe the ordinary
rules of courtesy

Strive to be in good spiritual and
bodily health

Walk and talk in the manner of love,
for God is love



HOW TO CREATE A RULE OF LIFE

MARJORIE THOMPSON, *SOUL FEAST*

1. Take a faith-illuminated inventory of your life as it stands
 - Consider primary relationships (marriage, children), caregiving roles, work
 - Actual commitments and responsibilities are key dimensions of my rule—already have one—shape of my life

HOW TO CREATE A RULE OF LIFE

MARJORIE THOMPSON, *SOUL FEAST*

2. Prayerfully discern what will help you grow toward a deeper communion with God, others, and your true self

- Spiritual gifts and faith values—love, mercy, kindness
- Personality traits and preferences—when we have energy, life, are you artistic, mellow (Myers-Briggs Inventory)
- Introverted (solitary, silence, contemplative prayer) extraverted (worship, service)
- Outer world of senses (candles, outdoors), inner world (scripture, poetry)
- Reason (reading theologians), Feeling (service, songs, prayer groups)
- Structure (rule will be easy!) Spontaneity (can be harder to follow a rule)

HOW TO CREATE A RULE OF LIFE

MARJORIE THOMPSON, *SOUL FEAST*

3. Make realistic choices about the disciplines you can actually commit to, given season and circumstances—ex. In a caregiving role to parent. Could be time based (pope) or situation based (MLK)

- Daily
- Weekly
- Quarterly
- Yearly
- Sabbaticals

HOW TO CREATE A RULE OF LIFE

MARJORIE THOMPSON, *SOUL FEAST*

4. Stretch and Balance

- Maybe as introvert called to communal practice, or called to silence as extravert—
- With things that are naturally drawn to—Rule of St. Benedict takes balance seriously, private and common, time for work and study

HOW TO CREATE A RULE OF LIFE

MARJORIE THOMPSON, *SOUL FEAST*

5. Making Choices

- What am I deeply attracted to or repelled by, and why? What brings me life? What opens me to grace? What draws me close to God? which discipline speaks to me?
- Where do I feel God calling me to balance or stretch my spirit? What brings life?
- What practices best fit my circumstances or season of life?

HOW TO CREATE A RULE OF LIFE

MARJORIE THOMPSON, *SOUL FEAST*

7. Keeping Self Accountable

- Write it down where you will see it—honor relational commitments, who you are and hope to become
- Share rule with one other person, hold you accountable—spiritual director or friend

HOW TO SUPPORT CLERGY TO CREATE A RULE OF LIFE?

- Create at deserted place/Day Apart/Sabbath to reflect on Rule of Life
- Offer different experiences of spiritual practices as invitational to crafting a Rule
- Provide support for peer groups based in spiritual practices (*lectio divina, centering prayer*)
- Provide support of spiritual direction

“ O BEGIN! FOR SOME PART OF EVERY DAY FOR PRIVATE EXERCISES. . WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, READ AND PRAY DAILY. IT IS FOR YOUR LIFE; THERE IS NO OTHER WAY, ELSE YOU WILL BE A TRIFLER ALL YOUR DAYS. . . DO JUSTICE TO YOUR OWN SOUL; GIVE IT TIME AND MEANS TO GROW. DO NOT STARVE YOURSELF ANY LONGER.” //

John Wesley

The background features abstract, flowing, translucent waves in shades of red and blue, set against a dark background. The waves are layered and have a slight glow, creating a sense of movement and depth.