



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

June 9, 2024

Primitive Physick

Recap of sermon from June 9, 2024

Scripture: Luke 4:14-20 and James 2:14-26

At the heart of the movement that John Wesley started is the idea that faith should change people. Faith in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit should matter. It should change your heart. It should change your relationships. It should change the world. Any attempts to separate works and faith are antithetical to the power of the Holy Spirit. Any attempt subordinate “the social gospel” is to ignore the full gospel of Jesus. The letter of James and Jesus’ first public message in the gospel of Luke are both examples to show that Jesus cared about our real lives. Following Christ is about salvation here and now, not just hereafter.

Wesley was a theologian, organizer, and preacher; but he had many other interests as well. He wrote about physics, electricity in particular; and he wrote about health care. His work *Primitive Physick or An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Disease*, was published in 1747 (at age 46). It proved to be extremely popular and was reprinted in Britain 23 times in his lifetime, five times in Philadelphia, and version were updated in 1828 and again in 1840 (36th overall edition).

The success of the book probably helped fund his ministry. While Wesley was kicked out of parish ministry for his enthusiasm, the proceeds from *Primitive Physick* helped keep him going. This was true even though the pamphlet was intentionally inexpensive. Wesley wanted to get his message in the hands of the poor. It was important for him to help those who might not be able to afford physicians and hospitals. *Primitive Physick* was an exercise of practical theology and it was his attempt at universal health care. He believed in the salvation of people’s bodies as well as souls. He understood the letter of James as well as Jesus’ opening sermon. The Good News of Christ is good news for our lives here and now.



John Wesley’s *Primitive Physick* remains in print and can be ordered from amazon or downloaded for free as a pdf. There are 288 home remedies and below is a paraphrase of his six rules for avoiding disease. While the home remedies now seem antiquated, most of these would hold up today. In fact, there modern studies that call Wesley “ahead of his time” regarding public health education.

John Wesley’s Rules for healthy living

1. The air we breathe is of great consequence to our health... To preserve health, be as clean and sweet as possible in the house, clothes, and furniture.
2. The great rule of eating and drinking is, to suit the quality and quantity of food to the strength of digestion... Pickled, smoked, or salted food is unwholesome... About 8 ounces of animal food, and 12 ounces of vegetable food in 24 hours is sufficient... Water is the most wholesome of drinks.
3. Tender persons should eat light suppers. Go to bed constantly at about 9:00 p.m., and rise at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m.
4. A due degree of exercise is necessary to health and long life... Walking is the best exercise... You ought to have stated times for exercise, at least 2 or 3 hours a day... Frequently shave and wash feet... Those who read and write should do so standing...
5. Costiveness cannot long consist with health, and therefore should be taken to remove as quickly as possible.
6. The passions have a greater influence on health than most people are aware of.

**Next Week: Part 5 of 6 of “The Music of Methodism”
Charles Wesley, the great poet and hymnist**