

A Methodist Way of Life for May 2025
Care “We care for ourselves and those around us”

Introduction

Society is always asking us to be more, buy more, do more. There is a constant pressure to do, want or be more, which can cause us to feel like we are constantly not doing well enough. We need to give ourselves permission to have a break. We are not superheroes, and should not aspire to be. This commitment to ‘Care’ combines care for self as well as care for others because caring is a mutual practice involving both giving and receiving.

Key themes

- It's all about love: love for God, other people and yourself. Loving each other is at the centre of our spiritual journey. Love transforms acts of service into acts of care (both are good to practise).
- How we love ourselves and each other reflects the way we believe Jesus loves us.

Two relevant bible passages

Elijah

“While he himself (Elijah) went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

Source: 1 Kings Chapter 19 verses 4 to 9.

Martha and Mary

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Source Luke Chapter 10 verses 38 to 42.

Reflections

The practice of Sabbath in the story of creation continues throughout the Bible. In the first book of Kings, after Elijah has had an incredibly stressful time, the angels take care of his physical needs: God does not demand more prayer or action from him but allows him to rest from 'doing' and just 'be'. God loves us, no strings attached. We must make time to listen to God's voice and treat ourselves as if we are enough just as we are, not constantly trying to prove we are loveable.

The Church is often very good at loving our neighbour, following part of the greatest commandment: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:31, NRSVA). Many of us can think of times our church offered hospitality or food provision to those in need, as well as community spaces. But we can also think of many stories where caring for others has come at the detriment of caring for ourselves. We treat ourselves far more harshly than we ever treat others, at the disservice to ourselves and others.

There are places in the Gospels where Jesus takes some time for himself and takes time for the disciples to have a break (eg Luke 5:16; Mark 6:30-32 and 45-6). He does it for a few different reasons – to recharge, to prepare, to spend concentrated time with God before making a big decision.

So, "What have we learnt about caring"

The story of Martha and Mary is sometimes cited to suggest that we should spend more time in prayer and Bible study, and less time in hospitality and service. But these are all good things – in fact, hospitality and service are two other commitments of MWOL! [Dr Lucy Peppiatt suggests](#) that the underlying issue in the story is 'fretting'. "Looking after our guests and making sure people are fed are good things... It's not the work, but the *underlying worry* that's the problem – and this can apply to any person in any situation."

What causes you to fret at the expense of your emotional, spiritual and mental health, so that you are missing out on the abundant life Jesus desires for us all (John 10:10)?

Source: "A Methodist Way Of Life" Abridged and amended for BMC
www.methodist.org.uk/faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/ then search for "Care".

Prepared by: John Cornish