

# “Minimum Daily Requirements”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – August 22, 2021

Ephesians 6:56-69

For years children have been taught about our body's "minimum daily requirements." Remember the "four food groups?" Dieticians drilled into us how many servings of meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables, bread and grains we should consume every day. Now after several decades what we believed to be our "minimum daily requirements" have turned out to be far more minimal and not even daily. The pyramid has been turned upside down. Suddenly we are informed we no longer need all that meat, or all that milk. Fat is out; fiber is in. The pasta lovers of the world can rejoice, as the daily demand for carbohydrates climbs and proteins plummets. Even if we are no longer sure what exactly our "minimum daily requirements" should be, we do recognize that our bodies need certain things every day to maintain health and strength.

Just as we all have physical "minimum daily requirements," so our own spiritual body must be constantly nourished with a carefully balanced diet of prayer and praise, worship, and work. For too long our spiritual health has been ignored or taken for granted, as though it were an aspect of our lives that would simply take care of itself. Not true. Christians have a long tradition of meeting the needs of their spiritual bodies by maintaining the elements necessary to meet their spiritual MDRs. The prophets, the saints, and Jesus himself demonstrated how a vital life of faith is dependent on the presence of certain spiritual “One-a-Days.”

**MDR #1 - Communal Rituals** -- This was the requirement stressed so strongly by the Ephesians' writer. Christians are not found in singles. Christians grow like grapes -- in clusters. Participating in a community of faith is not an elective. Daily communal rituals must be a part of any healthy spiritual lifestyle. Whether family devotions, prayer breakfasts, study circles, Bible studies, we need each other to practice love, keep the faith and have hope.

When Covid hit, we were forced to close down. We still maintained our worship life online. It was not the same for so many of us. We struggled to find meaning in worshipping in our house slippers and drinking coffee while preparing our own communion and sitting in front of the TV or computer. We missed being together. That is what made worship so powerful to many of us. Many of our folks have found meaning and purpose in worshipping this way, but now we have the option. We are still together but in different ways. We have had to adapt.

**MDR #2 - Spiritual Exercises** -- Each person must flex his or her spiritual muscles on a daily basis if he or she is to keep them fit and flexible. Do you make room in your morning or evening schedule for a time of prayer and devotions? Do you regularly sing out to the Lord -- even if it's in the shower or in the car? Our faith must find words, and the words of praise and adoration that come out in song and prayer. Prayer is especially crucial to spiritual health. It keeps us in close contact with the One whose love draws us together in the first place. Prayer is not just an excuse for giving God a long list of requests. ("I'm gonna say my prayers now," a six-year-old yelled from up in his bedroom. "Anyone want anything?") Prayer is the act of opening our spirit to a two-way street of communication. Like breathing, prayer involves both exhaling our needs, our love, our praise, and inhaling God's peace and power and presence. Think of prayer as a kind of spiritual aerobics, exercise that forces your spirit to breathe deeply and fully oxygenate the soul.

**MDR #3 - Mission** -- A refreshed and strengthened spirit will naturally flow out and over others. No matter how "busy" our lives become, our spiritual energy and health will suffer if it is hoarded, not shared in service. Being ministers of the gospel to others is what it means to be a Christian. We become ministers through the acts of love, the works of faith, that we offer to the world. Look around the community. What are the needs and how can God, through us, support those who are in need? That is what we are called to do and to be.

**MDR #4 - Intermission** -- Keeping spiritually fit doesn't mean having to run a decathlon of events every day until you drop. A wiped-out spirit leaves us feeling exhausted and wrung out. Taking "down-time" to rest and regroup is an important part of maintaining spiritual health. No one can give of themselves to

others when their spiritual cupboard is bare. Take time to be silent -- to read, to meditate, to walk quietly in the world with open eyes and closed mouth. Only by taking this kind of "intermission" are we equipped for "mission." If your well is dry, you have nothing left to give to others.

When long-distance cyclists ride, there are times when they take a day off. They call it a zero day. That means that they ride zero miles that day. They use it to recharge their bodies, to heal, to rest. But then the next day they get back on their bikes and ride more. When we take an intermission to rest, we have to also remember to get back to work. To find a new outlet for our Christian service. We can't stay at zero on our faith journey.

**MDR #5 - The Word of God** -- Thankfully our spiritual strength is not dependent on our own abilities, our own insights, our own wisdom. Christians have a record of God's continuing activity in the world, God's words of love and guidance and judgment to all creation. But do you actually immerse yourself in the Word every day? All Christians need a dose of Bible as part of their minimum daily requirements for spiritual health. Strangely, what seems like such an obvious additive, is the one we are most likely to neglect. Too often we think of "Bible study" as something required of kids, but optional for adults. Others of us have never read whole portions of the Bible and have no idea what these texts can contribute to our growth and development. Scripture is the most vital part of spiritual health.

So, there you have it. The Minimum Daily Requirements to maintaining your Spiritual health. You have the choice to be a strong and healthy Christian or a sickly one. It is always what you put into your body and spirit that will make you strong and useful or weak and hopeless. Start today building up your body and your spiritual health. Amen.