

THE GENERAL RULES – SIMPLY LAID OUT, WITH SCRIPTURAL PROOFS

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, a "desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced: such as,

- The taking of the name of God in vain;
[Exodus 20:7]
- The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling;
[Exodus 20:8-11; Nehemiah 13:15-18]
- Drunkenness, or drinking spirituous liquors unless in cases of necessity;
[Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21; 1 Peter 4:3]
- Fighting, quarreling, brawling;
[1 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 12:20; 2 Timothy 2:14]
- Brother going to law with brother;
[1 Corinthians 6:1-8]
- Returning evil for evil, or railing for railing;
[Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Corinthians 5:11]
- The using many words in buying or selling;
[Proverbs 10:19; Proverbs 12:22]
- The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty;
[Romans 13:6-7]
- The giving or taking things on usury, i.e., unlawful interest;
[Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-37; Proverbs 28:8]
- Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates or ministers;
[Ephesians 4:29, 5:4; Matthew 12:35-37; Colossians 3:8, 4:6, 1 Chronicles 16:22]
- Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us;
[Luke 6:31]
- Doing what we know is not for the glory of God: as, the "putting on of gold and costly apparel;"
[1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 3:3-4]
- The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus;
[Colossians 3:17]
- The singing those songs or reading those books which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God;
[1 Corinthians 14:12, 26; 2 Corinthians 10:5]
- Softness or needless self-indulgence;
[Matthew 23:25; James 5:1-5]
- Laying up treasures upon earth;
[Matthew 6:19]
- Borrowing without a probability of paying, or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.
[Psalm 37:21; Luke 19:8; Ephesians 4:28]

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

- To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison;
[Luke 7:20-23; Matthew 25:31-46]
- To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to do it."
[2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Timothy 6:3-12]
- By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.
[Galatians 6:10; John 15:9-19]
- By all the possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.
[Ephesians 4:1; 1 Timothy 6:14; Philippians 1:27]
- By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and off-scouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.
[Hebrews 12:1; Luke 9:23; 1 Peter 4:14; 1 Corinthians 4:13; Matthew 5:11]

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God: such are,

- The public worship of God;
[1 Corinthians 14:26; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Timothy 4:13]
- The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;
[Acts 6:4; 2 Timothy 4:2 ; 1 Timothy 4:13]
- The Supper of the Lord;
[Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26]
- Family and private prayer;
[Acts 2:42-47; Matthew 6:5-8]
- Searching the Scriptures;
[John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:16]
- Fasting and abstinence.
[Matthew 6:16-18]

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in His written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know His Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul, as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season; but if he repent not, he hath no more place among us; we have delivered our own souls.

John & Charles Wesley - May 1, 1743

This research is NOT exhaustive. There are other passages and 'context-applicable' biblical situations to validate the Rules.... continue the research, refine the proofs! ~Pastor William R. T. Hale

NATURE, DESIGN, AND GENERAL RULES OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES

1. IN the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come; which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening.

To these, and as many more as desired to join with them, (for their number increased daily,) I gave those advices, from time to time, which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities. 2. This was the rise of the United Society, first in London, and then in other places. Such a society is no other than “*a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.*” 3. **That it may the more easily be discerned, whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes**, according to their respective places of abode.

There are about twelve persons in every class; one of whom is styled the Leader. It is his business, (a.) **To see each person in his class once a week at least**, in order to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor. (b.) **To meet the Minister and the Stewards of the society once a week**; in order to inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd; to pay to the Stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding; and to show their account of what each person has contributed. 4. **There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies, — a desire “to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins:”** But, wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, **First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind**; especially that which is most generally practiced: Such is, the taking the name of God in vain; the profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling; drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity; fighting, quarreling, brawling; brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling; the buying or selling unaccustomed goods; the giving or taking things on usury, that is, unlawful interest; uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of Magistrates or of Ministers; doing to others as we would not they should do unto us; doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as the “putting on of gold or costly apparel;” the taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus; the singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God; softness, and needless self-indulgence; laying up treasures upon earth; borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them. 5. It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, **Secondly, by**

doing good, by being, in every kind, merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible, to all men; — to their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison; — to their souls, by instructing reproving, or exhorting all they have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine of devils, that “we are not to do good unless our heart be free to it:” By doing good especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more, because the world will love its own, and them only: By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed: By running with patience the race that is set before them, “denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily;” submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and off-scouring of the world; and looking that men should “say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord’s sake.”

6. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, *Thirdly*, by attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are, the public worship of God; the ministry of the word, either read or expounded; the supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; and fasting, or abstinence. **7.** These are the **General Rules** of our societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these, we know, his Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that soul as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season: But then if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

JOHN WESLEY, CHARLES WESLEY.
May 1, 1743.