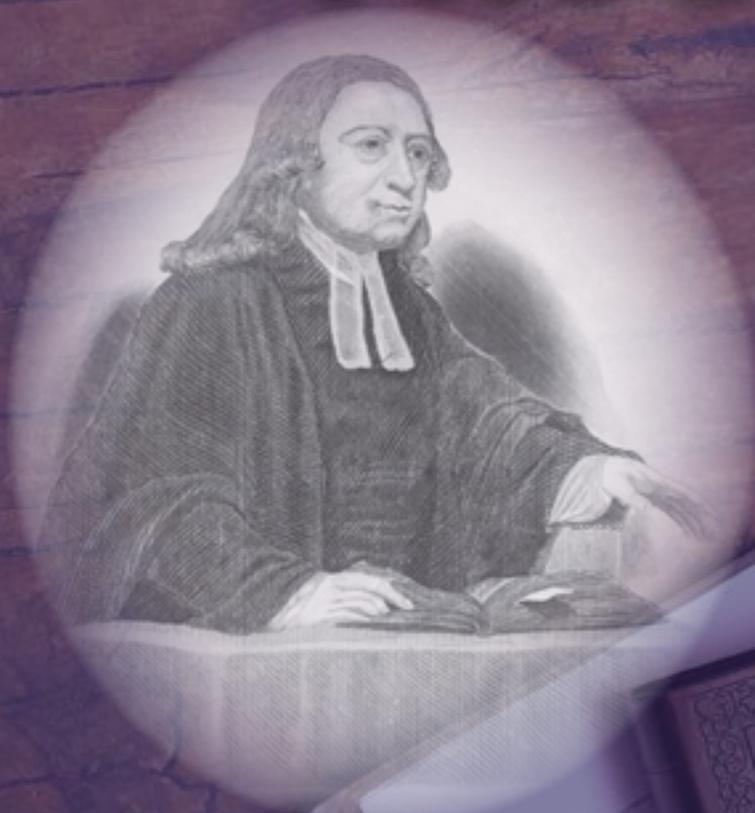


HOLY BIBLE

Wesleyan Theology



Free Methodist Church
AFRICA

Ordination Series

*Rather, honor Christ as Lord in your heart.
Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you
for a reason for the hope that is in you.*

2 Peter 3:15 NIV



Free Methodist Church
AFRICA

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Syllabus

Course Title: Wesleyan Theology

Course description:

This course examines the life and theology of John Wesley (1703-1791). It will examine the theological resources that Wesley and his successors used to develop the understanding of Wesleyan theology. In addition, it presents some practical implications of Wesleyan theology for the African context today.

General objectives:

At the end of this course the students will:

- Value and apply the teachings of John Wesley in their personal and ministerial life.
- Understand the Wesleyan resources for theological investigation.
- Be able to respond biblically from a Wesleyan perspective to current African realities.

Evaluation:

Students should carry a notebook (agenda, notebook, etc.), in which they will complete the lesson exercises and the reflection questions. At the same time, they can write down the questions that arise from the content of the lesson and the answers provided by the trainer.

Students will read John Wesley's treatise "Grave Address to the People of England Concerning the State of the Nation." Based on this essay, students will write a paper where they make a critical reflection on the state of society and the different social circumstances that affect them today. This paper should be shared with their church or Peace House. Then, together with their team, they will develop a practical plan in which their church or House of Peace can respond with works of mercy to the social realities of their community.

Resources

Complementary Readings:

- Wesley, John. "Grave address to the people of England concerning the state of the nation". In Works of John Wesley. Henrico NC: Wesley Heritage,
- Marston, Leslie. "From Age to Age a Living Witness" See FMC Africa resource page.
- Snyder, Howard. "The Radical Wesley: The Patterns and Practices of a Movement Maker". Seedbed Publishing, Franklin Tennessee

Online Resources

The Radical Wesley: Howard Snyder Interview, Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMXNkyOkQkY>

The Radical Wesley: Howard Snyder Interview, Part 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUw-vhambJEWWh>

Seven Minute Seminary: Why the Church Needed Methodism (Ryan Danker)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5wAm4HsDXw>

Seven Minute Seminary: Matt O'Reilly - Sin and Sanctification

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyvnNhSrktM>

Evaluation Criteria: Integrative Project - Wesleyan Theology

Option A: Present your topics to your class

Option B: Teach a class in your local ministry setting with your mentor attending

Option C: Write a response on your topics for your mentor to read

Assignment 1

Choose 2 of the 5 suggested topics for a response:

1. John Wesley's theology as a response to social conditions in England in the 1700's
2. Wesleyan theology as a response to the social, economic, and cultural conditions in your ministry context today
3. The process of grace in salvation
4. What sanctification looks like in the life of a Spirit-filled believer
5. How the Wesleyan Quadrilateral can be applied to a specific ministry: e.g. church planting, evangelism, discipleship

Assignment 2

Read the Adaptation in the Appendix "From Age to Age a Living Witness" by Leslie Marston. Give your response to the reading reflecting on your ministry and culture using Option A, B, or C.

	Superior	Acceptable	Deficient
Writing	The writing is clear, precise, and coherent. Grammatically appropriate language is used with a fluid style. The text is effectively organized, with a logical structure and well-developed paragraphs.	The writing is mostly clear and coherent, with some minor errors of grammar. The language is appropriate for the topic, and the general structure of the text is comprehensible.	The writing is confusing or disorganized with frequent grammatical errors making it difficult to understand. The language and structure of the text are not appropriate for the subject.
Content	The project presents a comprehension understanding of the topic with clear, precise and relevant information backed By solid evidence.	The project presents an adequate understanding of the topic with sufficient research and solid analysis. The information presented is largely relevant and accurate.	The project presents a limited understanding of the topic, with superficial research and basic analysis. The information presented is incomplete, imprecise, or lacks supporting evidence.
Structure	The project follows a clear and logical structure, with a well-defined introduction, coherent development of ideas, and a solid conclusion. Headings and subheadings are used effectively to organize the content of the topic.	The project follows a Basic structure with a clear introduction, development of appropriate ideas and a conclusion that summarizes the understanding of the topic. The organization of the content is understandable, but lacks clarity	The project structure is confusing or disorganized, with an unclear introduction, inconsistent development of ideas, and a weak or absent conclusion. The organization of the content makes it difficult for the reader to understand.

Introduction

It is a joy for us to be able to share with you the Wesleyan Theology class that we know will enrich us greatly, not only in our Christian pilgrimage, but also in our pastoral and missionary work.

We believe that we as Free Methodists have a richness in our theology that is worthy of being known, taught, and lived. It is a gift we have received from our foremothers and forefathers, a spiritual heritage that we cannot ignore. It is a heritage that we can live and share with the leaders and members of our congregations.

Our foundation is that Jesus Christ and the inspired Word of God are the only place where we as Christians stand. But we are not the only ones to stand here. Throughout history many leaders have lived a genuine faith and have provided a way of seeing and living the teachings of Jesus. This truth is the reason we study the life and works of John Wesley, not to replace the teachings of Jesus Christ, but, by studying Wesley, we will love and live the teachings of Jesus more vividly.

We suggest that this module be taught using the inverted classroom methodology. It is the method that best helps us develop the materials and achieve our goals. You, the church planters and student-pastors will receive the materials prior to the meeting (class time), so that you can read and understand the content and complete all the assignments. In the meeting we will discuss the materials, helping each other understand the content. Then we will review the exercises and answer all your questions.

Preferably this course should be done in a group and under the supervision of a trainer duly endorsed by the Free Methodist Church; for an exception, for special conditions, you should contact the person in charge in your church, district or conference. This material is intended for people who are in the process of Community Church Planting, as well as for pastors in established churches who are on their way to ordination.

The module design assumes that each lesson of this subject corresponds to 3 hours of group meeting (including a break time per lesson); therefore, it is ideal to follow one of the following modalities to complete this subject:

Extended plan: 12 weekly meetings of 1 hour and a half each. This modality is ideal when the same group is taking 2 or more subjects at the same time. In this modality we recommend that in one week you review the assimilation of the content by using the evaluation activities called “reflection questions” and “complementary readings.” In the following week you review the development of the personal evaluation exercises and action plans.

Regular plan: The course can be completed in 6 weekly meetings of 3 hours each (a variation of this is 2 weekly meetings of 1.5 hours each). Before each meeting you must complete all the activities indicated for the lesson.

Intensive Plan: The course can be completed in one meeting of approximately 18 hours. In this mode the students are expected to be very disciplined so that during each of the six weeks prior to the meeting, they will read the entire content of the manual, complete the evaluation activities related to thinking (reflection questions and reading reports) and the personal evaluation. At the meeting the trainer will indicate when and how to complete and report the evaluation activities called action plans.



Lesson 1

Introduction and Relevance of John Wesley's Teachings

Purpose of the Lesson:

To help students understand why Wesleyan theology is important and meaningful for life and ministry in Africa today.

Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson the student:

- Will discover how the Wesleyan message applies to life today.
- Will understand how to deal with parts of Scripture that seem to disagree.
- Will learn to value clear and simple ways of sharing the main truths of God's Word.
- Will think carefully about the meaning of the songs sung in church.

Content:

Why study the life of John Wesley?

Theological clarifications by John Wesley

Simplicity to convey the truth

The power of music

Miscellaneous Matters

Conclusion

Reflection Questions

Why Study the Life of John Wesley?

Why would someone study the life of a person in a class on theology? John Wesley started the Methodist movement in the 1700s. His theology means what he believed and taught about God, faith, and how Christians should live. Wesley believed that faith was not just about what you think, but about how you live every day.



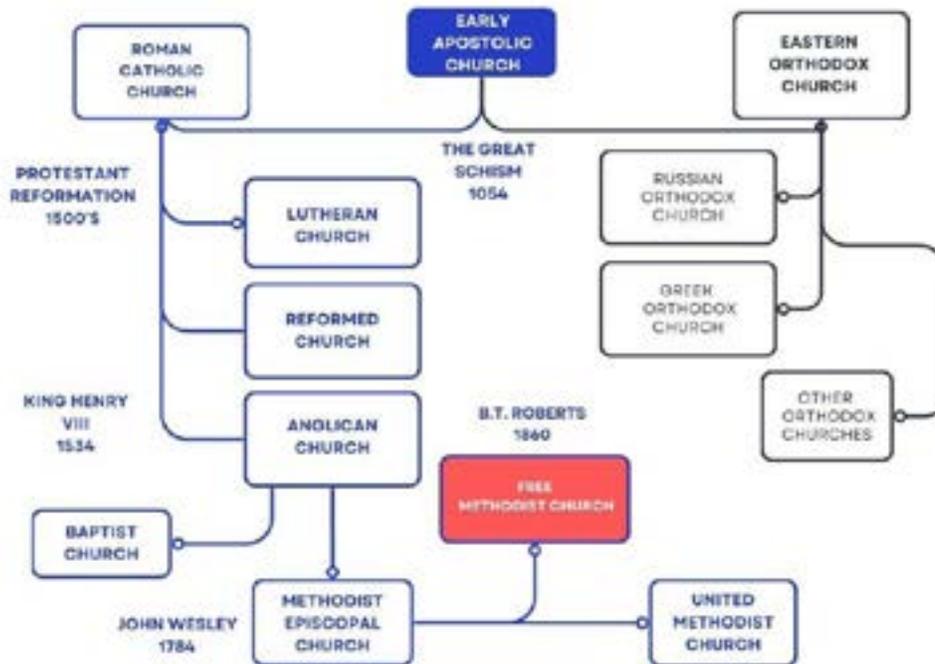
In order to fully appreciate John Wesley’s theological contributions, it is extremely helpful to understand the man. He was a man who was influenced by his surroundings. He responded to the needs and injustices of his time with theological thought and persuasion. John Wesley’s life deserves study because:

- he lived a life worthy of imitation
- his life led to a specific way of doing ministry
- his ministry led to a specific method he could easily share; and
- His influence brought countless people into the kingdom of God

John Wesley’s life and teachings still matter today because his understanding of the Bible helps Christians know God better. John Wesley’s view of scripture was the basis of his theology. His interpretation of scripture and the resulting ministry changed whole nations many years ago, and can help people in Africa today. Wesleyan theology is not simply an academic pursuit for the classroom. It is a theology that is lived, shared, and used in daily life. At the root of John Wesley’s theological perspective is the fact that it was lived out.

The teachings of John Wesley have made a big difference in the lives and culture of many peoples, even though many do not realize it. Wesleyan theology has shaped many churches, such as the Free Methodist Church, the United Methodist Church, the Global Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Church, Salvation

Development of the Christian Church



Army, Church of the Nazarene, Adventist Church, Pentecostal Methodist Church, Independent Pentecostal churches, Church of God, and others. Wesley's teachings obviously still have a strong influence on people's lives today.

Part of Wesley's legacy is his practical way of preaching and living the gospel. Dr. David McKenna, in his book "Wesleyans in the 21st Century," explained that John Wesley shared God's message of saving love in a simple way that ordinary people could understand. He lived out this message in everything he did and taught. He built groups that helped make this message real in people's lives. He also made sure that he and his followers stayed responsible to God and to each other for living out the things they preached.

Wesley was an innovative pastor, with a great desire to minister to all people and a fervent dedication to provide resources and tools to new Christians to help them in all aspects of their lives. Wesley was a practical theologian who focused his studies and ministerial preparation on serving and understanding the needs of the people around him.



One of Wesley's most important ideas was his understanding of God's grace. Grace means God's loving help, given freely. Wesley taught that God's grace comes to people in different ways.

Prevenient grace is God's grace that goes before us. It helps people know right from wrong and invites everyone to turn toward God, even before they believe. **Justifying grace** is when God forgives a person's sins and makes them right with Him through faith in Jesus. **Sanctifying grace** is God's ongoing work that helps believers grow to be more like Jesus.

Wesley believed that faith and good works belong together. He taught that we are saved by faith, not by earning God's love. But true faith will always lead to loving actions. Christians should show their faith by caring for others, helping the poor, visiting the sick, and standing up for what is right. Wesley called these actions "works of mercy" and "works of piety," such as prayer, reading the Bible, and worship.

Another key idea in Wesley's theology was **Christian perfection**, which does not mean being perfect or never making mistakes. Instead, Wesley meant that a person could grow so much in love that love for God and neighbor becomes the main desire of their heart. This growth happens over time as believers follow Jesus and depend on God's grace.

Wesley also believed in the importance of community. He encouraged Christians to meet in small groups to pray, study the Bible, and help each other live faithful lives. He believed Christians grow stronger when they support one another.

In short, John Wesley's theology teaches that God loves everyone, invites all people to follow Him, and gives grace to help believers live lives filled with love, faith, and service.

Theological Clarifications By John Wesley

Another reason why it is important to study John Wesley's life and teachings is that they help fix and correct wrong ideas that have hurt the church in Africa for a long time. Below are three examples of these wrong teachings and how Wesley showed the right way to understand them.

- **Separation between "social work" and "evangelization"**. Wesley's teachings bridge that dichotomy (division), as explained by Hugo Magallanes:

For Wesley, the gospel is the good news of God's love, a love that creates us, that saves us, that sanctifies us, that brings us into full communion with him. That sanctification includes not only our individual and private sanctification, but the sanctification of all creation and the entire social order (2005, p. 14).

- **Separation between “faith” and “education”.** Another separation in the teachings that we see in many of the religious circles is the separation between “faith” and “education”, about this Magallanes mentions:

Wesley's example: study more and more, and insist that our people and their leaders learn more every day. But let us not do so to defend the prestige of our group or our movement, but so that all of this may be an expression that we love God with all our minds, and because we are enabling ourselves to serve more and better (2005, p. 14).

- **Separation between “church” and “individual”.** Another separation that we sometimes find in our churches is our allegiance to the “church” or to the “individual”. Wesley in his teaching unites this dichotomy, in this regard Magellan writes:

He was always a faithful son of the Church of England (Anglican Church), and he did everything possible so that the Methodist movement would not compete with that church... but, at the same time, he did not allow his fidelity to the church as an institution to prevent him from carrying out his work, manifesting God's love to people to whom the church was barely reaching, or seeking new forms of ministry (2005, p. 15).

In addition to the points mentioned above, there are at **least two other teachings** that are relevant to John Wesley's theology and life for us today:

- **True faith unites revelation and reason.** On this subject McKenna comments, “Behind the firm logic of his sermons is his premise that the way to the heart is through the head” (2000, p. 18). McKenna also points out that the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard believed that the head helps people think carefully, and the heart helps them believe strongly. When the head and heart do not work together, problems happen. If someone uses only their head, they stop believing in right and wrong and only trust their own opinions. If someone uses only their heart, they believe things without thinking carefully. Both ways lead to confusion and bad choices.

Good theology should be both preached and sung. John's brother, Charles, wrote over 6500 songs to be used in worship. Sometimes Christians do not think carefully about the words in the songs they sing. People may sing songs that sound pleasant but do not tell the full truth about God's grace. When songs only speak of an easy kind of faith, even strong

preaching can seem less meaningful. Songs offered to God—old or new—should tell the truth about His grace, human sin, and the price Jesus paid on the cross.

When grace is mentioned without these truths, it becomes what may be called “cheap grace,” and when songs lose truth, it is a sign that people are forgetting what truly matters.

One example of the Wesley brothers’ integration of theology and music is the hymn by Charles Wesley, “O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing”. In the 4th verse he wrote:

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin;
He sets the prisoner free.*

In these two lines the theology of justification and sanctification can be sung. Jesus breaks the power of sin in His crucifixion and cancels the price of our sin. In the next line the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit to reorient the believer from sin to holiness is sung. He sets the prisoner free!

Both singing and preaching should always express both grace and truth. How do the songs used in African churches reflect sound theology?

- **If someone truly loves God, that person will also love others.** God cares about both **personal holiness** (living a pure and faithful life) and **social holiness** (showing love through actions that help others). John wrote in 1 John 4:20–21, *“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: the one who loves God must also love his brother.”*

At the start of the twentieth century, some Christians focused only on believing and defending the truth, while forgetting to live it out through loving actions. On the other hand, some Christians focused only on doing good works for society but left out the main message of the crucified and risen Jesus.

John Wesley taught that the Gospel of Christ does not separate personal and social holiness. He said, “The gospel of Christ knows no religion but social religion, and no holiness but social holiness.” For Wesley, the Gospel begins with personal salvation, but it must also lead to caring for others. God’s love moves Christians to love their neighbors and to serve them in every way possible.



Wesley's View and Vision				
Wesley's perspective on conflict with other Christians	Wesley's view on cooperating with other Christians	Wesley's financial advice	Wesley's vision	Wesley summarized his theology
“In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things love.”	“Though we may not think alike, can we not love alike? May we not be of one heart though we are not of one opinion?”	“Earn all you can, Save all you can, Give all you can.”	“The world is my parish.”	“Faith working through love.”
				

Simplicity to Convey the Truth

From an early age John Wesley was educated in a disciplined and rigorous manner. This undoubtedly contributed to his being one of the best educated men of his day. He wrote on religious, spiritual, economic, social, medical, and scientific matters.

Wesley put great effort and focus into his personal studies because he wanted to be sure that everything he taught was true. Then, he used his great skill and clear, powerful way of speaking to share ideas that were easy to understand but still full of deep meaning. McKenna gives the following sentences to show part of his way of thinking and how he explained it so simply that anyone could understand and live by it (2000, p. 14).

Although he possessed the knowledge to write a systematic theology for scholars, “He chose to share a practical kind of theology that ordinary people could understand” (McKenna, 2000, p. 14). In this, John Wesley gives today’s believers a great challenge. In a modern world where people often prefer short sayings or quick ideas instead of deep thinking, Christians must ask God to help them teach truths that have real meaning. The people of Africa need answers that speak to their real problems and fit their culture. As followers of Christ and keepers of Wesley’s teachings, believers must think clearly and teach wisely in today’s world. God used John Wesley to change his generation—now He wants to use others to bring change to theirs.

According to McKenna, the way Wesley managed to make things clear without making them misleading was to think long and hard about them. This made him look for ways to explain the paradoxes that commonly confuse us. He understood that great truths often present themselves as paradoxes. A paradox is a pair of facts that seems to contradict each other but both are true.

The Bible sometimes uses paradoxes to teach us (McKenna 2000, p. 14-16). For example, it invites us to

be leaders and servants at the same time.

The problem with these apparent contradictions or “paradoxes” is that we easily overemphasize one side or the other. In this way the tension is not always maintained. Not so with Wesley, however. Faced with the paradoxes of faith Wesley responded in two ways:

1. He gladly accepted paradoxes in forming his theology. In trying to solve the problem of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility, both Pelagius and Augustine rejected the paradox and emphasized opposite sides of it. Pelagius emphasized human responsibility by saying that people can be good through their own power. Augustine emphasized God’s sovereignty by saying that people can not do anything good on their own. Like the Bible, Wesley taught both that God gives people the grace to do good, but that people are responsible to accept God’s grace.
2. He led people with the simple truth that stands out after understanding the complexities of paradoxes. Time and again he preached to ordinary, uneducated masses of people who could understand him.



The Pelagian Controversy

The Pelagian controversy was a big debate in the early church during the early 400s A.D. It began with Pelagius, a British monk who lived around 360–420 A.D. Pelagius taught that people are born good and can choose to do right without God’s special help. He said that humans have the power to obey God completely if they just try hard enough.

Another teacher, Augustine of Hippo (354–430 A.D.), disagreed. Augustine said that because of Adam’s sin, all people are born with a sinful nature. He taught that only God’s grace can save and change people. Without grace, no one can truly do good or please God. His ideas helped the church understand how much humans depend on God’s help.

However, some people thought Augustine went too far. They said his ideas made it seem like people had no choice or free will at all — as if everything, even sin, was already decided by God. Later Christians tried to find a balance between Pelagius and Augustine.

The church councils — especially the Council of Carthage in 418 A.D. and the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. — agreed with Augustine that we need grace, but also taught that humans must freely respond to God’s call.

This is a point where the tension in the apparent contradiction is important. Can it be believed that both Pelagius and Augustine were correct to an extent? There needs to be tension between the theory of original sin and the freedom of people to respond to God. Wesley’s theology demonstrated a “middle way” of embracing these paradoxes.



The Power Of Music

Ellsworth Kalas, in his book *“Our Unique Singing”*, mentions that “Methodists are known as people who sing” (McKenna, 2000, p. 21). John Wesley knew very well the power of music. He said,

“By the power of music, I mean its power to affect listeners and raise various passions in the human mind. Of this we have several striking examples in ancient history. We are told that the musicians of ancient Greece were able to produce

any passion they pleased: to inspire love or hate, joy or pain, hope or fear, courage, anger or despair” (Wesley, 1998, p. 223).

Since we value the rich theology of John and Charles Wesley, it is encouraged that Free Methodists in Africa seek to find songs that express a Wesleyan view of grace, the incarnation of Christ, the role of love in holiness, the filling of the Holy Spirit, and the communion of God’s people. The music of Free Methodists must be true to our Wesleyan theology.

As we study Wesley’s hymns, we see how Wesley expresses the deep truths of the Christian life in words everyone could understand and remember.

Because music has great influence and impact, church leaders should think about the following questions when choosing songs for public worship:

- Do people understand both the grace and holiness of God when they sing these songs?
- Do these songs include the message of God’s grace and the problem of human sin and the price Jesus paid on the cross?
- Do these songs emphasize the centrality of the gospel or do they focus on less important matters?

Weak songs demonstrate weak theology!

Miscellaneous Matters

There are many important parts of John Wesley’s life and teachings, but this section focuses on two of them.

The first is his **“systems thinking.”** This term was created in the middle of the twentieth century, but John Wesley was already using this kind of thinking long before others gave it a name.

In the 1700s, England was close to falling apart. The century before had seen a terrible civil war that killed almost 5% of the people, and the country was still divided. Some wanted a government that controlled everything, while others wanted no rules at all.

John Wesley used “systems thinking” to help his country. He showed that the real answer was for people to turn to Jesus and follow His teachings in every part of life. Wesley never held political power, but the revival God brought through the Methodist movement helped bring peace and prosperity to England and solved many of its problems.

Future ordained ministers of the Free Methodist Church in Africa should become “systems thinkers,”

just as John Wesley was.

Ministers should plan not only for the local church but also for the good of the whole community and society. Like Wesley, they need to understand the needs of their country and region deeply so that God can use the message of the gospel to bring blessing to all people.

In trying to bless the whole world, John Wesley's way of relating to other Christians is worth studying. In his sermon "The Catholic Spirit," Wesley taught important lessons about how Christians can live in harmony. He wrote:

"Even if people have different opinions or ways of worship, that should not stop them from loving one another. We may not all think the same, but we can love the same. We can be united in heart, even if we are not united in every opinion. All of God's children can be joined in love and good works, even with small differences between them." (Wesley, 1998, pp. 2–3).

Today, pride and a sense of superiority have caused divisions in many churches. To face this problem, Wesley's message gives clear guidance: Christians should love each other even when they do not agree, have one heart, show respect for one another, and stay humble. As Wesley said, "No one can be sure that all his or her opinions are completely true" (Wesley, 1998, p. 4).

Conclusion

John Wesley was a man who deeply understood both the gospel and the society in which he lived. He cared about putting God's Word into action and shared deep truths in simple words so that everyone, even those without much education, could understand his message.

Wesley was also able to connect ideas that seemed very different, such as faith and education, or evangelism and social work. This makes him an important person to study. He also cared about music in the church, using songs to teach deep truth from scripture about the gospel.

Finally, Wesley showed his wise and organized way of thinking through his writing "A *Serious Address to the People of England*." In this work, he explained the difficult problems England was facing at that time, as will be seen in the next section.

Reflection Questions:

1. How does John Wesley's search to become holy impact the way we teach and preach the fullness of salvation in Africa today?
2. Wesley believed that personal holiness (loving God) and social holiness (loving others) must go together. What would it look like for Christians today to live out both kinds of holiness in their communities?
3. In your ministry experience what "apparent contradictions" (or paradox) have you encountered? How did you balance both sides of the contradiction? For example God's promised blessing and the reality of suffering? Or, God heals but uses suffering? Can you think of other examples?
4. Can you think of a song that expresses good Wesleyan theology? How does it help you teach the theological truths of John Wesley?
5. Wesley valued education but also spoke in ways ordinary people could understand. How can Christians today balance deep study with simple, clear communication of God's truth?
6. Wesley lived more than 300 years ago, yet his ideas still shape many churches today. What qualities or values made his ministry so lasting, and how can today's church leaders follow his example?



Lesson 2

Life and Historical Context of John Wesley

Purpose of the Lesson

To give the student an understanding of the historical realities of the times of John Wesley and how his life was impacted by his context.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the student:

- Will understand the social context of John Wesley.
- Will understand the family context of John Wesley.
- Will know the timeline of John Wesley's life.

Contents

Introduction

England in the 1700's: historical context

The Wesley Family

The fundamental role of Susana Wesley

John Wesley's childhood and youth

The experience of the burning heart

Wesley, Whitefield, and Bristol

Conclusion

Reflection Questions

Introduction

John Wesley lived a long time ago in England. To understand his life, we need to know what was



happening around him. The social, political, cultural, and spiritual problems of his time helped shape his ideas and beliefs. These beliefs still affect us today. This Lesson will talk about life in 18th century England. Life was very hard back then, and knowing this helps us see how God changed the whole country through His power. The message of Jesus can change people, communities, and societies.

England in the 1700's: Historical Context

The 18th century brought a big change called the Industrial Revolution. New machines and technology helped people make things faster and easier. This changed the way people worked and how society worked. It also changed how people saw life and what they valued.

England became the strongest economy in the world because of the Industrial Revolution. Between 1760 and 1770, three important inventions helped England become the best:

- the water mill,
- the steam engine,
- and the spinning textile machine.

Every technological change has consequences. It brings change to other parts of life and community. The Industrial Revolution changed England in the following ways:

- **Growth of the textile industry.** Most landowners changed what they did for work. They stopped farming and started raising sheep to sell wool. This meant the farmers who worked the land lost their jobs. The people without work moved to nearby cities and found new jobs making cloth in factories.
- **Demographic explosion.** At the same time as the Industrial Revolution, there was also a big change in farming. New methods helped farmers grow much more food. Because there was more to eat, fewer people died from hunger, and the population almost doubled. In 1710, England had about five million people, but by the end of the century, it had nine million. Many people moved from the countryside to the cities to find new jobs. This caused problems with housing, food, and work.
- **Economic explosion.** England became the greatest economic power of the world. The average wage doubled and the middle class was born. The middle class were common people who earned more money than poor people, but owned less than the wealthy people.
- **Slavery.** Early in the 1700s England controlled most of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, carrying slaves from Africa to islands in the West Indies, where

they worked on the sugar plantations. The slave workers brought great wealth to those who sold them and to those who used them to farm crops.

- **Political problems.** England was under the control of a king. The kings were more interested in satisfying their selfish desires for fame, power and wealth. Of the four kings England had during Wesley's time, none of them showed any interest in helping the common people who lived very hard lives..
- **Religious and spiritual problems.** The Anglican Church was the official church of England. The church was not interested in the struggles of the common people. Many pastors collected rents from their people and few offered any spiritual care. Even fewer believed or preached the Bible.



The Wesley Family

Family has a big influence on how a person grows and learns. The lessons and examples we get early in life help shape who we become. That's why each person is greatly affected by their family.

John Wesley was the fifteenth of nineteen children. His parents, Samuel and Susanna Wesley, and other family members had a strong impact on his education and character. In today's world, having so many children might seem unusual. When we study their social context there are two factors that help us to understand:

- Even though farming was starting to change, it was still a very important part of society. Large families were needed to help plant and take care of the crops. Having many children meant more help on the farm, which gave families greater safety and economic stability.
- Because sanitation and healthcare was poor, people only lived about 35 to 50 years. Many babies did not survive. The Wesley family faced this same hardship—nine of John Wesley's brothers and sisters died when they were very young.

Who were John Wesley's parents? His mother, Susanna Annesley, was the daughter of Samuel Annesley, a well-known and respected Puritan theologian. The Puritans were English Christians who believed the Anglican Church needed to be "purified" and separated further from the Roman Catholic Church that came before it. About a century before Wesley's time, the Puritans played a major role in the English Civil

War. They were also responsible for helping to settle New England in America and for the execution of King Charles I in England.

Being the daughter of a respected and well-known man gave Susanna the chance to receive an excellent education, which was unusual for women at that time. She read many books from her father's library and learned about philosophy and theology.

John Wesley's father, Samuel Wesley, was the son of another John Wesley (who shared his grandson's name). This older John Wesley studied at Oxford University and preached for the official church, but he was never given permission to become a minister. He spoke out against both the government and the church. He died young, at just 42 years old.

After his father died young, Samuel Wesley had to take on adult responsibilities very early in life. His hard work and talent paid off. He was an excellent student and a skilled writer, which helped him become the pastor of Epworth Anglican Church in 1696. He served there faithfully until his death in 1735.

John Wesley and the Methodist movement were deeply shaped by their family background. For example, both his mother and grandfather took part in lay ministry, meaning they served God even without being official pastors. The family also believed that a minister answered directly to God and that sometimes the official Church might stray from God's will—and in those times, it was right to stand against the Church.

The Fundamental Role of Susanna Wesley

“If I had twenty children, I would rejoice to consecrate all of them to missionary work, even if that I was sure I would never see them again” (Magallanes, 2005, p. 49).

Susanna Wesley was the mother of nineteen children and believed that helping them know God was her most important duty. She cared for the health and moral growth of the ten children who survived childhood illnesses. Susanna also firmly managed her household. She spent time thinking about the best ways to teach her children and followed a set of strict rules that she applied with discipline and love.

Susanna took responsibility to educate her children in the home, including knowledge of the Bible. Susanna used the Bible to teach her children how to read. Every week, she spent one to two hours talking privately with each child. These talks were calm and friendly, giving each child a chance to share their thoughts and feelings with their mother. During these talks, they discussed things like:

- The importance of Christian values
- How to build strong character in a sinful world
- Simple, classic prayers

These conversations were very important in shaping each child's character.

Her son John believed she did an excellent job raising her children. Later, when he wanted to start his own school, he asked his mother to write down her ideas about how to teach and raise children. Here is a summary of what she said:

- **Routine** – The Wesley house ran on a tight schedule. “The children were always put into a regular method of living,” she wrote. Times were assigned



for naps, education, meals, and bedtime.

- **Self-regulation** – Susanna was convinced that “self-will is the root of all sin and misery,” and worked to help her children develop self-control.
- **Positive reinforcement** – Susanna believed, “That every signal [sic] act of obedience...should always be commended and frequently rewarded.” When a child misses the mark, Susanna recommends that parents “sweetly” direct the child on “how to do better for the future.”
- **Discipline** – When needed, Susanna strived to discipline appropriately. “Some [infractions] should be overlooked and taken no notice of, and others mildly reproved,” she wrote, “but no willful transgression ought ever to be forgiven children without chastisement, less or more, as the nature and circumstances of the offence require.”
- **Forgiveness** – Susanna taught that a child should never be punished for the same offense twice, and “that if they amended they should never be upbraided with it afterwards.”
- **Peace** – “The family usually lived in as much quietness as if there had not been a child among them,” Susanna remembers.
- **Bedtime** – After dinner at 6, the process of getting the children ready for bed began at 7 p.m. with the youngest child. All children were in bed by 8 p.m., whether they were ready for sleep or not. “[T]here was no such thing allowed in our house as sitting by a child till it fell asleep,” she wrote.
- **Dining** – Mealtime was family time. When the children were young, “At dinner their little table and chairs were set by ours,” Susanna recalls, near enough to be supervised. Children graduated to the dining room table, “As soon as they could handle a knife and fork.”
- **Choosing meals** – Susanna expected the children to eat what was served. “They were never suffered [permitted] to choose their meat, but always made to eat such things as were provided by the family,” Susanna wrote.
- **Medicine** – “They were so constantly used to eat and drink what was given them,” she remembers, “that when any of them was ill there was no difficulty in making them take the most unpleasant medicine.”
- **Polite speech** – The children were given “nothing they cried for, and instructed to speak handsomely for what they wanted.”
- **No lying** – Susanna believed that children were tempted to lie when they feared punishment. “To prevent this,” she reasoned, “a law was made that whoever was charged with a fault, of which they were guilty, if they would ingenuously confess it, and promise to amend,” they would not be punished.
- **Respect for property** – The Wesley children were taught to keep their hands off of another’s stuff, even “in the smallest matter, though it were but of the value of a farthing [1/4 of a penny], or a pin; which they might not take from the owner without, much less against his consent.”

The teachings and principles she imparted to her children soon became known to the Epworth community. Once, while her husband Samuel was away on a trip, residents of the community asked her to teach them about the Bible and theology as she did with her children. Susanna agreed and soon her kitchen was full of children and adults, the number of people going to “Susanna’s kitchen” increased to close to two hundred people.

Susanna Wesley is an example of devotion, commitment to God and her family, an example worthy of imitation today. Susanna reminds us of the influence that parents exert on their children for better or worse. Our greatest desire is that these principles that Susanna used be applied in every home in our African continent; that they not be delegated to the church or to educational institutions, this responsibility should fall primarily on the parents.

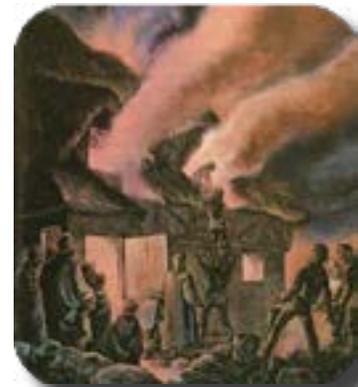
Childhood and Youth of John Wesley

God’s Protection

John Wesley was born in 1703. When he was only five years old, on February 9, 1709, his family’s house caught on fire. Many people believe the fire was started by members of his father Samuel Wesley’s church, who wanted to harm him or make him leave the community.

The fire was very dangerous and could have killed the whole family. But Samuel and Susanna Wesley bravely fought the flames and helped their children escape. They were burned on their hands and bodies while rescuing them. They saved all their children—except for John, who was still trapped inside.

John’s father tried to go back for him, but the fire was too strong. With a heavy heart, he prayed and left John in God’s hands. Just then, little John appeared at a second-story window, calling for help. Two men rushed over. One climbed onto the shoulders of the other and reached up to save John from the burning house. The men rescued John just before the roof collapsed.



Even though John had this experience at the age of five, he never forgot it; and proof of this is that in one of his portraits, he wrote the following question: “Is this not a brand snatched from the fire?” (Zechariah 3:2)

Because of his narrow escape from death, Susanna felt she had a special responsibility for this child. He was a quick learner and spiritually sensitive. He loved to study the Bible and his father considered him mature enough to receive the Lord’s Supper at the age of eight.

Charterhouse and Oxford (1714-1729)

When he was ten, John Wesley was helped by the Duke of Buckingham to enter the important Charterhouse School in London. His older brother, Samuel, was already at that school so John was never far from the influence of his family. When he turned 17 he enrolled at Christ Church College, Oxford. The next four years were very important for his spiritual and intellectual development.

In the intellectual field, he studied classical and modern literature, history, Greek, biology (he always wanted to be a doctor) and theology. In the theological area, two authors were of great influence for him. The first one was Thomas Kempis with his book *The Imitation of Christ*. From him he learned that the importance of religion is found in the heart, and that the heart governed by God should rule all aspects of life. The second author was Jeremiah Taylor. From his *Rules for Holy Living and Dying* Wesley learned the disciplines of prayer, fasting, Bible study, Self-control, time management, and personal accountability.

Charles, John's younger brother, also received a scholarship to attend the same college, but unlike John, he did not show the same interest in his studies. His father and brother John both rebuked him and Charles responded, "Would you have me to become a saint all at once?" Despite this irreverent question, Charles did decide to take his studies more seriously. Charles had a special talent for making friends and began to help a fellow student with his personal problems, and then led this student to know Christ personally. Other students were drawn to Charles so he formed them into a group which would meet periodically to pray, read the Bible, take communion, give money to the poor, and share their spiritual lives.

John Wesley was so impressed with this group that he joined them. Because of his age and natural leadership, John quickly became the leader of the group. Under John's influence many other students joined the group. Even before John came to the group, some people had given it nicknames as a form of mockery. They called them The Reformers Club, The Saints' Club, The Holy Club, Bible Moths, Enthusiasts, and finally, Methodists because they lived so methodically. Ever ones to turn an insult into a compliment, the brothers embraced that name and used it for the rest of their lives.

Their meetings began with a prayer and then they read the New Testament in Greek. Then each of the members told about his personal and spiritual needs and the others would respond with suggestions on how to improve their relationship with God and with others. They would also plan for various works of charity by which they could help the poor.

After completing his studies at Christ Church College, John Wesley followed in the footsteps of his father and older brother and began the process of ordination as a minister of the Anglican Church. His candidacy was well received by church officials, and he was ordained a deacon on September 19, 1725. He was ordained as a priest three years later.



While he was in the process of ordination John Wesley was elected a "fellow" of Lincoln College. The college has nothing to do with the future American president Abraham Lincoln but was founded in the 1400s by the bishop of the English city of Lincoln. Being a fellow of a college was a paid position and allowed a priest to teach in the college if he chose. He could live and eat at the college for free, but he need not. He really had no obligations to the college whatever but was free to do whatever he thought was God's will for his life. This fellowship freed John Wesley from any financial worries and enabled him to teach for a time, to help his father back in Epworth, and to go to Georgia, in America, as a missionary.

The Experience Of The Burning Heart

John Wesley's burning heart experience can be divided into two parts: the missionary trip to Georgia and the event that took place on Aldersgate Street.

Mission trip to Georgia

John Wesley was chosen as a fellow at Lincoln College. He and his brother Charles, along with other Methodists had a chance to go to the colony of Georgia. They wanted to be missionaries and share the Gospel with the Native Americans there.

On October 21, 1735, John Wesley, his brother, and others set sail for Georgia. The trip had a big effect on John Wesley's life. One day, a terrible storm hit the ship. Everyone on board thought they were going to die. John Wesley was very scared.

As he walked around the ship, he found a group of Moravians (people from Germany who followed a

serious Christian faith). During the storm, they were calmly singing and praising God. Wesley was amazed by how peaceful they were. After the storm ended, he asked them if they had been afraid. They answered, “Thank God, no! Not even our wives and children were afraid.” (Magallanes, 2005. p. 50).

This experience, along with the storm and his own fear, made Wesley think deeply about his faith and his relationship with God. He realized that the Moravians had a stronger faith than he did. They were sure of their salvation, but he was not. Wesley wished he had the kind of faith they had.



When John Wesley arrived in Georgia after about four months at sea, he met with a Moravian pastor named Spangenberg. Wesley told him about all the fears he had felt during the journey. Pastor Spangenberg asked him some serious questions that surprised him: *Do you feel God's presence in your life? Does God's Spirit tell you that you are His child? Do you know Jesus? Are you sure Jesus has saved you?* Wesley said “yes,” but later he admitted in his diary that he had not been honest with his answers.

John Wesley's time as a missionary in Georgia did not go well. The colonists did not like his strict and serious way of living. The Native Americans were not interested in his message. He even fell in love with a girl, but she married someone else.

Wesley ended up leaving his mission and returned to England feeling like a failure.

This failure showed the emotional and spiritual struggle Wesley was going through. He realized that hard work, strict rules, and trying to earn God's love were not enough. All his religious efforts only revealed how empty he felt inside and how helpless he was in trying to reach God on his own.

Wesley himself recorded in his diary:

I went to America to convert the Indians. But, alas, who, who will convert me? Who, who will deliver me from this perverse and unbelieving heart? I have a summer religion. I can speak well, and even believe, so long as there is no danger near; the more that death stares me in the face, then my spirit is disturbed. Nor can I say, “for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Wesley, Wesley's Works, Vol. XI, 1996, p. 37).

The Aldersgate Experience

When John Wesley returned to England, he began thinking deeply about his calling, his ministry, and his fears about salvation and death. He decided to seek help from the Moravians, the people he had admired on the ship because they were so sure of their faith. In London, he found a community of Moravians and met Pastor Peter Böhler. After listening to Wesley, Böhler answered many of his questions.

This time with Böhler helped Wesley understand things more clearly. Böhler taught him that true salvation gives victory over sin and a strong assurance of God's love. Wesley said this teaching felt like hearing the Gospel in a brand new way.

God gave that assurance of his love to Wesley on May 24, 1738. Wesley tells us in his diary:

I think it was about five o'clock in the morning that I opened my mind to those words: “He has given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we might become partakers of the divine nature” (2Pet. 1:4)... In the evening I went reluctantly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where someone was reading the preface from Luther's Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. At about eight thirty-five in the evening, as he described the change

that God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I trusted in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation and received an assurance that he had taken away all my sins, even my own, and had delivered me from the law of the sin of death. I began to pray for those who had outraged and persecuted me. Then I gave public testimony before all present of what I first felt in my heart (Wesley, Wesley's Works, Vol. XI, 1998, pp. 66-67).

After many years of searching—through the Holy Club, reading books by Law, Kempis, and Taylor, and even his trip as a missionary—John Wesley finally found the assurance he had been looking for. He had now felt God's unconditional love in a real and personal way.

The moment on Aldersgate Street, known as the “heart-warming” or “burning heart” experience, marked a clear turning point in Wesley's life and ministry. From that day on, everything changed for him.

Soon after this experience, Wesley decided to visit the main Moravian community in Germany. There he once again got spiritual help and advice that was of great help to him and his ministry. This trip was the beginning of learning the justifying faith of the virtues of godly living and community life practiced by the Moravians.

Wesley, Whitefield, and Bristol



Not long after his conversion, John Wesley met George Whitefield (pronounced wit-field). George Whitefield was also a preacher and one of John's old friends from Oxford University. He had been part of the “Holy Club” with John and Charles Wesley. George told John about something new he had been doing—preaching outside, in the open air. This was something very unusual in their day. Most people thought preaching should only happen inside a church building. George had gone to a city called Bristol, where there were many poor miners who worked in dark, dirty coal pits. They didn't go to church, but they



needed to hear about God's love. George Whitefield went out to where they worked and started preaching right in the fields and streets. To everyone's surprise, thousands of people came to listen! Some cried as they heard the message of God's forgiveness.

When John Wesley heard about this, he wasn't sure what to think. He had always believed that preaching should be done inside a church. The idea of preaching outdoors felt strange and even disrespectful to him. George Whitefield asked John to come to Bristol and see for himself what was happening.

In April 1739, Wesley traveled to Bristol. When he arrived, he saw hundreds, even thousands, of people waiting to hear the message of Jesus. They were poor, dirty, and tired from their work in the mines, but they listened with open hearts. Wesley felt God speaking to him. He realized that these people might never go to church—but the church could go to them. So, John decided to try field preaching himself.

Field Preaching

He later wrote in his journal, “I submitted to be more vile.” By this he meant that he humbled himself to do something that might seem foolish to others, but he knew it was right before God. On April 2, 1739, John Wesley stood on a small hill near Bristol and preached his first sermon outdoors. His voice carried over the crowd, and people listened carefully. Many began to weep as they felt the Holy Spirit working in

their hearts. It was a powerful moment. Wesley later said that he felt more alive preaching in the open air than he ever had inside a church.

From that day on, field preaching became one of the most important parts of John Wesley's ministry. He began to travel all over England, sometimes riding more than 4,000 miles a year on horseback. He preached in fields, on streets, in barns, and even on gravestones. He preached anywhere people would gather to listen. He often spoke to thousands at a time, and sometimes whole communities were changed because of his messages.

In Bristol, Wesley saw that the people needed more than just preaching—they needed a community of believers to support them. Wesley started the first Methodist Society there. It was a group where people could meet together every week to pray, study the Bible, and encourage one another to live holy lives. Each person who joined agreed to follow three simple rules:

1. Do no harm.
2. Do good.
3. Stay in love with God.

Wesley's Small Groups

These small groups, called “societies” and “classes” became the heart of the Methodist movement. Through them, people grew in faith and helped one another live as true followers of Jesus. This new kind of community became one of the greatest strengths of Methodism. There will be more on societies, classes, and bands in another course.

John Wesley also helped organize a place in Bristol called the *New Room*. It was built in 1739. It was the first Methodist chapel ever built. It was simple with plain benches and white walls. Above the meeting room, there were small rooms where preachers could stay when they traveled. The New Room became a center for worship, teaching, and caring for the poor. It is still standing today and is known as the oldest Methodist building in the world.

Wesley's work in Bristol and his choice to preach outdoors made a huge difference. Thousands of people came to faith in Jesus. Men who had once spent their wages on alcohol began to care for their families. Women found new hope and dignity. Children were taught to read and learn about the Bible. The whole city began to change.

Wesley And Opposition

Not everyone liked what Wesley was doing. Among other things, Wesley began preaching against the evil of slavery in Bristol. Some church leaders thought he was breaking the rules by preaching outside. Others accused him of causing trouble. Sometimes angry mobs threw rocks at him or tried to chase him away. Wesley never stopped. He said, “The world is my parish,” meaning that he believed God had called him to preach the gospel everywhere, not just inside a church building.

John Wesley's time in Bristol was the start of something much bigger than anyone could have imagined. From that one city, the Methodist movement began to spread across England, then to Ireland, Scotland, and later to America and other parts of the world. Field preaching helped bring the good news of Jesus to people who would never have heard it otherwise.

Wesley's message was simple but powerful. He told people that God loved them, that Jesus had died for their sins, and that through faith they could be forgiven and live a new life. He also taught that true faith leads to good works—helping others, caring for the poor, and living with kindness and mercy. This combination of faith and action became a mark of Methodism.

Wesley's Impact

By the end of his life, John Wesley had preached more than 40,000 sermons and traveled over 250,000 miles, mostly on horseback. He was always busy helping others, visiting the sick, and organizing societies. He never forgot those early days in Bristol, when he first preached outdoors and saw the power of God touch the hearts of ordinary people.

John Wesley's time in Bristol and his work in field preaching remind us of something very important: the good news of Jesus is not just for people inside churches. It's for everyone—rich or poor, young or old, wherever they are. This became an important theological truth for Methodists. Wesley showed that the church is not just a building; it's people who live out their faith every day. He helped people understand that God's love can reach anyone, anywhere.

Even today, Methodists around the world remember John Wesley's courage and passion. His story encourages us to go beyond our comfort zones and share God's love with others. Whether it's in a church, a school, a park, or a street corner, God can use us—just like He used John Wesley in Bristol—to change lives and bring light to the world.

Conclusion

The story of John Wesley shows us that even in a troubled and changing world, God can use a person for a special purpose. John Wesley, saved by the blood of Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, became a powerful instrument in God's hands. Through him, God brought spiritual healing to a whole nation—and eventually, to people all around the world.

Samuel Wesley	Samuel 1690-1739
1662-1735	Emilia 1691-1770
Susanna Wesley	Susanna 1695-1764
1669-1742	Mary 1696-1734
Married 1688	Mehetabel 1697-1751
	Anne 1702-?
	John 1703-1791
	Martha 1706-1791
	Charles 1707-1788
	Keziah 1709-1741

Figure 2.1 Family tree of the Wesley family

Note: Samuel and Susana had nineteen children, nine of whom died at a very young age

Reflection Questions

1. How does the life of John Wesley demonstrate his theology?
2. How did John Wesley's efforts to serve God prior to his "Aldersgate experience" look like salvation by works?
3. Why do you think John Wesley's missionary work in America failed?
4. How can you learn from John Wesley's time in Bristol? What does "field preaching" look like today?



Lesson 3

Theology of Wesley I

Purpose of the Lesson

To give the student an understanding of John Wesley's theology specifically examining the process of salvation.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson and the next the students:

- Will understand the theological methods used by Wesley.
- Will understand how John Wesley explained the process of salvation.
- Will reflect on and apply the concept of salvation in their personal lives.

Contents

Introduction

John Wesley's theological methods

Humans and the image of God

Reflection Questions

Introduction

John Wesley's teachings are a valuable treasure for the Free Methodist Church, and they are worth studying. Remember, we can see farther when we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.

In this lesson and the next, we will learn how Wesleyan theology connects important things: God's grace and our responsibility, faith and daily living, and the individual and the church. Wesley is often called the "both/and theologian" because he brought together ideas that others kept apart.

Wesley believed strongly in the work of the Holy Spirit in our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Known as "the people's theologian," he taught a faith that people could live out, not just think about.

Wesley was mainly a practical theologian. His goal was to guide people on the path to salvation. That is why, in this section, we will follow an order that explains what happens before salvation, during salvation, and the goal of salvation.

Before we continue, it's important to pause and explain why having a solid theology matters. Figure 3.1 will help show this.

Figure 3.1 Importance of theology

A Community of Faith



Theology means learning about God. We start by learning about the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son - Jesus Christ, and then God the Holy Spirit. After that, we learn about people and how God saves us. When we understand God well, it helps us understand the church better. A healthy church helps more people learn about Jesus and grow in faith. This is called missiology, which means helping the church grow around the world.

There are more technical terms in the study of theology for each of these areas of study.

Theology	<i>The study of God</i>	What is the character of God?
Christology	<i>The study of Jesus Christ</i>	How is Jesus human and God at the same time?
Pneumatology	<i>The study of the Holy Spirit</i>	How and why the Holy Spirit works.
Anthropology	<i>The study of humans</i>	What are humans?
Soteriology	<i>The study of salvation</i>	How does salvation work?
Ecclesiology	<i>The study of the church</i>	How does the church work?
Missiology	<i>The study of evangelism</i>	How does the church multiply?
Eschatology	<i>The study of the end times</i>	How will Jesus come again?

Theological Methods Of John Wesley

When we look at how John Wesley developed his ideas about God, there are a few things to remember:

1. First, Wesley was influenced by many different Christian groups in Europe during his time. Each of these helped shape his way of thinking about faith.
2. Second, Wesley never wrote one book that explained exactly how he did theology. Instead, we learn about his method by studying what he wrote in his sermons, books, journals, and letters.

Because of this, people describe his method in different ways. Some say he had three main sources, like a three-legged stool. Others say he had four, calling it a “quadrilateral.” Some suggest a fifth source being creation. We will focus on four sources.

Influences

As John Wesley sought to know God better, he was influenced by several Catholic groups, including those started by St. Dominic, St. Benedict, St. Francis, and St. Ignatius of Loyola. Besides these Catholic influences, Wesley also learned from the Lutherans, Anglicans, and Pietists, who all focused on living a life of personal holiness.

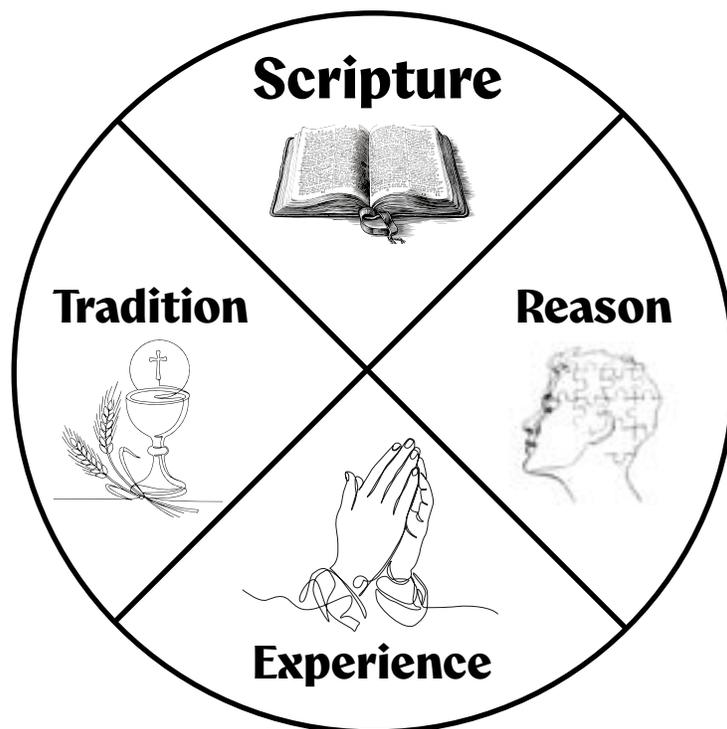
The Moravians had a very strong influence on John Wesley’s life and beliefs. They helped him in two big ways: first, they helped him understand what it means to have true saving faith and guided him toward that experience; second, they showed him how Christians could live together in loving and faithful community (Snyder, 2016). Wesley even traveled to Germany to see how the Moravians lived out their faith. What he learned there helped shape how he later organized the Methodist movement.

Even though Wesley admired the Moravians, he also disagreed with them on two important points. First, he felt they did not value the church’s sacraments enough. Second, he thought their focus on inner spirituality needed to be balanced with more attention to doing good works, living disciplined lives, and sharing the gospel with the poor (Snyder, 2016, pp. 54–55). Because of these differences, Wesley chose not to become a Moravian himself.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Wesley used four sources for the construction of his theology: Scripture, reason, Christian tradition, and Christian experience. This is what has subsequently been called the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral”.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral



Scripture



God Himself teaches us the way to heaven and has left it written in a book, the Bible. Wesley says that his own intention was to be “the man of one book” (Wesley’s Works, Vol. XI, 1996, p. 10).

Much of what Wesley has to say about the Bible is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Wesley summarized what he believed about the Scriptures:

This is what we now call Holy Scripture. This is the word of God which endures forever, from which, though heaven and earth perish, yet not an iota or tittle shall pass away. Therefore the Scripture of the Old Testament and the New Testament is a solid and accurate system of divine truth. Every portion of it is worthy of God, and all of it is one body, without defect or excess (Wesley, Wesley’s Works, Vol. IX, 1998, p. 313).

The Bible is God’s message written for us. It is a guide we should follow for what we believe and how we live. The Bible gives us true wisdom and helps us tell the difference between right and wrong. Christians need the whole Bible because God uses it to work in our hearts—sometimes to wake us up, sometimes to teach or comfort us, and sometimes to change us completely. For John Wesley, reading the Bible was a way

God gives us grace or a “means of grace”. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the people who wrote the Bible also helps believers understand what they read.

Reason



John Wesley lived in the 1700s, during a time called the Age of Enlightenment. It was not easy to be a Christian in England then. Many smart and educated people were skeptics or deists (they believed that God was no longer active in the world he created). They believed more in human reason than in faith in Jesus. Some Christians tried to fight back by using the same kind of reasoning, while others said reason had no place in faith at all. Wesley looked for a middle ground between these two sides. He didn't think reason was the most important thing, but he didn't reject it either. Instead, he believed that reason could be used by the Holy Spirit to help people understand God's truth.

Wesley believed that Christianity is a “truly rational religion” because it agrees with the truth of how God made the world. God's nature is full of wisdom and order, and the universe He created follows that same design. Human reason was made to reflect part of God's nature and to help people understand their relationship with God and with one another. This understanding is shown in what Wesley called the “moral law.”

“If we look at the law of God from another point of view, we shall see that it is the supreme and immutable reason; the unalterable rightness; the eternal quality of all things that are or have been created...it is a copy of the eternal mind; a transcript of the divine nature” (Wesley, *Wesley's Works*, Vol. II, 1996, p. 311).

Christian Tradition



“If any doubt remains, I consult with those who have experience in the things of God, and then with the writings by which they continue to speak even after death. What I thus learn, that I teach” (Wesley, *Wesley's Works*, Vol. I, 1996, p. 21).

These writings refer especially to the Fathers of the Church during the first three centuries and to the documents of the Church of England.

John Wesley often referred to the early Church Fathers because he cared deeply about what he called “Christian antiquity.” This term refers to the writings of early Christian leaders who lived during the first 300 years of the church, before the Council of Nicaea in the year 325. Wesley believed that this time period came before the church became corrupted, which happened after Emperor Constantine made Christianity the

official religion of the empire. The Church Fathers were the closest writers to the time of the New Testament, and Wesley said they were “*the most trustworthy teachers of Scripture because they were nearest to the source and guided by the same Holy Spirit who inspired it*” (Wesley, *Wesley’s Works*, Vol. IX, 1998, p. 200).

Another important source for Wesley was what he called “ours,” referring to the Church of England, where he served as an ordained priest. The early Methodists believed that their teachings matched those of the Church of England. They also believed that God had raised up the Methodist movement to help renew and reform the church, which had, in Wesley’s time, drifted away from its original faith and purpose.

Catholic spirituality from Europe was another important influence on John Wesley. Although Wesley disagreed with many of the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, he admired several Catholic spiritual writers because they focused on having a real and living relationship with God. When he was young, Wesley read *The Imitation of Christ*, a book that deeply affected him. Years later, he included summaries of many Catholic spiritual writings in his *Christian Library* so others could learn from them too.

Wesley was usually against mysticism because he thought it did not fully agree with the Bible, but he still respected many of these spiritual writers. He saw them as good examples, or “models of true holiness.”

Christian Experience



“I have endeavored to describe true, biblical, experience religion, omitting nothing that is a real part of it, and adding nothing that is not” (Wesley, *Wesley’s Works*, Vol. I, 1996, p. 21).

Christianity is “the religion...of experience.” It is a “fundamental experience of the person”, something that happens within him before it becomes a “scheme or system of doctrine”.

The purpose of doctrine is to describe a real experience—the restoration of God’s image in a person’s life. The Bible talks about this change, and a true Christian actually lives out what the Scriptures describe. When Wesley used the word *experience*, he didn’t mean just any human feeling or event. He meant the inner work of holiness that the Holy Spirit creates in a believer, bringing to life what the Bible teaches.

For Wesley, the connection between Scripture and experience made perfect sense. The Bible shows what the Christian life should look like, and experience helps explain the Bible by making its truth real and understandable. In other words, experience confirms what Scripture says. Wesley even said that experience can “prove a doctrine that is based on Scripture” (*Wesley’s Works*, Vol. I, 1996, p. 224). He believed that if no one actually experienced a certain teaching, then theologians must have misunderstood what the Bible really meant.

The Christian experience has both an inside and an outside part. The inside part is about our *feelings*—what happens in our hearts. The outside part has to do with *providence*—the way God guides the events and circumstances in our lives. Earlier we saw that reason is important for understanding God and the things of God, especially our human situation. But Wesley also taught that our feelings are another real way of knowing truth.

The Holy Spirit works in both areas—helping us understand with our minds and also moving deeply in our hearts. For a belief to be truly Christian, it must pass both tests. First, it must make sense as a faithful and

reasonable explanation of what the Bible teaches. Second, it must be confirmed by what believers actually feel and experience in their lives. In this way, John Wesley showed that he was a theologian of both the mind and the heart.

John Wesley used a wide framework for doing theology. It included **Scripture, reason, tradition, experience**. However, he made it very clear that the last 3 must always submit to the first one—**Scripture**.

For Wesley, the Bible was the highest standard, the main source of truth about God, and the foundation for every teaching. While reason, tradition, and experience can all help us understand God better, they are always secondary to Scripture and must agree with it.

Humans and the Image of God



We will begin our study of John Wesley's theology with the very start of God's revelation in the Bible: **Genesis chapters 1 to 3**. Here, we will look at how God created human beings, what original sin is, and the consequences that came from it.

God's sovereignty and human freedom in creation

To understand Wesley's theology of salvation, we first need to look at what happened to human beings when they were created. To explain this, Wesley gave **Sermon 45 "THE NEW BIRTH"**, which describes the original condition of humanity. The following are some excerpts from it.

First, why must we be born again? What are the foundations of this doctrine? Its foundation is almost as deep as the creation of the world, in the biblical account where we read: "And God," the triune God, "said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he them". Not merely in his natural image, a figure of his own immortality, a spiritual being endowed with understanding, free will and diverse affections; not merely in his political image, a ruler of the underworld, who "rules over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, over the cattle, over all the earth..." , but mostly in his moral image, which, according to the apostle, is righteousness and true holiness.

According to this image of God the human being was made. God is love; therefore the human being, when he was created, was full of love, which was the unique principle of all his moods, thoughts, words and actions. God is full of justice, mercy and truth: so was the human being when he came from the hands of his Creator. God is immaculate purity: and such was the human being in the beginning, pure, without any sinful stain... But although the

human being was made in the image of God, nevertheless he was not made immutable. This would have been incompatible with the state of probation in which God wanted to place him. He was therefore created capable of standing firm and yet subject to the possibility of falling. And of this God Himself forewarned him and gave him a solemn warning.

However, man [and the woman] did not remain in honor. They fell from their high estate. They ate of the tree of which God had commanded them, “Thou shalt not eat of it.” By this willful act of disobedience to their Creator, this plain and simple rebellion against their sovereign, they openly declared that they no longer wanted God to rule over them; that they wished to be ruled by their own will, and not by the will of him who had created them, and that they would not seek their happiness in God, but in the world, in the works of their hands (Wesley’s Works, Vol. III, 1996, pp. 106-108).

From this passage, we learn that God, in His sovereignty and guided by His infinite love, created the heavens and the earth. No one forced Him to do it. This idea of God’s sovereignty agrees with the teaching of most theologians throughout church history. However, what happens next—and the role of human freedom in the creation story—is where John Wesley and his followers (the Wesleyan-Arminians) stand apart from others.

Wesley clearly says that human beings were given the freedom to choose whether to obey or disobey God. In His perfect love, God made people with this ability, which Wesley calls *free will*. Without free will, people would be forced to love God, and that love would not be real. True love must come freely, not because God made them have to love Him.

This helps us understand two important ideas in Wesleyan theology:

- First, God is sovereign, but that does not mean He forces anyone to do something they don’t want to do. God can do anything, but His perfect and holy character means He will never take away human freedom. He always respects the choices people make—even when those choices harm themselves or others.
- Second, if we do not accept that human freedom limits God’s sovereignty, then we must ask: who is responsible for what people do? The answer might seem to be God, at least in part. But according to Wesley, the freedom God gives also brings moral responsibility. People, not God, are responsible for their choices.

The original problem was that humans rejected God’s love and chose selfish love instead—a love focused on themselves rather than on God. God created us hoping we would respond to His love. But both the Bible and experience show that people often act in selfish ways instead.

It is important to remember that even though God gives humans some of His qualities, this does not make them God. For example, when we talk about eternity, it does not mean that humans are eternal like God, who has no beginning or end. In Genesis 1, we see that humans are given a beginning. But the image of God in humans at creation gives them the ability to live forever—they have the potential for everlasting life.

For Wesley, the image of God in humans includes the ability to care for and manage the natural resources God has created. This does not mean that we are the masters of creation. Instead, it means we are given the privilege of being partners with God, continuing the work He began. Because of this, Christians are responsible for keeping the environment healthy and in harmony.

To explain the moral image of God in humans, Wesley highlights three qualities: love, justice, and mercy. He connects this to **Micah 6:8**, which says:

“O man, He has shown you what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

Wesley describes God’s expectations of humans in moral conduct. There is a part of the image of God in people that seeks to bring about justice and mercy.

The image of God after the fall

The sermon we have been studying “The New Birth” helps us to understand Wesley’s explanation of the events and implications after the fall:

On that day, therefore, he died: he died to God, the most dreadful of all deaths. He lost the life of God: he was separated from him in whose union his spiritual life consisted. The body dies when it is separated from the soul; the soul when it is separated from God. But Adam suffered this separation from God in the day and hour in which he ate of the forbidden fruit. And of this he gave immediate proof, showing at once by his conduct that the love of God had been extinguished in his soul, which was now alienated from the life of God. Instead, he was now under the power of servile fear, so that he fled from the presence of the Lord. Indeed, he retained so little of the knowledge of him who fills the heavens and the earth that he hid himself from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Thus he had lost both the knowledge and the love of God, without which the image of God cannot exist. Therefore, at the same time he was deprived of God’s image, and was deprived of holiness and happiness. Instead of these he was plunged into pride and obstinacy, which are the very image of the devil, and into sensual desires and appetites, in the image of the beasts that perish (Wesley’s Works, Vol. III, 1996, p. 108).

Sin has very sad and serious results. John Wesley explains that the first result is **spiritual death**. This means people lost their close friendship and personal relationship with God. For the first time, humans knew they had sinned. They felt fear and shame, and they realized they could not be close to God like before. They had lost something very important.

Another result of sin is **physical death**. It doesn’t happen right away, but humans can no longer live forever. Our bodies start to get weak, feel pain, and go through sickness. One day, our body stops working.

The last result is **social death**. This means that sin also hurts our relationships with other people. We see this in Genesis chapter 4 when Cain kills his brother Abel. Sin makes people act in selfish and harmful ways. It causes fighting, violence, and hurt. People start caring more about themselves than others, and this destroys peace in families and communities.



Some Wesleyan teachers, like Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, say that when people sinned, the image of God in us was hurt but not completely destroyed. They believe that, because of God’s grace, part of God’s image in us is still there.

Other Wesleyan teachers, like Leonard George Cox, say that the image of God was completely lost when people sinned. But they also believe that God gives us grace ahead of time so that some of God’s goodness can start to grow in us again.

Even though these teachers explain it in different ways, they both agree on something very important: by God’s grace, every person can respond to God, hear His call, and choose to accept His salvation.

Original sin

John Wesley taught that the doctrine of original sin is very important for Christians. It helps us understand what makes Christianity different from other beliefs. Original sin explains the main problem that all people have, and the gospel is God's answer to that problem.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their sin affected everyone who came after them. All the children of Adam and Eve follow their example and choose to sin too. Even when we are saved, we still feel the effects of original sin in our lives. We still struggle with temptation and sometimes do wrong, but God helps us grow and become more like Him.

As Wesley admitted in his sermon number 13 "Of Sin in Believers,"

But can Christ dwell in the same heart where there is sin? Undoubtedly yes; otherwise the person could not be saved. Where there is sickness, there is the physician, continuing his inner work by struggling to eradicate sin. Christ certainly cannot reign where sin reigns, nor can He dwell where all sin is permitted. But He reigns and dwells in the heart of every believer who struggles against sin (Wesley's Works, Vol. I, 1996, p. 252).

Wesley taught that, with God's grace, Christians can learn to control the effects of original sin in their lives. We need to understand how original sin shows up in us:

First, original sin causes people to not know God. We are born without a close relationship with Him.

Because we do not know God, the second result is that we try to seek our own glory instead of God's glory. This happens because of pride—thinking too much about ourselves.

Next, because of that pride, people try to follow their own will without caring about what God wants or how their actions affect other people.

Finally, original sin leads us to love the things of this world more than God. This shows up as wanting everything we see and being proud of what we have or what we do.

Original sin means that every person has a strong pull toward doing wrong. This is true for everyone, even Christians. Many Christians think this sinful desire stays with us until we die. But John Wesley said the Bible teaches something better!

Wesley believed that God can free Christians from the power of original sin in this life, not just after we die. He taught that God can make our hearts holy and help us live in a way that pleases Him.

Some people say Christians will always be controlled by original sin. But Wesley strongly disagreed. He pointed to what the Apostle John wrote in the Bible: "As Jesus is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Wesley explained that this means Christians can become more like Jesus now, not only later in heaven.

This idea is called **Christian Perfection**—God helping believers love Him and others with their whole heart. We will learn more about this wonderful teaching in the next lesson.

Reflection Questions

1. What has been the most common way you have developed these teachings (or theology)? Do you consult only the Bible? Do you study what others have said? Do you draw on your experiences? Do you try to make it rationally understandable? Compare your methodology with that mentioned in this chapter.
2. How can you apply the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in your effort to build your theology? How do you use Reason and Experience to inform you? How does Christian tradition influence your thinking?
3. How do you understand the “image of God” as part of each human life? How do you see the “image of God” affected by sin?
4. How do you see “original sin” changing people? What are the effects of “original sin” you see in your ministry?



Lesson 4

Theology of Wesley II

Purpose of the Lesson

To ground the student in his Wesleyan identity by understanding John Wesley's theology about the process of salvation.

Lesson Objectives

In addition to the results of the previous lesson at the conclusion of this lesson students

- Will understand the different kinds of grace God wants to pour into their lives.
- Will understand how John Wesley found the truth of entire sanctification or Christian Perfection in the Bible.
- Will experience or at least begin to seek for God's promised entire sanctification.

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Prevenient or anticipatory grace

Convincing grace

Justifying grace and the faith of the sinner

Regeneration

Christian perfection: personal and social holiness

A final thought, what is salvation?

Reflection Questions

Prevenient Grace

Prevenient grace is a very important idea in Wesleyan teaching. It means the grace God gives to every person **before** they become a Christian. Wesley said that prevenient grace is the way God works in our hearts before we are saved. With this grace, God pulls us toward Himself and gets us ready to respond to Him.

The main purpose of prevenient grace is to help people say “yes” to God. On our own, we cannot come to God because sin has made us spiritually dead. We cannot save ourselves or make ourselves right with God. But because of prevenient grace, we can hear God’s voice, understand His call, and choose to follow Him. This grace helps us look for God, even when we don’t really know Him yet. It also begins to restore God’s image in us, which was damaged when Adam and Eve sinned.

Prevenient grace brings hope for each person and for the whole community. Since God gives this grace to everyone, every person shows a little bit of God’s image in some way. This helps create fairness and goodness in families, churches, and society.

Wesley taught this to remind us of two important things: **hope** and **responsibility**. Because of prevenient grace, we are able to make choices—we can choose to follow God or turn away from Him. This means we must take responsibility for our decisions.

Prevenient grace also reminds us that we **cannot save ourselves**. We can never be “good enough” on our own. Salvation is always a gift from God, beginning to end.

Step	What God Does	What it means for us
1. God reaches out first	God shows love to every person before they know Him	We are never alone - God starts the relationship
2. God helps us hear him	God opens our hearts to notice His voice	We begin to feel God calling us
3. God helps us understand	God helps us know right from wrong and feel His truth	We learn about God and His love
4. God gives us a choice	God gives us the power to say “YES!” or “No” to Him	We are responsible - we must choose to follow Him
5. God prepares us for salvation	God gets our hearts ready for faith in Jesus	When we say “YES!” we can receive salvation

Convincing Grace

After people experience **prevenient grace**, the next step in salvation is **convincing grace**. Convincing grace is what John Wesley called **repentance**. This kind of grace helps us see the truth about ourselves. It shows us that we are sinners and that, on our own, we are not right with God. Convincing grace reveals our sin and helps us want to turn away from it and turn toward God.

Wesley in his sermon (17) speaks of this grace by pointing out to us:

[Convincing grace convinces us] *that we cannot help ourselves; that, without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing but add sin to sin. That he alone produces the willing as well as the doing, by his own will, it being impossible for us to think even one good thought without the supernatural aid of his*

Spirit, or to create or renew our souls ourselves in righteousness and true holiness (Wesley's Works, Vol. I, 1996, p. 344).

The first step of repentance, and the next part of God's grace, is when we **realize our sinful condition**. We understand that we cannot fix our spiritual problem by ourselves. Only God can change our hearts and bring us back to life spiritually.

Wesley said that every person goes through **three stages**:

1. **Natural Stage** — We are ruled by sin and do not truly know God yet. But God still gives us **prevenient grace** to help us hear Him and start seeking Him.
2. **Legal Stage** — We begin to understand right and wrong. We see that we have sinned and are responsible for our actions. This makes us feel guilty and see our need for God.
3. **Grace Stage** — God saves us through Jesus. In this stage, we receive God's forgiveness and new life through His grace.

These stages help us understand how God works in our lives to bring us from sin to salvation.

Stage	What It Means	What God Does	What We Realize/Do
1. Natural Stage	We are born in sin and don't really know God yet	God gives prevenient grace to help us begin to hear and notice Him	We don't understand God on our own
2. Legal Stage	We learn right and wrong and feel guilty for sin	God uses convincing grace to show us our sin and need for Him	We see we are sinners and need God's help; we repent
3. Grace Stage	We receive God's forgiveness and new life	God gives saving grace through Jesus	We trust in Jesus, are forgiven, and begin to live a new life with Him

When **convincing grace** leads us to **repentance**, it can start a **new way of life**. People's thoughts, values, goals, and actions begin to change as they experience God's forgiveness.

For Wesley, the proof that repentance is real is **not** in using fancy words about God or having a big dramatic experience. The real sign of true repentance is a life that is **changed**—a life that shows a sincere desire to grow and follow Jesus every day.

Justifying Grace

Justifying grace from our sin is very important. In sermon 5, "justification by faith" Wesley refers to this subject:

How can a sinful person justify himself before God, the Lord and Judge of all, is a question of great importance to all human beings. It contains the foundation of all our hope, for as long as we are at enmity with God there can be no true peace, no true joy in this life or in eternity. How can there be peace when our heart condemns us, much more He who is greater than our heart, and knows all things? What true joy can there be in this world or in the next,

as long as the wrath of God remains upon us?

And yet how little has so important a matter been understood! How many confused ideas do many have on this subject! Indeed, not only confused, but often erroneous, and as contrary to the truth as light is to darkness; notions utterly inconsistent with the oracles of God, and with the whole analogy of faith. Wherefore, erring from the foundation, they can build nothing thereafter (Wesley's Works, Vol. I, 1996, p. 101).

John Wesley said that **justification** is the foundation of the Christian faith. Just like a building needs a strong foundation to stand, our faith needs justification to be strong. If the foundation is wrong or missing, then our whole Christian faith will also be wrong or incomplete.

The meaning of justifying grace

People often use the **courtroom analogy** to explain justification. Justification is like a legal process where **God is the judge**. Even though we have done wrong, God declares us **righteous** because of Jesus. This means God forgives our sins and treats us as if we had always done what is right.

Here is how Wesley explains the legal theory:

The simple and clear teaching of the Word concerning justification is forgiveness, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father by which He through the propitiation made by the blood of His Son, manifested his justice (or mercy) on account of having passed over, in his forbearance, the sins that had been committed... To him who is justified or forgiven, God will not impute sin For this reason he will not condemn the forgiven sinner either in this world or in the next. All his past sins, in thought, word and deed, are covered, are blotted out; they will not be remembered or mentioned against him; they are as if they had never been. God will not apply to this sinner what he deserves, because the Child of His Love suffered for him. From the moment we are accepted in the Beloved, justified in his blood, God loves and blesses us, and watches over us for good, as if we had never sinned (Wesley's Works, Vol. I, 1996, p. 108).

Justification and the sinner's faith

Wesley asks: *How can people who are sinners and have not yet done good works be made right with God?* His answer is simple: by faith.

There are two important points to remember:

1. The only thing needed for God's **justifying grace** to work is **faith**.
2. No good works can make a person right with God before justification.

Wesley explains that faith is more than knowing facts—it is the assurance and confidence that God has forgiven us. This gift of God should be received with thankfulness and truly believed in our hearts. Faith that saves is not just something we learn in school; it must come from the heart. Knowledge alone is not enough—it must lead to action.

About good works before justification, Wesley points out the following in his sermon 5 “Justification by Faith.”

No work is good unless it has been done according to God's will and command. No work done before justification is done according to God's will and command. Therefore: no work done before justification is good (Wesley's Works, Vol. I, 1996, p. 112).

Wesley wanted to make it very clear: we cannot truly do good works out of love unless God's love is in our hearts. If the love of God is not in our lives, our actions are not really done in true love.

Regeneration

Regeneration is another word Wesley uses for God's gift of salvation. It is a gift from God and means being **born again**—starting a completely new life.

When we are born again, our **sanctification** begins. This is the process of becoming holy inside and out. From that moment on, we are to grow and become more like Jesus, who is our example and guide.

Think of it like a baby being born:

- A baby is completely dependent on its mother for food, care, and love.
- As the baby grows, it gradually becomes stronger and starts to do things on its own.

In the same way, when a person is born again:

- The new birth happens instantly.
- At first, the spiritual “baby” depends on God and spiritual guidance.
- Slowly, the person grows stronger and learns to live directly by God's Word.

Just like a child needs care to grow, we need the **Holy Spirit** to help us grow in our faith. God works in us, giving both the desire and the power to follow Him. The **means of grace**—like prayer, reading the Bible, and helping others—help us grow into the likeness of Christ.

Christian Perfection: Personal and Social Holiness

The idea of Christian perfection is often misunderstood. Many people think the word “perfect” means there is no room to grow. That is not what the Bible or Wesley means.

Wesley uses the word “perfect” because Jesus used it: “*You shall be perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt. 5:48). But neither Jesus nor Wesley means that a Christian has no room to grow. The word “perfect” in Hebrew is “tamim” which means whole or all it is designed to be. For example a “perfect lamb” has 4 legs, 1 mouth, 2 eyes, white wool, with no obvious physical defects - all it is created to be.

God can help a Christian love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and love others as themselves (Matt. 22:36-40). Christian perfection is about growing in love, not about being flawless.

1 John 4:17-18 provides more understanding:

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Wesley teaches that Christians can and should grow toward the kind of perfection Jesus meant.

He explains that after a person has received convincing grace (repentance) and justifying grace (forgiveness), they still need to keep growing. To help them live a victorious Christian life, God gives a new

work of His grace called sanctifying grace.

Sanctifying grace helps Christians grow in love, holiness, and in becoming more like Jesus every day.

Sin in believers and sanctifying grace

For a true Christian, sin is very painful. It hurts our relationship with God and with other people. Wesley calls this struggle “sin in believers.” Even as we grow in Christ, we still need to repent of any remaining sin to keep growing in God’s grace, until we fully experience God’s perfect love.

The apostle Paul calls this struggle the battle between the flesh and the Spirit. Wesley explains that at first, sin still exists in believers, but it does not have control over them. Sin is like being chained—it may still be there, but Christians are learning not to obey it.

But some people suppose that when there is still some sin in the believer, that believer lives in fear and discouragement. They think sin still controls the believer’s life. These people are wrong! To affirm the presence of some sin in us does not imply that it is master of our forces; Nor does it imply that sin has taken over our hearts. Sin has been dethroned. It remains in chains. It does wage war, but it grows weaker and weaker, while the believer goes from strength to strength and from victory to victory (Wesley’s Works, Vol. I, 1996, p. 261).

Some people say that from the first moment of justification, the believer is perfect, and never does anything wrong. Wesley rejects this idea:

Therefore, for no reason can I accept the statement that says “there is no sin in a believer from the moment he is justified”. In the first place, because it is contrary to the whole tenor of the Bible. Secondly, because it is contrary to the experience of the children of God. Thirdly, because it is absolutely new. This has never been heard of until recently. And lastly, because it has fatal consequences, not only grieving those whom God does not wish to grieve, but perhaps dragging them down to eternal perdition (Wesley’s Works, Vol. I, 1996, pp. 253-254).

Wesley teaches that sin is possible for Christians, but it should not control their lives. People who are born again naturally want to do God’s will because God gives them grace to help them live rightly.

Many churches think the best they can hope for is a Christian who is always struggling with sin. But John Wesley saw something greater in the Bible. He learned that God can do more than just forgive sin over and over. God can give believers new, clean hearts and write His law in them, fulfilling His promises.

God promises this in Ezekiel 36:26-27:

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my laws.”

This special gift from God is called sanctifying grace. Like justifying grace, it is received by faith. Sanctifying grace does not stop Christians from facing temptation, weakness, or mistakes, but it perfects them in love. Christian perfection is about freedom from the bonds of sinful nature and filled with perfect love for God and others in this life.

See more about sanctifying grace and the work of the Holy Spirit in the next lesson.

Implications for the life of the believer

John Wesley used several ideas to explain Christian perfection. These ideas help us understand what he meant. Here are seven important concepts that show the heart of Wesley's thinking about growing in love and holiness:

- **Love of God.** To explain Christian perfection Wesley uses the texts in Matthew 5:43-48 and Ephesians 5:1-2.

You have heard that it was said: "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He makes the sun rise on the good and the bad, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. If you love only those who love you, what reward will you receive, do not even the tax collectors do that? And if you greet your brethren only, what more do you do, do not even the Gentiles do this? Therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matt. 5:43-48

Therefore, imitate God, as beloved children, and lead a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Eph. 5:1-2

The foundation of Christian perfection is love. Why love? Because God is love, and Jesus lived a life full of love.

Wesley teaches that, theologically, the heart of holiness in a Christian—just like the heart of God's own character—is love. In other words, to be holy means to grow in love for God and for others.

- **To love God with all our being.** Wesley uses two portions for this point. Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37. Both verses say the same thing: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength."*

Wesley teaches that obedience comes from love. True love for God happens when we experience His unconditional love—a love that goes beyond words and is lived fully in our lives.

God does not want us to love Him just because we are afraid, or just because He provides for us, or just because He commands it. He wants us to love Him because He first loved us.

- **Love for one's neighbor.** This idea comes from the previous points and is shown in Luke 10 and Romans 13:8.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan shows what a sanctified believer looks like in real life. God wants us to love Him, as we learned before, but Christian perfection is more than just a private or one-sided relationship with God.

Wesley teaches that God also wants us to love other people—selflessly and sincerely. True Christian perfection includes caring for others just as much as loving God.

- **Be a faithful steward.** Wesley uses the Parable of the Talents and the Judgment of the Nations from Matthew 25 to teach about Christian responsibility.

The Parable of the Talents shows that everyone is given gifts or resources, called talents, and each person must be accountable for how they use them. Those who worked with what they were given were blessed, but those who did nothing were condemned.

The Judgment of the Nations teaches that everyone will stand before God and be judged

for how they treated people in need.

These passages show that we are called to serve others with the resources and abilities God has given us. Christian stewardship is not optional—it is something every person must take seriously.

- **Live a life that reflects an understanding of God’s universal grace.** To explain this point, Wesley uses the well-known Bible verse John 3:16. He points out that God loved the whole world. This shows that God’s grace and the offer of salvation are for everyone, not just a few people.

Wesley teaches that if we believe that God’s grace is working in every person, then we should treat everyone with respect and dignity.

- **Good works.** This part of Christian perfection is the most controversial. That’s because the Catholic tradition teaches that good works are needed to earn salvation.

For Wesley, good works are not what saves us. Instead, they are a result of justification and show themselves as we grow in sanctification.

Wesley also explains that good works have two important aspects. Figure 4.2 shows what these works are and what their purposes are.

Figure 4.2 The two types of works according to John Wesley

Works of Piety	Works of Mercy
Focused on private life	Focused on social life
Pray	Do good
Study the Bible	Visit the sick and imprisoned
The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper	Feed and clothe the poor
Fasting	Generous use of our resources
Christian community gathering for worship	Opposition to slavery
Healthy living	Serving the community

The works of piety and the works of mercy make up what Wesley calls the means of grace. Both types go hand in hand and help a person grow in the stature and character of Christ; at the same time, they allow us to be his hands here on earth. Entirely sanctified persons will be known for both kinds of good works.

- **The restoration of the image of God.** Before the fall, all of creation lived in perfection, harmony, and peace. Everything was as God intended.

Today, things are different. In particular, our bodies are no longer perfect and are affected by sin.

Even though believers cannot completely restore God’s image in themselves, they can grow closer to it through their relationship with God and how they treat others. There will always be areas where we can grow, so as long as we live, we can continue to reflect God’s image more and more.

Social implications

The Christian perfection to which Wesley refers has more than one variant, and it is perhaps this element that distinguishes the Wesleyan people from others. In this Wesley affirms:

The fundamental doctrine of the people called Methodist is, whoever is saved, before anything else, it is necessary that the person has faith. True

faith. The faith that works by love, which, through the love of God and the love of neighbor produces a change in the interior, as well as in the interior of the person as well as abroad (Wesley, quoted by Magallanes, p. 196).

For Wesley, Christian perfection was the heart of the Methodist movement because it looks at both the inner and outer parts of life—the personal and the social parts of the gospel. Wesley combined ideas that had often been kept separate.

Christian perfection is not just about inner peace or personal change. It also includes social peace and helping to transform society and its structures. The social part of Christian perfection is just as important as the personal part. Wesley said:

“Solitary saints” is as wrong as saying “adulterous saints.” The gospel of Christ is a social religion, not a private one. True Christian perfection is faith working through love—in every direction and in every part of life.

Just as God’s love leads naturally to good actions, it also leads us to help others: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, help the blind and lame, care for widows and orphans.

Wesley showed that faith cannot be lived alone. It grows in community. In his travels throughout the United Kingdom, he worked to identify and solve the problems in his nation, including slavery, education, and food shortages.

Good works and acts of mercy are an active part of a Christian’s life, through which we can bring glory to God.

Before we finish learning about Christian perfection, it is important to also understand what it is not, so we do not misunderstand it.

Wesley teaches:

1. Christian perfection is not absolute.

- It does not mean being perfect like an angel or like Adam before the fall.
- Only God is completely perfect. His creatures are far from being perfect, and no one can fully “understand God” or be perfect like Him.
- No one can become like the angels, and no one can get back the perfection that Adam had before the fall.

2. Christian perfection is not infallibility.

- Wesley spent as much time explaining what Christian perfection is not as he did explaining what it is. Christian perfection does not mean being free from mistakes or weaknesses.

Wesley said:

“There is no perfection in this life that means we are completely free from ignorance, mistakes in things that are not essential for salvation, temptations, or the many weaknesses of our bodies that affect our souls.”

- Our bodies are not perfect, and these weaknesses can cause us to make mistakes or do wrong things. But these actions are not sins if they do not come from evil motives. Wesley explains:

“Even those who love God dwell in imperfect bodies, so they cannot always think, speak, or act exactly right. Sometimes they make mistakes, not because of a lack of love, but because of a lack of knowledge or ability.”

Christian perfection is about the heart and motives, not about being flawless in every action.

3. Christian perfection may or may not be sinless, depending on how one defines the term “sin.”

Wesley does not think the term “sinless” is worth arguing about. He even agrees to call the perfection he preaches “sinful perfection.” It all depends on how one defines sin. He makes the following points:

1. Not only sin, properly so called (that is a voluntary transgression of a known law), but sin, improperly called (that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown), needs the atoning blood.
2. I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality.
3. Therefore, sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself.
4. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions.
5. Such transgressions you may call sin, if you please: I do not, for the reasons above mentioned.

What Is Salvation?

For a long time, preaching the good news was mostly about giving hope for the future. But Wesley wanted to change that idea.

He taught that, while our future with God is amazing, we can also begin to enjoy God’s blessings now. As children of God, we don’t have to wait until heaven to experience His love, guidance, and joy.

He himself makes reference to this in sermon 43 “The way of salvation according to the Scriptures”:

The salvation spoken of here is not what is often understood by this word: going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not that the soul goes to paradise, called “Abraham’s bosom” by our Lord. It is not a blessing to be found on the other side of death or, as we commonly say, in the other world. The very words of the text express it in an unquestionable way: you are saved. It is not something at a distance: it is something present, a blessing of which, through the free mercy of God, you are now in possession (Wesley’s Works, Vol. III, 1996, p. 70).

If we study Wesley’s life, we can see what he believed about salvation. His conversion at Aldersgate helped him understand the important teachings of the Reformation, especially justification by faith.

For Wesley, the goal of salvation is sanctification here on earth. It is not just about going to heaven after we die. Salvation is also about living a holy, loving, and faithful life now—practical and real in our everyday lives.

John Wesley stated that “all can be saved” as part of his “Four Alls” of Methodist doctrine, which also includes “all need to be saved,” “all can know they are saved,” and “all can be saved to the uttermost.” This core tenet expresses the belief that salvation is available to everyone through God’s grace, emphasizing God’s universal desire for humanity’s salvation and the potential for every person to experience God’s transforming power.

The Four Alls:

1. **All need to be saved:** This acknowledges that all people are inherently sinful and in need of God's grace for salvation.
2. **All can be saved:** This is the focus of your question, highlighting the universal availability of salvation through Jesus Christ and God's grace, not just a select few.
3. **All can know they are saved:** This is the experience of assurance that believers can have about their salvation, made possible by the Holy Spirit.
4. **All can be saved to the uttermost:** This refers to entire sanctification, the process of becoming fully Christ-like through perfect love for God and neighbor.

Wesley was an advocate of Arminian theology because he experienced it himself.

Figure 4.3 shows why he leans toward that theology and not that of John Calvin.

Chart 4.3 Comparison between the "4 All's" of Wesleyanism and "TULIP" of Calvinism

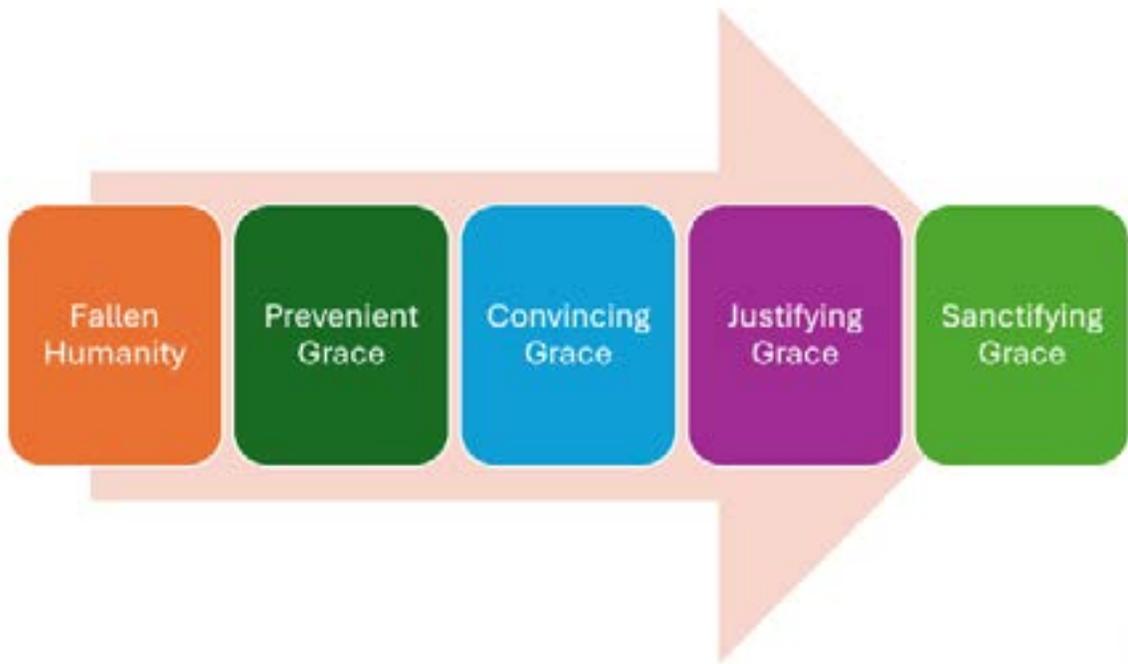
4 All's	Calvinist Theology
All need to be saved	Total depravity - All humans are corrupted by sin and unable to choose God on their own
All can be saved	Unconditional election - God chooses who to save based solely on His will
All can know they are saved	Limited atonement - Christ's death was intended to save the elect, not all humanity
All can be saved to the uttermost	Irresistible grace - When God calls the elect to salvation, they cannot resist His saving grace
	Perseverance of the saints - Those truly saved will remain saved and persevere until the end

Conclusion

Wesley developed his theological thinking based on the Word of God, his personal experience of faith, the tradition of the church and his systemic reasoning. Through a process he explains the life of a person.

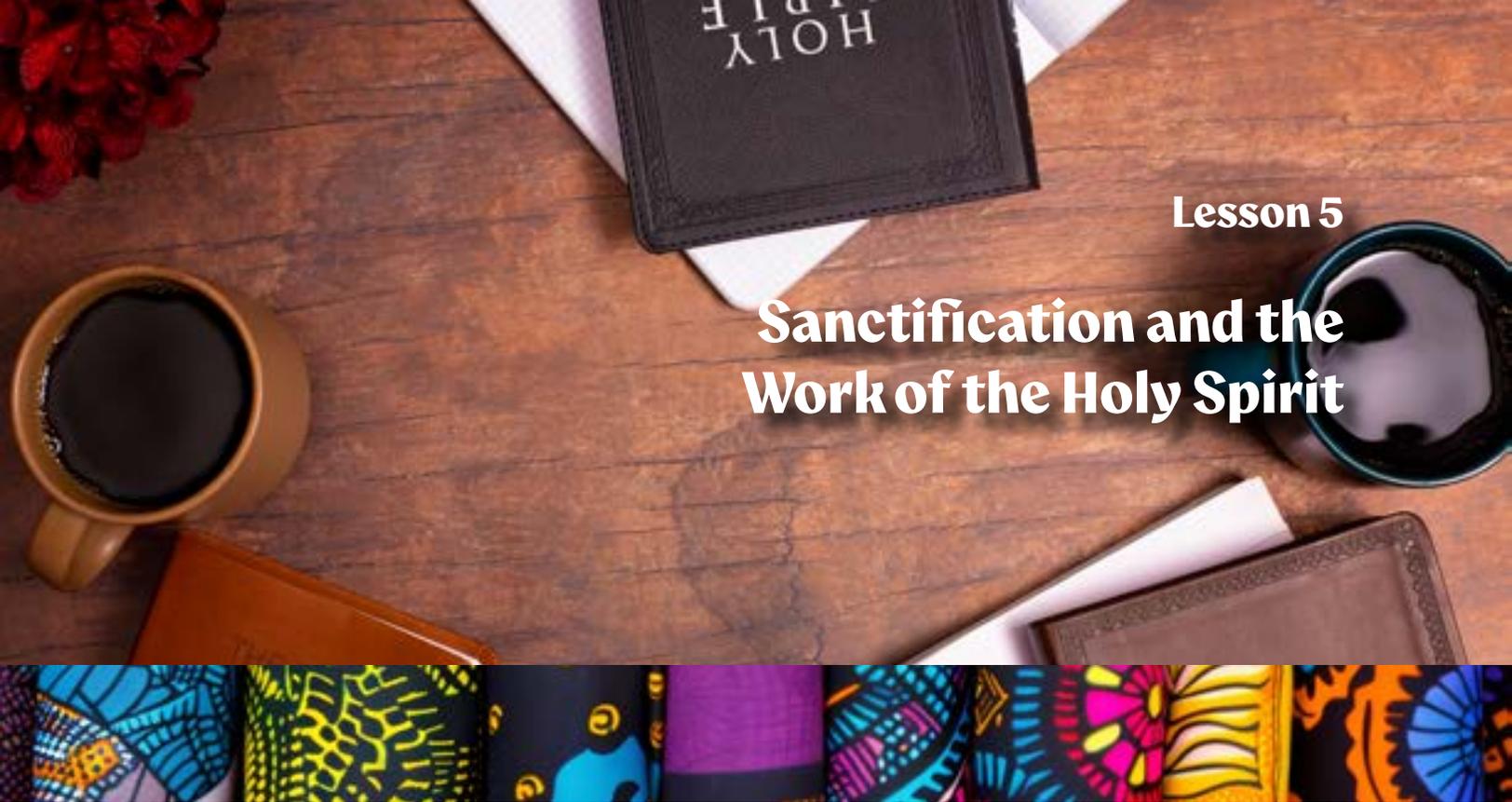
Figure 4.1 shows how Wesley describes salvation as a process that happens in the human being.

The points that Wesley emphasizes in all his theology are related to the sovereignty of God, the grace of God expressed in different forms and stages (for the whole human race) and the participatory role of the human being. Martin Luther's main contribution to the Protestant tradition led us to justification by faith. Wesley goes a step further and introduces us to the second part of the gospel that explains what the purpose of salvation is beyond going to heaven. God's plan is to make us holy in this world. This has present implications and not only individual but communal, to love God and neighbor, by means of works of piety and works of mercy.



Reflection Questions

1. How does grace work to bring a person from not knowing God to loving God “with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength”?
2. Why is preventive grace important? How does it impact our ministry and the way we interact with people who don’t know Jesus?
3. If someone were to ask you why they should confess their sins and seek God’s forgiveness, what will you tell them?
4. What does Christian perfection look like? How is it different from “perfect as flawless”? What does love have to do with Christian perfection?



Lesson 5

Sanctification and the Work of the Holy Spirit

Purpose of the Lesson

To help the student understand, teach, and experience the in-filling of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Objectives

The student will:

- understand the basic work of the Holy Spirit
- know the difference between salvation/regeneration and sanctification/Christian perfection
 - know and tap into the source of victorious Christian living

Content

Holiness

The Work of the Spirit

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Doctrinal Differences Between Salvation and Sanctification

Life in the Spirit

Fruit of the Spirit

Work Out What God Has Worked in You

Reflection Questions

Holiness

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.... I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:17 NIV).

Jesus’ teaching to obey, abide, and love shows us how to be perfect as His Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). But most Christians experience situations in daily life that reveal spiritual weaknesses and persistent sin patterns. Even though they try to obey, they stumble and sin. Perhaps they speak words they should not speak. Perhaps they do things they know to be wrong. Perhaps they rely on their own strength and fail to abide. How can anyone be perfect?

The Apostle Paul described this struggle in Romans 7. It is a common experience for many believers. There is a conflict between our new salvation and the desire to serve Christ and our old human flesh and its desire to serve ourselves (Romans 7:13-24). This is the evidence of a divided heart. But we can rejoice because we can be set free from this conflict.

1. **Praise the Lord!** God promised a wonderful gift to heal our divided hearts: the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27).
2. **Praise the Lord!!** Jesus promised a wonderful gift to guide us moment by moment: the Holy Spirit (John 14: 16, 26). Jesus, we thank you for the gift of the Spirit!
3. **Praise the Lord !!!** “Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2, NIV).



The Work of the Spirit

By faith, believers receive new life in Jesus Christ. They are “born of God” (John 1:12-13). Jesus described this dramatic transformation of a new birth to Nicodemus in John 3. Paul wrote that believers are a “new

creation” (II Cor. 5:17). Our new life in Christ is the work of all three Persons of the Trinity: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Believers receive new life and the on-going, sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit (II Thess. 2:13, I Peter 1:2). To “sanctify” means “to make holy.”

The Holy Spirit:

- Brings Conviction to those in sin (John 16:8-11)
- Fills and Assures Believers (Acts 2:38, Romans 8:16-17)
- Equips Believers for Ministry and for Holy Living (I Corinthians 12:11, Galatians 5:22, Romans 8:11)
- Teaches and Reminds (John 14:26)
- Comforts and Prays for Believers (John 14: 16-17, Romans 8:26)
- Sanctifies (II Thessalonians 2:13, I Peter 1:2)

Hebrews 6:1 encourages us to keep moving toward perfection. John Wesley called this Christian perfection—becoming all God intended us to be: loving God with all our heart and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

When John Wesley was preparing ministers for ordination, the ministers were asked:

- “Are you going on to perfection?”
- “Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?”
- “Are you earnestly seeking after it?”
- “How are you going on to perfection?”

Christian Perfection according to Wesley



From: A Plain Account of Christian Perfection

“Scriptural perfection is pure love filling the heart and governing all the words and actions.”

“Pure love reigning alone in the heart and life--this is the whole of Scriptural perfection.”

Jesus said, “But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” John 16:7.

The disciples couldn't believe this! How could it be better if Jesus, the Messiah, the One they had been looking for, waiting for, longing for, would leave them? And it would be better? What would be and could be better than having Jesus right by their side, walking, and talking with them on an everyday basis?

There is only one thing better than having Jesus *with* us. That is having Jesus *in* us. And the only way Jesus lives *in* us is through the Holy Spirit.

The Father sent Jesus to save and redeem us from sin. We celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas and the resurrection of Jesus at Easter. But Jesus then sent the Holy Spirit to us to live in us and make it all possible to live a daily life in the Spirit.

*“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father,
and you are in me, and I am in you” John 14:20.*

The Filling of the Holy Spirit as a Work of Grace

In Acts 1:4-5, Jesus instructed his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit. They waited and were filled with the Holy Spirit on that day in place and time. Peter became a changed man. Peter, who denied Jesus three times after following him for three years, was radically changed and stood up declaring the truth about Jesus in the midst of a rowdy crowd. And Peter preached boldly until his death as a martyr. He surrendered himself to the will and power of the Holy Spirit. Peter became a man whose surrendered life became a loving, self-giving channel of God and God's Kingdom purposes.

Our sanctification, or as Wesley put it, “perfect love,” is possible because of receiving the full outpouring of God's Spirit. It is characterized by total submission or entire consecration to God and the cleansing / purification of our sinful nature. It continues to cleanse and purify as believers daily seek Him. Some call this “the self-giving love of God.” This sanctification experience, like salvation – our new birth – is a definite step of faith in a close, ongoing relationship with God. This is also the basis for including “experience” in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. People do not only understand the concept of holiness, they can fully experience it. “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5).

There are different words used to represent the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers:

- **BAPTIZED:** A believer can be baptized with the Spirit (Acts 1:5)
- **FILLED:** The Holy Spirit fills believers (Acts 2:4, 9:17)
- **RECEIVED:** Believers receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)
- **FALL:** The Spirit can come upon or fall upon a person (Acts 10:44)
- **POURED:** The Holy Spirit can be poured out (Acts 10:45)
- **UNLIMITED:** You can have the Spirit without limit (John 3:34)

Among churches and denominations, there are differences in the interpretation and application of these words used for the Spirit's work in believers' lives. It is important to know the biblical evidence and our church's position on the Spirit's work.

Several observations that can be made from these Bible texts are:

- The Spirit is the active person; the believer receives.
- The Spirit is a gift given when a person, by faith, believes in Jesus Christ.
- The filling of the Spirit is a gift following salvation/regeneration.

- The Spirit desires our completeness; the Spirit FILLS, POURS OVER, COMES UPON believers so that they are fully consecrated, obedient followers of Jesus Christ. The Spirit comes into our lives with lavish abundance.

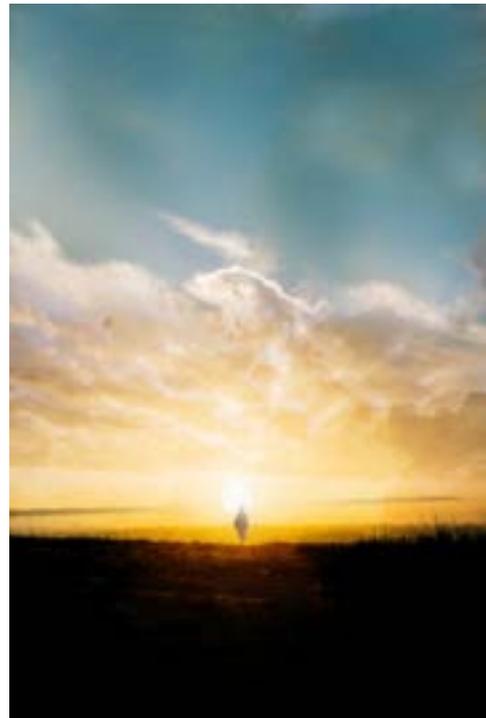
Doctrinal Differences between Salvation and Sanctification

Salvation (Regeneration)	Sanctification (Christian Perfection)
What Jesus does FOR us	What Jesus does IN us
Delivers us from PENALTY of sin	Delivers us from POWER of sin
SAVED from sins	PURIFIED from sin
Jesus as RESIDENT/GUEST	Jesus as PRESIDENT/OWNER
YOU HAVE the Holy Spirit	The Holy Spirit HAS YOU

Life in the Spirit

Sanctification is not only experienced in salvation and in being filled with the Holy Spirit. It is also the process of becoming more like Christ. It is to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). The filling of the Holy Spirit is not a “one time” event, but a continuing relationship. This growth in Christian maturity is described as:

- righteous and ethical living in all aspects of life (Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 4:20- 32, 2Peter 3:14).
- transformation, to become like Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:16; 1 John 2:6).
- surrender of our will to Christ’s lordship (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 2:20).
- hunger to know and live the Word (John 14:21-24, 15:1-11; Joshua 1:7-8; 2 Timothy 3:13-17).
- humility and confession (Psalm 51:1-4, 9-12; 1 Peter 5:6; Luke 11:4; 1 John 1:9).
- walk of obedience by faith (Galatians 5:16; Colossians 2:6-7; Philippians 1:27-30).
- love for God and others (Ephesians 5:1-2, John 13:34-35,15:12-13; Hebrews 13:1; Matthew 22:37-40).
- evangelistic burden for the lost (Romans 10:14-16; Colossians 4:5-6; Luke 24:45-47; Matthew 28:18-20).
- active participation in Christian fellowship and worship (Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:25; Philippians 2:3-4).



The Fruit of the Spirit

One of the biblical references in the preceding list of the Holy Spirit's transforming work is Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit. The word fruit is singular, but it is followed by a list of characteristics or virtues. All these virtues are to be evident in believers' lives. By listing the characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit, Paul helps believers to recognize the perfecting work of the Spirit.

Define each characteristic of the fruit and how it should be expressed in our relationships with others.

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

When the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit are compared with the list of the holy characteristics of God, the Spirit's work of guiding believers in holy living becomes wonderfully evident.

Characteristics of God

- Faithfulness
- Righteousness
- Power and Might
- Purity
- Justice
- Mercy
- Loving-Kindness
- Slow to anger

The fruit of the Spirit produces the character of God within us. As our hearts are healed, we love the Lord more and more. We follow Jesus with more and more faithfulness and integrity.

Yes, we will be glorified and fully perfected in heaven, but how wonderful to be growing and maturing in holiness in heart, mind, word, and deed today! Jesus Christ is glorified as we reflect the character of God and as we love as Jesus loved us (Ephesians 5:1-2). The Spirit helps us to grow in perfection day by day.

We were not created to live in constant struggle. God designed us and created us in his own image to live free from sin, in victory, and in intimate relationship with Him. He does this through the work of the Holy Spirit from the inside to out



Jesus did not come to teach us how to live; but He came to equip us to live what He taught. (Nelson Purdue)

Paul said, "Since we are born in the Spirit, we can live in the Spirit." But we cannot live in the Spirit without the Holy Spirit working and empowering us.

1 Corinthians 13 is sometimes called "The Love Chapter" and is often read at weddings. What is the main verb in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3? Many people say that "love" is the action word. A closer look shows that there are eleven verbs and five of them are the same. "**Have**" is the main verb in these verses. Why is this significant? It is significant because this "agape-love" which is described in this chapter does not come from our feelings or determination to love but comes from outside of us. The source of agape-love is outside of us. We cannot produce agape-love on our own. 1 John 4:7 says, "For love (agape) comes from God." God sources it. Not me. Not you.

We could explain this by using the simple example of a cup of tea. The tea is outside of me and in a cup in my hands. So, I "*have* tea" but it is only in me only as I drink it." In the same way God's love, God's Spirit, God's power, God's peace all come from God – from outside of ourselves. Therefore, when I need more agape-love, I need more of God's gifts in me.

It would be a cruelty if God created us – even in the image of God – and left us to live a life of struggle. No, God never intended this. He always intended us to live a victorious life in relationship with Him. This became possible through Jesus who gave His life for our sins and then sent the Holy Spirit to live within us.

Work out what God has worked in you

(see Philippians 2:12-13)

Read the Bible

If we are to live a victorious life, to live in the Spirit, to be filled with His Holy Spirit, we need to be filled with the Word of God. What daily practice do you have for reading and thinking about the Bible? Some read one or two Psalms per day, along with one Old Testament Chapter and one New Testament Chapter. Others read the Bible through in one year. Whatever you do, get in the Word on a daily basis.

Pray

The foundation of a sanctified spiritual life is being in the Word and being people of prayer. Our Father God welcomes us and hears our prayers. We have the honor of connecting with God through prayer. Some use reminders like these:

P.R.A.Y.

Praise: Worship God for who He is.

Repent: Confess your sins and ask for forgiveness.

Ask: Present your needs and requests to God.

Yield: Surrender your life to God's will.

A.C.T.S.

Adoration: Praise God for His greatness and power.

Confession: Admit your sins and ask for forgiveness.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for the blessings He has given you.

Supplication: Present your needs and requests to God.

"Pray as you can, not as you can't," one prayer warrior said. Whatever you do, pray!

Guard what goes in

We have the responsibility to guard what we receive through our eyes, ears, and mouth. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Some say they can watch and listen to anything – even with violent, sexual, evil content – and not be affected by it all. But everything we see, hear, watch, becomes a part of us in some way. We are influenced by our environments, friends, and media. We are exhorted to stay away from evil:

- 1 Corinthians 15:33 “Bad company corrupts good character.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:22 “Reject every kind of evil.”

Be part of a community

We can't grow in the Lord on our own. We need a group of believers to surround us, pray for us, encourage us, and help protect us from evil. Besides being part of a local worshiping church, John Wesley established small house groups of believers to meet on a weekly basis for the purpose of intimate community, discipleship, accountability, and encouragement. The foundations were around the Bible, prayer, and basic questions.

Wesley's Small (Class Meeting) Group Questions:

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?
8. Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?

20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
22. Is Christ real to me?

Wesley's Questions for Leaders (Band Meeting):

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done which you doubt whether it was sin or not?
5. Are you keeping any secrets?

Reflection Questions

1. Since becoming a believer in Jesus, have you experienced the in-filling of the Holy Spirit? If so, when and how did you experience that? If not, are you open and praying about being filled with the Holy Spirit?
2. In what ways do you practice disciplines and activities to be constantly filled with the love, power, and Spirit of God?
3. Since the source of agape-love, of victorious life, of eternal life is not from you, how do you find the true Source?
4. What do you do when agape-love is not winning in your life? When people around you are difficult and trying? When the circumstances of life crush your spirit?



Lesson 6

Relevance and Conclusions for Africa

Purpose Of The Lesson

To help the student to identify possible answers to the problems experienced in his or her ministry context.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the student:

- Will reflect on the social conditions and economic realities in Africa.
- Will compare the current Africa reality with the reality of 18th century England.
 - Identify Christian responses to the challenges of Africa.

Contents

Introduction

Wesleyan Model for Africa Today

Wesleyan principles in Africa

300 years after Wesley

Current reality of the Africa church

General conclusions

Reflection Questions

Introduction

The teachings and example of John Wesley are still important today. His ideas about faith and daily life can help us understand and respond to many of the problems we face in Africa. This is because some of the things Wesley saw and lived through are similar to what we experience today.

In this section, we will look at some of today's challenges and compare them with what Wesley faced in his time. We will also see how Wesley responded to these problems and think about how we, as the church, can respond in our own time.

Wesleyan Model For Africa Today

If John Wesley were alive today, living in our world of global trade and technology, he would probably be both amazed and deeply concerned. He would see airplanes, cell phones, and computers connecting people around the world, but he would also notice how unfair the world can be—where some people live in great comfort while others struggle just to survive.

In the 18th century, during Wesley's time, England became a rich and powerful country because of the Industrial Revolution. It built factories, traded with many nations, and took control of large parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Many of these countries were forced to sell their natural resources and became poor while Europe became richer. India, for example, came under British control, and almost all of Africa was ruled by European nations.

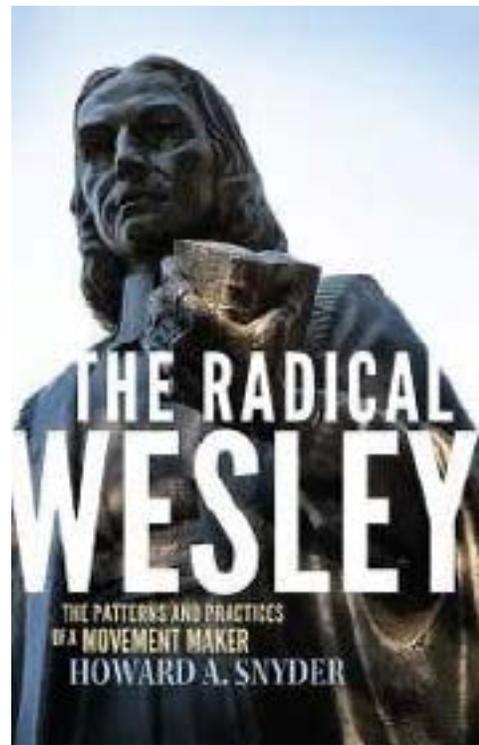
Today, in the 21st century, we also live in a world of opposites. We have amazing progress in science and technology, but many people still live in deep poverty. In Africa, this difference is very clear. Some people have great wealth, but many others have almost nothing. The gap between the rich and the poor keeps getting bigger.

John Wesley would not ignore this. He cared deeply about the poor and those who suffered. In his own time, he helped people who had little food, no education, or no access to doctors. He preached in the open air so that poor workers could hear the message of God's love. He opened schools, health clinics, and small lending programs to help people find hope and opportunity.

If Wesley were here today, he would likely call the church to act in similar ways. He would remind us that faith in Jesus is not just about going to church or singing hymns. True faith must also show love to others through action. He would say that worship should lead to service—that praising God must include caring for the hungry, the sick, and the forgotten.

In worship, Wesley would want people to focus their hearts on God, not on wealth or comfort. He would encourage simple and sincere worship, where people give thanks to God and ask for His help to serve others.

In evangelism, Wesley would remind us to share the good news of Jesus with everyone, not only with those inside the church. He would encourage us to go where people are—in villages, cities, schools, and workplaces—and to show God's love through kindness and action, not just words.



In discipleship, Wesley would teach that following Jesus means growing in love, holiness, and responsibility. He would encourage small groups, just as he did in his time, where people can study the Bible together, pray, and hold each other accountable for living a good life.

And in social justice, Wesley would speak out strongly. He would challenge governments, businesses, and churches to care for the poor and to make fair systems that help everyone. He would condemn greed and the misuse of power. He would call on Christians to use their money and talents to make a difference—by feeding the hungry, educating children, and fighting corruption.

Wesley once said, “Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” This means he believed in hard work and responsibility, but also in generosity. He would say that the wealth of the world should be shared to bless others, not stored up by a few.

So, if John Wesley lived in the 21st century, he would probably be amazed at the modern world, but he would still preach the same message he gave in the 18th century: love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. He would urge us to use today’s knowledge and technology not to build walls, but to build bridges—to bring hope, healing, and justice to every corner of the earth.

In the 18th century, England was changing very quickly. It was the time of the Industrial Revolution. New machines and factories were being built, cities were growing fast, and many people moved from farms to towns to find work. Some people became very rich, but most factory workers were very poor. Children worked long hours, families lived in crowded houses, and many did not have enough food or education. John Wesley saw this and began preaching to the poor, helping them and speaking out against injustice.

Today, a good comparison in Africa might be a country like South Africa or Nigeria. These nations have rich natural resources and strong industries—like mining, oil, and technology—but also face deep poverty and inequality. In big cities such as Johannesburg, Lagos, or Nairobi, we can see the same kind of contrast that Wesley saw in England: tall buildings and fancy homes on one side, but crowded neighborhoods and struggling families on the other.

In Nigeria in 2018 the poorest 20% of the population received only 7% of the national income, while the top 20% received 42% of the income.

Just like in 18th century England, some people in Africa today are gaining great wealth from business and trade, while many others do not have jobs, education, or access to good healthcare. This growing gap between the rich and the poor is very similar to what Wesley saw in his own country.

If Wesley lived in Africa today, he would probably focus his ministry in these areas—where workers, students, and families are facing hardship in the middle of rapid change. He would preach hope, teach responsibility, and call the church to serve those who are suffering.

This was the situation in England in the eighteenth century, and today we see something similar happening in many parts of Africa. The problem has even become more serious over time.

All around the world, people are living through fast changes in science, technology, politics, and especially in the economy. This great process is called globalization.

The word *globalization* comes from the word *globe*, which means the whole earth—the planet where we all live. Globalization describes how people, countries, and cultures are now more connected than ever before. It means that we can share ideas, goods, and information more easily across the world.

Globalization is not something that belongs only to one political group or country. It is the result of progress in transportation, communication, and technology. It allows people and nations to trade, learn, and work together. Globalization is not completely good or bad—it depends on how people use it. It helps us know more about others and share what is good, but it also shows us the problems and unfairness that still exist in the world.

Wesleyan Principles In Africa

Africa is plagued by turmoil; wars, political crises, tribalism, corruption, mass migration, social inequality, poverty from colonialism, and natural disaster.

In January 2016, the United Nations (UN) made a worldwide call to action. Its goal was to end poverty, protect the planet, and make sure that all people can live in peace and have good lives. To help reach this dream, the UN created **17 goals** for all countries to work on together. These goals focus on things like ending hunger, giving boys and girls equal opportunities, protecting the environment, improving education and healthcare, and promoting peace and fairness for everyone



Figure 6.1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Even though 300 years have passed, when we compare the goals of the United Nations (UN) with what life was like in John Wesley's England, we can see that there are many similarities. In the next section, we will look at some of these connections and learn more about them.

300 Years After Wesley

John Wesley spoke out against many problems that were hurting the people of his country. Many of these same problems can still be seen in Africa today. In Wesley's time, people—especially children and women—often worked very long hours, sometimes up to 18 hours a day. The land was not cared for properly, and many people suffered because of unfair treatment, unemployment, and the high cost of living.

Below, we will look at what Wesley said about each of these problems and how we can see similar issues in Africa today.

Social inequality

Africa is trailing the rest of the world in economic and social development. According to Outreach International, “Africa has the highest extreme poverty rates globally, with 23 of the world’s 28 poorest countries, which have extreme poverty rates above 30%. Using the poverty line of \$1.90 per day [for extreme poverty], Africa’ extreme poverty rate was recently estimated to be about 35.5%. This rate is 6.8 times higher than the average for the rest of the world.” This rate impacts all areas of society, including education, healthcare, job growth, mortality, and food security.

Figure 6.1 shows which countries in our region suffer the most from this problem.

Figure 6.1 Poverty rates in Africa

Country	Population below poverty line (%)
Zimbabwe	72
Madagascar	71
Sierra Leone	70
Nigeria	70
Guinea-Bissau	67
Sao Tome and Principe	66
Burundi	65
Congo, DRC	63
Swaziland	63
Central African Republic	62
Lesotho	57
Togo	55
Zambia	54
Liberia	54
Malawi	51
Eritrea	50
Gambia, The	48
Guinea	47
Chad	47
Senegal	47
Sudan	47
Congo - Brazzaville	47
Mozambique	46
Niger	45
Comoros	45
Equatorial Guinea	44
Burkina Faso	40
Seychelles	39
Rwanda	39
Angola	37
Benin	36
Kenya	36
Mali	36
Gabon	34

Mauritania	31
Cape Verde	30
Cameroon	30
Ethiopia	30
Namibia	29
Egypt	28
Ghana	24
Djibouti	23
Algeria	23
Tanzania	23
Uganda	21
Botswana	19
South Africa	17
Tunisia	16
Morocco	15
Mauritius	8

Information from the CIA World Factbook January 2020

Extreme Poverty by Country - Top 25

DRC	85.3
Mozambique	82.2
Malawi	75.4
Burundi	74.2
Zambia	71.7
CAR	71.6
Niger	60.5
Uganda	59.8
Zimbabwe	49.2
Kenya	46.4
Burkina Faso	42.1
Guinea-Bissau	39.9
Chad	39.5
Ethiopia	38.6
Mali	36.1
Togo	34.7
Benin	27.2
Cameroon	26.7
Kosovo	25
Gambia	22
Cote d'Ivoire	20.9
Vanuatu	19.5
Senegal	17.9
Honduras	17
Syria	16.5

In Sub-Saharan Africa 559 million people live in extreme poverty as the region faces an average rate of 45.5%.

Extreme poverty is defined as those living under \$3 USD per day accounting for each country's living cost. [Earlier in this lesson a figure of \$1.90 USD per day was used which is even more severe than the internationally accepted rate.]

Given this reality, we should ask ourselves an important question: How are our governments and we, as individuals, using the money and resources that God has given us for our own good and for the good of others? John Wesley, in his sermon number 50 called "**The Use of Money**," gives us important lessons that can help us think about this.

The lessons that John Wesley teaches about stewardship and justice are very different from the "prosperity gospel" that is popular in many parts of Africa today. This modern teaching says that being rich is a sign of God's blessing and that God helps people escape the curse of poverty by making them wealthy. However, this idea often comes from rich churches, especially in the United States, and it does not fit with what the Bible or Wesley taught.

Wesley believed that money should be used to help others and to serve God, not just to make ourselves comfortable. The "prosperity gospel" tries to explain why some nations and Christians are rich while many others live in poverty, but it ignores the unfairness that still exists in the world. Instead of closing the gap between the rich and the poor, this way of thinking often makes the gap even wider.

Poor people, who do not have much money to buy things, often become invisible in society. Because of this, fairness and justice for the most vulnerable are often ignored in the world's economic system.

To fix this problem, we need to change the way we think about the economy. The economy should exist to serve people, not the other way around. Today, it often seems that people live to serve money and business. Instead, we should build an economy that has a "human face," one that puts people first and values every person's life and dignity.

John Wesley understood this problem in his own time. He saw that his country, England, was spending money on luxury and gaining wealth by taking advantage of other nations through trade and slavery. Wesley stayed true to his beliefs. Even though he could have become rich, he chose to live simply and use his money to help others. Until the end of his life, he stood up for the poor and spoke out against the misuse of money, power, and wealth—things he saw as the main causes of poverty and suffering in his world.

Wesley believed that the church must set the example for stewardship of money and material goods, as well as justice toward the poorest:

God has entrusted us with a portion of this world's goods, with food to feed us, clothing to clothe us, and with a place to lay our heads; and not only with the necessities, but with the conveniences of life. Above all, he has given us into our care the precious talent that contains the rest, and this is money. Indeed, it is inexplicably precious if we are faithful and prudent stewards, if we use every portion for the purposes which our blessed God has commanded us to do (Wesley's Works, Vol. III, 1996, pp. 223-224).

Unemployment

In John Wesley's time, the Industrial Revolution brought many new inventions and machines. These technological changes greatly affected the economy. As a result, many people lost their jobs and struggled to survive, as the following quote explains:

Meanwhile, due to the growth of the textile industry, instead of growing edible grains, vegetables and fruits, many of the landowners co-operated with the textile industry. They began to use [the land] primarily to raise sheep and sell the wool demanded by the textile industry. This change in the use of agricultural land and in the economy caused agricultural workers to lose their only source of income and work (Magallanes, 2005, p. 30).

Our world today is not very different. In this time of globalization, technology keeps changing faster. Many jobs that people used to do are now being done by machines. We see drones delivering packages, robots building cars, and computer programs and artificial intelligence helping people in their daily lives. These new technologies are very useful, but they also mean that fewer workers are needed. As a result, many skilled workers may lose their jobs or find it harder to find work in the future.

Figure 6.2 shows the highest rates of unemployment in Africa as a percentage of the population.

Figure 6.2 Unemployment figures in Africa



Modern slavery

In the 18th century, England became very powerful in world trade and built many large ports to support its growing business. Sadly, much of this wealth came from the suffering of African people who were taken from their homes and sold as slaves. These men, women, and children were treated like property. They were forced onto ships, branded like animals, and taken across the ocean to be sold to English settlers in America. Many of them were made to work on sugar cane plantations in the Caribbean under terrible conditions. This cruel system helped make England rich, but it caused great pain and injustice for millions of Africans.

In 1774, John Wesley wrote about the cruelty of slavery in a work called “**Reflections on Slavery.**” In his writing, he spoke out against the idea that one race or culture is better than another. He strongly criticized the English people who captured, transported, and supported the slave trade. Wesley believed that slavery went against the most important values of God—justice, mercy, and truth—and that anyone who defended it was acting wrongly.

Wesley also spoke out against the terrible living conditions of thousands of English people. He saw how these hardships were caused by the big social and economic changes happening in his country at that time.

In this regard, Meléndez comments the following:

Lacking the means of subsistence, the masses of unemployed population had to survive in the worst living conditions... women and children working long hours in the worst working conditions. Many people provoked violent demonstrations against the high cost of living. (Meléndez, 2006, p. 29)

In Africa today modern slavery is a significant problem. It is estimated that in Nigeria alone there are 1.6 million people living in slavery. In other countries in Africa slavery has long, traditional roots. In West Africa there is a system of “*trokosi*” where families can “atone” for a crime by offering a virgin girl to a local priest as a slave.

WALK FREE, an international human rights group, make the following claim:

On any given day in 2021, an estimated 7 million men, women, and children were living in modern slavery in Africa, a prevalence of 5.2 people in modern slavery for every thousand people. Africa had the fourth highest prevalence of modern slavery among the five regions of the world, following the Arab States (10.1 per thousand), Europe and Central Asia (6.9), and Asia and the Pacific (6.8). Forced labour was the most common form of modern slavery in the region, at a rate of 2.9 per thousand people, while forced marriage was at 2.4 per thousand.

In addition to the issue of forced labor, forced marriage is another form of slavery that impacts Africa. Forced marriage can take the form of child brides, kidnapping for marriage, or arranged marriages without consent. Forced marriage is particularly prevalent in conflict zones. WALK FREE goes on:

One in every 300 females in the region was in a forced marriage compared to one in every thousand males. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of child marriages increased in Sudan, Egypt, and parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and they nearly doubled in communities across Senegal and Uganda. Women and girls living in conflict zones also experience forced and child marriage, including as a negative coping mechanism by families to protect them from further violence and by fighters who abduct, marry, and exploit women and girls as domestic and sexual slaves. Forced commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls is

used as a weapon of war by both state and non-state groups, reportedly in the Central African Republic, the DRC, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and by both parties to the civil war in Ethiopia's Tigray region.

Free Methodists in Togo and Kenya are combatting slavery through initiatives like Wunders <https://www.wunderspartners.com/> Thrive, and Set Free Movement <https://setfreemovement.com/>. This is a continuation of Wesley's example and theology. His integration of redemption and human freedom remains a value and a need.

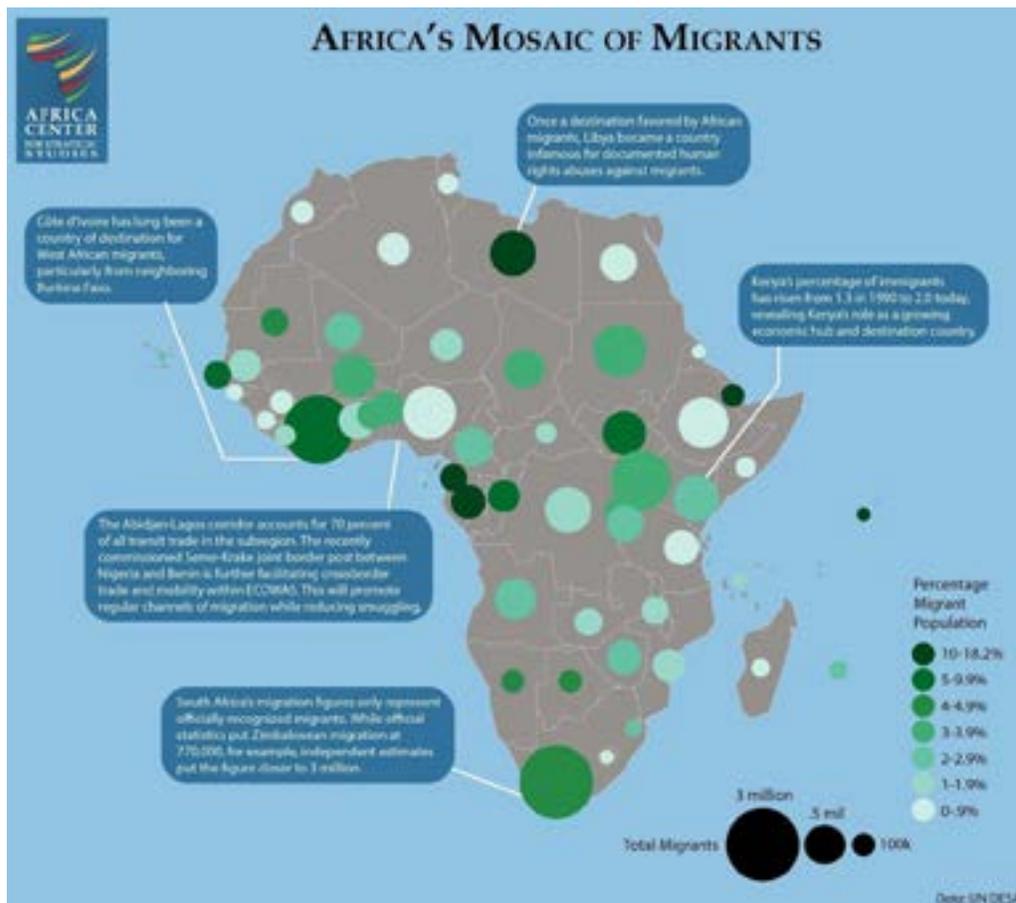
Migration and Hospitality

In Lesson 2 it was revealed that England saw a significant movement of people from rural farms to working in towns and cities where they found better paying jobs. Population growth also contributed to the movement and migration of people in England.

Population growth was the natural result of the growth of large cities, which undoubtedly encouraged immigration and attracted many people... (Meléndez, 2006, p. 21).

Africa is seeing massive migration of people from one area to another. War has sent refugees from the Congo to other continents. Lack of jobs and opportunity in Zimbabwe had led to a situation where more Zimbabweans live abroad than in Zimbabwe. Many Africans who are able to obtain a higher education leave for more developed countries where they can earn a much higher income and enjoy political and economic stability.

Even inside every African country there is migration for work, education, and safety. In the large cities of Africa millions of residents left their rural villages to find a better life.



Hospitality was common practice by early Methodists that grew out of John Wesley's understanding of the gospel. He encouraged the welcoming of strangers because he knew the gospel was given for all people. Instead of viewing strangers as outsiders to be avoided or mistreated, Methodists viewed strangers as people who belonged in the kingdom of God.

As David McKenna reminds us: "We Wesleyans are one family in faith, united in one spirit and with open arms to welcome the stranger" (2000, p. 79).

As the church today, we must take time to understand the reality of life in Africa. We have a responsibility to help and support those who leave their homes to look for a better life. This is an opportunity that God gives us—to welcome others in His name. When we show kindness and share the love of Christ with those who are new or far from home, people can see God's love through us. In this way, God's name is honored even in the middle of the challenges and new beginnings that come with migration.

Conclusion

Peter Block writes in his book "*Stewardship*": "he who wants to be a cautious person may become a cynic who criticizes society, a victim who blames others for problems, or a spectator who refuses to get involved" (McKenna, 2000, p. 13).

When we see these problems around us, the church must not ignore them. Part of the church's mission is to understand the times we are living in and respond with wisdom and love. For this reason, the church needs to create a clear plan of action that focuses on helping people in need, instead of only thinking about itself.

The goal should be to become a holy church, filled with the Holy Spirit, using all its gifts, resources, and abilities to serve those who need help the most.

For this reason, Wesleyans are expected to:

- Invest themselves in evangelizing and missionary work
- Study the realities of their community and nation
- Deepen their knowledge of current trends and realities
- Apply intellectual integrity to the process

Current Reality of the African Church

We live in a global and modern world where many new ideas and ways of thinking have entered the church. This has sometimes created a mix of different beliefs that can cause confusion about what is true and what is not. Many churches advocate practices that do not bring a deeper, more spiritual walk. They welcome practices that do not reach the lost and suffering of our communities. Here are some observations that relate to the church in Africa:

- There is a lot of legalism and not enough holiness
- There is a lot of energy for worship, but not much in relation to the practice of justice and mercy.
- There can be a lot of people but not a lot of transformation
- There are lots of scripture read and quoted, but a lack of understanding about what the Bible teaches.
- Wealth is valued above holiness
- There is celebration for wealthy people who join the church, but little effort to reach the poor

- There is acceptance of corruption and abuse of power and little appetite for justice
- There is a desire to have more people join the church, but little desire to see people listening to the Holy Spirit
- The church in Africa is growing, but injustice and suffering continue

General Conclusions

Throughout this course, we have studied the most important parts of John Wesley's life and teachings. His way of understanding and living the gospel showed great wisdom and balance. Wesley was very practical, but he was also serious and thoughtful. He lived in a time when society needed deep change, and his message helped bring that transformation.

John Wesley was a man with a big vision. He was creative in finding solutions and careful in studying the problems of his country. He had the ability to organize people and create strong systems that helped care for others through the work of the whole church. This is one of the great parts of his legacy.

Wesley also had a special gift for explaining deep spiritual truths in simple ways. He helped people see that faith and action must go together. He showed that social work and evangelism are not opposites but part of the same mission, and that faith and education should work hand in hand.

Some of his famous sayings show his way of thinking:

- **“Faith working through love”** summed up his theology—faith must lead to loving actions.
- **“The world is my parish”** showed his vision that the message of Jesus is for everyone, everywhere.
- **“Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can”** expressed his belief that money should be used wisely and shared to help others.

What first seemed to be good for the nation later caused serious social and economic problems. Many workers and farmers lost their jobs as machines began to replace human labor. Because of this, many people were forced to leave the countryside and move to crowded cities to look for work. This led to unemployment, poverty, and difficult living conditions for many families. John Wesley saw these problems and spoke out against them. He shared his concerns in his writing called **“A Serious Address to the People of England,”** where he challenged his nation to care for the poor and to act with justice and compassion.

The real strength of Wesleyan theology is that it connects what we believe with how we live. John Wesley always wanted his beliefs to make a difference in real life. For him, true faith was not just about knowing things—it was about doing them.

Wesley taught that our beliefs should change the way we live every day. Whether he talked about God's grace before we believe (*prevenient grace*), being made right with God (*justification*), or growing to be more like Jesus (*sanctification*), he always showed how these truths should shape our actions.

Wesley used theology to guide his ministry. He believed that the best way to know if our beliefs are true is to see if they help people grow closer to God and become more like Him in holiness.

Reflection Questions

1. How does the theology of John Wesley work in Africa? How do “works of mercy” play a role in your ministry?
2. Where have you seen modern slavery? How does our theology shape our response to slavery?
3. What are some meaningful, lasting ways Free Methodists can address poverty where you live? How can we change systems of economics to honor God and help people?
4. What does the current reality of the African church look like to you? How does the African church honor God? How does the African church dishonor God? What can you do to change that?

APPENDIX

An Adaptation of an excerpt from “From Age to Age a Living Witness” by Leslie Marston.

Adaptation by Rev. Mike Reynen, AFRICA Area Director Free Methodist World Missions

What Makes John Wesley Important to Free Methodists?

The Free Methodist Church had its origin in 1860 as a movement toward renewed Wesleyan revival. Its founding generation embraced the original Methodist mission: the spread of Scriptural holiness over these lands. To that generation of Free Methodists, Scriptural holiness meant:

- The Scriptural doctrine of entire sanctification according to the Wesleyan interpretation;
- A corresponding inner experience of cleansing and power;
- Spirituality and simplicity of worship in the freedom of the Spirit;
- A way of holy living that separates sharply the Christian from the world;
- Full consecration for service to God and man.

These issues were clear and comprehensive. Those founding Free Methodists considered this vital Christianity and surrendered their status in established and respectable churches to commit themselves to a difficult but worthy mission.

The early intensity of the movement gave it fervor which in some ways may have seemed like a sect. As decades passed, the new church grew in numbers and gained influence. Its procedures became established organizationally, and its common heritage with other evangelical bodies came more and more into focus. Thus, it finally came about that this reviving and reforming movement settled in the early twentieth century into an established denomination that has endured right through to the twenty-first century.

Our present mission as a church is not only to conserve our heritage, but to share its benefits by applying the ageless principles of our holy religion to the problems of a complex age.

Our mission is still to spread Scriptural holiness over these lands, and Scriptural holiness still means sound doctrine, an inner experience of cleansing and power, spiritual worship, a way of holy living, and faithful stewardship. The principles of holiness are ever the same; their application must be extended to contexts of our times as the enemy of holiness attacks on new fronts.

So it follows that as Free Methodists look to their future, they need to recall and focus the wisdom of their history on the present and future course. They need to know what was their heritage in the movement called Methodism; what Free Methodism was in its origin; what it has been in the course of its development to the present; what is its distinctive mission today; and what it must be in the time ahead, if the church is to justify its place in the family of Christian denominations.

Here is the story of the beginning of the Methodist movement through the life of its founder, John Wesley.

England's Degraded Morals

Judged even by the weak standards of the twentieth century, the morals of the England of the eighteenth century were unbelievably corrupt. The lower classes existed on a brutish level, sodden with drink, rotting in filth, and depraved in their appetites for pleasure and excitement. All historians of this era paint the picture in dark colors. Profanity, bare-fisted street fighting (even women participating), cockfighting, gambling, robbery, sexual immorality, and general violence were prevalent. Perhaps the height of popularity in amusements was reached in the spectacle of public hangings, of which there were many in a land where the death penalty was imposed for a variety of offenses, many of them trivial.

Historians report that about one-half of the children of London were born out of wedlock; that every tenth adult sold liquor, and every sixth shop in the metropolis was a gin-shop. The often-quoted historian, Lecky, has asserted that drinking in the early eighteenth century was the outstanding phenomenon of the era, greater in its influence upon England than any political or military event. Piette points out that gross immorality prevailed in London streets in the daytime, and at night conditions reached the level of savagery when, to be out, was to risk one's life.

Morals of the rural population and the court likewise were debauched. So corrupt had the theater become by the late seventeenth century that women attending its performance wore masks to hide their blushes--or, as one writer has suggested, to hide the fact they didn't blush! Theaters welcomed prostitutes without charging them admission. Writing of the middle of the eighteenth century, the historian Green recorded that, "Purity and fidelity to the marriage vow were sneered out of fashion; and Lord Chesterfield, in his letters to his son, instructs him in the art of seduction as a part of a polite education."

Corruption in politics was rampant. On occasion, widespread drunkenness among its members compelled Parliament to discontinue its business early in the day.

Low State of Church and Clergy

Early in the century, Bishop Burnet lamented the "imminent ruin" he saw hanging over the Church, the principal threat being the Church's own inward condition. He complained that candidates for orders knew neither the Catechism nor the Gospels, and far from knowing enough to be ordained, "they would appear not knowing enough to be admitted to the holy sacrament."

Many parishes seldom saw their paid priest (pastor) tend the flock, for through political influence or direct purchase he might have acquired several parish assignments, most of which he resided at some distance, and neglected them. Following this pattern, some clergymen built up immense incomes while others, faithful shepherds serving a small parish, barely managing to make ends meet for themselves.

John Wesley's Quest

"Its public life corrupt; its clergy discredited; its Church frozen; its Theology exhausted of Christian elements. This was the England of the eighteenth century! It needed a spiritual revolution"

In these words Fitchett describes the miserable condition of England when God chose John Wesley to break through the dense spiritual darkness with the light and warmth of the gospel to melt the religious cold-heartedness of the age. He was born in 1703 when the century was young. But it was not until the age of thirty-five, after he had followed many misleading pathways to frustration and failure, that Wesley himself came to the full light and warmth of evangelical faith. This is his story.

How John Wesley's Early Life Prepared Him

John Wesley was raised by parents of character and culture. The poverty of a large family compelled

them to exist on the sparse provisions of the Epworth parish in Lincolnshire. Despite challenges, John was given the best schooling England afforded, as were his elder brother, Samuel, and his younger brother, Charles.

John's formal education began in the home school conducted in the Epworth rectory under the skilled tutelage of his highly intelligent mother, Susanna Annesley Wesley. At the early age of ten he was accepted at the famous Charterhouse School in London. Here he remained until his admission at seventeen years to Christ Church, one of Oxford's most noted colleges. Until his senior year, John Wesley seems to have been only nominally Christian, carefree perhaps, but certainly not ungodly. As he neared the completion of his undergraduate course, however, he became serious concerning his future and more concerned with conducting his life within the limits of serious-minded piety.

He was graduated a bachelor of arts from Oxford in 1725 at the age of twenty-two, and the same year was ordained a deacon by Bishop Potter in Christ Church Cathedral. Remaining at Oxford, the next year he was appointed as fellow in Lincoln College, and in 1727 received the degree Master of Arts. Then followed a two-year period as curate, or assistant, to his father at Epworth and more particularly at Wroote, a nearby very small village which for a time was attached to the Epworth parish. During this period, in 1728, he was ordained a presbyter of the Church of England.

In 1729 he was recalled to his duties as fellow, or instructor, in Lincoln College. Here he had been commissioned to direct disputations, to teach philosophy, and to lecture in Greek on the New Testament. For the training he gained in moderating disputations (or debates), Wesley later declared he often had reason to thank God. Peculiarly effective was this discipline in logic for the later period of his life when he needed to defend evangelical religion against its self-righteous opponents, and proclaim its message to poor and sinful creatures who needed its life-changing power.

Before John's leaving Oxford to assist his father at Epworth and Wroote, a younger brother, Charles, had entered Christ Church and had caused John a measure of brotherly concern because of his lack of religious seriousness. But upon John's return to Oxford to take up his duties again as fellow at Lincoln, he found Charles the leader of a small group of devout young men whose pursuit of earnest Christianity had won for them on campus the insulting label, "Holy Club." Soon John had succeeded his brother as leader of this group, for leadership was always John's natural role, and in this situation his leadership was quite inevitable by virtue of his seniority and his position on the staff of Lincoln College.

Under John's leadership, the rigid self-discipline and asceticism of the members of the Holy Club, along with their closely scheduled observance of the duties both of devotion and good works, led to their being further labeled: "Methodists." The name stuck, and years after the group was dissolved by the scattering of its members from Oxford, the term "Methodist" identified the revival movement that developed under the leadership of three of them, namely the two Wesleys and George Whitefield.

Let us back up and note a few particular stages in his development, during these young adult years. We see he is on a quest; he is seeking in several ways.

John's Wesley's Quest through Reason

Until his last year as an undergraduate in Oxford, John Wesley had been properly but not deeply religious. With completion of his course drawing near, he gave attention to his future and, upon the urging of his father, considered the taking of orders. He finally decided to do so. He carried on careful correspondence with his parents concerning this serious step, and with his mother concerning such weighty theological topics as predestination and the foreknowledge of God.

Continuing at Oxford after his graduation, he studied extensively the philosophies of the day, and for his

master's degree wrote dissertations on such diverse themes as Animal Souls, Julius Caesar, and The Love of God. He took up and abandoned one system of thought after another, leading Piette rhetorically to ask, "Will John Wesley, a searcher of all philosophies then in vogue, give his adherence completely to any one system in this state of intellectual anarchy, so widespread throughout the eighteenth century in England?" As early as 1725 his scholarly father wrote him a word of warning. "I like your way of thinking and arguing," he said; "but nevertheless I ought to say that it frightens me a little."

In a sermon of his later years, Wesley told of his earlier quest for God and the truth of an invisible world by way of reason, "till there was no spirit in me," he said; "and I was ready to choose strangling rather than life." In his sermon on "The use of money," he illustrated from his own experience that one person may not safely for his faith engage himself in certain employments which others find harmless. "So I am convinced," he said, "from many experiments, I could not study, to any degree of perfection, either mathematics, arithmetic, or algebra without being a deist, if not an atheist : and yet others may study them all their lives, without sustaining any inconvenience." Thus he acknowledged late in life the danger in abstract thought to which he was inclined by nature. Fortunately, he turned from an undue dependence upon reason in his early maturity and reached the conclusion that knowledge is not worth pursuing merely for the sake of knowledge or merely to satisfy curiosity.

But John Wesley did not swing to anti-intellectualism at the other extreme and was ever strong for reason as handmaid of faith. To correct the extravagances of some of his followers in a later period, he warned against discounting reason or belittling knowledge. Long after his Aldersgate experience, he wrote "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in which he said, "We join you in desiring a religion founded on reason," and then proceeded to show that the religion of the Methodists was founded on the highest reason.

Preaching before Oxford University on Salvation by Faith less than a month after he had exercised this faith in the little chapel of Aldersgate Street, he could say from recent and vital experience that saving faith "is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart."

John Wesley's Quest by Way of Mysticism and Withdrawal

Nearing the time of his graduation from Christ Church in 1725 and about the time of his decision to seek ordination, John Wesley became interested in devotional literature, especially the writings of the mystics, which exerted on him a deep influence. This tended to introvert his religious interests but did much to enrich his spiritual life. Later, as we shall see, he was to react strongly against the mystics.

He hoped to find a teaching position in Yorkshire, but evidently he did not secure the position, for later that year we find him at Epworth's desolate outstation of Wroote where he found seclusion. Twice only during this two-year period did he leave the Epworth area, one of those occasions being his ordination as presbyter. During this seclusion he benefited by his mother's counsel and wise views of life and religion, and by the parish duties that fell to him as his father's assistant. And he had his books.

Following his recall to instructional duties at Lincoln College in 1729, he soon became engrossed with the Holy Club, as we have already noted. After four or five years in what for Wesley was a satisfying life of academic seclusion at Oxford, his aged and declining father desired that he apply for the Epworth lead position as his successor. His brother Samuel, now headmaster of a school at Tiverton, had declined to apply for the place but joined in urging John to do so. Samuel used as a principal argument the vows of ordination John had taken. In response, John appealed to his bishop for an opinion on his father's claim that he was under obligation because of his ordination to seek a parish. The bishop answered, "No; provided you can as a clergyman better serve God and His Church in your present or some other station" than as parish priest.

John had written to his father, declining his request that he apply for the Epworth parish, pleading that he could be holier in Oxford. His father replied, "It is not dear self, but the glory of God, and the different degrees of promoting it, which should be our main consideration and direction on any course of life." And then to his thirty-two year old son, the elder Wesley gave this seasoned advice: "God made us for a social life; we are not to bury our talents; we are to let our light shine before men, and not barely through the chinks of a bushel for fear the wind should blow it out."

But in his systematic way, John wrote to his father, giving twenty-some reasons for remaining at Oxford, most of them centering on the welfare of his own soul. Another less worthy clergyman succeeded to the Epworth parish following the death of the Wesley's father.

Within a few months, however, John left for Georgia to be a missionary to the Indians, and, strangely enough, this also was for the purpose of saving his own soul! He answered the question, "Cannot you save your own soul in England as well as in Georgia?" by saying, "No; neither can I hope to attain to the same degree of holiness here which I may there."

In this he reminds us of the monastic temper of the Psalmist who longed to escape to wilderness seclusion, and wrote in Psalm 55:

"O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. . . . I have seen violence and strife in the city."

This flight to the American wilderness, "to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen," as Wesley expressed it, reflects the idealization of the state of nature, since he assumed it was undisturbed by organized human society, which found expression in the social and political arena of England.

Wesley took with him to Georgia some of his favorite authors, and perhaps in that select library were volumes from the mystics he had admired. When he had been in Georgia most of a year he wrote his brother, Samuel, giving his analysis of mysticism's errors, and confessing, "I think the rock on which I had nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the mystics; under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace."

On another occasion he declared himself even more critically concerning mysticism and those mystics "whose noble descriptions of union with God, and internal religion made everything else appear mean, flat, and insipid." And he added, "But in truth they make good works appear so too; yea, even faith itself, and what not?" Confused by the mystics' teaching that the Christian is released from the commandments of God because, as they said, "Love is all," he "fluctuated between obedience and disobedience"; he "had no heart, no vigor, no zeal in obeying"; and he was continually in doubt and perplexity, and was disturbed in conscience. After being delivered from mysticism's snare, Wesley came to the conclusion that "all the other enemies of Christianity are triflers; the mystics are the most dangerous of its enemies."

Wesley's longing for solitude continued, and on the return voyage from Georgia to England he wrote in his Journal the following:

". . . I reflected much on that vain desire, which had pursued me for so many years, of being in solitude in order to be a Christian. I have now, thought I, solitude enough. But am I therefore the nearer being a Christian? Not if Jesus Christ be the model of Christianity."

Some people insist that by so broadly condemning mysticism, Wesley was unfair. They accuse that both he and the Methodist movement were strongly tinged with mystical tendencies. Careful reading of Wesley makes clear, however, that his definition of mysticism makes the distinction clear. He condemned mysticism

because its essential difference from the faith of Christianity was a neglect of the objective means of grace and an exaggeration of subjective efforts at union with God. Wesley's emphasis was a personal relationship to God by faith rather than a mystical union with God.

Very fortunately, Wesley was delivered from suffocation by mysticism. His efforts to guard Methodism against its choking grasp were to begin within eighteen months after Aldersgate in his controversy with the Moravians over "stillness," and would continue for fifty years. His last reference to mysticism in his Journal was September 1, 1790, within six months of his death. Without his own deliverance from mysticism prior to his Aldersgate experience, the revival that followed could well have been engulfed by suffocating subjectivism, and Methodism would have gone down in history merely as one of a host of fanatical sects that clutter Christian history.

John Wesley's Quest by Way of Legalism

John Wesley was cheerful by nature, as the tenor of his life clearly indicated. But when in Oxford days he began to take life and religion seriously, he became morbidly technical and legalistic in his zeal for personal holiness.

His quest during the Holy Club era at Oxford led him to diligent moderation in food, the strictest self-denial in his expenditures, and a rigorous regimen in controlling his hours and minutes. This strenuous program carried through the Georgia period, with fasting three times a week and meticulous parceling of time. Indeed, his going to Georgia to save his own soul seems itself to have been motivated by his legalism quite as much as by his desire to flee from the perplexities of civilization to the serenity and simplicity of the wilderness. He was seeking personal holiness by his own efforts that he might claim full justification before God. As late as January 24, 1738, during his return voyage from Georgia, he reviewed his religious state and sought crumbs of comfort in his own good works. He wrote into his Journal this analysis:

I think, verily, if the gospel be true, I am safe: for I not only have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor; I not only give my body to be burned, drowned, or whatever God shall appoint for me; but I follow after charity (though not as I ought, yet as I can) , if haply I may attain it. I now believe the Gospel is true. "I show my faith by my works," by staking my all upon it. . . . Whoever sees me, sees I would be a Christian But in a storm I think, "What if the Gospel be not true? For what art thou wandering over the face of the earth—a dream, a cunningly devised fable! Oh, who will deliver me from this fear of death?"

How significant that one who had followed the difficulties of legalism should later come to understand and so clearly define, as did Wesley, the operation of "faith working by love!" In the sermon already mentioned, which he preached before the University in the early weeks of his walk by faith, he courageously spoke from personal experience when he said, "For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God's hand."

His treatment of faith and works in Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament is a far step from his own early legalism, and an equal distance on the other hand from antinomianism (law rejection) which, said Wesley, "makes void the law through faith," and for which he held an intense hatred.

John Wesley's Quest by Way of Ritualism

In his Georgia sojourn John Wesley became extremely sacerdotal, which has to do with various ritual and spiritual duties of ordained priests. He later acknowledged he had become extreme by placing too much credence in the assumed antiquity of certain rites and ordinances. He sought diligently to restore original Christianity among the uncultured and often immoral colonists of Georgia, and he was keenly disappointed

that his purpose to introduce early form Christianity to the Georgia indigenous people failed for lack of opportunity to carry on missionary work among them.

On the rude frontier Wesley insisted upon baptism, even of infants, by three-times immersion baptism at that! He refused Christian burial to those not baptized, and refused baptism to children of dissenters. He held two services a day and on occasion floundered through the Georgia wilderness in his clerical robes. In fact, he was looked upon as a Catholic by some for his extreme sacerdotalism.

His high-church convictions led him to refuse the Lord's Supper to a saintly Moravian pastor, Boltzius by name, because he had not been baptized by an episcopally ordained minister. A dozen years later, and following his own persecution as an "irregular" by the Church of England and his exclusion from most of her pulpits, he received a gracious letter from Pastor Boltzius declaring the increase of his love for Wesley, which had first been kindled during Wesley's Savannah ministry! Wesley quotes the letter in his Journal and records the Savannah incident. "Can anyone carry High Church zeal higher than this?" he asked; then quaintly exclaimed, "How well have I since been beaten with my own staff!"

Even more appropriately might he have applied this same expression to an even sharper irony. On his visit to the Moravian colonies in Germany following his Aldersgate experience, and only a few months after his high ritualism in Georgia, it is reported that the Moravians refused to admit him to Communion because they deemed that he was not prepared in heart. This exclusion was the more pointed because they did admit his traveling companion, Ingham, who had earlier been with Wesley in the Holy Club and had shared with him the Georgia venture. Ingham later joined the Moravians.

In later years, during the development of the Methodist movement, Wesley so far moderated his former rigidity as to admit penitent sinners and properly instructed children to the Lord's table. According to his later views, the Communion was both a confirming ordinance for the believer and a converting ordinance for the sincerely penitent. Wesley steadfastly maintained a higher view of the Lord's Supper than would reduce it merely to a symbol or a witness. It was a channel of grace to those who by faith appropriated its benefits, and consistently with this view he communed on an average of every five days for most of his long life. He distinguished the priestly from the prophetic ministry, restricting the administration of the sacraments to ordained clergymen but authorizing laymen to serve in the prophetic office as preachers. This stricture on his preachers was to become the cause of severe tensions, for there were few episcopally ordained clergymen in Methodism, and the growing membership came to demand the Sacraments at the hands of their own pastors. This demand, along with the peculiar needs of American Methodists after the American Revolution, finally led the precise, yet practical, Wesley to ordain a limited number of his preachers, and even to ordain Dr. Coke superintendent of the work in America. He was supported in this irregularity by a conviction of years' standing that the Scriptures make no distinction between bishops and presbyters. This step all but led to rupture with his brother, Charles, who was more ardently Anglican than John. As was Charles' habit on occasions happy or otherwise, he resorted to verse, in this instance to express his disapproval with this bit of sarcasm :

How easily are bishops made By man or woman's whim!

Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid, But who laid hands on him?

Charles saw this move as a step away from the Church of England, as indeed it proved to be, although the formal break from the Church did not come during the lifetime of the Wesleys.

Nearing the End of the Quest

He had sat at the feet of many instructors and had read many books. He had been a sacerdotalist, a mystic, a legalist, all in turns, or rather, all together! And yet, through all these stages, he had persistently

misread the true order of the spiritual world. He believed that a changed life was not the fruit of forgiveness, but its cause. Good works, he said, come before forgiveness and constitute the title to it; they did not come after and represent its effects.

This is how Fitchett summarizes Wesley's fruitless quest for rest of soul by devious routes that seemed good to prideful man because they promised salvation through human capacity and effort. Having exhausted himself in all such efforts, Wesley is about to make the discovery that salvation is by grace on God's part, through an answering faith on man's part; and that even this faith is not of man but of God.

The faith by which man finds rest in God, Wesley had now learned, is not by reason, not by mysticism, not by ritualism, and not by legalism.

Wesley's tutor in the way of faith was the pious and learned Moravian, Peter Bohler. The two met in February, 1738, a few days after Wesley's return from his disappointing Georgia missionary assignment and during Bohler's stopover in England.

The first truth Peter Bohler conveyed, by the Spirit, to John Wesley was the basic evangelical fact that salvation is through faith alone. Before giving his assent to this claim, Wesley demanded proof from Scripture; and empiricist that he was, demanded also the testimony of experience. Both demands were met, and he intellectually accepted the doctrine. Then, upon Bohler's insistence, Wesley reluctantly preached what he had not experienced himself. But he was a sincere seeker and his preaching salvation by faith was effective!

The second lesson Bohler taught Wesley was that the work of faith is instantaneous. Turning again to search the Scriptures, Wesley was astonished to find, as he said, "scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions; scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth." But did instantaneous conversions still occur, or were they reserved to Bible times and personages? Again, Wesley demanded the test of experience, and Bohler produced several witnesses who had instantaneous conversions. "Here ended my dispute," Wesley wrote. "I could only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief.'"

This was in late April of 1738. Dawn was about to break for him, spiritually. A month later would come the heart-warming sunburst of faith, perhaps brighter and warmer because Wesley had explored to his own dissatisfaction every way by which God is sought but cannot be found. To him there was no lure in that direction, but the highlands of faith beckoned.

It is difficult to comprehend how Wesley could have met and overcome the many counterinfluences that later were to oppose the revival, without the wide and varied explorations he had made by his own efforts to find the way of faith. In an introductory section of the Journal, Editor Curnock turns all of Wesley's wandering to the profit of his later ministry, saying: This strange story of pilgrimage had its stages, its discipline, its instruction in faith and righteousness, its prophecies of the future. Nothing in the long journey from the town of Legality to the Cross was lost. Not only Methodism, but the whole Christian Church, is the richer today because of all the ways in which John Wesley, during these years, was led and humbled and proved.

Aldersgate Street and Beyond

Charles Wesley preceded his brother, John, by three days in finding rest to his soul. And in these three days, according to his own testimony, John had "continual sorrow and heaviness of heart." It was during these days that he wrote as follows to a friend who evidently was in like distress: I know that I too deserve nothing but wrath, being full of all abominations; and having no good thing in me to atone for them, or to remove the wrath of God. All my works, my righteousness, my prayers, need an atonement for themselves. Yet I hear a voice (and is it not the voice of God?) saying, "Believe. and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth is passed from death unto life."

In his Journal, Wesley records these three events of Wednesday, May 24, 1738:

In the early morning he received encouragement from Scripture, one passage being, “Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God”; in the afternoon at worship in St. Paul’s Cathedral he was impressed by the anthem, “Out of the deep have I called unto thee” (Psalm 130); the third event we give in the words of Wesley himself: In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ. Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

I believe

A fourth event of that day is recorded by Charles rather than John. This incident followed John’s Aldersgate crisis by about an hour. Charles was not present at the little service in Aldersgate Street that evening, but was convalescing from an illness in the house of a friend on Little Britain Street, hardly more than a stone’s throw away.

About ten o’clock that night John and a company of friends came singing up the street to Charles’ sick room. Upon entering the room, John announced to his brother, “I believe.” As reported above, John wrote of the Aldersgate experience in his Journal, “I felt....”

Aldersgate involved both the feeling of experience and the believing of faith, and ever since the synthesis of faith and feeling has been important in the lives of Wesley’s spiritual descendants.

A few days later he wrote to his brother in answer to Samuel’s inquiry as to what he meant by being made a Christian. This letter is a bit more confident, but quite in line with the discouraging results of his typical self-analysis although approaching a statement of the distinction between his present justified state and the fullness of the Spirit toward which he was striving. Here in part is his letter to Samuel:

By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ as that Sin hath no more dominion over him; and in this obvious sense of the word I was not a Christian till May 24th last past. For till then sin had the dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but, surely then from that time to this, it hath not, such is the free grace of God in Christ.... If you ask by what means I am made free? I answer, by faith in Christ: by such a sort or degree of faith as I had not till that day.... Some measure of this faith, which bringeth salvation or victory over sin, and which implies peace or trust in God through Christ, I now enjoy by His free mercy; though in very word it is in me but as a grain of mustard seed: for the... seal of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in my heart, and producing joy in the Holy Ghost. ‘joy which no man taketh away, joy unspeakable and full of glory;’—this witness of the Spirit I have not; but I patiently wait for it.

About ten months after this Aldersgate discovery of real faith in Christ, he was invited to come to Bristol and to help his friend, George Whitefield with open-air preaching to coal miners. John Wesley was cautious about making the move and once he did, he was also quite reluctant about open-air preaching. But he decided to try. In doing so he discovered the door to ministry he never anticipated. From that moment in his life, it is not an overstatement to say “everything changed.” He was no longer doubting himself, nor focusing on himself. He was now oriented to the lost souls that needed to be reached. His ministry began reaching hundreds and thousands. Bristol was the city where he established a ministry center called, The New Room. From there, his decades of revival ministry flowed, raising up preachers, bringing spiritual transformation to large portions of the population. The result was, England itself began to transform. All those deplorable conditions described earlier in this paper began to diminish and largely disappeared from public awareness.

Wesley’s life and the ministry which flowed out of it serve as an invitation to us. As was stated at the beginning, the mission of the Free Methodist Church is still to spread Scriptural holiness over these lands. Each of us has a part to play in achieving that mission. None of us can do our part in our own strength. Wesley’s experience challenges us to the exercise of true faith, finding that knowledge of God in Christ and

the assurance he gives. And then to continue onward finding the fullness of the Spirit such that our attention moves outward from ourselves to the masses of people around us who need the message we have come to know; the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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