

## 11. PART II **ADVANCE-** DRIVEWAYS: “*The Wesleyan Way*”

### **(REVIEW)**

#### Section I:

#### **“A Brief Review of Methodist History & Theology.”**

##### 1. John Wesley (1703-1791)

**Childhood:** John Wesley was born in 1703 in Epworth, England. His father was an Anglican priest named Samuel. His mother, Susanna, was a strong, intelligent woman; she was raised in the puritan tradition and was a very spiritually fervent woman who raised their family in a tradition of Christian service and worship. At age 5, John narrowly escaped death in a house fire. His mother thereafter thought him especially set apart by God- “*a brand plucked from the burning.*” John was 1 of 19, over half died before reaching maturity.

**Education:** In 1714, at age 11, Wesley was sent away to school in London and later, at 17, to Christ Church College, Oxford. There he proved to be an excellent student, particularly gifted in languages and theology. When he was 23, he was appointed a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. In 1728, at age 25, Wesley was ordained a priest of the Church of England.

**Methodism:** Shortly after his ordination, John joined his younger brother Charles and other Oxford students who had formed a religious society, *The Holy Club*, dedicated to personal devotion and service to the poor. They tried to achieve order and method in their habit of prayer, discussion, and social ministry. Other students in jest called them the “*Bible Moths*” and the “*Methodists.*” Wesley and his followers adopted the latter name as a badge of honor.

**Seeking Faith:** Wesley did not yet feel that his disciplined life of holy actions would assure his salvation. He decided to preach the Gospel to the Indians, hoping to come to understand it better. He sailed to the colony of Georgia in 1735 and spent two disappointing years as a frontier missionary. Feeling he had lost his faith in God, Wesley returned to England. There he began to worship with a very devout German Christian Society (the Moravians).

**Conversion:** At a prayer meeting in London on May 24, 1738, Wesley had a climatic experience of Christ:

*"I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in 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."*

Wesley went on to share this new love in his heart with the people throughout England. Wesley's England was in terrible need of Spiritual Renewal.

- 2. Wesley's Ministry:** He sought to provide an answer by providing an Evangelical Mission to the people. Wesley's message was, *"Salvation is for everyone and can be found through Jesus. A new life awaits anyone who loves Christ, repents of sins, believes in saving grace and follows His example."* Wesley preached in the church, byways, and highways of Europe, preaching outdoors and on stones outside of the mines as the workers would come from the mines. Wesley's heart was extra sensitive to those with no contact with the church. During his years of ministry, Wesley traveled some 250,000 miles on horseback giving more than 40,000 sermons. John's younger brother Charles was always a supporter and partner in his ministry and is responsible for writing over 4000 hymns, such as *"Hark the Herald Angels Sing."*

3. **Wesley's Social Gospel:** Wesley worked his whole life to renew the Church of England and extend its reach to the churchless masses. John Wesley preached social holiness. Methodists have long supported:
- **Education-** Many local Methodist Societies sponsored schools. Wesley himself ran a school for orphans at Kingswood. He also wrote many educational texts and revised others for general use. Duke, Emory, SMU, Vanderbilt, McKendree, Illinois Wesleyan, many, many colleges, seminaries, and medical schools are of Methodist origin.
  - **Abolition of Slavery-** Wesley staunchly opposed slavery calling it "the scandal of religion, of England and of human nature." He gave many sermons on its evils.
  - **Medical Assistance-** Wesley ran medical dispensaries for the poor in several English cities. He wrote and published a handbook for medical home care. Methodists operate hundreds of Hospitals, Nursing homes, Retirement villages and other institutions throughout the World.
4. **Methodism in AMERICA:** Around 1760 a movement lead by lay Methodist missionaries to the America began developing parishes around the Maryland and Virginia areas. As the American Methodist movement grew, and there were almost no Anglican priests available, the church cried for ordained clergy to carry out the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Methodist movement grew until the war for independence made it hard for Wesley, an English Tory, to maintain relations with his American Methodist cousins. Wesley sent Thomas Coke to America as a superintendent with orders to make Francis Asbury an additional superintendent to supervise the work of the Methodists in America. Both Asbury

and Coke, as ordained clergy, would supervise the sacraments. Wesley also sent a prayer book titled, "The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America." his revision of the Church of England's 39 Articles of Religion. In 1784, at the famous Christmas Conference of Methodist preachers held in Baltimore at Lovely Lane Chapel, the American Methodist movement organized officially as the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. In some way or another that original church has continued to this day. For over 30 years Coke and Asbury served as the bishops. The first American born Bishop was Bishop William McKendree.

## Section II. Major Points of Wesleyan Doctrine

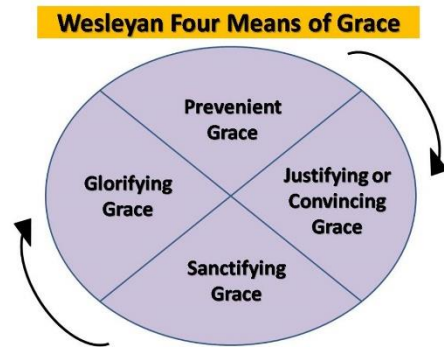
1. As people of the Methodist Way, we share in the **Apostolic witness** to Jesus Christ as Savior & Lord.
2. As people of the Methodist Way, we accept as part of our identity:
  - 1) The **Cannon of Scripture** found in the **39** Books of the OT and **27** Books of the NT.
  - 2) Ecumenical Creeds from Nicaea as well as **The Apostles' Creed**. *(These Creeds have set the boundaries for acceptable Christian Doctrine.)*
  - 3) As people of the Methodist Way, we became a part of **The Protestant Reformation** of the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Century. This movement *"sought to reclaim authentic biblical witness. These documents affirm the primacy of scripture and provided format for doctrinal standards through their statements of essential beliefs on matters such as the way of Salvation, the Christians life, and the nature of the Church."* (pg. 42, Para 101, 2004 UM Discipline)

- 4) As people of the Methodist Way, we spring from the loins of **The Church of England** and share in their doctrinal heritage.
- 5) The Methodist movement began as a **renewal movement** within the Church of England. The movement sought a return to Christian Holiness by living out in a practical way, *“The Scriptural Way of Salvation.”* (pg. 45)
- 6) The Wesleyan Way has a clear **"Ordo of Salutis"** or **"Order of Salvation"**: It follows that God's grace and love is always with us. While the grace of God is undivided, it precedes salvation as *"Prevenient grace,"* continues in *"Justifying grace,"* and is brought to fruition in *"Sanctifying grace"* and achieves its perfection in *"Glorifying grace."* The definitions of Wesley's four means of Grace make it clear that as Wesleyan's, we believe that the Grace of God is ever present with us:

By GRACE we mean *“the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit.”* (pg. 45)

- i. **Prevenient Grace-** *“The First Slight Transient Conviction.”*
- ii. **Justifying or Convincing Grace-** The point where we confess our sins, accept God’s pardoning love. *“We become Children of God.”*
- iii. **Sanctifying Grace-** is about seeking Christian Perfection. It is the Grace of God in seeking to have one’s own heart per Wesley to be *“habitually filled with the Love of God and neighbor”* and as *“having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.”* (pg. 47)

iv. **Glorifying Grace**- The Grace that leads us home into the Presence of the Almighty, transforming us into God’s perfect will for our lives. This grace most often comes to us in death, but Wesley considered this a state of entire sanctification.



7) **Faith & Good Works**- Wesley believed *“repentance should be accompanied by ‘Fruit meet for repentance,’ of works of piety and mercy.”* (pg. 47)

8) **Mission & Service**- *“Personal Salvation always involves Christian mission & service to the world.”* Our faith cannot be real unless it is holiness in action through our worship inside the walls and our service outside the walls. Wesley called this *“Social Holiness.”* (pg. 48)

9) **The Early Methodist Societies had a very simple term for membership:** *“a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins.”* (pg. 48)

10) Wesley felt evangelical living should be lived out to three simple rules. Wesley wrote:

i. **FIRST:** *“By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind.”*

ii. **SECOND:** *“By doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all.”*

iii. **THIRD:** *“By attending upon all the ordinances of God”*- In short – Stay in Love with God!

11) The Wesleyan Way calls for us to better understand the Bible and our Church using what is known as **"The Wesleyan Quadrilateral."** It breaks down to:

1. **Scripture**

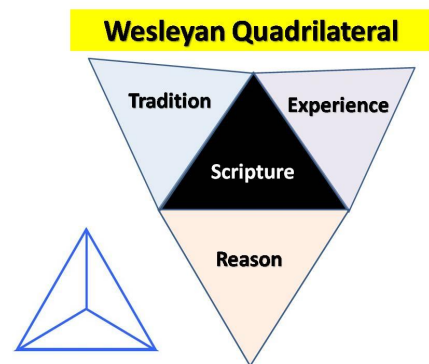
2. **Tradition**

3. **Reason**

4. **Experience**

- i. The Wesleyan Way holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice but that the Bible is primary among them.
- ii. Scripture provides us with God's Words, illustrations, and stories. Sometimes these texts make clear-cut inferences to modern day dilemmas, but in some cases, it requires us to add in the tradition of the Church, the experiences of our lives and cultures and to even use logic and reason to complete the process of using the Bible as our guide for determining our beliefs and practices. It is my belief, and the Wesleyan belief, stated in the Methodist Articles of Religion, that Scripture contains *"all things necessary for salvation."* (The 2004 UM Book of Discipline, pg. #59.) The Wesleyan Quadrilateral goes on to inform us on how to read these Sacred Texts in the light of modernity.

- iii. Yes, there are four main categories that should inform our beliefs and practices, and as there are four, all should play a role in that decision. But only one of the four categories is given the respect of a big "S- Scripture." As such, four sides support the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, but it is not an equilateral quadrilateral. (NOT A SQUARE)



12) Finally, what is **Pastor Troy's** favorite idiosyncrasy of the Wesleyan Way. I believe it is found in Wesley's understanding of the **"Witness of the Spirit."**

**"Witness of the Spirit"** was Wesley's term for salvation:

In other words what are the marks of the Christian life? In the Wesleyan tradition, the greatest mark is the *"Witness of the Spirit."* This is the knowledge, the certification, that we are children of God. Romans 8:16 say, *"The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."* The most important mark is the one inside our hearts and minds that tells us we are a child of God, an heir to the Kingdom of God. With this knowledge comes the by-product that the Spirit of God brings in those that believe. This starts with an inward knowledge of God's love and grace. It is witnessed to through the development of the fruits of the Spirit and through our openness to God's gifts, graces, and talents in our life. The Christian, in living a life consistent with the *"life of Christ"*, seeks to please God and by living out the teachings of the Bible. Living a life that focuses on a love for God equaled by a love for our neighbors. The Christian will seek to do those things that glorify God, and bring honor to the Kingdom, including being a good employee or employer, a good spouse, a good parent, a good neighbor, and a good citizen. The mark of the Christian life is ultimately the inner peace that comes from knowing that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of one's life.



### Section III.

#### SMALL GROUP- THE WESLEYAN CLASS MEETING/CELL GROUP

##### a. Small Group Breakout Questions:

- i. Can you name one thing that makes our church distinctly Wesleyan in nature compared to other Protestant or Roman Catholic Churches?
- ii. As to the three simple rules of Wesley: (1) Do no harm/Evil, (2) Do Good, (3) Stay in Love with God, which are you the best at and which do you need the greatest work on?
- iii. In Wesley's Order of Salvation, the four stages of grace (*Prevenient, Justifying, Sanctifying & Glorifying*), where do you clearly land? And what would be one thing you could work on to head towards the next stage?

##### b. SPECIAL SMALL GROUP ASSIGNMENT:

Would your group have prayer together thanking the Holy Spirit where each person is doing well and asking for leadership and guidance on growing in living Wesley's Three Simple Rules and walking out Wesley's Means of Grace! **(FOLLOWING THIS YOU ARE DISMISSED)**

##### NEXT WEEK

The Big House: *"The Church- It's Nature, Mission and Power."*