
APEX UMC FAMILY

ONLINE COURSE

WHAT METHODISTS BELIEVE

APPLICATION GUIDE





A WORD FROM OUR PASTORS

Thank you for signing up for "What Methodists Believe" We are so excited that you are taking this course. We cannot wait for you to discover many of the things that made us fall in love with this beautifully messy church. Whether you were born and raised in the UMC, or this is the first church you've ever been to, we believe this class will help you understand some of the foundations of what we believe and why it matters.

As you go along, please know we are here to support you and answer any questions you might have. John Wesley believed that true discipleship was rooted in practical application. So we want you to engage this course from the perspective of how it might impact your life! We believe a deeper understanding of the church to which you belong creates room for greater participation in its community, mission, and vision.

THE PASTORAL TEAM

THE PEAK
APEX UMC
519CHURCH
FIESTA CRISTIANA

1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

There is no Methodist movement without the need for deeper levels of discipleship within individual Christians. Wesley was formed by people who deeply believed that faith should impact every aspect of life. The key to faith had to be the pursuit of holiness.

Discussion Prompt

1. In this session we discussed the rise of Methodism in 18th century England. Much like our church, we too bring stories to the table that shape who we are. Talk a little bit about your faith journey to this point and why this course interests you.

KEY CONCEPT: REFORMATION

John Wesley's mission was "To reform the church and spread scriptural holiness throughout the land."

This ethic of making something better from within is still evident in Methodist churches today. Even as our denomination finds itself wrestling with new theological questions, our first instinct is never to run, but to stay and create a better world together. Even if the work is messy.

APPLICATION

Wesley aspired to what we call "practical divinity." This meant that every aspect of faith needed to have a tangible impact on his daily living. In that same spirit, here is our invitation to you...

Exercise:

1. The discussion prompt was to share a little bit about your faith story with the group. At this time we want to invite you to write out your faith story and consider how God might have been at work throughout your life to bring you to this moment. Did you know that all candidates for ministry in the UMC are required to write out their faith story and share them with their local church leadership? Perhaps you could ask your pastor to share their story with you.

BONUS CONTENT: DATES

Feel free to search these dates and read more about their importance in our history

1534 - Act of Supremacy

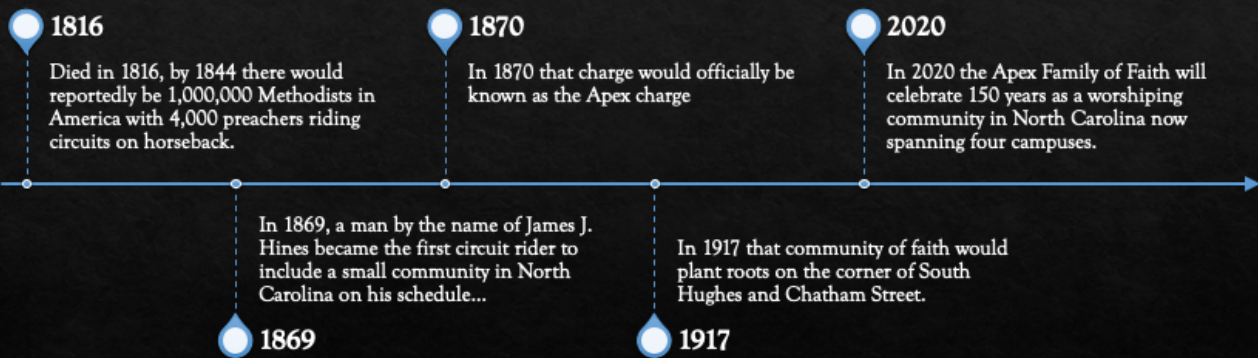
1536-1571 - 39 Articles of Religion are formed

1736 - Wesley's Missionary Journey to Georgia

1784 - Christmas Conference at Lovely Lane Chapel. Baltimore Maryland

1968 - United Methodist Church is Formed

Asbury's Death - Then to Now



OUR HISTORY

The story that began with John Wesley in 18th century England can be traced all the way to our Apex UMC Family of Faith. The point being that seeking to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world can, in fact, transform the world. What started with a group of friends at Oxford University now extends to you, right now, engaging this study.

2: OUR THEOLOGICAL TASK

In a denomination as large and diverse as the United Methodist Church, the reality that not everyone will agree on everything is inevitable. Our theological task creates space for us to name what our non-negotiable tenants of faith are (doctrine), and how we might go about the work of striving to better understand a God of infinite mystery (theology). This is the "how" and "why" of what we believe.

Discussion Prompt

1. When's the last time your mind was changed on some deeply held belief? Why was that change brought about?

KEY CONCEPTS: THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINE

Theology - "serves the Church by interpreting the world's needs and challenges to the Church and by interpreting the Gospel to the world."

Doctrine - serves the Church by establishing the core of Christian teaching, having been "measured by their fidelity to the apostolic faith grounded in scripture, and evidenced in the life of the church through the centuries."

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Exercise:

1. Children are some of our greatest resources for theological questions! Try using what we learned about *how* we engage in the work of theology to answer this question I get from kids all the time: Why do we sing so much in church?

BONUS CONTENT: LINKS

To read all of our doctrinal standards you can visit:
<https://www.umc.org/en/content/foundational-documents>

To read Our Theological Task you can visit:
<https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/ourtheologicaltask>

Basic Definitions



*DOCTRINE – THE CORE
OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING*



*THEOLOGY – THE STUDY
OF THE NATURE OF GOD*

Helpful Image



3: GRACE-SALVATION-SANCTIFICATION

"In God's self-revelation, we see the splendor of our true humanity. Even our sin, with its destructive consequences for all creation, does not alter God's intention for us—holiness and happiness of heart. Nor does it diminish our accountability for the way we live. Despite our brokenness we remain creatures brought into being by a just and merciful God. The restoration of God's image in our lives requires divine grace to renew our fallen nature."

~UMC Book of Discipline

Discussion Prompts

1. Define the word "grace" and share a little bit about what it means to you
2. How would you say you have experienced grace throughout your life?

KEY CONCEPT: GRACE

°**Grace** – the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence, through the ever-present Holy Spirit. 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.”

APPLICATION

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Exercise:

1. Look up how at least one other Christian denomination defines "grace" and consider how it differs from our interpretation. Do any definitions stand out or surprise you?

BONUS CONTENT: WESLEY SERMON ON GRACE

Want to know more from John Wesley himself? Use this link to read one of his most beloved sermons on grace and salvation:

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-128-free-grace/>

4: THE BIBLE

“I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. For this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri [a man of one book]”.

Preface to Wesley’s Sermons Volume 1

Discussion Prompts

1. If someone on the street asked you "what is the Bible?" how would you respond?
2. What has shaped your understanding of the Bible throughout your life?

KEY CONCEPTS: INERRANT VS INFALLIBLE

Inerrancy - Scripture is without error or fault in all its teachings

Infallibility - What the Bible says regarding matters of faith and Christian practice is wholly useful and true

These concepts are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. Methodists believe scripture to be infallible, but not inerrant.

APPLICATION

Wesley aspired to what we call "practical divinity." This meant that every aspect of faith needed to have a tangible impact on his daily living. In that same spirit, here is our invitation to you...

Invitation:

1. The way we interpret scripture matters. The Bible has been used both to help and harm people throughout history. My invitation to you, if you haven't done so already, is to take Pastor Kyle's "How to Read the Bible" course, also available on demand through all of our church family platforms.

BONUS CONTENT: QUAD PRACTICE

We talked about the quadrilateral in our session. Use that same system to develop a scriptural interpretation for two other major conversations in the life of the Methodist Church:

Slavery: Ephesians 6:5-9

Human Sexuality: Romans 1:24-27

Use the next page as a guide

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

- ◇ Scripture
- ◇ Tradition
- ◇ Reason
- ◇ Experience



Other Subjects

◇ Slavery

- ◇ Scripture: Ephesians 6:5-9; Philemon
- ◇ Tradition: Slavery across the world
- ◇ Experience: Has your experience with the concept of slavery impacted how you view it scripturally?
- ◇ Reason: What does our logic tell us about slavery and the ability for people to own other people?

Other Subjects

◇ Human Sexuality

- ◇ Scripture: Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:24-27
- ◇ Tradition: How has the church approached this subject?
- ◇ Experience: What has been your experience in relationship?
- ◇ Reason: What does our logic tell us?

5: THE MEANS OF GRACE

“I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. For this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri [a man of one book]”.

Preface to Wesley’s Sermons Volume 1

Discussion Prompts

1. After learning more about works of piety and works of mercy, is there one you find more natural to incorporate in your own life?
2. How might better understanding these concepts help you grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

KEY CONCEPTS: THE MEANS OF GRACE

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Invitation:

1. In this session, I shared about why I am methodist. This is important, because understanding why a place feels like home helps us as we strive to participate more within it. If someone came up to you and asked "why do you go to the methodist church?" how would you answer the question? Has this course helped in crafting that response? Try to write your response in the box below. Right now, it's just for you, but it may come in handy someday!

WHY I'M METHODIST:

WHO ELSE CAN YOU LEARN FROM?

1. 2016 UMC Book of Discipline
2. Wesley and The People Called Methodist by Richard P. Heitzenrater
3. Responsible Grace by Randy Maddox
4. John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology edited by Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater
5. UMC.org