

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Methodism for Smarties

Have you ever wondered what it means to be a Methodist? What do we believe about salvation or the Bible? Why do we baptize infants? Or what does it mean to be a part of a global United Methodist Church? Join us this November as we dig in to scripture, our Wesleyan theology, and United Methodist polity to answer some of the most frequently asked questions about our church!

Message description:

United Methodists are all about grace! The unmerited, underserved, gift of God's love and action to us and for us in the world. The three types of grace that comprise the complete journey of salvation are prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. Salvation is a process of becoming more Christlike that Paul encourages us to work out with fear and trembling, confessing, repenting, receiving grace, and growing in love. Thankfully, there are many ways or channels or means to experience God's grace!

Key Scriptures

Philippians 2:1-16

For Further Study:

On our Evangelical United Brethren roots: <https://www.umcsc.org/home/wp-content/uploads/A-Brief-History-Of-The-Evangelical-United-Brethren-Church.pdf>

A Wesleyan understanding of grace: <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/a-wesleyan-understanding-of-grace>

A video recap on the Wesleyan of Salvation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTLXocrvSE8>

Wesley sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation"- <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-43-the-scripture-way-of-salvation/>

Wesley sermon, "Christian Perfection"- <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-40-christian-perfection/>

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. What are the three types of grace presented in the teaching?
2. Who has been an agent of prevenient grace for you, revealing God's love for you before you were even aware of your need for grace?
3. Do you remember the first time you experienced justifying grace? Do you remember that moment you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Share about the experience.
4. How can the journey of salvation be compared to living in a house? Where are you right now in relation to the house?
5. How are you growing in grace and holiness right now? [sanctifying grace- hint: house group is one way we grow in grace and love!]

Going Deeper:

Read James 2:14-26

- What do you think the author means by faith and works in this passage? What do you think it means that "faith without works is dead"?
- Vv 23-24 refer to Abraham who was "reckoned righteous" or justified (made right before God) because of his faith. This is the foundation of the Protestant belief that we are justified by faith alone and not "works righteousness" or the idea that there are many things we must do in order to be right in God's eyes. This can be confused in v 24, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." However, it seems that the work referred to here is the action of belief or faith, which made Abraham righteous. The main concern of the author is a dead faith that doesn't indicate works of love toward the neighbor (vv14-17). Also hear, how can we say we love God yet hate our neighbor? Our faith must look like something in the world, it must impact how we live and engage with others- that's what the author is going for here.
 - o How does "works" in this sense relate to our Wesleyan understanding of the means of grace?
 - o If faith in Jesus Christ and receiving his grace and forgiveness is the "doorway" of salvation, how do we understand that our faith grows once we have entered the "house"?
 - o How can we discern if our faith is alive or dead? What are the indicators of a healthy faith? [consider the fruit of the Spirit or Romans 12:9-21]
- How can we be sure our faith grows in love of God and neighbor without slipping into works righteousness, the idea that there are things we must do to earn God's grace and salvation? It feels like a fine line; how can we grow through the means of piety and means of mercy [service] and remain humble in our need for God's grace first?

Challenge:

Consider reading one of the resources above, or a sermon of John Wesley, and discussing it!

- What did you learn?
- What surprised you?
- What resonated with you or encouraged you?
- What confused you?
- What do you still have questions about?