



# ADULT MEMBERSHIP CLASS

Membership in the United Methodist Church

A study of foundation beliefs of Christianity launching a lifetime journey of discipleship

By Chip Bennett

## Introduction

The following project is intended to be used for a new membership class. It is designed to be flexible to work for various audiences and contexts. Typically the idea of catechesis brings to mind long list of questions and responses. Success in this setting is simply measured in the memorization of the proper answer. These lesson plans are designed to do more than simply communicate information. It is an attempt to be engaging knowing that people learn not only in the form of lectures and readings but also in actions and thoughtful reflection.

Inspiration is drawn from James Smith's work *Desiring the Kingdom* where he makes a strong connection between our actions and our beliefs. We often think our beliefs inform our actions when in fact it is often the opposite. Our actions often shape our beliefs. Much of the church's catechesis has centered on ensuring proper beliefs that lead to proper actions. As such there is a heavy emphasis on sitting and learning in lecture format. Taking Smith's lead I have tried to incorporate both knowledge and action. Pedagogically people learn differently. Each lesson is composed of a song, a lesson, a small group discussion, readings, reflections, and actions. Some people learn through music, others learn by verbally processing, still others learn by doing. I have tried to incorporate all these.

The general outline of God, humanity, salvation, church, life is adapted from a suggested outline in Packer and Parrett's *Grounded in the Gospel*. In chapter 9 of their book they suggest three different outlines for organizing catechesis classes. I took their outline and adapted to fit my current setting in the United Methodist Church. Many of the points I include are taken directly from the United Methodist Book of Discipline or Wesley's sermons. I have indicated where I have used this material.

While my lessons are not designed to be as long as Augustine describes his to be I did take a few pointers from him. I have included songs, one contemporary and one traditional, as a way to grab the audience's attention and use the culture around me to help illustrate my point.

My prayer for this class is that it would be a jumping off point for membership into the church. More importantly my desire is this class would be an important event in the life long process of discipleship.

## How to use this

Each lesson is comprised of a song, poem, or short story related to the topic. The song titles in this document are linked to YouTube videos of the songs. There is an outline for instruction. The outline also comes with a student outline that can be used or not used depending on the audience. There is time in each session for small group questions. Small groups should be comprised of 3-5 candidates and their mentors (if you are using mentors). For adults you should nominate one person to facilitate the small group time using the questions provided for each lesson. Along with the classroom portion there are also weekly Bible readings and space to respond to them there. Knowing that catechesis is as much about what we do as what we know there are weekly challenges and activities. These are not given as requirements but will enhance the overall catechesis project.

### Proposed Schedule - 45 minutes

Opening Prayer	1 minute
Song (either played or sung together)	4 minutes
Dialogue about last week's challenge	5 minutes
Lesson	20 minutes
Small Group Questions	10 minutes
Wrap up	5 minutes

## To the Student

Over the next five weeks you will get a crash course in the foundational beliefs of Christianity. By no means can we ever hope to cover the entire scope of the Bible or Christian beliefs, but we can get a very good understanding on what they mean through this. This will not be an experience that you can simply show up on the appointed day and hope to get everything out of it. This will require your participation. There are songs that you may or may not be familiar with. There are lessons that may challenge what you believe about God. There are small group times with questions that might make you uncomfortable. There are readings and reflections that will require your time. Finally there are challenges that will require you to do something. I encourage you to stick with it! This is only the first step, but it is an important step!

## God

### [How Great is our God – Chris Tomblin](#)

The splendor of a king  
Clothed in majesty  
Let all the earth rejoice  
All the earth rejoice

He wraps Himself in light,  
And darkness tries to hide  
And trembles at His voice  
Trembles at His voice

How great is our God – sing with me  
How great is our God – and all will see  
How great, how great is our God

Age to age He stands  
And time is in His hands  
Beginning and the end  
Beginning and the end

The Godhead Three in One  
Father, Spirit and Son  
Lion and the Lamb  
Lion and the Lamb

Name above all names  
Worthy of all praise  
My heart will sing  
How great is our God

### [Come, Thou Almighty King – Charles Wesley](#)

Come, thou almighty King,  
help us thy name to sing,  
help us to praise!  
Father all glorious,  
o'er all victorious,  
come and reign over us, Ancient of Days!

Come, thou incarnate Word,  
gird on thy mighty sword,  
our prayer attend!  
Come, and thy people bless,  
and give thy word success,  
Spirit of holiness, on us descend!

Come, holy Comforter,  
thy sacred witness bear  
in this glad hour.  
Thou who almighty art,  
now rule in every heart,  
and ne'er from us depart, Spirit of  
power!

To thee, great One in Three,  
eternal praises be,  
hence, evermore.  
Thy sovereign majesty  
may we in glory see,  
and to eternity love and adore!

## God - Leader Outline (week 1)

In the first week we are going to discuss God. We'll attempt to answer questions like: Who is God? How can we know God? What is the nature of God? What is the Trinity? What has God done? These are big questions and the answers are important. They serve as the foundation for belief and our foundation for the rest of our time together. You might find your beliefs about God challenged, affirmed, or expanded. Feel free to take notes and ask questions. Remember there is a small group time in order to verbally process some of the things we cover in this session.

We can know God.

- We come to know God through the Bible.
- The Bible can be trusted.
- The author's of the Bible were illumined by the Holy Spirit.
- The Bible contains everything we need for salvation<sup>1</sup>.

God is three in one.

- We know this as the Trinity.
- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
  - There is only one God.
  - God is three persons, not three different Gods.
- There are different descriptions of the Trinity that try to simplify the concept.
  - H2O: water, ice, and steam. These are all one thing but different modes.
  - Egg: shell, white, yoke. One thing with but with different parts.
  - Clover: three different leaves. One thing with three equal parts.
- At some point though all our illustrations break down because they oversimplify the Trinity.
  - It is best to leave it at this: The Trinity is "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power<sup>2</sup>.

God creates.

- Primary function of God the Father.
- Before there was anything, there was God.
- God created out of nothing.
- God created everything we see and everything we do not see.
- God transcends all of creation.
- God is all present.
- God is all knowing.

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<sup>1</sup> United Methodist Book of Discipline ¶ 104

<sup>2</sup> United Methodist Book of Discipline ¶ 104

- God is all powerful.

God redeems.

- Primary function of God the Son
- Jesus is God in the flesh.
- Jesus is both fully human and fully divine.
- Jesus redeems creation thru his life, death, and resurrection.
- Jesus redeems us from our sin.

God sustains.

- Primary function of God the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is a person not a magical power or force.
- Holy Spirit is important in the salvation process.
- Holy Spirit enables us to fully love God.
- Holy Spirit gives us the ability to resist sin.
- Holy Spirit enables us to love others.

*Break for small group discussions*

Recite the Nicene Creed (attached)

The Nicene Creed has been used for centuries from Christians from every tradition. It represents the claims about God and faith that Christians everywhere hold to be true. Let's recite it together now.



## Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true  
God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from  
heaven:

was incarnate of the Holy Spirit by the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he  
suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into  
heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to  
judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.

Who has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy universal and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Candidate Outline  
God – Week 1

We can \_\_\_\_\_ God.

God is \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.

God \_\_\_\_\_.

God \_\_\_\_\_.

God \_\_\_\_\_.

## God –Week 1 - Small Group Questions

What did you think about God before you came today?

- Has that changed? Why or why not?

United Methodists believe the Bible is the Word of God. What does that mean to you?

Is the Trinity easy or difficult for you to understand?

How would you describe the Trinity to someone?

Why is the Trinity so important?

In today's scientific world is it difficult to believe God created the world?

- Why or why not?

What does that statement "God restores humanity" mean to you?

In what ways has Jesus restored you?

In what ways does the Holy Spirit sustain you?

## God – Week 1 scripture readings and reflections

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3: How does this reading relate to this week's topics?

Read Psalm 147: Reflect on themes of creation and redemption found in this Psalm.

Read Luke 17:11-19: In what ways does Jesus restore the lepers? How have you responded to Jesus?

Week 1 Challenge: Restore dignity to someone. Strike up a conversation with someone you might typically ignore. Learn their name and some of their story. You might even invite them to church with you!

## Humanity

### Beautiful Things – Gungor

All this pain  
I wonder if I'll ever find my way  
I wonder if my life could really change at all  
All this earth  
Could all that is lost ever be found  
Could a garden come up from this ground at all

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us

All around  
Hope is springing up from this old ground  
Out of chaos life is being found in You

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us

You make me new, You are making me new  
You make me new, You are making me new

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us

### Grace Greater than all our sin – Julia Johnston

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!  
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

*Refrain:*

Grace, grace, God's grace,  
grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
grace, grace, God's grace,  
grace that is greater than all our sin!

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,  
threaten the soul with infinite loss;  
grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,  
points to the refuge, the mighty cross.  
(Refrain)

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide.  
What can avail to wash it away?  
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,  
brighter than snow you may be today.  
(Refrain)

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,  
freely bestowed on all who believe!  
You that are longing to see his face,  
will you this moment his grace receive?  
(Refrain)

## The Challenge

Last week's challenge was to restore dignity to someone. "Strike up a conversation with someone you might typically ignore. Learn their name and some of their story. You might even invite them to church with you!" Would anyone like to share about their experience with this challenge?

## Humanity - Leader Outline (week 2)

In the second week we are going to discuss humanity. The Bible tells us humanity is God's crowning achievement of creation. But things quickly go south. This week we will answer questions like: What are God's feelings towards us? What is our standing with God? How can we be in relationship with God? It is important to note that our topic is not humanity, rather our topic is humanity's relationship to God. We will start down a path this week that we will more fully address in week 3.

We are created in the image of God.

- We are more than just another thing/being created by God.
  - we are more than just another animal
- The account in Genesis tells us God created us in God's image.
  - we are God's crowning achievement
  - we are created on the last day, the crescendo of God's masterpiece
- God created us in order to have a relationship with us
  - we are designed to be in relationship with God
  - we are designed to be in relationship with each other
  - the garden of Eden represents a time when those relationships were healthy

We have inherited Adam's sin.

- God gave out of God's abundance.
- Adam and Eve placed their desires over God's desires for them.
  - they chose to disobey God
  - they ate the forbidden fruit
- This is the foundation of the doctrine of 'original sin.'
- In the New Testament Paul affirms this too.
  - we are all heirs of Adam
  - no one is without sin
- We are all together sinful<sup>3</sup>.
  - John Wesley dedicates one of his standard sermons to the topic
  - our sin makes us unable to turn to God on our own

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<sup>3</sup> United Methodist Book of Discipline ¶ 104

- our sin totally estranges us from God

We are saved by faith in Jesus.

- The first sermon of Wesley's standard sermons is titled "Salvation by Faith"
- We cannot save ourselves from sin.
  - we can do nothing to earn our salvation
- God alone saves us.
  - saving faith is trust in Jesus
- Faith saves us from<sup>4</sup>:
  - Sin
  - Guilt of past sins
  - Fear of punishment
  - Consequences of sin

*Break for small group discussions*

When Jesus' disciples asked Jesus how they should pray he gave them what we now call "The Lord's Prayer." As we wrap up this week's session we're going to recite the Lord's Prayer together. Pay special attention now to the section "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" and think about how that relates to our discussion of humanity's relationship with God.

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> John Wesley "Salvation by Faith"

Candidate Outline

## Humanity – Week 2

We are created in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

We have \_\_\_\_\_ Adam's sin.

We are saved by \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus.



## Humanity –Week 2 - Small Group Questions

What does being created in the image of God mean to you?

In what ways does being created in the image of God ring true to you? In what ways does it ring false to you?

Do you consider yourself to be a generally good person? How does this line up with your understanding of original sin?

Do you think people are able to turn to God in their sinfulness or are we totally estranged from God?

Does depending on God for your salvation ease your mind or make you nervous?

- Why do you think that is?

How have you witnessed or experienced the consequences of sin in your life?

## Humanity – Week 2 scripture readings and reflections

Read Genesis 2:4-3:24: How does this passage relate to this week's topic?

Read Isaiah 64: What is your reaction to Isaiah saying our righteousness is like filthy clothes?

Read Romans 3: In verse 23 Paul says everyone has sinned, does that strike you as true?

Week 2 Challenge: Pray the Lord's Prayer every night this week and reflect on how it relates to our discussion of humanity. Are there connections between the garden of Eden and the Kingdom of God, original sin and forgiveness, or being saved by faith and God providing daily bread for us?

## Salvation

### What a Savior – Laura Story

Atoning sacrifice  
Keeper of this life  
Hallelujah You are Savior  
Beginning and the end  
Forgiver of my sin  
By Your mercy You have saved us

Jesus You are stronger  
More than any other  
Hallelujah what a Savior  
Jesus You are higher  
My soul's deepest desire  
Hallelujah You are Savior

You are the shepherd king  
You lead us by still waters  
Hallelujah You are Savior

You are my only hope  
Your kindness is my friend  
In Your presence You restore us

You are the way, the truth and the life  
You are my joy and my salvation  
Stood in my place, taking my shame  
Upon your shoulders

Hallelujah  
You are Savior  
You are Savior

### And Can It Be – Charles Wesley

And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies:  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love divine.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;  
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above  
So free, so infinite His grace—  
Emptied Himself of all but love,  
And bled for Adam's helpless race:  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
For O my God, it found out me!  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
For O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.  
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

## The Challenge

Last week's challenge was to "pray the Lord's Prayer every night this week and reflect on how it relates to our discussion of humanity. Are there connections between the garden of Eden and the Kingdom of God, original sin and forgiveness, or being saved by faith and God providing daily bread for us?" Would anyone like to share about their experience with this challenge?

## Salvation - Leader Outline (week 3)

So far we have talked about God and how we relate to God. Today we are going to talk about salvation. Often the idea of salvation is one dimensional. This week we will answer questions like: What is the process of salvation? Who does God extend grace too? How are we put in a right relationship with God? Is salvation a onetime event or a continual process? When we talk about salvation you will notice the entire conversation revolves around God's grace. Salvation is only possible because God extends grace to us.

First there is prevenient grace.

- A big word that means the grace that comes before.
- This grace is offered to everyone.
  - God freely extends grace universally.
  - God's grace is at work in our lives even when we are unaware of it.
- It makes us aware of our sinfulness.
  - Gives us the ability to cry out to God for help.
  - Prevenient grace allows us to cooperate with God.

Second comes justifying grace.

- Best described as coming into a right relationship with God
  - The broken relationship of Adam is repaired by God's justifying grace.
- We are no longer sinners before God.
  - Christ's righteousness/goodness becomes ours.
- Everyone's experience of receiving justifying grace is different.
  - For some there is a dramatic conversion experience
  - For others it is a gradual process as they come to know and experience God's grace.
  - Some have grown up in the church and have always trusted in Jesus for their salvation.

Lastly there is sanctifying grace.

- Salvation does not stop with justification.
  - It is more than just an experience at the altar
  - Salvation is both something that *has* happened and something that *is* happening.
- Sanctification is a continual process.

- The Holy Spirit is always shaping us into who we are meant to be.
  - Sanctification is best described as working the Holy Spirit to become fully human.
- The purpose of sanctifying grace is that the believer might be enabled to:
  - love God
  - resist evil
- The process of becoming sanctified means we are continually growing in grace.
  - It is not a destination we arrive at.
  - It is growing in Christian maturity.
  - It is a lifelong process.

*Break for small group discussions*

Today we have spent time discussing salvation and the prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace God offers to us. Let's revisit a song we sang at the beginning of class. Charles Wesley's hymn "And Can It Be" describes much of what we have been talking about here. We'll pause for a few minutes to read through and meditate on these words and then we will close today's session by singing (or playing) the song again.

*Refer to the lyrics earlier in the lesson*

Candidate Outline  
Salvation – Week 3

First there is \_\_\_\_\_ grace.

Second comes \_\_\_\_\_ grace.

Lastly there is \_\_\_\_\_ grace.

## Salvation –Week 3 - Small Group Questions

How does the idea that God extends grace to everyone sit with you?

- Does this idea affirm or conflict with your idea of God's grace?

Has there been a time in your life when you have become aware of your own sinfulness?

- What events led up to this understanding?
- How did you become aware of your sinfulness?

Why do we need our relationship with God repaired?

How does it make you feel that Jesus righteousness becomes ours?

Have you experienced God's justifying grace where the relationship between you and God has been mended?

- What was that experience like for you?

How has your faith matured from the point you were saved?

## Salvation – Week 3 scripture readings and reflections

Read John 1:1-18: How does verse 9 relate to what our discussion about prevenient grace?

Read Romans 3: What does Paul have to say about justifying faith in verses 21-26?

Read Galatians 3: What do verses 10-14 say about justifying grace?

Read Philippians 2: What do verses 12-13 tell us about sanctifying grace?

Week 3 Challenge: This week show grace to someone. Not because they deserve it, but because God showed grace to you! This might mean donating money or time. Maybe it means forgiving someone who has wronged you.



## Church

### Build Your Kingdom Here – Rend Collective

Come set Your rule and reign  
in our hearts again.  
Increase in us we pray.  
Unveil why we're made.  
Come set our hearts ablaze with hope  
like wildfire in our very souls.  
Holy Spirit, come invade us now.  
We are Your church.  
We need Your power in us.

We seek Your kingdom first.  
We hunger and we thirst.  
Refuse to waste our lives  
for You're our joy and prize.  
To see the captive hearts released.  
The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace.  
We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause.

We are Your church.  
We pray revive this earth.

Build Your kingdom here.  
Let the darkness fear.  
Show Your mighty hand.  
Heal our streets and land.  
Set Your church on fire.  
Win this nation back.  
Change the atmosphere.  
Build Your kingdom here.  
We pray.

Unleash Your kingdom's power  
reaching the near and far.  
No force of Hell can stop  
Your beauty changing hearts.  
You made us for much more than this!  
Awake the kingdom seed in us!  
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ.

We are Your church.  
We are the hope on earth.

### The Church's One Foundation – Samuel Stone

The church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
she is his new creation  
by water and the Word.  
From heaven he came and sought her  
to be his holy bride;  
with his own blood he bought her,  
and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation,  
yet one o'er all the earth;  
her charter of salvation,  
one Lord, one faith, one birth;  
one holy name she blesses,  
partakes one holy food,  
and to one hope she presses,  
with every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder  
we see her sore oppressed,  
by schisms rent asunder,  
by heresies distressed,  
yet saints their watch are keeping;  
their cry goes up, "How long?"  
And soon the night of weeping  
shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation,  
and tumult of her war,  
she waits the consummation  
of peace forevermore;  
till, with the vision glorious,  
her longing eyes are blest,  
and the great church victorious  
shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union  
with God the Three in One,  
and mystic sweet communion  
with those whose rest is won.  
O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we  
like them, the meek and lowly,  
on high may dwell with thee.

## The Challenge

Last week's challenge was to "show grace to someone. Not because they deserve it, but because God showed grace to you! This might mean donating money or time. Maybe it means forgiving someone who has wronged you." Would anyone like to share about their experience with this challenge?

## Church - Leader Outline (week 4)

Over the past few weeks we have talked about God, humanity, and salvation. We now turn our attention to the church. We will address two big questions: what is the church, and what is the mission of the church? As we dive deeper into those topics we will talk about the sacraments, the body of Christ, Christian worship, and other related topics. As we continue down this path keep an open mind and an open ear to what God is teaching us about the church.

The Church is:

- The family of God.
  - Believers are adopted into God's family.
  - We are brought into the family of God by Jesus' work on the cross.
  - God's family is diverse.
    - God does not discriminate.
    - Adoption is not based on skin color or country of origin.
- The body of Christ.
  - There are many parts of the body.
  - Each person is called to play their part based on the gifts given them.
    - Some people are teachers.
    - Some people work behind the scenes.
    - Some people are called to encourage others.
  - There are many ways to participate
    - Everyone is called to participate.
    - Ministry is not reserved for a select few.
  - There is unity in the body.
    - All the parts work together.
    - Come together for the mission of making disciples.
- A community of believers.
  - The fellowship among believers is fostered by the Holy Spirit.
  - This fellowship produces spiritual gifts that enrich the common good of the community.

The mission of the Church is<sup>5</sup>:

- The maintenance of worship.

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<sup>5</sup> United Methodist Book of Discipline ¶ 201

- One of the primary functions of the church is to lead Christians in the worship of God.
  - Worship is connected to discipleship and growth in grace.
  - When we gather to worship we encounter God.
  - This encounter draws us closer to God.
- Our worship impacts our beliefs.
  - When we gather to worship we remember what God has done for us.
  - We rehearse the biblical narrative.
- A foundation of our worship is holy actions.
  - The sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are integral to worship.
  - In Baptism we are incorporated into the body of Christ.
  - In the Eucharist we are sustained for our journey of faith.
- The building up of believers.
  - One of the most important tasks of the church is to faithfully transfer from one generation to another the faith which we have received.
  - This is accomplished in:
    - worship
    - catechesis (Christian education)
  - In the community of the local church we support each other along our faith journey.
- The redemption of the world.
  - The church is actively involved in the redemption of the world.
  - The people of God are on a mission to expand God's Kingdom through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Break for small group discussions

The Apostle's Creed has unified the church for centuries. As we close today's session let's recited it together.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the  
dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\*\* church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Candidate Outline  
Church – Week 4

The Church is:

- The \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ of believers.

The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Church is:

- The \_\_\_\_\_ of worship.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ up of believers.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of the world.

## Church –Week 4 - Small Group Questions

Does the church feel like the family of God to you?

- Why or why not?

What role do you think you are called to play in the body of Christ?

How has the community of believers (the church) helped strengthen you?

Why do you think worship is so important to the church?

In what ways can the church build up believers?

How have you seen the church involved in the redemption of the world?

## Church – Week 4 scripture readings and reflections

Read 1 Corinthians 12: In what ways does this relate to our discussion about the church?

Read Acts 8:26-40 and Acts 16:25-34: What do these scriptures tell you about baptism?

Read Matthew 26:26-30 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: What do these passages tell you about the Lord's Supper?

Week 4 Challenge: Consider what your part of the body of Christ might be and try it out this week. Ask about how you might volunteer in a ministry that interests you.

## Life

### [Take My Life and Let it Be – Chris Tomblin \(original Frances Havergal\)](#)

Take my life and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
Take my moments and my days,  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.  
Take my hands and let them move  
at the impulse of Thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing  
always, only for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be  
filled with messages from Thee.  
Take my silver and my gold  
not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect and use  
every power as You choose.

::Chorus::

Here am I, all of me.  
Take my life, it's all for Thee.

Take my will and make it Thine  
it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart it is Thine own  
it shall be Thy royal throne.  
Take my love, my Lord I pour  
at Your feet its treasure store  
Take myself and I will be  
ever, only, all for Thee.  
Take myself and I will be  
ever, only, all for Thee.

Here am I, all of me.  
Take my life, it's all for Thee.

### [I Surrender All – Judson Van DeVenter](#)

All to Jesus I surrender;  
all to him I freely give;  
I will ever love and trust him,  
in his presence daily live.

*Refrain:*

I surrender all, I surrender all,  
all to thee, my blessed Savior,  
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender;  
humbly at his feet I bow,  
worldly pleasures all forsaken;  
take me, Jesus, take me now.  
(Refrain)

All to Jesus I surrender;  
make me, Savior, wholly thine;  
fill me with thy love and power;  
truly know that thou art mine.  
(Refrain)

All to Jesus I surrender;  
Lord, I give myself to thee;  
fill me with thy love and power;  
let thy blessing fall on me.  
(Refrain)

All to Jesus I surrender;  
now I feel the sacred flame.  
O the joy of full salvation!  
Glory, glory, to his name!  
(Refrain)

The Challenge: Last week's challenge was to "consider what your part of the body of Christ might be and try it out this week. Ask about how you might volunteer in a ministry that interests you." Would anyone like to share about their experience with this challenge?

## Life - Leader Outline (week 5)

This is our final week. We have covered topics like God, humanity, salvation, and the church. This week we are looking at what it means to live life as a Christian. What is it we are supposed to do and what is it we are supposed to avoid. Christianity is not simply about knowing about God, but it's also about doing what God commands us to do.

Wesley's General Rules: The early Methodists only had one rule for those who wanted to become members, "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sin." The evidence of the desire for salvation was shown by doing no harm, by doing good, and by staying in love with God by practicing spiritual disciplines<sup>6</sup>.

### Do no harm

- This means avoiding evil of every kind
  - Insure your actions do not hurt or harm God's creation or God's children
- There is an expectation that we are good stewards with what God has given us
  - Don't spend money foolishly
  - Avoid materialism and consumerism
- Do not gossip about people behind their back
  - Do not get caught up in petty disagreements

### Do Good

- Do good to all people as much as possible
  - This means helping people on the margins of society.
  - It means doing acts of mercy.
    - feeding the poor
    - clothing the naked
    - visiting the prisoner
- Do good by living as a lifelong Christian
  - in order that others will see your example.
  - by not giving people a reason to speak bad about your faith

### Stay in love with God

- This is done primarily by maintain spiritual disciplines like:
  - Worshipping with a community of believers regularly
  - Taking communion

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<sup>6</sup> United Methodist Book of Discipline ¶ 103



- Studying the Bible
  - personally and corporately
- Prayer
- Fasting

Finally the goal of the Christian life is to be filled with the love of God.

- Wesley said a Methodist is one who has had the love of God shed abroad in his heart.
- The greater we love God the greater our capacity to love others grows.

Break for small group discussions

The 10 commandments have been foundational in the life and actions of God's people for a very long time. Let's read through them one by one before we leave here today.

**Exodus 19**

<sup>2</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup>you shall have no other gods before<sup>[a]</sup> me.

<sup>4</sup>You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, <sup>6</sup>but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation<sup>[b]</sup> of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work. <sup>10</sup>But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

<sup>12</sup>Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup>You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Candidate Outline  
Life – Week 5

Wesley's General Rules: The early Methodists only had one rule for those who wanted to members, "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sin." The evidence of the desire for salvation was shown by doing no harm, by doing good, and by staying in love with God by practicing spiritual disciplines.

Do no \_\_\_\_\_

Do \_\_\_\_\_

Stay in \_\_\_\_\_ with God

The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Christian life is to be \_\_\_\_\_  
with the love of God.

## Life –Week 5 - Small Group Questions

What do you think of Wesley's General Rules? Are they helpful to you?

In what ways do the general rules provide clarity?

In what ways are the general rules confusing?

What are some ways we can do harm?

- Why is it important that we do no harm?

What are some creative ways you can do good in your community, home, or work?

Why is it important to stay in love with God?

What are some things you currently do to stay in love with God?

What are some things you can begin doing to stay in love with God?

How does being filled with the love of God help you live a Christian life?

## Life – Week 5 scripture readings and reflections

Read Matthew 25:31-46: How does this verse relate to the first two general rules, do no harm and do good?

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Luke 10:25-37: Write your reflections about the connection of these passages and the third general rule to stay in love with God.

Week 5 Challenge: Find ways this week to do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. This might mean making a lifestyle change, helping someone in need, or adopting a new spiritual practice.

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