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JOHN WESLEY'S FORMATIVE READING OF SCRIPTURE AS  
AN APPLICABLE MODEL FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

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A Thesis  
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by  
Lorinda Lewis Roberts

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

JOHN WESLEY'S FORMATIVE READING OF SCRIPTURE AS  
AN APPLICABLE MODEL FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

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To Landon, Dylan, and Kaden.

And to all those helping families grow in Christ

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## PREFACE

I am thankful for my husband, Landon, who has been my greatest support and strength throughout this process. I love that we partner in ministry together wherever the Lord leads. I am extremely grateful to see our sons, Dylan and Kaden, growing in Christ daily. Each stage of life has been exciting, and I treasure the memories we have all made together.

I am thankful for the godly heritage passed down to me from my parents, Charlton and Paulette Lewis. They taught by example to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. They have been a source of encouragement throughout my entire life, especially during this season.

I am a life-long learner who enjoys adventure. Going back to school has been one of my greatest adventures. My professors, peers, and advisor have enhanced my educational experience greatly. Finally, I offer my deepest and sincere thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Joe Harrod, for his faithful guidance on this journey, helping me to achieve life-long goals and pushing me to go deeper.

Lorinda Roberts

Columbia, Maryland

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to the Bible, Christian parents are given the challenging yet rewarding task of teaching their children scriptural truths.<sup>1</sup> Christian parents must not rely entirely on the church to undertake their children’s biblical training. Parents living within the biblical covenant must understand their sacred mandate and thus lead their children as the primary disciple-makers in the home. Christian parents desire to witness their children in a right relationship with God and continually growing in their faith. However, many Christian parents are ill-equipped to lead their children spiritually.<sup>2</sup> In the absence of an effective model, parents are likely to become frustrated or quit the process altogether.

John Wesley (1703–1791), minister of the eighteenth century, offered practical teachings for many spiritual disciplines. In particular, Wesley adhered to a model that some specialists<sup>3</sup> refer to as the formative reading of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> In this method, Wesley

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<sup>1</sup>Prov 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Deut 6:6-7 says, “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup>Karen-Marie Yust, *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World’s Religious Traditions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 321.

<sup>3</sup>Specialists such as M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., Susan A. Muto, and Eugene Peterson have written much on this subject. Often, the formative reading of Scripture is referred to as spiritual reading or meditative reading. See M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., “Information versus Formation,” in *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1985), 47-60; Susan Muto, *Approaching the Sacred: An Introduction to Spiritual Reading* (Denville, NJ: Dimension, 1973); Muto, *A Practical Guide to Spiritual Reading* (Denville, NJ: Dimension, 1976); Muto, *The Formative Power of Sacred Works* (Denville, NJ: Dimension, 1979); and Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>4</sup>Wesley’s formative reading of Scripture can be found in the preface of his commentary on the Old Testament in John Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament: Genesis to Ruth* (Bristol, England: William



outlines a few simple steps that, when practiced, provide an opportunity to transform the lives of those who participate. Parents seeking to train their children biblically can use Wesley's methods for the formative reading of Scripture. Using this model under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, there is an opportunity for children and parents alike to witness transformation in their spiritual lives.

### **Familiarity with the Literature**

Wesley was a prolific writer. *The Works of John Wesley*, compiled through Abingdon Press, contains more than twenty volumes of Wesley's sermons, journals, and letters.<sup>5</sup> Wesley's sermons that specifically deal with the importance of Scripture in the life of a believer, such as "The Scripture Way of Salvation" and "Scriptural Christianity," were of interest for this thesis. In addition, I have used the later volumes to include portions of his journal and diaries, especially those writings that contain information dealing with his view of the Word. Using various portions of Wesley's writings, one finds helpful information related to his personal life, practices, and family relationships. Further, Wesley offers readers specific instructions on how to read the Word in his preface to the *Old Testament Notes*.<sup>6</sup> As one studies Wesley's guide for reading the Bible, one may see a plan arise worth noting and sharing with others, especially those ministering to families and children.

For many years, analysts have been interested in Wesley's writings. Authors such as John Telford, Richard Heitzenrater, and Anthony Headley look extensively at Wesley's writings, especially as it relates to his childhood and family experiences.<sup>7</sup>

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Pine, 1765), 8-9; and John Wesley, "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 88-90.

<sup>5</sup>John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 32 vols., ed. Frank Baker et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984).

<sup>6</sup>Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8-9.

<sup>7</sup>John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1896); Richard P.

Some critics contemplate specifically the relationship found between John and his mother, Susanna (1669–1742). Many have discovered the close bond Susanna shared with her children, in particular with John. Some writers focused their attention on the way she taught her children Scripture.<sup>8</sup> Learning more about this relationship is a beginning point for understanding Wesley’s concern for the Word as well as its significant influence throughout his life. Other reviewers, such as Randy Maddox and Kenneth Collins, focus their attention on Wesley’s writings centered on theology and holy living.<sup>9</sup> The findings and writings of the various researchers demonstrate links between Wesley’s early childhood experiences and Wesley’s works related to Scripture. Connecting these writings aid families in the discipleship process.

A recent book *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading the Bible as Scripture*, focuses on Wesley’s method of reading and interpreting the Bible.<sup>10</sup> The book uncovers Wesley’s method of reading the Word for spiritual formation. Though not an exact replica, his approach has been likened unto the ancient practice of *lectio divina*, as he instructs people to prayerfully and meditatively take time every day to read from the Bible, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak through the process for the purpose of spiritual change and growth.<sup>11</sup> Uncovering Wesley’s method for Scripture reading, one finds that

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Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984); Anthony Headley, *Family Crucible: The Influence of Family Dynamics in the Life and Ministry of John Wesley* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010).

<sup>8</sup>Several authors closely examine Susanna’s method of teaching her children Scripture. Her practices were intentional, precise, and methodical. These authors present findings related to this topic: Arnold A. Dallimore, *Susanna Wesley: The Mother of John and Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); Sandy Dengler, *Susanna Wesley: Servant of God* (Chicago: Moody, 1987); and Ray Comfort and Trish Ramos, *Susanna Wesley: Her Remarkable Life* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2014).

<sup>9</sup>Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994); Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007).

<sup>10</sup>Joel Green and David Watson, *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading Bible as Scripture*, ed. Joel B. Green and David F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).

<sup>11</sup>*Lectio Divina* is an ancient sacred reading practice, traditionally associated as a Benedictine-Cistercian discipline used primarily in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. The method teaches to discern

he has provided a foundation and framework for family Bible reading aimed at spiritual formation. In a recent journal, authors Susan Muto and Klaus Issler contributed articles presenting the transformative aspect of meditative Scripture reading. These authors provide a framework for Scripture study centered on the Formative Reading of Scripture. Susan Muto explains the formative reading of Scripture as having a more personal-reflective approach, able to guide one's heart.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Issler challenges readers to apply Wesley's framework in order to focus one's head and heart in the Scripture reading and study process.<sup>13</sup> Another author, Philip McKinney, argues for Wesley's formative reading of Scripture as an aid in the education of children for churches and schools.<sup>14</sup> While all of these findings are unique in content, there is still continuity between them. Certain aspects of their discoveries have been brought together in this thesis to highlight the personal and reflective nature of reading the Word centered on Wesley's teachings. There is greater value when reading these articles and book collectively as each perspective of the formative reading of Scripture assists in building the family ministry model presented in this thesis.

Ultimately, the information surrounding the man, the writings, and the theology of John Wesley is plentiful. His works have made a broad impact upon movements

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the voice of God through contemplative prayer based on Scripture with the challenge of personal, spiritual change. Typically, communion with God is encouraged through four stages: *lectio*—Scripture reading; *meditatio*—meditating; *oratio*—praying; and *contemplatio*—contemplating. Additional findings on this ancient practice can be found in Thelma Hall, *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1988); Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 79-118; Mark Batterson, *Whisper: How to Hear the Voice of God* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2017), 74-75.

<sup>12</sup>Susan Muto, "The Art and Discipline of Formative Reading: Revisiting Holy Scripture with Humble Receptivity," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 1 (2012): 100-116.

<sup>13</sup>Klaus Issler, "Approaching Formative Scripture Reading with Both Head and Heart," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 1 (2012): 117-34.

<sup>14</sup>Philip McKinney, "John Wesley on the Formative Reading of Scripture and Educating Children," *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 5, no. 1 (2013): 12-24. I am appreciative of McKinney's article as it allowed me to reflect intentionally upon the formative reading of Scripture as it relates to family discipleship.

around the world. The United Methodist Church has its roots in the evangelistic meetings, ideas, hymns, works, and theology of John and his brother Charles (1707–1788).<sup>15</sup> The Holiness and Pentecostal denominations also have roots in many of John and Charles Wesley’s teachings and practices.<sup>16</sup> Wesley made a great impact on the church at large, especially related to social concerns and holy, practical living. Additionally, taking notice of his use of discipleship practices in societies, classes, and bands assists the church today in the development of small group ministries.<sup>17</sup> When making connections between Wesley’s teachings and ministries found in the church today, one sees the impact he continues to have.<sup>18</sup>

### **Wesley’s Primary Influences**

Susanna Wesley made a significant impact on her son, John. During her children’s formative years especially, Susanna was the main contributor of the biblical

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<sup>15</sup>Neil M. Alexander, ed., *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2012).

<sup>16</sup>John Wesley’s prominence on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian’s life and sanctification as an experience beyond justification were instrumental teachings in the rise of Pentecostalism. Phoebe Palmer, mother of the Holiness movement, was raised by devout Methodist parents who held family devotions twice a week. She patterned her study of Scripture after Wesley’s method of searching Scripture. Additional information regarding Pentecostal and Holiness movement beginnings can be found in Tony Richie, “Pentecostalism’s Wesleyan Roots and Fruits,” *Seedbed*, accessed October 30, 2017, <http://www.seedbed.com/pentecostalisms-wesleyan-roots-fruit/>; John A. Sims, *Our Pentecostal Heritage: Reclaiming the Power of the Holy Spirit* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1995); Henry H. Knight, ed., *From Aldersgate to Azusa Street: Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal Visions of the New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010); and Elaine A. Heath, *Naked Faith: The Mystical Theology of Phoebe Palmer* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009).

<sup>17</sup>Joe Iovino, “Disciples Making Disciples: Life-Transforming Small Groups,” Wesleyan Small Groups for Today Series, accessed October 30, 2017, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/disciples-making-disciples-life-transforming-small-groups>.

<sup>18</sup>Though Wesley’s methods date back to the eighteenth century, people continue to unravel his writings and find application for the church today. For example, Seedbed Ministry has released a resource that includes Wesley’s six-step process for Scripture reading. While interesting to look at, this booklet offers readers no instruction or explanation on how to use Wesley’s approach to Scripture study. It lacks a clear proposal for attaining the most of Wesley’s method. For further reading, see Lindsay Bodkin, ed., *Seedbed Sower’s Almanac and Seed Catalog* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2015).

truths that Wesley and his siblings received. Several authors are interested in Wesley's childhood experiences, especially as it relates to the spiritual influence of his mother. Amy Oden gives readers an appreciation for Susanna Wesley's writings in the book, *In Her Words*. This book helps one understand the biblical foundation Wesley received.<sup>19</sup> Susanna diligently taught her children to read and study the Word as part of their daily routine. She included mandatory Scripture reading as part of the daily educational regimen. Her persistence with matters of the Word yielded long-lasting habits in her children. They continued to read and practice the teachings found in the Bible. Additionally, Wesley's father made an indelible mark on John's life. He influenced John in areas such as education and moral discipline. Since the majority of John Wesley's writings came during his adulthood, it could be easy to overlook his childhood experiences and parental upbringing as an option and resource for parents today. Gaining further insight into the instruction he received may help parents who are seeking a godly example.

Surveying John Wesley's writings, one finds a connection between his formative reading of Scripture and parents guiding their children spiritually in the home.<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein, Timothy Paul Jones' *Family Ministry Field Guide* is a useful resource offering readers information related to parents serving as the primary disciple-makers.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Amy Oden, *In Her Words: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).

<sup>20</sup>John Wesley diligently trained parents to teach their children biblical truths in the home. See John Wesley, "On Family Religion," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 3:336-43; John Wesley, "On the Education of Children, Sermon 95," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:347-60. However, many credit John Wesley on the establishment of the first Sunday School on the American continent in 1737, and for his work with children in Savannah, Georgia. Thus, though he believed parents should teach their children biblical truths, he also provided an additional avenue for religious training in the church. See Elmer Towns, "John Wesley and Religious Education," *Religious Education* 65, no. 4 (July-August 1970): 327.

<sup>21</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011).

Jones explains how parents impact their children spiritually through daily interaction. He also instructs parents to take the lead role in their children's lives and train them biblically. Jones encourages parents to not rely entirely on the church to do their children's biblical training. Rather, parents should actively lead in the spiritual formation of their children. Similar books, such as *The Faithful Parent* by Martha Peace and Stuart Scott, as well as *God, Marriage, and Family* by Andreas Köstenberger, also offer readers a foundational start to family ministry.<sup>22</sup> Such books comprise practical guides with biblical truths for parents and their relationship with their children. Yet, more teaching that is practical is needed in order to quench the questions arising from parents unsure of how to proceed with their biblical mandate.

### **Void in the Literature**

The works of John Wesley are numerous and available both online and in libraries around the world. Still, there is a gap in the literature pertaining to Wesley's formative reading of Scripture. The gap exists in integrating three written perspectives on Wesley's formative reading of Scripture together. Additionally, there is a gap in declaring Wesley's model useful for family discipleship. Merging Wesley's teachings into a model for family discipleship can fill the literature gap.

When Wesley penned his six-step outline, his intent was for believers to have a viable method for spiritual formation. He purposefully kept his words plain and simple in order to reach people from various educational backgrounds. Further, Wesley worked to keep his published writings reasonably priced so that people from every socio-economic situation might afford it.<sup>23</sup> Hence, Wesley's teachings continue to be relevant

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<sup>22</sup>Martha Peace and Stuart Scott, *The Faithful Parent: A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010); Andreas J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004).

<sup>23</sup>John Wesley desired to assist people in their understanding of the Bible by simply writing in "as few and plain words as I can." Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 7-8. He hoped to assist both learned and "ignorant men" to gain a better understanding of the Word. Wesley encouraged mass readership through

for all family discipleship practices today. His writings help fill a literature gap in family ministries offering simple and affordable teachings to all.

### **Thesis**

John Wesley's formative reading of Scripture provides an appropriate model for family discipleship. It is an applicable model through its simplicity and rootedness in the Word. Christian parents can use Wesley's method on the formative reading of Scripture as a viable resource for training their children spiritually and leading as primary disciple-makers.

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the dissemination of books accessible in language and price. Richard D. Altick, *English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 35-37; and Clive Murray Norris, *The Financing of John Wesley's Methodism c. 1740-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FORMATION OF JOHN WESLEY

This chapter examines John Wesley's early spiritual formation. Wesley's parents, Susanna and Samuel Wesley (1662–1735), left an indelible imprint on their children's spiritual lives. They accomplished this impact by imparting a high view of the Bible, as well as demonstrating methods for engaging Scripture for the purpose of personal devotion. This upbringing marked Wesley's life and gave found expression in his writings and advice to other Christians.

#### **Family Background**

John Wesley was born on June 17, 1703, in Epworth, England, into a God-fearing family.<sup>1</sup> He was the fifteenth child. Wesley's family lived in the rectory in Epworth, twenty miles from London, where his father served as the rector. Though born into a Christian family, Wesley eventually discovered that his family had its set of troubles. His parents, Samuel and Susanna, experienced deep grief associated with the death of nine of their nineteen children.<sup>2</sup> They also suffered the effects of emotional distress because one of their children was crippled permanently and their oldest son did not speak for the first five years of his life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Collins, "Wesley's Life and Ministry," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy Maddox and Jason Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2010), 43.

<sup>2</sup>Fred Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 27.

<sup>3</sup>Anthony Headley, *Family Crucible: The Influence of Family Dynamics in the Life and Ministry of John Wesley* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 37.



Samuel and Susanna Wesley's marriage was often unstable. The couple had different views on many topics, including politics and household management. In a letter to John, Susanna admitted that she and her husband did not agree: "Tis an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike."<sup>4</sup> These differences eventually led to a brief separation from one another.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the Wesley family faced financial strains.<sup>6</sup> At one point in their marriage, they struggled to find six shillings to buy coals.<sup>7</sup> Samuel Wesley lacked financial sense and often spent time away from his family because of his ministry travels and even once being thrown into a debtor's prison.<sup>8</sup> The birth of many children was costly, as was the daily financial pressure associated with raising children. Further, the household employed several servants.<sup>9</sup> Samuel Wesley struggled to keep his family's complex finances in order.<sup>10</sup>

The stressful conditions in the Wesley home often left Susanna with a depressed disposition.<sup>11</sup> She describes her situation as one suffering from "extreme

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<sup>4</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to John Wesley, February 23, 1724," in *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, ed. Charles Wallace, Jr. (New York: Oxford Press, 1997), 106.

<sup>5</sup>Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life*, 27.

<sup>6</sup>Maldwynn Edwards, *Sons to Samuel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1961), 5-6.

<sup>7</sup>In a letter to the Archbishop of York in 1701, Samuel Wesley thanks his friend for the financial gift of ten pounds to his family and admits he and his wife had recently "clubbed and joined stocks, which came to but six shillings, to send for coals." Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, M. A.* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1866), 236.

<sup>8</sup>Samuel Wesley could not repay a 30 pound debt and was thrown into debtor's prison in Lincoln Castle. While in prison, in 1705, Samuel wrote a letter to his friend, the Archbishop of York. He told him that while spending time in prison he prayed, preached, wrote books, and got acquainted with his "brother jail-birds." *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>9</sup>The letters and journals of Susanna Wesley mention the servants employed by the Wesleys. *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 88-89, 221, 371.

<sup>10</sup>Dan B. Brummitt, "The First Epworthian: A Sketch of His Life and Times for the Epworthians of Today," *The Epworth Herald*, May 2, 1903.

<sup>11</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to Samuel Jr., October 11, 1709," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 68-69.

sadness,” a “melancholy temper,” and “as one dead to the world.”<sup>12</sup> Further, Samuel faced challenging church members who did not enjoy his stern practices. He insisted that the sinners in his parish publicly confess their sins, as well as stand barefoot on the stone floor for hours. In one instance, Samuel made a man admit to being guilty of adultery and made him stand naked with only a sheet on the floor of St. Andrew’s Church.<sup>13</sup> In protest, the people destroyed the Wesleys’ flax crop and tried killing their dog.<sup>14</sup> The community of Epworth was made up of simple people who did not connect well with Samuel’s rigid and academic approach.<sup>15</sup>

Despite their dire circumstances, Samuel and Susanna held to their unwavering conviction to raise their children according to biblical standards. Their desire was for each of their children to love God and obey His Word. Though the couple had their share of disagreements, their commitment to the Church of England, along with their dedication to teach the Word of God, was an area of complete agreement.

The importance of studying the Word was passed on from one generation to the next. Both Susanna and Samuel came from religious families. Susanna’s father was a scholar and clergyman. Susanna chose to depart from her father’s Dissenting or Nonconformist tradition and align herself with the Church of England. She did so with her father’s blessing.<sup>16</sup> She later met Samuel at her sister Elizabeth’s wedding to John Dunton in 1682. Samuel’s father and grandfather were Nonconformist ministers and

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<sup>12</sup>Susanna Wesley, “Letter to Samuel Jr., October 11, 1709,” in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 68-69..

<sup>13</sup>Franklin Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys* (New York: Exposition Press, 1971), 112.

<sup>14</sup>Geoff Bengel, *John Wesley: The World His Parish* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2007), 74, Kindle.

<sup>15</sup>Epworth Old Rectory, accessed March 12, 2016, [http://www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk/hist\\_samuel.php](http://www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk/hist_samuel.php).

<sup>16</sup>Charles Wallace, Jr., introduction to *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 5.

eventually ejected from the ministry for their beliefs under the Act of Uniformity.<sup>17</sup> Samuel's father continued to preach in violation of the Act and was arrested on several occasions.<sup>18</sup> Though Samuel received his early education from dissenting academies, those schools who did not choose to conform to the Church of England, he later decided to become a member of the established church. The Wesleys' faithfulness to teach godly principles had a positive effect on their children, with three of them going into the ministry.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Influence of Susanna Wesley**

Susanna Wesley was intentional about making a lasting impact in the life of her children. The influence she had on John carried through into his adult life. Samuel was often absent from the home, in part due to the marital strain he and his wife endured.<sup>20</sup> These circumstances naturally gave Susanna a leading role as she raised and trained their children with Scripture as her guide.

Though John Wesley experienced life with several siblings in the home, Susanna's fondness for him in particular is evident through her writings.<sup>21</sup> Of the surviving seventy-four letters that Charles Wallace, Jr., collected, thirty-six are addressed to John Wesley, making John the primary recipient of the surviving letters.<sup>22</sup> Seventeen

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<sup>17</sup>Headley, *Family Crucible*, 24, 37.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>19</sup>Collins, "Wesley's Life and Ministry," 43.

<sup>20</sup>Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life*, 27.

<sup>21</sup>Charles Wallace Jr., ed., "Introduction to the Letters," in *Susanna Wesley*, 31-33.

<sup>22</sup>Religious professor Charles Wallace, Jr., worked thirteen years collecting, comparing, and editing Susanna Wesley's writings. Wallace's desire was to offer Susanna Wesley's voice more fully in a time that was ripe for recovering women's voices in the historical church and society. He provides the fullest collection of Susanna Wesley's writings currently available. Further information on Wallace and his writing project can be found in Donald A. Bullen, *A Man of One Book? John Wesley's Interpretation and*

of the letters are addressed to her oldest son and nine are addressed to her youngest son.<sup>23</sup> The closeness to John could have been brought on by the loss of her previous children, two of whom were also named John.<sup>24</sup> John was also one of a few surviving sons still living at home. His older brother, also named Samuel, left for school the year after John was born. His brother Charles was four years younger than him.<sup>25</sup> Wesley and his mother naturally had time to form close bonds from an early age.

John Wesley experienced a defining moment as a child that further connected him to his mother. On February 9, 1709, the Wesleys' rectory home in Epworth burned. John was the last of the Wesley children to be rescued. He barely escaped from the second floor moments before the roof collapsed. Wesley's life was miraculously spared through a dramatic set of circumstances involving the help of nearby neighbors.<sup>26</sup> Because Susanna nearly lost young John in a house fire, she clung to him all the more.<sup>27</sup>

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*Use of the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), xxv; Charles Wallace, Jr., preface to *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, vii-ix.

<sup>23</sup>Wallace, "Introduction to the Letters," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 31-33.

<sup>24</sup>Wallace, introduction to *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 7-8.

<sup>25</sup>Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 15.

<sup>26</sup>Susanna Wesley, "The Rectory Fire," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 64.

<sup>27</sup>Years after the incident, many referred to John Wesley as "the brand plucked from the burning," which is an allusion to Zech 3:2. This biblical reference given to John Wesley from Susanna Wesley and others was a continual reminder to him of God's presence in times of trouble, Scripture's significance in the life of a believer, and the language of salvation for believers redeemed from the flames of hell. Charles Wesley used this phrase in his hymn, "Where Shall My Wondering Soul Begin?" Throughout his life, John used the same biblical phrase in reference to himself and asked that his epitaph bear the biblical phrase. Additional information on this can be found in Mark Williamson, *A Blueprint for Revival: Lessons from the Life of John Wesley* (Milton Keynes, England: Authentic Media, 2011), 18; John R. Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 5; Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 6; *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 11, 64.

Susanna's faith led her to believe that God spared her son for a special work in life. She continued to show him special attention. On May 17, 1711, she wrote in her journal,

And I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child that thou has so mercifully provided for than ever I have been, that I may do my endeavor to instill into his mind the principles of thy true religion and virtue. Lord, give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success.<sup>28</sup>

Susanna's bond with, and influence on, John's young life continued even after he left home. When John went to university, his mother tutored him in theological issues, such as temptation, virtues, and piety.<sup>29</sup> John also sought direction from his mother when facing his life-altering decision to apply for ordination.<sup>30</sup> John heeded his mother's own advice during his season of preparing for ordination and began keeping a diary as a form of self-examination. This diary was meant to record any temptations or sins he confronted.<sup>31</sup>

John Wesley had a strong, steady, methodical approach to life and ministry, making the best use of his time. He learned this systematic approach to life from his mother's methodical approach while she educated her children. John mentioned, "The calm serenity with which his mother transacted business, wrote letters, and conversed, surrounded by her thirteen children."<sup>32</sup> John Wesley was an early riser and encouraged others to sleep early and rise early in an effort to keep one's flesh firm and spirits lively.<sup>33</sup> He learned the value of a routine, order, discipline, and the importance of spiritual growth

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<sup>28</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Evening Journal Entry, May 17, 1711," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace 235.

<sup>29</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letters to Jacky," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 103-13.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 104, 106.

<sup>31</sup>Williamson, *A Blueprint for Revival*, 18.

<sup>32</sup>Adam Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (London: J & T Clarke, 1823), 260.

<sup>33</sup>Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, M. A.: Founder of the Methodists* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1872), 1:71; 3:489.

from his mother. Thus, Susanna Wesley helped shape John in several areas, including his personal growth, his beliefs, his daily methods, and later, his teachings.

Wesley asked his mother to share her wisdom and to offer an account of her particular way of training her children. Thus, at his request in 1732, Susanna wrote a letter explaining her methods.<sup>34</sup> At the time the letter was written, Susanna was sixty-three years of age. Susanna initially responded to her son's request by indicating that she could not understand how such a letter would be of service to other people. However, she was still willing to help.<sup>35</sup> Ten years after his mother's death, John's published journal included his mother's letter of methods and practices.<sup>36</sup> The letter explained how Susanna Wesley created order in her rectory home with such a large number of children. The letter also demonstrated how Susanna exhibited strong leadership by establishing daily routines with her children.<sup>37</sup>

Susanna began teaching her children before they could speak or walk. She taught her children early on to distinguish the Sabbath from every other day. She taught them to be still during family prayers. After the prayer, they were to ask a blessing. Before the children could speak, she taught them to ask for the blessing through signs.<sup>38</sup> The letter further reveals that Susanna was the lead educator of her children during their young years and required each child to spend six hours a day on school.<sup>39</sup> Her organized

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<sup>34</sup>Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 16.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>John Wesley published his mother's methods in his journal "for the benefit of those who are entrusted . . . with the care of a numerous family." John Wesley, "Journal Entry, July 24, 1732," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* (London: John Mason, 1829), 1:387. He also published portions of her letter in his *Arminian Magazine* as part of a sermon. *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 367.

<sup>37</sup>Collins, "Wesley's Life and Ministry," 43.

<sup>38</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to John," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 371.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

and systematic teaching methods consisted of reading the Word, family prayers, a short catechism,<sup>40</sup> and Scripture memorization.<sup>41</sup> As soon as her children could speak, she taught them to recite the Lord's Prayer. They were made to say it every morning when they awoke and every evening before retiring to bed.<sup>42</sup> When the child turned five, Susanna taught him or her the alphabet and proceeded to have each begin reading the Bible from the beginning.<sup>43</sup> Every morning, she required each child to read a Psalm and a chapter from the Old Testament and each evening they were to read another Psalm, as well as a chapter from the New Testament.<sup>44</sup> Her teachings were intentional as she explained in one of her letters, "You must understand what you say, and you must practice what you know."<sup>45</sup>

When educating her children, Susanna used the Bible as her primary textbook. As she read aloud to her children and as they learned to read independently, they read from the Bible. Susanna also used the Word of God as a spelling book.<sup>46</sup> Her teaching practices reinforced to her children the importance of keeping the Bible at the center of one's life.

Susanna's pedagogical practices stemmed from her Puritan upbringing. Her personal devotional life and spiritual practices were also related to her Puritan heritage.

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<sup>40</sup>The catechetical education Susanna Wesley initiated with her children consisted of her writings of a commentary of the Ten Commandments, an exposition of the Apostles' Creed, and a dialogue on natural and revealed religion. See sec. 3, "Educational, Catechetical, and Controversial Writings," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 365-464. See also Arthur Dicken Thomas, Jr., "Profiles in Faith: Susanna Wesley," *Knowing and Doing* (Winter 2003): 1, 18-21.

<sup>41</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to John," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 371.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup>Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 20.

<sup>45</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to Susanna (Suky)," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 379.

<sup>46</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to John," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 371.

One finds key words associated with the Puritan tradition reflected in her writings, such as method, discipline, duty, experience, and holiness.<sup>47</sup> Though she chose to join the Established Church instead of the Nonconformist congregations of her parents, she did not reject her heritage and background entirely.<sup>48</sup> Her ordered and structured life consisted of times for meditation, self-examination, and keeping a spiritual journal, which is reflective of Puritan ways.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, the pastoral care Susanna gave to the care and cure of her children's souls reveals a pattern typical of a Puritan.<sup>50</sup> John Wesley's teachings and practices reflected his Puritan ancestry and the Puritan's custom for practical application of the gospel in one's daily life.

Susanna established strict rules, which she expected each child to follow. She was quick to discipline her children when they disobeyed her guidelines. Some of the rules in which Wesley and his siblings learned to abide by were going to bed by 8 p.m., no eating between meals, and remaining still during family worship. Her children also were instructed to cry softly, and they were not given anything when they cried. In order to break their will, she taught them to fear the rod.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>John A. Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Epworth, 2002), 132.

<sup>48</sup>Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 21-22.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>50</sup>Puritan pastors were to give careful attention to the care of souls. English Puritan church leader and theologian, Richard Baxter repeatedly instructs on taking care of souls and individual counseling, in Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (London: Richard Edwards, 1825). Baxter's teachings had an impact on John Wesley. See Joseph W. Cunningham, "Justification by Faith: Richard Baxter's Influence upon John Wesley," *The Asbury Journal* 64, no. 1 (2009): 55-66. See also Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley's Precedent for Theological Engagement with the Natural Sciences," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 23-54.

<sup>51</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to John," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 369-73.



In the letter to John, Susanna gave particular attention to the topic of conquering the child's will.<sup>52</sup> She wrote, "I insist upon conquering the will of children . . . because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual."<sup>53</sup> For Susanna, the parent who sought to subdue the will of the child is working together with God in the saving and renewing of the child's soul.<sup>54</sup>

Susanna also established individual time with each child on a weekly basis. She desired to use this time to ask about each child's faith, fears, hopes, dreams, and most importantly, the state of their souls.<sup>55</sup> These times were not actually times of instruction but rather times of listening and offering advice to the concerns of that particular child. John's turn took place on Thursdays.<sup>56</sup> He remembered such times well into his adulthood. In a letter to his mother on September 23, 1723, he writes, "If you can spare me only that little part of Thursday evening, which you formerly bestowed upon me in another manner, I doubt not but it would be as useful now for correcting my heart, as it was then for forming my judgment."<sup>57</sup> Their time together influenced his later practice of small group ministry.<sup>58</sup> He purposely used the ministry of small groups as an avenue

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<sup>52</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to John," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 370.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Susanna Wesley, "Letter to John," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 370.

<sup>55</sup>Susanna Wesley, "The Evening Prayers Controversy," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 79-80.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>57</sup>John Wesley, *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. John Emory (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1835), 6:593.

<sup>58</sup>For more thoughts on Wesley's small group ministry practice, see Jim Plueddemann and Carol Plueddemann, *Pilgrims in Progress: Growing through Groups* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1990), 8; and Joel Comiskey, *2000 Years of Small Groups: A History of Cell Ministry in the Church* (Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2015), 153.

to inquire about one another's development in the faith. Wesley discovered that these discipleship accountability groups allowed people to spend intimate time with one another. This particular practice fostered discussion, which presented an environment conducive for spiritual growth. His goal for small group ministry was that people would pursue a deep commitment; thus, he made the groups operate with ease and accessibility.<sup>59</sup>

Throughout John Wesley's life, he continued to cultivate a deep appreciation for the Word of God. His mother modeled such a love for the Word and shared this passion with her children.<sup>60</sup> Beyond reading and memorization, she instilled biblical truths into her children from a young age. Susanna taught her children the value of faithfully studying the Word of God. She also modeled godly behavior in front of her children. After meditating on a piece by pastor and writer Richard Lucas (1648–1715), she wrote, "Religion is not to be confined to the church, or closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation. Everywhere we are in the presence of God, and every word and action is capable of morality."<sup>61</sup>

Susanna also used her time wisely and incorporated study of the Word into her daily routine, as well as her weekly practices. She took advantage of Sunday afternoons as a time for devotional reading and church services in her home. Although the services began with only her children and their family's servants, the audience quickly grew to

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<sup>59</sup>David Hunsicker, "John Wesley: Father of Today's Small Group Concept?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 221.

<sup>60</sup>In a letter to Samuel Wesley, Jr., Susanna wrote, "There is nothing I now desire to live for, but to do some small service to my children, that as I have brought 'em into the world, so that it might please God, to make me (though unworthy) an instrument of doing good to their souls." Susanna Wesley, "Letter to Samuel Wesley, October 1709," in *Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 12.

<sup>61</sup>Susanna Wesley quotes from practical theologian Richard Lucas (1648-1715) in Richard Lucas, "Of the Attainment of Perfection," in *An Enquire After Happiness In Three Parts*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: W. Innys and R. Manby, 1735), 96.

include over two hundred people.<sup>62</sup> Susanna Wesley modeled a devotion and leadership in the area of Scripture. Her influence was formational and inspirational to Wesley's appreciation of Scripture. Some biographers have noted that Susanna is the primary contributor to both his personality and emotional life.<sup>63</sup> In his private diary, he records his thoughts on marriage and lists his reasons for living a single life beginning with, "From the time I was six or seven years old, if any one spoke to me concerning marrying, I used to say, I thought I never should, 'Because I should never find such a woman as my Father had.'"<sup>64</sup>

### **The Influence of Samuel Wesley**

John's father, Samuel Wesley, was not only the rector of Epworth, but he was also a published poet. Although he was often away from his family for great lengths of time, Samuel's leadership and use of Scripture was influential in the formation of his son, John.

Samuel Wesley was an Anglican pastor by choice. He and his wife made the transition from the religious practices of both of their parents and became High Church Anglicans, rejecting their dissenting views. They believed this affiliation was the best way to be a faithful Christian in England.<sup>65</sup> Thus, John Wesley grew up in a home where the parents held deep faith convictions. His grandparents displayed deep convictions as well. John's paternal grandfather, John Westley<sup>66</sup> (1636–1678), was actually imprisoned

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<sup>62</sup>Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life*, 27.

<sup>63</sup>Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Influence: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth, 2014), 60.

<sup>64</sup>Bufford W. Coe, *John Wesley and Marriage* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1996), 58.

<sup>65</sup>Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life*, 26.

<sup>66</sup>John Wesley's grandfather's name was spelled three different ways: Wesly, Wesley, and most commonly, Westley.

for refusing to use the Book of Common Prayer in worship.<sup>67</sup> His maternal grandfather, Samuel Annesley (1620–1696), was removed from his pastorate at one point and later had his property confiscated for having an informal small group meeting.<sup>68</sup> The Dissenting influence brought to Wesley an emphasis on personal, spiritual discipline and the Anglican influence brought him an emphasis on the sacraments.<sup>69</sup> Both influences are evident throughout Wesley’s life.

From an early age, Samuel was interested in his children, especially his boys. He took a distinctive interest in their development from their early boyhood years. His letters often indicated his concern for their education and interests. As the years passed, his letters showed an effort to offer advice, friendship, and encouragement to his sons.<sup>70</sup>

The relationship with his father was instrumental for John. Samuel and John exchanged numerous letters. When John was around 22 years of age, his father compelled him to enter the ministry.<sup>71</sup> When John was at university preparing for ordination, it was his father who encouraged him to read from several translations when studying the Word. Samuel believed that comparing other translations to the original language was the “best commentary in the world.”<sup>72</sup> In the same year as his father’s death, John published a pamphlet his father had written, which offered instruction for young ministers. His

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<sup>67</sup>Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life*, 26.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Andrew Dragos, “The Life of John Wesley,” *Seedbed*, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://seedbed.com/feed/the-life-of-john-wesley/>.

<sup>70</sup>Edwards, *Sons to Samuel*, 8-9.

<sup>71</sup>John Wesley recounts, “My father pressed me to enter into Holy Orders.” *John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 61.

<sup>72</sup>Samuel Wesley, *Advice to a Young Clergyman* (London: C. Rivington & J. Roberts, 1735), 26-28.

father's piece was entitled, *Advice to a Young Clergyman*.<sup>73</sup> Samuel's intention in writing this piece was to help prepare young men for ministry. He encouraged young ministers to use a polyglot Bible, specifically, which included texts in Hebrew, Greek, Chaldean Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Persian.<sup>74</sup>

Samuel Wesley influenced John's love for reading and for learning. Samuel had a lifelong passion for academic and devotional study of the Bible. He spent much of his time studying Scripture, developing sermons, and writing a book on Job.<sup>75</sup>

Just as the fire the family endured had lasting results on Susanna, so it also had a significant effect upon Samuel. On the day of the fire, his father heard a scream coming from upstairs. He knew it to be his son John because the other children had been accounted for. He made an effort to reach John, but the flames prevented him from going up the stairs. Thus, Samuel fell to his knees in the hallway, "commended his [John's] soul to God," and continued looking for the rest of the family.<sup>76</sup> The day after the fire, Samuel walked around the remains of his house. He was overcome with thanks and asked his neighbors to join him in thanking God. He stated, "He has given me all my eight children: let the house go, I am rich enough."<sup>77</sup> He picked up a page of his Bible from among the rubble, which read, "Go sell all thou has, take up thy cross and follow me."<sup>78</sup> The tragedy the family endured was a life-changing experience for all involved.

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<sup>73</sup>Wesley, *Advice to a Young Clergyman*, 26-28.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid. The polyglot Bible Samuel Wesley refers to is the *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, 6 vols., ed. Brian Walton (London: 1655-1657).

<sup>75</sup>Edwards, *Sons to Samuel*, 9.

<sup>76</sup>*Susanna Wesley*, ed. Wallace, 65, 67. See more in Kenneth Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 14. Ironically, John commended his father's soul to God at Samuel's deathbed. John recounts the exchange between him and his father in "Letter to Archbishop Seeker, March 22, 1748," in Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend Samuel Wesley*, 444.

<sup>77</sup>Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend Samuel Wesley*, 327.

<sup>78</sup>John Telford, *Wesley Anecdotes* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1885), 18.

However, as Samuel looked upon the remains of the fire, finding and reading that portion of Scripture became even more significant to him. John's elderly father eventually needed assistance in his ministry. Though a teaching fellow and an Oxford don, Wesley spent much time away from the university to assist his father. He gave a significant portion of his time helping in the parishes of Epworth and Wroot from 1727–1729.<sup>79</sup> While assisting his father, John did not see much fruit from this pastoral opportunity, but he continued to read spiritual and devotional literature, and thus gained greater biblical knowledge and spiritual growth.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Influence of Wesley's Sisters**

The influence of women in Wesley's life is noteworthy and often overlooked. A typical day for John consisted largely of time with his mother, his six sisters,<sup>81</sup> Emilia, Susanna, Mary, Mahetabel, Anne, Martha, and Kezia,<sup>82</sup> and two nannies.<sup>83</sup> As noted by Heitzenrater, John Wesley shared a close bond with his sisters, lasting well beyond his years at home.<sup>84</sup> They often referred to him as "Jacky."<sup>85</sup> Martha Wesley remembered fondly, "John was my favorite brother, and I tried to be like him as much as possible."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend Samuel Wesley*, 388.

<sup>80</sup>Collins, "Wesley's Life and Ministry," 44; Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend Samuel Wesley*, 399-400.

<sup>81</sup>Emilia Wesley Harper (1692–1771); Susanna Wesley Ellison (1695–1764); Mary Wesley Whitelamb (1696–?); Mahetabel Wesley Wright (1697–1750); Anne Wesley Lambert (1701–?); Martha Wesley Hall (1706–1791); Kezia Wesley (1710–1741).

<sup>82</sup>Each of the Wesley sisters also carried a commonly known nickname: Emilia (Emily); Susanna (Sukey); Mary (Molly); Mahetabel (Hetty); Anne (Nancy); Martha (Patty), and Kezia (Kezzy).

<sup>83</sup>Headley, *Family Crucible*, 71.

<sup>84</sup>Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 15.

<sup>85</sup>Mahetabel Wesley, "Part One, Chapter 3," in *Martha Wesley*, ed. Franklin Wilder (New York: Exposition Press, 1976), 24.

<sup>86</sup>Martha Wesley, "Part Two, Chapter 10," in *Martha Wesley*, ed. Wilder, 63.

The bits of sarcasm found in the letters between them reveal the fun and close relationship John had with his sisters.<sup>87</sup> The letters also reveal their love for him and their desire for more of his company.<sup>88</sup> They would often seek his counsel on several matters, notably their intimate relationships.<sup>89</sup>

Just as John had opportunity to develop a strong connection with his mother, the same was true concerning his many sisters still living at home. When there was tension in the home, John often sided with his sisters, even over his father.<sup>90</sup> His sister, Hetty once recalled, “Jacky was our only brother who did not pull tricks on Patty, trying to get her to lose her temper.”<sup>91</sup>

The closeness John and his sisters shared lasted into their adult years, as well.<sup>92</sup> His sisters faced many trials in life, yet he seemed to be their steady and reliable brother. When his sister Mahetabel lost her third child, she wrote a poem to her dying infant.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Emilia Wesley responded to John’s letter by using friendly sarcasm and teasing. She reminded him that she was his “best loved sister and dearest friend”; she teased that because he walked one hundred miles and he looked “more like a foot post than a pillar of the Church of England,” and commented on his “mean, scurvy appearance.” Emilia Wesley, “Letter to John Wesley, June 26, 1731,” in “The Wesley Works Editorial Project: John Wesley’s In-Correspondence (1731-35),” accessed January 15, 2018, <https://wesleyworks.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/201704jw-in-correspondence-1731-35.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup>Maldwyn Edwards, *My Dear Sister: The Story of John Wesley and the Women in His Life* (Manchester, England: Plenwork [Leeds], 1974), 17.

<sup>89</sup>Headley, *Family Crucible*, 47.

<sup>90</sup>Concerning Mahetabel (Hetty), John Wesley repeatedly disagreed over the treatment and unforgiveness he witnessed from his father, Samuel Wesley toward Mahetabel. John sided with his sister in the matter. Samuel expressed his frustration to Charles Wesley: “Every day, you hear how he contradicts me, and takes your sister’s part before my face. Nay, he disputes with me.” Charles quotes Samuel as found in *The Works of John Wesley, Letters I (1721-1739)*, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 25:202; Vivian Hubert Howard Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley: A Study of John Wesley and Oxford* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961), 110.

<sup>91</sup>Mahetabel Wesley, “Part One, Chapter 3,” in *Martha Wesley*, ed. Wilder, 24.

<sup>92</sup>Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 15.

<sup>93</sup>Mehetabel Wesley Wright, “A Mother’s Address to Her Dying Infant,” *Arminian Magazine* 1 (1778): 187-88. John Wesley began publishing the *Arminian Magazine* in 1778. It was divided into three

John later published her poem in the *Arminian Magazine*. Martha writes, “Some people accused John of showing no affection to his family, but that was not true. Most of his family were, in one way or another, receiving support from him or his activities, in their adult life.”<sup>94</sup> His oldest sister, Emily, through a series of letters, asked John several questions about the Methodist faith.<sup>95</sup> She eventually accepted the doctrines and became a Methodist herself.<sup>96</sup> She so embraced the faith that in the last twenty years of her life she lived in a Methodist chapel performing the ministries of a deaconess. The two continued their caring correspondence for several years, even to the point that John expressed a desire to bring his wife to meet Emily.<sup>97</sup> Other sisters of John eventually accepted the Methodist faith, as well as his mother, Susanna. Martha recalled, “More and more, I realized that my brother John Wesley had the key to happiness and eternal life.”<sup>98</sup>

### **The Influence of Charles Wesley**

Of John Wesley’s siblings, he spent the most time with his brother Charles. They made a close connection while attending the same school, Oxford University, and by participating in the Holy Club together.<sup>99</sup> A friend of the brothers, John Gambold (1760–1827), observed of Charles, “I never observed any person have a more real

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main sections. The first section consisted of sermons and biographies. The second section featured letters written to John Wesley that had spiritual significance. The third section was entirely poetry.

<sup>94</sup>Martha Wesley, “Part Two, Chapter 17,” in *Martha Wesley*, ed. Wilder, 109.

<sup>95</sup>Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Letters I*, ed. Baker, 25:161-67.

<sup>96</sup>Frederick E. Maser, *The Story of John Wesley’s Sisters or Seven Sisters in Search of Love* (Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1988), 28.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>98</sup>Martha Wesley, “Part Two, Chapter 15,” in *Martha Wesley*, ed. Wilder, 103.

<sup>99</sup>Their closeness was not easily recognized in their early years, for John was four years older than Charles, making Charles six years old when John left for Charterhouse School in London.



deference for another than he constantly had for his brother.”<sup>100</sup> John continued his description of the brothers by adding, “Could I describe one of them, I should describe both.”<sup>101</sup>

The two brothers also shared times of brotherly bonding as they traveled on a missionary journey to Savannah, Georgia, together. Though neither of them had entirely positive experiences in Georgia, one beneficial aspect was their meeting of the Moravians.<sup>102</sup> Their encounter with the Moravians led them later on a deeper spiritual journey. After Charles’ return to Georgia, he experienced an assurance of his salvation.<sup>103</sup> Charles expressed his experience in his journal, writing that the Spirit of God had “chased away the darkness of my unbelief. I found myself convinced, I knew not how nor when; and immediately fell to intercession.”<sup>104</sup> Shortly after learning of John’s similar experience, Charles shared two hymns expressing their assurance of salvation. One hymn Charles wrote was “Where Shall My Wondering Soul Begin.” The hymn has seven stanzas. Stanzas 1, 2, 5, and 6 are especially relevant.

Where shall my wondering soul begin?  
How shall I all to heaven aspire?  
A slave redeemed from death and sin,  
a brand plucked from eternal fire,  
how shall I equal triumphs raise,  
or sing my great deliverer’s praise?

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<sup>100</sup>John Gambold, in Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 37. This letter was first featured in the *Methodist Magazine* (1798) under the title “The Character of Mr. John Wesley.”

<sup>101</sup>Ibid. Similarities between the brothers abounded, as both were poets, like their father and siblings, Kezia and Samuel, Jr., as well as musicians. Charles played the organ and John played the flute. Both were ordained ministers in the Church of England and both married. Sometimes John seemed to take the lead, while other times Charles took the lead, like in spiritual awakening and marriage. Richard P. Heitzenrater, “A Tale of Two Brothers,” accessed November 8, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-69/tale-of-two-brothers.html>.

<sup>102</sup>Charles became ill in Georgia and had to return home within six months after his arrival. Heitzenrater, “A Tale of Two Brothers.”

<sup>103</sup>Ironically, his experience was three days before John’s similar experience.

<sup>104</sup>Charles Wesley, in *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M. A.*, ed. Thomas Jackson (New York: G. Lane and P. P. Sandford, 1842), 122.

O how shall I the goodness tell,  
Father, which thou to me hast showed?  
That I, a child of wrath and hell,  
I should be called a child of God!  
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,  
blest with this antepast of heaven!

Come, O my guilty brethren, come,  
groaning beneath your load of sin;  
his bleeding heart shall make you room,  
his open side shall take you in.  
He calls you now, invites you home:  
Come, O my guilty brethren, come.

For you the purple current flowed  
in pardon from his wounded side,  
languished for you the eternal God,  
for you the Prince of Glory died.  
Believe, and all your sin's forgiven,  
only believe--and yours is heaven.<sup>105</sup>

Charles penned a second hymn, "And Can It Be, That I Should Gain," as an expression of their salvation assurance. The hymn has five stanzas. Stanzas 1, 3, 4, and 5 are particularly relevant.

And can it be that I should gain  
An int'rest 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, should die for me?

Refrain:  
Amazing love! how can it be  
That Thou, my God, should die for me!

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.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;

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<sup>105</sup>Charles Wesley, "Where Shall My Wondering Soul Begin," accessed November 8, 2017, [https://hymnary.org/text/where\\_shall\\_my\\_wondering\\_soul\\_begin](https://hymnary.org/text/where_shall_my_wondering_soul_begin).

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.

Amen<sup>106</sup>

Both Charles and John wrote many hymns, but the majority came from Charles. He left a lasting impact on both John and the Methodist people.

Though John and Charles shared many similarities, they were not without their differences. Charles was opposed to the many people John appointed to serve as preachers.<sup>107</sup> In one instance, John made his tailor a preacher and Charles responded by saying, “I, with God’s help, shall make him a tailor again.”<sup>108</sup> In their later years, John addressed Charles’s criticality of John’s leadership. At the age of 82, John wrote a letter to Charles scolding, “Do not hinder me if you will not help. Perhaps if you had kept close to me, I might have done better. However, with or without help, I creep on.”<sup>109</sup> Though the letter was direct and criticizing, he still signed the letter, “Your affectionate friend and brother,” pointing to the constant and lasting love between them.<sup>110</sup>

### **The Influence of Scripture**

Wesley’s formative years were significant in developing an appreciation for the importance of Scripture. This love for the Word continued to shape him as he left

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<sup>106</sup>Charles Wesley, “And Can It Be That I Should Gain,” accessed November 8, 2017, [https://hymnary.org/text/and\\_can\\_it\\_be\\_that\\_i\\_should\\_gain](https://hymnary.org/text/and_can_it_be_that_i_should_gain).

<sup>107</sup>Heitzenrater, “A Tale of Two Brothers.”

<sup>108</sup>Charles Wesley, in Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim*, 194-95.

<sup>109</sup>John Wesley, in Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley*, 3:445.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

home, continued into the ministry and later taught others. Wesley valued the Word above all else. He used it in his daily practices, as well as a source for teaching others.

Once John reached the age of ten and a half years old, his mother allowed him to enter school at the Charterhouse, London.<sup>111</sup> While in school during his teen years, Wesley admitted that continuing with all the discipline he had previously been taught was difficult. In fact, he admits to becoming negligent and having outward sins. Though not listing them, he offers assurance that these sins would not be considered scandalous in the world's eyes. Though feeling negligent in some areas, the two areas he faithfully continued in were prayer and Scripture reading.<sup>112</sup> During this season of his life, while continuing to grow spiritually, the influence of his mother continued to stay with him regarding Scripture reading.<sup>113</sup> Wesley read the Word daily, early in the morning and/or late in the evening.<sup>114</sup>

While in Oxford at Lincoln College, during a season of study and preparation for ordination, Wesley began to form bonds with like-minded people. While there, John and his friends, including his brother, Charles, met together on a regular basis to dedicate themselves to pious activities, including the study of Scripture.<sup>115</sup> They also committed to worship services more devoutly, visited the imprisoned, and gave to the poor. This

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<sup>111</sup>Wesley, in Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley*, 1:19.

<sup>112</sup>John Wesley, "Journal Entry, May 1738," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (1872; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 1:98.

<sup>113</sup>Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley*, 1:22.

<sup>114</sup>Wesley usually read the Bible systematically, following the readings established in the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*. Occasionally, when distressed, he would open the Bible seeking divine comfort and direction. See Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 41.

<sup>115</sup>The Holy Club met several nights a week to read and study the Bible together, and were in close conversation one with another. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley*, 2:83; Mark L. Weeter, *John Wesley's View and Use of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 19.

group was known as the Holy Club.<sup>116</sup> Other names given to the group were Sacramentarians, the Bible Moths, and Methodists.<sup>117</sup>

One of Wesley's most often quoted phrases is, "Let me be *homo unius libri*," meaning "a man of one book."<sup>118</sup> Wesley stated,

I want to know one thing: the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach 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!<sup>119</sup>

Wesley explained in his book *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, to be *homo unius libri* means to regard no book comparatively but the Bible.<sup>120</sup> Wesley maintained the primacy of Scripture by beginning his time in the Word with prayer, seeking God's wisdom, then by reading a chapter of the Bible comparatively by searching and considering parallel Scriptures.<sup>121</sup> Wesley believed in laboring over passages in the Bible by comparatively reading them with other passages. He wrote,

I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his Book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? . . . I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." I meditate thereon, with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any

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<sup>116</sup>John Wesley was nicknamed "Curator of the Holy Club." Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley*, 1:69.

<sup>117</sup>Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life*, 30.

<sup>118</sup>John Wesley, "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 89.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in vol. 11 of *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 366.

<sup>121</sup>When Wesley read the Bible, he typically read one chapter from the Old Testament and one chapter from the New Testament. If time did not allow, he read one chapter from the Bible, or simply a portion of a chapter. John Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament: Genesis to Ruth* (Bristol, England: William Pine, 1765), 8; Wesley, "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," in *John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 89-90.

doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God, and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak.<sup>122</sup>

He believed in the hermeneutical principle that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture.<sup>123</sup> In another work, “Popery Calmly Considered,”<sup>124</sup> he reiterated this principle: “Scripture is the best expounder of Scripture. The best way therefore to understand it, is carefully to compare Scripture with Scripture, and thereby learn the true meaning of it.”<sup>125</sup> He followed his reading with meditation on the text. When he needed further clarification, he sought the advice of those wise in Scripture and the writings of those who were deceased.<sup>126</sup> John desired all readers to read parallel passages and to rely on the Holy Spirit for their guidance.<sup>127</sup> His passion for God’s Word was clear and evident into his adult years. He used this passion for continuing in his personal study of Scripture and henceforth to share his knowledge of the Word with others. He expressed, “What I thus learn, that I teach.”<sup>128</sup>

Wesley affirmed the Protestant principles of *sola scriptura* and *sola fide*, viewing the Bible as the ultimate authority for his faith convictions and practice.<sup>129</sup> Further, Wesley believed the Bible received its authority from divine inspiration.<sup>130</sup> In

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<sup>122</sup>Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 89-90.

<sup>123</sup>Ian J. Maddock, *Men of One Book: A Comparison of Two Methodist Preachers, John Wesley and George Whitefield* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 110.

<sup>124</sup>John Wesley, “Poperly Calmly Considered,” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. John Emory (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 5:803-16.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 366.

<sup>127</sup>Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 89-90.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Weeter, *John Wesley’s View*, 115-17.

<sup>130</sup>Wesley’s belief and emphasis on the Bible was due to his conviction that Scripture is inspired by God. For more of Wesley’s view on Scripture’s authority, see Weeter, *John Wesley’s View*.

Wesley's *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, he writes, "We believe the Scripture to be of God. According to the light we have, the Scripture is of God and while we believe this we dare not turn aside from it, to the right or to the left."<sup>131</sup> He also viewed *sola* as "primarily" rather than "solely" or "exclusively."<sup>132</sup> He gained a strong reliance and appreciation for the Word from his parental upbringing and the Anglican High Church. He reflects,

After the primitive church, I esteemed our own, the Church of England, as the most Scriptural national Church in the world. Therefore, I not only assented to all the doctrines, but observed all the rubric in the Liturgy; and that with all possible exactness, even at the peril of my life.<sup>133</sup>

### **The Influence of Religious Authors**

Though John Wesley was determined to keep Scripture as the ultimate authority for his life and mission, he still read works from various religious authors. In fact, he had an extensive personal library. He enjoyed reading and studying from a variety of books as he prepared his sermons.<sup>134</sup> Wesley reflects, "From a child I was taught to love and reverence the Scriptures and oracles of God: and next to these, to esteem the Primitive Fathers, the writers of the first three centuries."<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>John Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 11:37-40.

<sup>132</sup>Outler, *John Wesley*, 28. Outler shows that Wesley's writings reveal that he compared parallel Scriptures and commentaries as he read the Bible.

<sup>133</sup>John Wesley, "Farther Thoughts on Separation from the Church," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley: Tracts and Letters on Various Subjects* (New York: J & J Harper, 1827), 10:95.

<sup>134</sup>Randy L. Maddox, "Remnants of John Wesley's Personal Library," *Methodist History* 42, no. 2 (2004): 122-28. Maddox has done significant research on the remains of John Wesley's library. Maddox has shown the location of the books from Wesley's library written by authors other than John or Charles identifiable as extant.

<sup>135</sup>Wesley, "Farther Thoughts on Separation from the Church," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 10:95.

Wesley was exposed to various authors and learned from each.<sup>136</sup> One author who helped shape Wesley was Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471); à Kempis’ book, *Imitation of Christ* shaped Wesley’s view that “true religion was seated in the heart, and that God’s law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions.”<sup>137</sup> Wesley’s *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* reflects on the influence of à Kempis. Wesley wrote that he learned from à Kempis’ to give his whole heart with a simplicity of intention.<sup>138</sup>

From yet another author, Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), Wesley learned a purity of intention. Taylor, a seventeenth-century Anglican bishop, wrote a classic devotional entitled *The Rules and Exercise of Holy Living and Holy Dying*. After Wesley read Taylor’s work, he resolved to dedicate all his life to God, including his thoughts, actions, and words. He felt every part of his life was either a sacrifice to God or to himself, which effectively would be to the devil.<sup>139</sup> This way of living, completely surrendered to God, resonated with Wesley and became the way he strived to live. He desired to simply surrender to Him and live a life modeled in love.

While serving with his father in Epworth, he read the works of William Law (1686–1761), including *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.<sup>140</sup> Through John’s readings of Thomas à Kempis, William Law, and others, he became convinced that there was a possibility of being half a Christian. He was determined to be wholly devoted to God, giving God his entire life: soul, body,

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<sup>136</sup>Wesley, “Farther Thoughts on Separation from the Church,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 10:95.

<sup>137</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, May 1738,” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 3:71.

<sup>138</sup>*John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 7.

<sup>139</sup>Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 366-446.

<sup>140</sup>Kenneth Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 40.



and substance.<sup>141</sup> He became so convinced of this commitment for God, that his friends nicknamed him “Primitive Christianity.”<sup>142</sup> Wesley also believed that reason and tradition were vital and God-ordained when one interprets Scripture. Wesley viewed the Church Fathers as the most reliable and the best representation of reasoned discourse.<sup>143</sup> John was on a course of taking his relationship with Christ seriously. Further, he was resolved to “not only read, but to study, the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion.”<sup>144</sup>

Wesley continued his correspondence with his mother concerning spiritual topics. He wrote to her expressing his appreciation for the works of Thomas à Kempis, but was concerned that some of his teachings might come across harsh, such as the canon’s view that Christians should be “perpetually miserable” in the world.<sup>145</sup> His mother wrote back to him her opinion of à Kempis: she found à Kempis to be an “honest, weak man, that had more zeal than knowledge.”<sup>146</sup> She continued in her writings to help Wesley filter through the disciplines and rules of being a Christian. Her assistance to Wesley shines through as she writes,

Take this rule. Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 366-446.

<sup>142</sup>Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 30.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>144</sup>Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 366-446.

<sup>145</sup>John Wesley, “Letter to Susanna Wesley (1725),” in *The Works of John Wesley, Journal and Diaries II*, bicentennial ed., ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 19:286-87.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup>*Ibid.*

Wesley also wrote to his father on the same subject a few months later. His father responded in a similar fashion as his mother.<sup>148</sup>

### **The Influence of John Wesley's Aldersgate Experience**

John Wesley's Aldersgate experience was a turning point moment in his life and ministry.<sup>149</sup> The events leading up to this milestone experience involved the influence of Moravian missionaries.<sup>150</sup> While traveling to Georgia, Wesley met the Moravians and witnessed their calmness during a life-threatening storm, causing him to question his own personal salvation experience.<sup>151</sup> When most people on the ship were terrified during the storm, the Moravians remained at peace as they sang hymns and prayed.<sup>152</sup> Though his time with the Moravians was brief, watching their response during the storm allowed Wesley moments of self-reflection. Wesley mulled over his observation of the Moravians' inner peace during troubling times.<sup>153</sup> Soon after his return to England, he met a young Moravian pastor, Peter Böhler (1712–1775). They met occasionally to discuss theology in the months leading to Wesley's Aldersgate experience. Böhler taught that saving faith

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<sup>148</sup>Samuel Wesley, "Letter to John Wesley, July 14, 1725," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Baker, 25:171.

<sup>149</sup>Some theologians argue that the Aldersgate experience was Wesley's conversion, while others argue against this point, viewing Aldersgate as Wesley's assurance of salvation. See Kenneth Collins, "Twentieth-Century Interpretations of John Wesley's Aldersgate Experience: Coherence or Confusion?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 18-31; Randy L. Maddox, ed., *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1990); and Daniel L. Burnett, *In the Shadow of Aldersgate: An Introduction to the Heritage and Faith of the Wesleyan Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2006).

<sup>150</sup>Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, 80.

<sup>151</sup>John Wesley initially traveled to Georgia to minister to the Native Americans, but quickly began ministry as the parish priest at the Governor's request. John Fremont Beeson, *John Wesley and the American Frontier* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2007), 12.

<sup>152</sup>Beeson, *John Wesley and the American Frontier*, 43.

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

has two fruits, happiness and holiness. These teachings caused Wesley to reflect on his salvation.<sup>154</sup>

John was known to be a religious, legalistic, and methodical man, intent on spreading a life of spiritual discipline.<sup>155</sup> He came back from Georgia very troubled because of the difficulty he faced while enforcing legalistic practices.<sup>156</sup> His journals and conversations with others reflect that he was going through a season where he questioned his salvation. He writes, “I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God.”<sup>157</sup> Though he was in turmoil, he continued to meet with the Moravians. He was on his way to a meeting with them when his Aldersgate experience occurred. He reflects on the moment of May 24, 1738:

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 the leader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith with 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.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Collins also describes Böhler’s teaching as peace flowing from forgiveness and power from Holy Spirit’s presence. Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 165, 287. Böhler advised Wesley to “preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.” He taught Wesley that perfect assurance is brought by living faith. Stephen Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography* (Oxford, England: Lion Publishing, 2003), 58.

<sup>155</sup>His religious, methodical, and pious living was reflective in his interactions within the Holy Club.

<sup>156</sup>John’s mission to Georgia failed in part due to his continual persuasion for people to adopt High Church practices, such as communion. He enforced strict disciplines and legalistic practices, turning people away, including Sophia “Sophy” Hopkey (1718-?), the woman he loved. Ray Comfort, ed. *Wesley Gold* (Orlando: Bridge-Logos, 2007), 27.

<sup>157</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, February 1, 1738,” in *The Works of John Wesley: Journals and Diaries. I*, ed. Richard P. Heitzenrater and W. Reginald Ward (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 18:214. Thirty-five years after his Aldersgate experience he went back and made modifications in his original texts. He inserted the words for this particular quote, “I am not sure of this.” Thus, as John looks back, he questioned this initial thought. D. Butler, *John Wesley and George Whitefield in Scotland* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1899), 80.

<sup>158</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, May 24, 1738,” in *The Works of John Wesley: Journals and Diaries. I*, ed. Heitzenrater and Ward, 18:250.

There was a noticeable change in John Wesley after his Aldersgate experience. At Aldersgate, Wesley received the assurance of his salvation. This experience was a turning point for him. His messages were now motivated by saving grace instead of legalism.<sup>159</sup> Wesley offers a personal evaluation and timeline of his messages:

From the year 1725 to 1729, I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour. Indeed, it could not be that I should; for I neither laid the foundation of repentance, nor or believing the gospel; taking it for granted, that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them “needed no repentance.”

From the year 1729 to 1734, laying a deeper foundation of repentance, I saw a little fruit. But it was only a little; and no wonder: for I did not preach faith in the blood of the Covenant.

From 1734 to 1738, speaking more of faith in Christ, I saw more fruit of my preaching, and visiting from house to house, than ever I had done before; though I know not if any of those who were outwardly reformed and inwardly and thoroughly converted to God.

From 1738 to this time, speaking continually of Jesus Christ, laying Him only for the foundation of the whole building, making Him all in all, the first and the last; preaching only on this plan, “The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel”; “the word of God ran” as fire among the stubble; it “was glorified” more and more; multitudes crying out, “What must we do to be saved?” and afterwards witnessing “By grace we are saved through faith.”<sup>160</sup>

After Aldersgate, Wesley’s pious activities changed. His religious activity was no longer practiced out of legalistic duty or responsibility, but rather in pursuit of a godly life full of love and holiness. He, in fact narrowed his religious activities to a few, maintaining those he considered practical, such as early-morning preaching, providing for the poor, and

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<sup>159</sup>Eighteen days after his Aldersgate experience, he preached a message of his renewed insight on salvation at the University Church in Oxford, St. Mary’s Church. The title of this famous message is “Salvation by Faith.” John Wesley, “Salvation by Faith 1738, Sermon 1,” in *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon 1991), 39-48. Other messages written by Wesley after Aldersgate reflect his new awareness of salvation by faith, including “The Marks of the New Birth (1748),” “The Great Privilege of the Those Who are Born of God (1748),” and “On the Spirit of Bondage and Adoption (1746).”

<sup>160</sup>John Wesley, “The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: John Mason, 1830), 8:468. Steve Harper reveals that Wesley’s selection and order of his standard sermons appeared to highlight soteriology. Sermons 1-16: The Essence of Salvation; Sermons 17-40: The Order of Salvation; Sermons 41-53: The Application of Salvation. Steve Harper, “Wesley’s Sermons as Spiritual Formation Documents,” *Methodist History* 26, no. 3 (April 1988): 133.

fasting.<sup>161</sup> Additionally, Wesley's life and ministry was now led with a deeper passion as it relates to his view on Scripture.<sup>162</sup> Tyerman points out that after Aldersgate, Wesley's chief aim was to spread a scriptural salvation message to the people.<sup>163</sup> Tyerman notes that almost all of Wesley's texts reflect this topic.<sup>164</sup> Wesley explains his main points of preaching:

The points we chiefly insisted upon are four: First, that orthodoxy, or right opinions is at best, a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all; that neither does religion consist in negatives . . . or in works of piety . . . Secondly, that the only way under heaven to this religion is, to repent and believe the gospel . . . repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thirdly, that by this faith . . . is justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. And Lastly, that being justified by faith, we taste of the Heaven to which we are going; we are holy and happy; we tread down sin and fear, and sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.<sup>165</sup>

John Wesley's teachings and sermons were driven from a desire to see lost souls saved and changed.

### **The Influence of a Simple Message**

Wesley learned from his listeners and readers the importance of keeping the message simple enough for everyone to understand. It was important to Wesley to not only teach the Word, but also for his listeners to comprehend the information preached.

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<sup>161</sup>Deborah Madden, "Medicine on Demand: John Wesley's Enlightened Treatment of the Sick," in *Perfecting Perfection: Essays in Honour of Henry D. Rack*, ed. Robert Webster (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2016), 141.

<sup>162</sup>Though Wesley's life was motivated with a deeper passion for the Word and ministry, his view on the authority and divine inspiration of the Bible was clearly established before Aldersgate. See Weeter, *John Wesley's View*, 60-64.

<sup>163</sup>Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, M. A., Founder of the Methodists* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1870), 1:234.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid. Tyerman also points out that Wesley endeavored to teach on saving sinners using four main points.

<sup>165</sup>John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Emory, 5:176.

Wesley expressed this by stating, “I design plain truth for plain people.”<sup>166</sup> Therefore, he learned to keep the content of his messages simple enough for his listeners to comprehend and applicable to their daily lives or current situation.

Wesley’s sermon topics were appropriate for the particular audience whom he was reaching, while the text was always taken straight from the Bible.<sup>167</sup> Wesley’s desire was to reach his audience in their current context, and deliver a message rooted in the Word of God.<sup>168</sup>

It was from his personal experiences that Wesley learned to use plain words, words that were simple enough for listeners or readers to understand. When Wesley ventured on a missionary journey to Georgia, he had hoped to “learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen.”<sup>169</sup> Not only did Wesley have a romantic and distorted view of Native Americans, but he also tried to function within the conventional practices of the Church of England.<sup>170</sup> By using the style and language associated with the ways of the University, he failed at connecting with those he had gone to reach.

Wesley learned that when using academic language, the results often yielded gapes and stares. As a young man, Wesley addressed a country congregation using elegant

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<sup>166</sup>Wesley added that he tried to abstain from philosophical speculations, intricate reasonings, and technical terms. Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 88-89.

<sup>167</sup>Richard P. Heitzenrater, “John Wesley’s Principles and Practice of Preaching,” *Methodist History* 37, no. 2 (January 1999): 102-3.

<sup>168</sup>Physician, lay preacher, and biographer, John Whitehead (1740?-1804) preached John Wesley’s funeral. A portion of Whitehead’s discourse described Wesley’s sermons. Wesley’s sermons were short, no more than thirty minutes and each subject he chose was instructive and interesting to his audience, as well as gained their attention and warmed their heart. Whitehead’s discourse is found in Richard Watson, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1836), 292-301.

<sup>169</sup>John Wesley, “Letter to John Burton, October 10, 1735,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Baker, 25:439.

<sup>170</sup>William Abraham, “Wesley as Preacher,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, 99.

words in a “highly finished sermon.”<sup>171</sup> He noticed the people did not understand what he spoke of because their mouths were agape. He decided to mark out some of the more challenging words and began to notice their mouths were now half open.<sup>172</sup> Later in life, he reflected on the lesson he learned as a young man of using a simple writing and speaking style. In a letter to Rev. Samuel Furly in 1764, he noted this event: “Quickly obliged me to alter my style and adopt the language of those I spoke to. And yet there is a dignity in this simplicity, which is not disagreeable to those of the highest rank.”<sup>173</sup>

Throughout Wesley’s ministry and travels, he continued to keep his resources and sermons simple enough for all readers and listeners.<sup>174</sup> This aspect of Wesley’s ministry is revealed in the Scripture selection—he encouraged his preachers to choose the plainest texts possible.<sup>175</sup> He believed the plain and simple Scriptures were the ones to demonstrate best the analogy of faith—the truth of salvation running through the Scriptures from beginning to end.<sup>176</sup>

### **John Wesley’s Influence on the Church**

Multiple individuals and experiences touched John Wesley’s life. As mentioned, the influence of his mother and father especially made an impact on his writings and choices in life. Further, Scripture itself and the use of simple messages

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<sup>171</sup>John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (London: Epworth, 1947), 315.

<sup>172</sup>*Ibid.*, 316-17.

<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*, 258. John Wesley, “Letter to Rev. Samuel Furley, July 15, 1764,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley: Tracts and Letters*, 252-53. The letter is titled, “On a Good Style.” He wrote to Furley on the importance of using a simple style when writing or speaking: “Here is style! How clear; how pure, proper, strong, and yet how amazingly easy!”

<sup>174</sup>Harper, “Wesley’s Sermons as Spiritual Formation Documents,” 134-35.

<sup>175</sup>John Wesley, *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences 1*, no. 38 (London: John Mason, 1862), 38, 527. Wesley taught his preachers to choose the plainest texts possible and not to ramble when delivering the message. The preachers were taught to stick to the text and to suit the subject to the audience.

<sup>176</sup>Heitzenrater, “John Wesley’s Principles and Practice of Preaching,” 89-106.

based on practical living influenced the style and content Wesley contributed. Through these things, Wesley's writings and actions made an enormous contribution to the church and denomination.

The Holy Club, which Wesley founded in college, became the basis for future evangelistic works. One of the members, George Whitefield (1714–1770), applied the lessons he learned from the club throughout England. Ten years later, Wesley led large crowds in open air preaching revivals. Field preaching became a way for many in England to be awakened to the message of the gospel.<sup>177</sup> The process also involved moving from one town to another using a series of sermons.<sup>178</sup>

The term Methodist became synonymous with one who preached in the Whitefield and Wesley way. The message they brought to towns was salvation by grace through faith. Their medium was preaching, in particular, preaching outside of churches. The combination of message and medium established an international movement that

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<sup>177</sup>John Wesley learned of open-air or field preaching from his friend, George Whitefield. It became a logical solution for Wesley's predicament of being forbidden to preach inside many churches. He dealt with critics by stating, "I had no leisure or design to preach in the open air, til after this prohibition . . . Field-preaching was therefore a sudden expedient, a thing submitted to, rather than chosen; and therefore submitted to, because I thought preaching even thus, better than not preaching at all." John Wesley, "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Cragg, 11:178. Further, field preaching was an avenue for John to reach people who would not typically enter churches. Ten years before his death, John remembered his traveling years: "Being thus excluded from the churches, and not daring to be silent, it remained only to preach in the open-air; which I did at first, not out of choice, but necessity; but I have since seen abundant reason to adore the wise providence of God therein, making a way for myriads of people who never troubled any church, nor were likely to do so, to hear that word which they soon found to be the power of God unto salvation." John Wesley, "A Short History of the People Called Methodists," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 7:349. For more on Wesley's open-air preaching, see William Parkes, "John Wesley: Field Preacher," *Methodist History* 30, no. 4 (July 1992): 217-34.

<sup>178</sup>Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life*, 341; Parkes, "John Wesley: Field Preacher," 221-24. The overarching message of Wesley's sermons was "to save that which is lost," and "to compel them to come in." John Wesley, "Minutes," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Emory, 5:212. The method was "(1) To invite, (2) To convince, (3) To offer Christ; (4) To build up; and to do this . . . in every sermon." Wesley, "Minutes," *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Emory, 5:224. Wesley used five sermon series. Series 1 contained fifty-three discourses; series 2 contained fifty-five discourses; series 3 consisted of eighteen sermons; series 4 contained seven sermons; and series 5 was comprised of eight discourses. W. L. Doughty, *John Wesley: Preacher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1955), 84.



became Methodism. The movement spread rapidly as people began demanding to hear Methodist preachers.<sup>179</sup> As momentum grew, Wesley and Whitefield no longer needed to promote the revivals. Rather, Wesley began working in a leadership role. He used his talents as a networker and organizer, directing the revivals into systems and patterns that would endure.<sup>180</sup> He also established some guidelines for lay ministers, including, to “be ashamed of nothing but sin.”<sup>181</sup> Wesley established small groups, which offered accountability and attention from a leader of a small number of people. Further, as the ministry grew he began to ordain ministers and send them out as missionaries.<sup>182</sup> The Methodist movement saw rapid growth, and Wesley helped bring order and focus.

### **John Wesley’s Wisdom with Age**

As Wesley grew older, his writings reflect the wisdom he gained throughout his life. His journals reflect the compassion and understanding that he gained with age. In a letter to young Samuel Furly, he writes, “The longer I live, the larger allowances I make for human infirmities. I exact more from myself, and less from others.”<sup>183</sup>

Though Wesley grew in wisdom, certain convictions remained consistent throughout his life. At the age of 75, John writes in his journal, “Forty years ago, I knew and preached every Christian doctrine which I preach now.”<sup>184</sup> He explained in his

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<sup>179</sup>Sanders, *Wesley and the Christian Life*, 36.

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup>Wesley, “Minutes,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Emory, 5:219. Wesley desired his preachers to turn away from the wickedness of the world in order to preserve their conscience. He wrote that they should avoid offense with God and man.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>183</sup>John Wesley, “Letter to Samuel Furly, January 25, 1762,” in *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (repr., London: Epworth, 1960) 4:169.

<sup>184</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, September 1, 1778,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 4:185.

journal that some sermons from years past would not be any better if he were to write them again years later.<sup>185</sup>

Wesley was determined to share his knowledge with as many as possible for as long as possible. As much as he was physically able, Wesley continued to travel and visit various societies in multiple cities, even in his old age. His journals reveal a reflective tone as he traveled from town to town.<sup>186</sup> His journals also reveal that his physical body weakened with age, but he continued to write. At age 85 he writes, “I am not conscious of any decay in writing sermons, which I do as readily, and I believe, as correctly, as ever.”<sup>187</sup> Shortly before his death he penned,

I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning; I have a lingering fever almost every day; my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labor: I can preach and write still.<sup>188</sup>

In his last journal entry, Wesley reflected on his final message: “I enforced that important truth, ‘One thing is needful’; and I hope many, even then, resolved to choose the better part.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup>Wesley, “Journal Entry, September 1, 1778,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 4:185.

<sup>186</sup>Wesley writes, “I preached at noon in the High-street of Helstone, at the largest and most serious congregation which I ever remember to have seen there.” John Wesley, “Journal Entry, August 19, 1789,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 4:729. A few days later, he writes, “I preached there [Redruth] again in the morning, and in the evening in the amphitheater; I suppose for the last time.” John Wesley, “Journal Entry, August 23, 1789,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 4:729.

<sup>187</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, June 28, 1788,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 4:427.

<sup>188</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, January 1, 1790,” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Emory, 4:735.

<sup>189</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, October 24, 1790,” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Emory, 4:750.

## CHAPTER 3

### JOHN WESLEY'S TEACHINGS IN PRACTICE

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role of Scripture in John Wesley's vision for the religious education of the laity, especially for families and children. A review of a sampling of Wesley's letters, poems, tracts, sermons, and other published materials show Wesley's emphasis on the importance of Scripture for both the home and the church.

#### **Religion and Education**

John Wesley's ministry to people reached beyond preaching; his ministry extended into the educational field.<sup>1</sup> Wesley believed in the education of all people, regardless of age, gender, or socioeconomic standing. Wesley was himself a man of letters and he prized literacy among adults and children and provided resources, such as a Bible, *Common-Prayer Book*, or '*Whole Duty of Man*.'<sup>2</sup> Wesley's desire was to further a person's ability to read and to offer religious materials among the Methodists, also among the general populace, including the lower and middle classes.<sup>3</sup> He encouraged his preachers and the laity to keep written journals and engage in correspondence,

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<sup>1</sup>G. M. Best believed John Wesley was as much an educator as he was a preacher. G. M. Best, "Education from a Methodist Perspective," 1, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/education-amethodistperspective-270312.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>John Wesley and the Holy Club received opposition in their ministry to the poor and prisoners. In response, they devised a series of questions to support their grounds for ministry to such individuals. This particular question asks, "Whether we may not give them, if they can read, a Bible, Common-Prayer Book, or '*Whole Duty of Man*'?" John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. Thomas Jackson (London: John Mason, 1837), 1:1:10.

<sup>3</sup>Vicki Tolar Burton, "John Wesley and the Liberty to Speak: The Rhetorical and Literacy Practices of Early Methodism," *College Composition and Communication* 53, no. 1 (September 2001): 67.

consequently through publication, they may reach a wider audience.<sup>4</sup> In a letter to fellow minister George Holder, he wrote, “It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people.”<sup>5</sup> Wesley believed that reading was so important that he could proclaim that “the work of grace would die out in one generation if the Methodists were not a reading people.”<sup>6</sup> Vicki Tolar Burton credits the success of Wesley’s literacy project to his method of combining instruction in reading, writing, and speaking with faith in one’s self.<sup>7</sup>

Wesley provided resources for all kinds of people, making them available to pastors, teachers, and laity, including women. He published a variety of reasonably priced materials, such as books, pamphlets, journals, hymnals, and catechisms.<sup>8</sup> Harper believes there was a direct correlation between his large amount of published materials and his desire for these documents to be seen as resources for spiritual formation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Henry H. Knight III, “Consider Wesley: Wesley and Lay Leadership,” accessed February 21, 2017, <http://www.catalystresources.org/consider-wesley-51/>.

<sup>5</sup>John Wesley, “Letter to George Holder, November 8, 1790,” in *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (repr., London: Epworth, 1960), 8:247.

<sup>6</sup>Wesley, *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Telford (1931), 1:xv.

<sup>7</sup>Burton, “John Wesley and the Liberty to Speak,” 88; John Wesley, “Witness of the Spirit, I, Sermon 10,” in *John Wesley’s Sermons*, ed. Albert Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, 145-55; John Wesley, “Witness of the Spirit, II, Sermon 11,” in *John Wesley’s Sermons*, ed. Outler and Heitzenrater, 393-404. Burton’s view is that as Wesley taught people to believe in the witness of their own spirit, they found reason to read, write, and speak aloud of their personal experience with God. I agree with Burton that Wesley succeeded in helping people find motivation to continue their literacy endeavors. While I had not considered her particular angle of his success, I would agree with Burton that this combination proved fruitful to Wesley’s literacy project.

<sup>8</sup>Some of Wesley’s resources included “Rules for Preaching,” “John Wesley’s Select Hymns,” “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” the *Arminian Magazine*, “Directions for Congregational Singing,” and “Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture.”

<sup>9</sup>Steve Harper, “Wesley’s Sermons as Spiritual Formation Documents,” *Methodist History* 26, no. 3 (April 1988): 132. Steve Harper did a study linking John Wesley’s sermons as spiritual formation documents. Harper’s findings reveal that Wesley published his documents as a means of enriching and nurturing the spiritual life of his readers.

The education he offered adults through various resources centered on helping them recognize their failings and helping them become more self-disciplined in order to gain right habits.<sup>10</sup> Wesley encouraged people through his writings and sermons to cultivate holy habits or spiritual disciplines. His passion for teaching such habits stemmed from his belief that these disciplines were means or channels of God's grace. Some of the habits he taught included avoiding evil, doing good,<sup>11</sup> prayer (private, family, public, and consisting of deprecation, petition, intercession and thanksgiving),<sup>12</sup> searching the Scriptures by reading, meditating, and hearing,<sup>13</sup> Christian conferencing<sup>14</sup> (including discussing information one has read with others), participating in communion, and fasting.

Wesley continually tied religion and education together, believing the two were mutually dependent.<sup>15</sup> He realized that in order to witness permanent results from his public preaching, he must unite education with religion.<sup>16</sup> Thus, he required his ministers to spend five hours a day in study.<sup>17</sup> Another way he fostered lasting results

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<sup>10</sup>Best, "Education from a Methodist Perspective," 2-7.

<sup>11</sup>John Wesley, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies 1743," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. John Emory (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 191.

<sup>12</sup>John Wesley, "On Zeal, Sermon 92," in *John Wesley's Sermons*, ed. Outler and Heitzenrater, 465-74.

<sup>13</sup>John Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament: Genesis to Ruth* (Bristol, England: William Pine, 1765), 8.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Elmer Towns, "John Wesley and Religious Education," *Religious Education* 65, no. 4 (July-August 1970): 321.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>John Wesley's instruction to his preachers involved extensive, daily study. He asked them to "read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly." He taught them to develop a taste for reading, like St. Paul. When his preachers did not have adequate books, he gave them "books to the value of five pounds." John Wesley, *Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. John Wesley, M. A., and Others, From the Year 1744, to the Year 1789* (London: John Mason, 1830), 315.

among the converts from his revivals was by tying education with religion through Wesleyan society and class meetings.<sup>18</sup> Howard Snyder remarks,

The class meeting . . . became the sustainer of Methodist renewal over many decades. The movement was in fact a whole series of sporadic and often geographically localized revivals which were interconnected and spread by the society and class network, rather than one continuous wave of revival which swept the country. . . . Without the class meeting, the scattered fires of renewal would have burned out long before the movement was able to make deep impact on the nation.<sup>19</sup>

Wesley explained education with this comparison: “As the only end of a physician is, to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state.”<sup>20</sup> Further, he believed and educators’ responsibility is to help their pupils “discover every false judgment of [their] minds, and to subdue every wrong passion in [their] hearts.”<sup>21</sup> He felt that if the world was taking education seriously, then Christians should all the more.<sup>22</sup>

Wesley and the early Methodists took a keen interest in the education of children. In Sermon 95, “On the Education of Children,” Wesley contrasted secular education with Christian teaching:

Education under Pythagoras or Socrates had no other end, but to teach children to think and act as Pythagoras and Socrates did. And is it not reasonable to suppose that a Christian education should have no other end but to teach them how to think, and judge, and act according to the strictest rules of Christianity? At least one would suppose . . . the teaching them to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity,—in such abstinence, humility, sobriety, and devotion as Christianity

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<sup>18</sup>Towns, “John Wesley and Religious Education,” 321.

<sup>19</sup>Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1980), 57.

<sup>20</sup>John Wesley, “On the Education of Children, Sermon 95,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 3:347-60.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>John Wesley modeled to Christians the importance of valuing children and giving them an education in a manner that set an example to the world.

requires,—should not only be more, but a hundred time more, regarded that nay or all things else.<sup>23</sup>

In particular, Wesley and the Methodists were concerned about the children of the poor. Catherine Stonehouse explains, “They invested in caring for the whole child, physically, socially, mentally, and spiritually.”<sup>24</sup> Wesley sought to try to do good to the less fortunate by “having their children clothed and taught to read.”<sup>25</sup> He also believed it best to begin educating children as early as possible:

Scripture, reason, and experience, jointly testify, that inasmuch as the corruption of nature is earlier than our instructions can be, we should take all pains and care, to counteract this corruption, as early as possible. The bias of nature is set the wrong way: Education is designed to set it right.<sup>26</sup>

To teach children early, Wesley directed his pastors to train parents in leading their children spiritually. He quickly learned that many parents lacked the necessary resources to provide any form of education for their children, let alone a spiritual education.<sup>27</sup> Further, illiteracy was widespread among children and adults, especially those of the poorer classes, and they had little religious instruction.<sup>28</sup>

## **Christian Schools**

In response to these circumstances, Wesley opened boarding schools with an emphasis on religious education. Wesley began his most famous school, the Kingswood

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<sup>23</sup>Wesley, “On the Education of Children, Sermon 95,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:347-60.

<sup>24</sup>Catherine Stonehouse, “Children in Wesleyan Thought,” in *Children’s Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, ed. Donald Ratcliff (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004), 133.

<sup>25</sup>Wesley describes the less fortunate as those who were “naked, hungry, or sick.” Wesley, *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, 1:129.

<sup>26</sup>John Wesley, “A Thought on the Manner of Educating Children,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Emory (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1853), 7:459.

<sup>27</sup>Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 226.

<sup>28</sup>Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 9.

School, on June 24, 1748, near Bristol, England.<sup>29</sup> This institution was intended to be, as Wesley stated, a “Christian school, such as would not disgrace the apostolic age.”<sup>30</sup> He sought transformation for the children.<sup>31</sup> One of the central goals of Wesley’s school entailed imparting wisdom and holiness to children by teaching them biblical principles. He states his goal as “forming the [children’s] minds, through the help of God, to wisdom and holiness, by instilling the principles of true religion, speculative and practical, and training them up in the ancient way, that they may be rational, Scriptural Christians.”<sup>32</sup> During the opening ceremonies for the school, Wesley’s message centered on Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Similar to the style in which Susanna taught her children, Wesley’s school strategically structured its day in a strict manner with reading and writing classes centered on religious texts. Wesley required students to read certain texts at Kingswood School, including, but not limited to, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Primitive Christianity*, *The Manners of the Ancient Christians*, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, and *Iliad*, as well as various books on subjects such as arithmetic, grammar, history, geography,

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<sup>29</sup>John Telford, “John Wesley’s School at Kingswood,” in *The Methodist Review*, ed. William V. Kelley (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1899), 81:410-20.

<sup>30</sup>Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* (London: G. Paramore, 1792), 281.

<sup>31</sup>Predominantly ministers’ children, between the ages of six and twelve, enrolled in Wesley’s new school. In a conversation at the Conference of 1748, Wesley said, “Our design is, with God’s assistance, to train up children in every branch of useful learning, from the very alphabet, till they are fit as to all acquired qualifications for the work of the ministry.” John Wesley, “A Short Account of the School in Kingswood, near Bristol,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 7:332-35. While his efforts to train children are to be commended, it is important to note the tension found between Wesley’s design of training children in a Christian School versus training and equipping parents to disciple their children in a family discipleship plan.

<sup>32</sup>John Wesley, “A Plain Account of Kingswood School,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 7:336-44.



English, French, Latin, Hebrew, and Greek.<sup>33</sup> The school's daily schedule was intense and rigorous. Children woke at 4:00 a.m. and they were not allowed to play, except for organized or productive activities, such as singing, walking, carpentry, or gardening.<sup>34</sup> Neither did Susanna allow loud talking or play during her children's learning hours.<sup>35</sup> Susanna explained, "Everyone was kept close to their business for the six hours of school."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Wesley stated, "The children ought never to be alone, but always in

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<sup>33</sup>Wesley was influenced by several books and religious authors. Many of the books that influenced him, he chose for the pupils of Kingswood School. Wesley abridged John Bunyan's classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*, in 1743. Geordan Hammond explains William Cave's *Primitive Christianity* as a model for revival in the church as it focused on practical piety practices of the early church Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21. Claude de Fleury's *The Manners of the Ancient Christians* is a source that some, such as Mark Weeter, feel affected Wesley the most, in Mark L. Weeter, *John Wesley's View and Use of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 16, 45. Claude de Fleury's *The Manners of the Ancient Christians* was originally published in 1682, and later translated to English in 1698. Deborah Madden explains that Wesley produced an abridged version of Fleury's work for his lay preachers and students at Kingswood School. Madden further describes the book and its disciplinary practices of the early church, in Deborah Madden, *A Cheap, Safe, and Natural Medicine: Religion, Medicine and Culture in John Wesley's Primitive Physic* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 78. William Law's *Christian Perfection* impacted Wesley to be wholeheartedly devoted to God, as described in Kevin Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda: A New Paradigm for Wesleyan Virtue Ethics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 86 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 136. Homer's *Iliad* fascinated Wesley—he was intrigued with the "vein of piety" running through the piece despite the pagan practices, as described in John Wesley, "Journal Entry, August 12, 1748," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* (London: John Mason, 1829), 2:108. For more on this topic see John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Kingswood School," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 7:336-44; John Wesley, ed., *The Manners of the Ancient Christians*, extracted from French author Claude de Fleury (Bristol, England: Farley, 1749); Randy L. Maddox, "The Rule of Christian Faith, Practice, and Hope: John Wesley on the Bible," *Methodist Review* 3 (2011): 9.

<sup>34</sup>The Kingswood School schedule was as follows: wake, private reading and prayer at 4:00 a.m.; public religious service at 5:00 a.m.; breakfast at 6:00 a.m.; school at 7:00 a.m.; walking or working (working involved carpentry or gardening) at 11:00 a.m.; lunch, which they refer to as "supper" at 12:00 p.m.; school from 1:00 until 5:00 p.m.; private prayer at 5:00 p.m.; walking or working at 6:00 p.m.; dinner at 7:00 p.m.; bedtime at 8:00 p.m. Telford, "John Wesley's School at Kingswood," 410-20; Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, M. A., Founder of the Methodists*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), 2:10; Richard P. Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and Children," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia Bunge (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 289.

<sup>35</sup>The learning hours for Susanna's children were from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. Susanna Wesley, "Letter to John," in *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, ed. Charles Wallace, Jr. (New York: Oxford Press, 1997), 371.

<sup>36</sup>Susanna did not allow her children to run in the yard, garden, or street without supervision. *Ibid.*, 372.

the presence of a master.”<sup>37</sup> Also similar to Susanna’s style of educating children, the stewards of the school were to meet one-on-one with the parents and exhort them to “train them [their children] up at home in the ways of God.”<sup>38</sup> Wesley also explained of the school, “It is our particular desire, that all who are educated here may be brought up in the fear of God, and at the utmost distance, as from vice in general, so in particular from softness and effeminacy.”<sup>39</sup> The students who longed to attend were required to have already shown a desire to know God, and their parents needed to be in agreement with an intentional religious education for their child.<sup>40</sup> Wesley appears to have modeled the Kingswood School after the Charterhouse School he himself attended.<sup>41</sup>

Wesley had strict rules and required exemplary conduct to be followed by the students and teachers alike.<sup>42</sup> He believed teachers should tread in the same steps as the students, obeying and following the guidelines set in place. Over time, this model proved to be a great challenge for Wesley. With each visit and check back to the school, he often

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<sup>37</sup>John Wesley, “A Short History of the People Called Methodists,” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 7:345.

<sup>38</sup>It appears John Wesley tried to bridge his maternal education with his academic education when designing his Christian school. Further, Wesley combined academic study with religious study. In time, he noticed a change in children concerning their tempers and behavior. While they learned academic work, they were “instructed in the sound principles of religion, and earnestly exhorted to fear God and work out their own salvation.” John Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Emory, 5:189; John Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. James H. Potts (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1891), 27.

<sup>39</sup>In the early years of the school, Kingswood admitted both boys and girls. It was partly to provide education for his itinerant preachers. Later, John suggested the girls attend Miss Owen’s school at Publow. Wesley, “A Short Account of the School in Kingswood, near Bristol,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 7:332-35; John Lenton, *John Wesley’s Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 114; A. G. Ives, *Kingswood School in Wesley’s Day and Since* (Epworth, England: Epworth, 1970), 39; Clive Murray Norris, *The Financing of John Wesley’s Methodism c. 1740-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 192-4.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>John Fletcher Hurst and James Richard Joy, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of His Life and Work*, electronic ed. (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1903), 39-50.

<sup>42</sup>Stonehouse, “Children in Wesleyan Thought,” 146.

found the staff and students behaving in a manner he did not approve.<sup>43</sup> In the end, the Kingswood School did not accomplish Wesley's desired intent. The boarding school, which provided structured religious education, was still not, as Randy Maddox explains, "a sufficient answer to the need for supplementing family religious education."<sup>44</sup> However, the influence Wesley had on the Kingswood School continues. The school is still in operation today, in nearby Bath, England, in Somerset county. It is a coeducational, independent, boarding school still affiliated with the Methodist Denomination.<sup>45</sup>

### **Evangelism and Discipleship**

John believed in a correlation between education and evangelism. Gayle Carlton Felton believes education was important for Wesley because it was an avenue for people to be brought into conversion.<sup>46</sup> Further, Wesley believed education did not stop in one's teenage years; neither did Wesley feel education was merely academic, but rather an opportunity to train one in personal holiness and growth. Best explains Wesley's view on education as a "life-long process guided by the Holy Spirit towards personal and social holiness, and it was the best possible tool for evangelism, for training in godliness,

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<sup>43</sup>Telford, "John Wesley's School at Kingswood," 410-20.

<sup>44</sup>Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 226.

<sup>45</sup>John Lewis, a former pupil of the Kingswood School from 1947-1956, spoke of the changes he witnessed in the school through the years. When he attended, it was "a very stressful educational process though a lot of people were being encouraged who then got to Oxbridge; that was a main aim for many."<sup>45</sup> He came back later to serve on staff, and he noticed a few of the changes: "The school became co-ed, and people had to refer to the boys by their Christian name." He also credits his skills as a photographer to his beginnings in the Kingswood School's dark room. John Lewis, "A Conversation between John Lewis and Mary Wimpres," *Kingswood Association News* 10 (April 2014): 45; Kingswood School, accessed February 21, 2017, [www.kingswood.bath.sch.uk](http://www.kingswood.bath.sch.uk).

<sup>46</sup>Gayle Carlton Felton, "John Wesley and the Teaching Ministry: Ramifications for Education in the Church Today," *Religious Education* 92, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 95.

and for the betterment of society.”<sup>47</sup> In one letter, Wesley encouraged Mary Bishop, who operated schools for girls in the towns of Bath and Kenysham, England, to “make Christians, my dear sister, make Christians.”<sup>48</sup> Wesley believed the process of making Christians required conscientious teaching. During his lifetime, Wesley was diligent to not only preach the gospel but also to educate people with the goal of assisting them toward growth on their spiritual journey.

John Wesley was concerned about the spiritual growth and maturity of Christians, including their inward and outward holiness. Methodist theologian Albert Outler believed “John Wesley was the most important Anglican theologian of the eighteenth century because of his distinctive, composite answer to the age-old question as to the ‘nature of the Christian life’: its origins, growth, imperatives, social impact, final end.”<sup>49</sup> Wesley valued experience along with biblical truth.<sup>50</sup> Wesleyan scholar Henry H. Knight III considers Wesley’s “central concern was the Christian life.”<sup>51</sup> Outler, Knight, and others show that Wesley sought to affect a Christian’s life beyond biblical knowledge. He desired the Christian nature to change one’s actions. Wesley taught that Christians must live their lives in love, love for God and love for others. Wesley said, “Religion is the love of God and our neighbor, that is, every man under heaven.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Best, “Education from a Methodist Perspective,” 1.

<sup>48</sup>John Wesley, “Letter to Miss Bishop,” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. John Emory (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1853), 7:243.

<sup>49</sup>Albert C. Outler, “The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 78.

<sup>50</sup>Steve Harper explains that Wesley understood Christianity to be as “more a life to be lived, than a creed to be espoused.” Steve Harper, *The Way to Heaven: The Gospel according to John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 147.

<sup>51</sup>Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace*, ed. David Bundy and J. Steven O’Malley (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1992), 1.

<sup>52</sup>John Wesley, “The Important Question, Sermon 84,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed.

Wesley believed Christians need not merely speak of their faith, but they should also demonstrate their faith through loving acts of service. Sondra Wheeler writes, “For Wesley, the life of Christian discipleship simply is the life impelled by active and universal love.”<sup>53</sup> Leon Hynson adds, “Wesleyan social ethics is an ethic of love.”<sup>54</sup>

John worked to make the discipleship process seamless by keeping the resources simple. He was intentional about keeping the materials simple to help people comprehend the teachings. Wesley was familiar with the original Greek text, yet he desired to keep the words of interpretation simple enough for all people to understand.<sup>55</sup> Wesley made his notes “as short as possible” and “as plain as possible” and declined “going deep into many difficulties, lest I should leave the original reader behind me.”<sup>56</sup> In Wesley’s Commentary, *Notes on the Old Testament* he expressed, “It is not my design to write a book, which a man may read separate from the Bible: but barely to assist those who fear God, in hearing and reading the Bible itself, by shewing the natural sense of every part, in as few and plain words as I can.”<sup>57</sup> He also stated, “For I now write, as I generally speak, *ad populum* (‘to the bulk of mankind’).”<sup>58</sup> Though he was knowledgeable of Latin words and phrases, he did not seek to confound his discipleship

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Outler, 3:184-85.

<sup>53</sup>Sondra Wheeler, “John Wesley and Social Ethics,” *Project on Lived Theology*, September 2002, 2, accessed February 25, 2017, <http://www.livedtheology.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/20020900PPR.02-Sondra-Wheeler-John-Wesley-and-22Social-Ethics22-.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup>Leon O. Hynson, *To Reform a Nation: Theological Foundations of Wesley’s Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 56.

<sup>55</sup>John Wesley, preface to *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1754), 3-6.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>57</sup>Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8.

<sup>58</sup>John Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 88.

resources with complicated words.

I design plain truth for plain people. Therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations, from all perplexed and intricate reasonings and, as far as possible, from even the show of learning, unless in sometimes citing, the original Scriptures. I labor to avoid all words, which are not easy to be understood, all which are not used in common life and, in particular, those kinds of technical terms that so frequently occur in bodies of divinity.<sup>59</sup>

For this reason, Outler described John as a “folk theologian.”<sup>60</sup> He also referred to John as a “popularizer,”<sup>61</sup> or one who intentionally masked his education to identify with the poor. He was a “superbly educated Christian minister who used his considerable gifts to translate complicated theological discourse for the common people.”<sup>62</sup>

### Family and Children

Wesley held to the total depravity of all, including children, and this theology impelled his work to preach reconciliation through Christ.<sup>63</sup> Wesley believed all people are born with a sinful nature, apt to evil, alienated from God, and in need of God’s grace.<sup>64</sup> Because of his concern for people, and children in particular, Wesley provided resources intended to aid the spiritual formation of children. According to Wesley,

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<sup>59</sup>Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Outler., 88-89.

<sup>60</sup>Albert C. Outler, “John Wesley: Folk Theologian,” *Theology Today* 34, no. 2 (July 1977): 150.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>62</sup>John R. Tyson, “John Wesley Remembered-And More,” *Churchman* 117, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 201. Reverend A. Tooke (1673-1732), master of the Charterhouse School, noticed Wesley had this quality, even as a child. He observed that though Wesley was advanced in his studies, he continually associated with various individuals, no matter how much education they had. Wesley’s effort to eliminate ambiguous terms demonstrates his pastoral sensitivity as well as his social inclusiveness. James Lackington, *Memoirs of the First Forty-Five Years of the Life of James Lackington* (London: Lackington, 1792), 304-18; Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, M. A., Founder of the Methodists* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1870), 1:20.

<sup>63</sup>John Wesley, “Salvation by Faith 1738, Sermon 1,” in *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 39-48.

<sup>64</sup>John Owen Gross, *John Wesley, Christian Educator* (Nashville: The Methodist Church, Board of Education, 1954), 9.

children are “immortal spirits whom God hath for a time entrusted to [our] care, that [we] may train them up in all holiness, and fit them for the enjoyment of God in eternity. This is a glorious and important trust.”<sup>65</sup> Richard Heitzenrater writes of Wesley: “His primary concern for children was the same as his concern for the rest of humankind—to help them know and love God.”<sup>66</sup> Wesley gave specific instructions on how to teach children. He suggested speaking to children plainly, using words little children could understand, and using illustrations from everyday life.<sup>67</sup>

Wesley understood the importance of religious training among children. However, it was not enough to offer a religious education for children, ages six through twelve, solely at school. Wesley wrote further of the impact parents have regarding their children’s spiritual formation. He knew the dynamic influence parents could have on shaping their children spiritually. Thus, he offered parents resources, such as pamphlets and sermons with information and suggestions on how and when to educate children in the home.<sup>68</sup> For example, the information Wesley provided to parents gave clear instructions on praying for their children, as well as starting the spiritual education process early with their children.<sup>69</sup> These resources aided parents in assisting their children toward spiritual growth. He trained parents to take the lead role in their children’s religious education and daily to teach them important biblical truths.

One of the ways John instructed parents was by admonishing them to break their children’s will. He insisted, “A wise parent . . . should begin to break their will the

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<sup>65</sup>John Wesley, “On Family Religion, Sermon 94,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:336-43.

<sup>66</sup>Heitzenrater, “John Wesley and Children,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Bunge, 298.

<sup>67</sup>Wesley, “On Family Religion,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:336-43.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 336-43.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*

first moment it appears. In the whole art of Christian education, there is nothing more important than this.”<sup>70</sup> Similar to his mother’s belief, Wesley preached, “Make them submit, that they may not perish. Break their will, that you may save their soul.”<sup>71</sup> While Wesley encouraged parents to begin nurturing their infants as soon as they could respond, he believed that some of the most significant formation takes place between the ages of six and twelve.<sup>72</sup>

Wesley understood the education of children as being a partnership between both parents and the church.<sup>73</sup> He realized the home was the first place a child would gain a religious education. Therefore, he trained parents to be the primary disciple makers in the home.<sup>74</sup> In a few of his published documents and sermons, he emphasized the training of children in the home, as well as the church.<sup>75</sup> These documents and sermons included “On the Education of Children,” “On Family Religion,” “A Thought on the Manner of Educating Children,” “Instructions for Children,” and “On Obedience to Parents.” Throughout these works, Wesley emphasized discipline and the significance

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<sup>70</sup>Wesley, “On the Education of Children,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:347-60.

<sup>71</sup>John Wesley, “On Obedience to Parents, Sermon 96,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:361-72.

<sup>72</sup>Stonehouse, “Children in Wesleyan Thought,” 147. Wesley’s thoughts concerning this particular age group could have been shaped by his observations at the Kingswood School of children who were most affected by the recurring revivals—those who received salvation were between the ages of six and fourteen years old. Towns, “John Wesley and Religious Education,” 324.

<sup>73</sup>Wesley did not use the more current and commonly used word “partnership,” although his writings reflect such a connection.

<sup>74</sup>In addition to training parents to lead their children in religious education, he also warned them of the consequence of neglect in this area: “What will the consequence be . . . if family religion be neglected? If care be not taken of the rising generation? Will not the present revival of religion in a short time die away? . . . The wickedness of the children is generally owing to the fault or neglect of their parents.” Wesley, “On Family Religion,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:336-43.

<sup>75</sup>Michelle Anthony and Kit Rae, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 206.



true religion had to a child's education.<sup>76</sup> He also stressed the parents' responsibility to instruct their children in the home.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, Wesley had works written specifically for children, including "Prayers for Children" and "Hymns for Children." The "Prayers for Children" provided prayers for use in both the morning and evening, as well as prayer before and after the meal.

He also understood that for children to continue to grow into spiritual maturity, the Christian community was also a necessity.<sup>78</sup> Wesley encouraged the inclusion of religious education to children among his ministers. He required his ministers to spend time teaching both the children and the adults in the home.<sup>79</sup> They were to conduct systematic visitations to the families, and they were to follow the teachings found in *The Reformed Pastor* by Puritan Richard Baxter (1615–1691).<sup>80</sup> In keeping with his mother's teaching method, the minister was to spend one-on-one time with each child in the home during the visit. The minister was to teach Wesley's catechism to every child under his charge.<sup>81</sup> Wesley provided instruction for the ministers to assist them during their with

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<sup>76</sup>Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and Children," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Bunge, 286.

<sup>77</sup>Not every parent utilized Wesley's published materials. Some parents responded by pointing out that Wesley had no children of his own. In 1738, Whitefield observed, "The only reason why so many neglect to read the words of Scripture diligently to their children is because the words of Scripture are not in their hearts, for if they were, out of the abundance of their heart their mouth would speak." George Whitefield, *Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield*, ed. John Gilles (New Haven, CT: Whitmore & Buckingham and H. Mansfield, 1834), 467.

<sup>78</sup>John Wesley's journals reflect his belief in the early conversion of children. John Wesley, "Journal Entry, June 8, 1784," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (1872; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 9:279; John Wesley, "Journal Entry, June 28, 1784," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 9:282-3; Ralph Fenwick, ed., *The Teacher's Assistant and Bible Class Magazine* (London: Primitive Methodist Book Depot, 1882), 41.

<sup>79</sup>Felton, "John Wesley and the Teaching Ministry," 103.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Methodist Episcopal Church, *A Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodists Episcopal Church in America* (New York: William Ross, 1787), 38. Although Methodists were not known as a confessional church, they used the catechetical method to help teach young people more about their faith and keep them from doctrinal error. James E. Kirby, Russell E. Rickey,

the children. For example, to ensure the child did not get too anxious, the minister was trained to answer the question for the child if he/she did not know the answer.<sup>82</sup>

However, following his partnership style of ministry to families, he not only offered the catechetical resource to ministers, but also to parents and educators. He instructed parents to teach the catechisms to their children.<sup>83</sup>

Wesley was personally known to enjoy the company of children. He was not opposed to children being in the meetings with the adults.<sup>84</sup> One of Wesley's neighbors in Bath, Mrs. Hughes, observed his interaction with children apart from the church. She often saw him calling for his carriage a half hour before he needed it. He would then give as many children as could fit in his carriage a pleasure ride.<sup>85</sup>

It is evident Wesley highly valued children and their spiritual formation. Wesley's journals indicate he taught groups of children on a regular basis during his ministerial career. He began this practice in Savannah, Georgia, where he ministered to colonists. His journal reads,

On Saturday, in the afternoon, I catechise them all. The same I do on Sunday, before the Evening Service. And in the church, immediately after the Second Lesson, a select number of them having repeated the Catechism, and been examined in some part of it, I endeavor to explain at large, and to enforce that part, both on them and the congregation.<sup>86</sup>

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and Kenneth E. Rowe, *The Methodists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), 168.

<sup>82</sup>John Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. John Wesley and Others," in *The Works of John Wesley: Addresses, Essays, Letters* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1997), 8:333.

<sup>83</sup>Kirby, Rickey, and Rowe, *The Methodists*, 168.

<sup>84</sup>Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. John Wesley and Others," in *The Works of John Wesley: Addresses, Essays, Letters*, 96.

<sup>85</sup>Robert Southey, *Southey's Commonplace Book, Fourth Series: Original Memoranda, Etc.* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851), 672.

<sup>86</sup>John Wesley, "Journal Entry, February 24, 1737," in *The Works of John Wesley: Journal and Diaries I (1735-1738)*, ed. Richard Heitzenrater and W. Reginald Ward (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988). While in Georgia, the catechism he used was *Westminster's Shorter Catechism*. He later abridged this work, making it more appropriate for young children. The first edition was *Wesley's Revision of the Shorter*

According to his journals, he continued to teach children upon his return to England. He further encouraged ministry to children by promoting and supporting the ministry of Sunday school. He firmly believed teaching children spiritual truths should begin early. He wrote,

But does it follow, that we ought not to instill true religion into the minds of children as early as possible? Or rather that we should do it, with all diligence, from the very time that reason dawns? Laying line upon line, precept upon precept, as soon and as fast as they are able to bear it? By all means.<sup>87</sup>

Wesley strove to encourage the use of catechisms by writing his own.<sup>88</sup> He named his catechism *Instructions for Children*, as one of three books to be given to every Methodist home.<sup>89</sup> This book was to serve as the chief textbook in the religious education of children in Methodist homes.<sup>90</sup> Wesley's preachers were to study, teach, distribute, and encourage its use.<sup>91</sup> Parents, especially mothers, were encouraged to teach the catechism to their children and all living in the home.<sup>92</sup> Its intention was to offer theological content and to teach foundational truths in a simple format. The goal was for children to "distinguish Good and Evil."<sup>93</sup> Part 1 was a sixty-question catechism arranged into nine

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*Catechism*. A later edition was Wesley's *Instructions for Children*.

<sup>87</sup>John Wesley, "The Manner of Educating Children," in *Living Thoughts of John Wesley*, ed. James H. Potts (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1891), 459.

<sup>88</sup>John Wesley, "Instructions for Children," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 7:339.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid. The two additional books were John Wesley, *The Primitive Physic* (London: Barr & Co., 1843); and Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1871).

<sup>90</sup>Felton, "John Wesley and the Teaching Ministry," 92-105.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Kirby, Richey, and Rowe, *The Methodists*, 168.

<sup>93</sup>John Wesley, "Instructions for Children," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Emory, 7:339.

lessons, adapted from the work of Claude de Fleury (1640-1723).<sup>94</sup> Lessons 1 and 2 explained the nature of God; lessons 3 and 4 taught Creation and Fall; Lessons 5 through 7 focused on the evangelical nature; while lessons 8 and 9 showed the means of grace—The Lord’s Supper, prayer, searching the Scriptures, fasting, and Christian conference.<sup>95</sup> Next, Part 2 moved beyond question and answer to lessons on God and the human soul, as well as how to regulate passions and practices, which was translated and abridged from the work of Pierre Poiret (1646—1719).<sup>96</sup> Wesley relied on the standard catechism of the Church of England, published in the *Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>97</sup> Wesley also spent time revising the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.<sup>98</sup> Besides making changes to approximately ten of the questions and answers, he also added scriptural references to all of the answers.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid. Claude Fleury was a French church historian. He published a catechetical work entitled *A Short Historical Catechism*, in 1683. Claude Fleury, *A Short Historical Catechism, Containing a Summary of Sacred History, and Christian Doctrine*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (1683; Brugis, Brugge, Belgium: F. Van Eeck and Fils, 1805). His document is simple, thorough, and Scripture-focused. It has been translated in several languages and printed into many editions. Wesley and others have patterned their liturgical renewal efforts after Fleury’s work. Raymond E. Wanner, *Claude Fleury (1640—1723) as an Educational Historiographer and Thinker* (The Hague, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 249; Trevor A. Hart, ed., *The Dictionary of Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 278.

<sup>95</sup>Kirby, Richey, and Rowe, *The Methodists*, 168.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid. Pierre Poiret was a French mystic and Christian philosopher, and wrote *The True Principles of the Christian Education of Children Briefly and Plainly Declared and Recommended to Parents and All Others Concerned in the Institution of Youth. Very Profitable for All Sorts of Persons, as Containing the Great and Fundamental Truths and Duties of the Christian Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Edinburgh: John Reid, 1695).

<sup>97</sup>Kirby, Richey, and Rowe, *The Methodists*, 169.

<sup>98</sup>The reason Wesley abridged the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* is that he felt it was “utterly improper for children of six or seven years old.” His revised work can be found in *Instructions for Children*. John Wesley, “Letter to Miss B---, December 26, 1776,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (New York: J & J Harper, 1827), 10:324; Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley*, 1:433; Kirby, Richey, and Rowe, *The Methodists*, 174.

<sup>99</sup>Herbert McGonigle, “Wesley’s Revision of the Shorter Catechism,” *Preacher’s Magazine* 56, no. 1 (1980): 59-63.

In “On Obedience to Parents,” Wesley provided a biblical perspective to children on their responsibility to obey their parents. Colossians 3:20 is the basis for the teaching. Wesley did not exclude parents from this teaching. Rather, he likewise challenged parents to live an exemplary Christian life.

In Wesley’s “On Family Religion,” he advised parents to instruct their children “early, plainly, frequently, and patiently.”<sup>100</sup> He understood that for children to be obedient, they first needed the motivation of trust. Obedience required teachings by parents or teachers who had embraced an obedient, faithful life, and taught in love through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.<sup>101</sup> Wesley taught and expected parents and teachers to adhere to the teachings and lifestyle in which they were calling children. He desired a genuine faith to be evident in the life of the parents.

Wesley was particular concerning the manner in which he wanted parents to teach their children. It was not only important for Wesley *what* children learned, but *how* they learned it. For instance, he wrote,

I cannot but earnestly entreat you to take good heed how you teach these deep things of God. Beware of that common, but accursed way of making children parrots, instead of Christians. Labour that, as far as it is possible, they may understand every single sentence which they read. Therefore do not make haste. Regard not how much, but how well, to how good purpose, they read. Turn each sentence every way; propose it in every light; and question them continually on every point: if by any means they may not only read, but inwardly digest, the words of eternal life.<sup>102</sup>

One of the themes Wesley admonished parents to teach their child was to live a simple and modest lifestyle. He wrote,

Inspire them early with a contempt of all finery . . . teaching them [a love for] plainness and modesty. . . . Instill into them, as early as possible, a fear and dread of

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<sup>100</sup>Wesley, “On Family Religion,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:336-43.

<sup>101</sup>Colleen R. Derr, “The Role of Obedience in Child Faith Formation: Insights from the Teachings and Practices of John Wesley,” *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 2 (September 2014): 380.

<sup>102</sup>Wesley, “Instructions for Children,” 7:522.

pomp and grandeur, an abhorrence and dread of the love of money, and a deep conviction, that riches cannot give happiness.<sup>103</sup>

For Wesley, value should be placed on the quality of relationships. He believed children received the most value from important life lessons as parents taught them to their children.

Besides the published material that Wesley produced to engage the spiritual formation of children, there were also references to children in his journals. In 1779, after preaching in Lowestoft, he wrote of the “great awakening, especially among youth and children; several of whom, between twelve and sixteen years of age.”<sup>104</sup> Again, in 1784, he wrote of children in relationship to revivals: “God begins his work in children. Thus, it has been in Cornwall, Manchester, and Epworth. Thus the flames spread to those of riper years; till at length they all know him, and praise him from the least unto the greatest.”<sup>105</sup>

### **Hymns That Teach**

More than a decade before John Wesley traveled to Herrnhut, Germany, to meet with the Moravians, they experienced a spiritual awakening.<sup>106</sup> As Count Zinzendorf (1700–1760) proclaimed, August 13, 1727, was “a day of the outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation; it was its Pentecost.”<sup>107</sup> During the awakening, a

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<sup>103</sup>Wesley, “On the Education of Children,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:347-60.

<sup>104</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, February 18, 1779,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. W. Reginald Ward (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 23:117. He visited Lowestoft multiple times. His journals displayed a fond connection to the locality and stated that the people of Lowestoft “stood firm since the beginning” and were a “steady, loving, united society.” John Wesley, “Journal Entry, February 23, 1779,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Ward, 23:117; John Wesley, “Journal Entry, February 27, 1779,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Ward, 23:117.

<sup>105</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, June 8, 1784,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Ward, 23:315.

<sup>106</sup>A. Kenneth Curtis, “A Golden Summer,” Zinzendorf: The Ecumenical Pioneer, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://zinzendorf.com/pages/index.php?id=a-golden-summer>. This article was originally published in *Glimpses* from Christian History Institute.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

twelve-year-old girl, named Anna Nitschmann (1715–1760), was deeply affected.<sup>108</sup> She dedicated her life to the Lord’s service, and immediately organized a group or club for young women to meet for worship and ministry.<sup>109</sup> Many noticed her godly leadership and dedication, and she was nominated and voted as the Chief Eldress at the age of fourteen.<sup>110</sup> Anna wrote and published more than thirty hymns in the Moravians’ German hymnal. It was during John Wesley’s visit to Herrnhut in August of 1738 that Wesley discovered the Moravians’ technique for teaching children.<sup>111</sup> He witnessed the Moravians teaching their children through the means of their hymns, and it made an impression upon him.<sup>112</sup> He learned that written within their constitution are the words, “Our little children we instruct chiefly by hymns; whereby we find the most important truths most successfully insinuated into their minds.”<sup>113</sup>

John mirrored the technique of the Moravians by creating his personal set of hymns. In his preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists*, he referenced the collection as being “large enough to contain all the truths of our most holy religion.”<sup>114</sup> Also, in the preface, Wesley explained that he accomplished his goal for the

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<sup>108</sup>A. Kenneth Curtis, “The Young and the Tireless,” Zinzendorf: The Ecumenical Pioneer, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://zinzendorf.com/pages/index.php?id=a-golden-summer>. This article was originally published in *Glimpses* from Christian History Institute.

<sup>109</sup>Curtis, “The Young and the Tireless.”

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

<sup>111</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, August 1738,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Heitzenrater and Ward, 18:275-96.

<sup>112</sup>Though Wesley learned much from the Moravians, two years later they made a break from one another. The break occurred over doctrinal differences, as explained by George Wolfgang Forell in his “Introduction” of Nicholas Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion*, ed. George Wolfgang Forell (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), xv.

<sup>113</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, August 1738,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Heitzenrater and Ward, 18:296.

<sup>114</sup>John Wesley, preface to *A Collection of Hymns, for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (London: John Mason, 1779), 3.

collection of making it neither cumbersome nor expensive.<sup>115</sup> Since his hymnbooks were easily accessible, all could utilize them at home and church. The repetition of doctrine in musical format allowed the truth to be learned and memorized by people of all ages and socioeconomic standing. Together, Wesley and his brother Charles published a collection of hymns specifically for children entitled, *Hymns for Children*.<sup>116</sup> The purpose in writing these hymns was to (1) teach right doctrine, (2) shape spiritual experience and (3) inspire worship.<sup>117</sup> The inspiration and teachings from the hymns were found in Wesley's work, *Instructions for Children*, which offered catechetical training for children.<sup>118</sup> Wesley added a preface to the reprint version in 1790. Within this preface, Wesley's wrote about his desire to teach children and witness their spiritual growth:

There are two ways of writing or speaking to children: the one is to let ourselves down to them, the other to lift them up to us. Dr. Watts has wrote on the former way, and has succeeded admirably well speaking to children as children, and leaving them as he found them. The following hymns are written on the other plan. They contain strong and manly sense, yet expressed in such plain and easy language as even children may understand. But when they do understand them they will be children no longer, only in years and in stature.<sup>119</sup>

Several doctrinal themes emerge from the Wesleys' hymns. Christian living is one of the

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>John Wesley, *Hymns for Children* (London: New Chapel, 1790), accessed September 5, 2016, [https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cswt/34\\_Hymns\\_for\\_Children\\_%281787%29\\_mod.pdf](https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cswt/34_Hymns_for_Children_%281787%29_mod.pdf). In 1747, Wesley published a short volume of *Hymns for Children*. In 1763, his brother Charles published a longer version of *Hymns for Children*. Later, in 1787, Wesley, most likely, released an abridged version of the 1763 version.

<sup>117</sup>Randall McElwain, "No Room for Mirth or Trifling Here: Theological and Spiritual Instruction in Charles Wesley's *Hymns for Children*" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Evangelical Theological Society, Atlanta, November 17, 2015), 3-8.

<sup>118</sup>John Wesley's 1745 *Instructions for Children* was translated and abridged from the works of French Catholic ecclesiastical historian, Claude Fleury and Pierre Poiret. For more information on Fleury and Poiret's influence on Wesley's works, see Randy L. Maddox, "Editorial Introduction," in John Wesley, *Hymns for Children (1747)*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Durham, NC: Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition, 2008), 1; Maddox, "The Rule of Christian Faith, Practice, and Hope," 9; Wanner, *Claude Fleury (1640-1723)*, 252-53; Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34-35, 49.

<sup>119</sup>John Wesley, preface to *Hymns for Children* (1790), iii.



themes found in the hymns.<sup>120</sup> Charles poetically took Wesley's catechetical teachings and set them to music. For instance, John wrote about the struggle between the believer's will and God's will. Charles then took Wesley's writings and added poetry. Together, Charles and John endeavored to teach children to live a godly life. Charles and John agreed that godly living required children to submit their will to their parents first, and then to God.<sup>121</sup>

Children and family was another theme that emerged from the Wesleys' hymns. John published Nonconformist and contemporary Philip Doddridge's (1702–1751) hymn that was written specifically for family religion. It includes four stanzas.

1. Father, of all, thy care we bless,  
Which crowns our families with peace:  
From thee they spring; and by thy hand  
They are, and shall he still sustained.
2. To God, most worthy to be praised,  
Be our domestic altars raised;  
Who, Lord of heaven, yet designs to come,  
And sanctify our humblest home.
3. To thee may each united house  
Morning and night present its vows;  
Our servants there, and rising race,  
Be taught thy precepts, and thy grace.
4. So may each future age proclaim  
The honors of thy glorious name;  
And each succeeding race remove  
To join the family of above.<sup>122</sup>

Likewise, Hymn no. 137 was written for fathers who strive to set a godly example for their family. It has six stanzas. Stanzas 1, 2, and 4 are especially relevant.

1. I and my house will serve the Lord,

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<sup>120</sup>McElwain, "No Room for Mirth or Trifling Here," 13.

<sup>121</sup>McElwain, "No Room for Mirth or Trifling Here," 13.

<sup>122</sup>Philip Doddridge, "Family Religion," Hymn no. 739, in *A Collection of Hymns*, 667-68. Doddridge originally published this hymn as "God's Gracious Approbation of a Religious Care of our Families" in his *Hymns Founded on Various Texts in the Holy Scriptures*, 1755. The hymn is also titled "Family Prayer," accessed February 27, 2018, [https://hymnary.org/text/father\\_of\\_all\\_thy\\_care\\_we\\_bless](https://hymnary.org/text/father_of_all_thy_care_we_bless).

But first, obedient to His Word,  
I must myself appear,  
By actions, words, and tempers show  
That I my heavenly Master know,  
And serve with heart sincere.

2. I must the fair example set,  
From those who on my pleasure wait  
The stumbling-block remove;  
Their duty by my life explain,  
And still in all my works maintain  
The dignity of love.

4. Lord, if thou didst't the wish infuse,  
A vessel fitted for thy use  
Into thy hands receive;  
Work in me both to will, and do,  
And show them how believers true,  
And real Christians live.<sup>123</sup>

### Means of Grace

Wesley used the phrase “means of grace” in reference to specific spiritual disciplines. He explained, “By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or saving grace.”<sup>124</sup> For Wesley, these “means of grace” included (1) prayer, (2) searching the Scriptures, (3) the Lord’s Supper, (4) fasting, and (5) Christian conference.<sup>125</sup> Of the five practices, Wesley viewed three having the highest priority: prayer, searching the Scriptures, and the Lord’s Supper.<sup>126</sup> Wesley’s goal for the means of grace was for renewal of one’s soul in righteousness and

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<sup>123</sup>Charles Wesley, *Hymns for the Use of Families* (Bristol, England: Pine, 1767), 144-45.

<sup>124</sup>John Wesley, “Means of Grace, Sermon 16,” in *John Wesley’s Sermons*, ed. Outler and Heitzenrater, 157-72.

<sup>125</sup>Wesley, *Minutes of Several Conversations*, 33.

<sup>126</sup>Wesley, “Means of Grace, Sermon 16,” in *John Wesley’s Sermons*, ed. Outler and Heitzenrater, 157-72.

true holiness.<sup>127</sup> If they did not accomplish the goal, they were “dung and dross.”<sup>128</sup>

## Prayer

Wesley did not view the “means of grace” as conclusive, or as providing one’s salvation; rather, he saw them as avenues for active participation in the process towards sanctification. As one Wesleyan professor demonstrates, the purposes of the individual means of grace are in direct correlation to the larger context of the Christian life.<sup>129</sup>

Wesley’s intentions were not that the “means of grace” be practiced solely in private. He encouraged societies, similar to a small group setting to discuss studies and practices. In fact, he encouraged private, public, and family prayer time. Family prayer offered an added aspect of accountability and union with the people one knows best. He posed the question in his training, “Have you family prayer?”<sup>130</sup> He desired for the people receiving his instruction to ask others this question as a way of promoting accountability and offering encouragement in family discipleship settings.

Prayer, as a means of grace and instrumental in public, private, and family time, involved deprecation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving.<sup>131</sup> For Wesley, prayer was lifting up one’s heart to God.<sup>132</sup> He wrote, “All words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever thou attemptst to pray see that it be thy one design to

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Bundy and O’Malley, “Editors’ Foreward,” in Knight, *The Presence of God*, vii.

<sup>130</sup>Wesley, *Minutes of Several Conversations*, 33.

<sup>131</sup>John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in vol. 11 of *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 366-446.

<sup>132</sup>John Wesley, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: VI (1748), Sermon 26,” in *John Wesley’s Sermons*, ed. Outler and Heitzenrater, 223-38.

commune with God, to lift up thy heart to him, to pour out that soul before him.”<sup>133</sup>

### Searching the Scriptures

Immediately following his teachings on prayer, Wesley offered information on the Scriptures. John R. Tyson writes, “The Scriptures were considered a ‘means of grace’ because in reading them a person could meet God and Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and experience God’s revelatory and transforming message.”<sup>134</sup>

Wesley taught to search the Scriptures using three steps:<sup>135</sup>

1. Reading: constantly, some part of every day; regularly, all the Bible in order; carefully, with the notes; seriously, with prayer before and after; fruitfully, immediately practicing what you learn there?
2. Meditating: at set times? by any rule?
3. Hearing: Every morning? Carefully; with prayer before, at, after; immediately putting into practice? Have you a New Testament always about you?<sup>136</sup>

Wesley’s way of searching the Scriptures required one to use intellectual vigour and critical thinking.<sup>137</sup> Wesley’s diligence in searching the Scriptures led him to summarize for others key ideas of the Bible he deemed important. Wesley summarized the core of the Bible into two words: “faith and salvation.”<sup>138</sup> He preached that faith and salvation were “the substance of all the Bible, the marrow, as it were, of the whole Scripture.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>John R. Tyson, *The Way of the Wesleys: A Short Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2014), 5.

<sup>135</sup>Wesley taught to search Scripture in “The General Rules” and in his sermon, “The Means of Grace.” John Wesley, “General Rules (1743),” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. John Emory (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1839); John Wesley, “Means of Grace, Sermon 16,” in *John Wesley’s Sermons*, ed. Outler and Heitzenrater, 157-72.

<sup>136</sup>Wesley, *Minutes of Several Conversations*, 33.

<sup>137</sup>Best, “Education from a Methodist Perspective,” 7.

<sup>138</sup>John Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation, Sermon 43,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 2:156.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

Wesley's desire in helping others learn to search the Scriptures was to assist them and teach them to reflect on their faith actively. For Wesley, faith was a matter of the mind and the heart. He believed one grew in faith by using questions. Some of the questions he and the Holy Club used to foster accountability included the following: "Did the Bible live in me today? Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day? When did I last speak to someone else of my faith? and, Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?"<sup>140</sup> By using these questions and carefully examining the Scriptures, one can begin to see how the words apply to life. These results were Wesley's ambition.

### **Primacy of Scripture**

It is clear that Wesley placed great emphasis on reading and knowing the Scriptures. From his early days with the Oxford Holy Club, he learned to "not only read, but to study the Bible as the one and only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion."<sup>141</sup> He stated, "The written word is the whole and sole rule of their [the Protestants'] faith, as well as practice."<sup>142</sup>

Wesley put His trust in Scripture knowing that it was "delivered by men divinely inspired . . . a rule sufficient of itself."<sup>143</sup> He believed that the Holy Spirit provided divine assistance as divine inspiration.<sup>144</sup> He wrote,

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<sup>140</sup>John Wesley, "Preface and Introductory Letter," in *The Works of John Wesley: Journals from October 14, 1735-November 29, 1745* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1997), 1:16-27. The questions were partially derived from a list of twenty-two questions John Wesley and his Holy Club asked one another while students at Oxford.

<sup>141</sup>Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 366-446.

<sup>142</sup>John Wesley, "On Faith (Hebrews 11:6), Sermon 106," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:494.

<sup>143</sup>John Wesley, "Poperly Calmly Considered," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 5:803-16.

<sup>144</sup>See John Wesley, *Proverbs: Explanatory Notes and Commentary*, accessed August 24, 2017, <http://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=wes&b=20&c=16>. See also John Wesley, "A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Potter, November 4, 1758," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, 3<sup>rd</sup>

God speaks, not as man, but as God. His thoughts are very deep, and thence His words are of inexhaustible virtue. And the language of His messengers, also, is exact in the highest degree: for the words which were given them accurately answered the impression made upon their minds.<sup>145</sup>

Wesley did not ignore the fact that Scriptures had both divine and human elements. He explains that the apostles wrote nothing that was not “divinely inspired.”<sup>146</sup> He further acknowledged the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit as it relates to Scripture, writing, “The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer.”<sup>147</sup>

Both John Wesley and Charles Wesley had a deep respect and awe for the Word of God. They often referred to the “oracles of God,” taken from 1 Peter 4:11: “Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God.”<sup>148</sup> Wesley wrote, “The foundation of true religion stands upon the oracles of God.”<sup>149</sup> He warned the Newcastle society to avoid “reading those books which do not attend to the knowledge or love of God.”<sup>150</sup>

John believed that the Scriptures provided the answers to all people for daily Christian living. The Sermon on the Mount, for instance, provided the “the pattern for every Christian preacher.”<sup>151</sup> The pattern in which the words were spoken could be

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ed. (London: John Mason, 1830), 9:89-96.

<sup>145</sup>Wesley, preface to *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 6.

<sup>146</sup>John Wesley, “1 Corinthians,” in *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 422.

<sup>147</sup>John Wesley, “2 Timothy,” in *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 554.

<sup>148</sup>John Wesley refers to the “oracles of God” seventy times in published sermons. Charles Wesley uses the figure of speech throughout many of his sermons and hymns. Tyson, *The Way of the Wesleys*, 2.

<sup>149</sup>John Wesley, “The Case of Reason Impartially Considered, Sermon 75,” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 2:126.

<sup>150</sup>Wesley, “General Rules (1743),” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Emory, 5:191. Wesley had a burning desire to “spread scriptural holiness.” John Wesley, *Minutes of Several Conversations between the Reverend Mr. John and Charles Wesley and Others: From the Year 1744, to the Year 1780* (London: J. Paramore, 1780), 3.

<sup>151</sup>John Wesley, “Matthew,” in *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*,” 20.

modeled in both content and clarity.<sup>152</sup>

### **Christian Conferencing**

Christian conferencing was another one of Wesley's means of grace. Christian conferencing was the name for spiritual conversations that took place between Christians.<sup>153</sup> Wesley understood intentional discipleship and accountability as being best developed in small groups. Thus, he spent his time creating various types of small groups. He advised his converts to meet weekly in bands, societies, and classes to study Scripture and to cultivate spiritual growth. Tyson writes, "The heart and soul of the movement was found in the infra-structure of Methodist small groups, in the societies, classes, and bands."<sup>154</sup> Each of the societies he created was governed by what he referred to as "The General Rules." These rules intended to summarize the means of grace, which served as examples of how the Christian life looked.<sup>155</sup> The rules included the following:

First, to do no harm: "that is by avoiding evil in every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced."<sup>156</sup>

Second, to do good: "by being in every kind, merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible to all men—to their bodies; . . . [and] to their souls."<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>Ian J. Maddock, *Men of One Book: A Comparison of Two Methodist Preachers, John Wesley and George Whitefield* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 1.

<sup>153</sup>Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, "Wesley's Emphasis on Worship and the Means of Grace," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy Maddox and John Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 229.

<sup>154</sup>Tyson, "John Wesley Remembered," 210-11.

<sup>155</sup>Andrew C. Thompson, "The Practical Theology of the General Rules," *The Asbury Journal* 68, no. 2 (2013): 6-27.

<sup>156</sup>John Wesley, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies," in *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns*, ed. Frank Whaling (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 108-10.

<sup>157</sup>*Ibid.*

Third, “by attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are, the public worship of God; the ministry of the Word, either read or expounded; the Supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; fasting or abstinence.”<sup>158</sup>

Societies included children. The children were to be taught by the preachers. Wesley wrote, “Where there are ten children in a society, meet them at least an hour every week.”<sup>159</sup> When ministers felt they did not have the gift to teach children, Wesley replied with, “Gift or no gift, you are to do it, else you are not called to be a Methodist Preacher. Do it as you can do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the gift, and use the means for it, particularly study, ‘Instructions,’ and ‘Lessons for Children.’”<sup>160</sup>

John provided the resources necessary for spiritual growth among people in societies. He was diligent to publish his resources. Wesley’s desire to aid in the spiritual formation of Methodist societies motivated him to print his materials.<sup>161</sup> Members of the Methodist societies were the intended audience for the majority of his publications, but they also targeted other audiences. These additional audiences included lay preachers, students of his Kingswood School, and children.<sup>162</sup> He also designed publications to be given away to the poor. Wesley’s purpose was to enhance the spiritual life of those who read his publications.<sup>163</sup>

Wesley’s published material distinctly fell into several genres. A catalog of his works in 1790, classified his works into six main categories. The categories were poetical, practical, historical, controversial, political, and miscellaneous. Those works

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<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M. A.* (London: Stephen Cochman, 1845), 470.

<sup>160</sup>John Wesley, “Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others,” in *The Essential Works of John Wesley*, ed. Alice Russie (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 2011), 904-5.

<sup>161</sup>Maddock, *Men of One Book*, 110.

<sup>162</sup>Isabel Rivers, “John Wesley as Editor and Publisher,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, 150.

<sup>163</sup>Harper, “Wesley’s Sermons as Spiritual Formation Documents,” 132.



considered his most popular fell into the practical and historical categories.<sup>164</sup>

### **The Methodist Impact**

Wesley's impact was far reaching. His influence was felt far beyond the ones whom he had daily contact with. His vast publications and his intentional travels enlarged the expanse of his influence.

John and Charles Wesley had a methodical approach to discipleship, which became known as Methodism.<sup>165</sup> Personal faith and holiness motivated the Wesleyan movement. Further, as Paul Wesley Chilcote writes, "The fact that the Wesleyan movement was rooted in Scripture is a fact that should never be forgotten."<sup>166</sup> Gerald R. McDermott explains, Wesley represented the "reviving gospel"<sup>167</sup> side of the Reformation and that Wesley experienced the "travails of personal conversion and devoted his life relentlessly to spreading the gospel and summoning Great Britain to holiness."<sup>168</sup>

### **Wesley's Theories Did Not Translate**

John was a man who taught extensively on family subjects, yet never fully experienced certain family matters. Ted A. Campbell explains, "There was a side of Wesley that was kept from public view, and his private self was as complex as his public

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<sup>164</sup>Rivers, "John Wesley as Editor and Publisher," 158.

<sup>165</sup>The Methodist movement was a renewal movement in the Church of England. "Who We Are: Roots (1736-1816)," in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 2012, accessed September 23, 2016, <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/roots>.

<sup>166</sup>Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision: An Introduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 82.

<sup>167</sup>Gerald R. McDermott, *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 203.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid. McDermott explains of Wesley, "On one hand, he founded a movement that in places quickly became one more triumphalist, Biblicist effort to establish true Christianity; one the other hand, his heart and mind were set on the renewal and reform of the existing church to which he belonged." McDermott, *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, 299.

self.”<sup>169</sup> Though John provided many teachings specifically aimed at the spiritual formation of children and the equipping of parents, he was not successful in his own marriage, and he never fathered any children. Nonetheless, he strove to cultivate resources that both taught and equipped those married and raising children.

### **Wesley’s Failed Marriage**

It is no stretch to say that Wesley’s marriage failed. His decision to marry Mary (Molly) Vazeille (1710–1781) in February of 1751 has perplexed many. His decision could have been made in haste, in naivety, for money, or from an emotional burden from losing the woman he desired to marry.<sup>170</sup> No matter his reasons, the woman whom Wesley chose to marry did not become the woman whom he cherished, nor was she the one with whom he cultivated a lasting relationship.

Wesley began the marriage by sending her affectionate letters. He wrote, “I can imagine then I am sitting just by you, and see and hear you all the while, softly speak and sweetly smile.”<sup>171</sup> Mary also accompanied her husband on his journeys at the beginning of the marriage. She proved she could not endure the long hours of travel, the occasional persecution associated with ministering in certain areas, and the time away from her four children.<sup>172</sup> Further, Molly was an independent, wealthy widow and lacked certain necessary attributes of leading an itinerant life. Thus, their affection one for another did not last long. The relationship lacked communication, and they did not intentionally

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<sup>169</sup>Ted. A Campbell, “John Wesley as Diarist and Correspondent,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, 143.

<sup>170</sup>John fell in love with at least three other women. One of those included Grace Murray (1716-1803). Both he and John Bennet (1714-1759), one of John’s ministers, proposed to Murray. She chose Bennet, and Charles Wesley performed the marriage ceremony. John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (London: Epworth, 1924), 114-27.

<sup>171</sup>John Wesley, “Letter to Molly Wesley, March 30, 1751,” in *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Telford (1960), 3:65.

<sup>172</sup>Mark Williamson, “Chapter 6: Getting Married,” in *A Blueprint for Revival: Lessons from the Life of John Wesley* (Crownhill, UK: Authentic Media, 2011), n.p., Kindle.

spend time together. The busy traveling schedule Wesley maintained brought a noticeable strain to their relationship.

In addition to the stress of travel, the communication John had with other women also caused a strain in their marriage. While John was away, Molly received and read each of his letters. Many of the letters were from female friends associated with the Methodist movement, as well as those from his sisters. While the letters did not have inappropriate information, they added to Molly's feelings of jealousy and isolation. He addressed Molly on this issue in a letter dated December 23, 1758:

I was much concerned . . . at your unkind and unjust accusation. You accused me of unkindness, cruelty, and what not. And why so Because I insist on choosing my own company! because I insist upon conversing, by speaking or writing, with those whom I (not you) judge proper! For more than seven years this has been a bone of contention between you and me. And it is so still. For I will not, I cannot, I dare not give it up.<sup>173</sup>

In a letter to his wife in 1759, Wesley spelled out ten different things that he did not like about her. The ten items included Molly's showing his private letters and papers without his permission; Wesley not having freedom to invite family over; his feeling like a prisoner in his own house; his feeling of being unsafe in his house; Molly's treatment of the staff; Molly's speaking about him behind his back; her false accusations of him; her common practice of lying; her foul language against those who try to defend his character.<sup>174</sup> Minister and writer, John Hampson (1760–1817), of Manchester, entered a room unannounced to find Molly dragging Wesley across the floor by his hair.<sup>175</sup>

To their detriment, on several occasions, Wesley and Molly did not communicate for extended periods of time. In fact, it was not uncommon for them not to

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<sup>173</sup>John Wesley, "Letter to Molly Wesley, December 23, 1758," in *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Telford (1931), 4:49.

<sup>174</sup>Wesley, "Letter to Molly Wesley, March 30, 1751," in *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. Telford, 3:164.

<sup>175</sup>John Pollock, *John Wesley* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), 238.

talk for days, weeks, and sometimes months at a time. Months eventually turned to years, and then they did not communicate for decades. Molly left him on several occasions. In 1758, when she left, she reported that his parting words were, “I hope I shall see your wicked face no more,”<sup>176</sup> though Wesley denied it. Each time Molly left, she returned, except on one occasion in 1771, and on this particular occasion, the separation became final. When Wesley learned of her leaving, his response was, “For what I cause I know not to this day, [my wife] set out for Newcastle, purposing ‘never to return.’ I did not leave her: I did not send her away: I will not call her back.”<sup>177</sup> Molly’s daughter married a Methodist preacher, and he tried to help the couple reconcile their differences.<sup>178</sup> Unfortunately, the couple did not reconcile.

The relationship was consequently severely strained to the point that Wesley was notified of Molly’s death in a letter after the funeral had taken place. While reading the letter, he did not appear grieved upon receiving the news. In his will, he referred to Molly’s daughter’s children as “my dear grand-daughters.”<sup>179</sup> Wesley was a model Christian and minister in many areas, though in marriage and family, he was not.

### **Wesley without Children**

The teachings he shared concerning children were acquired from his time as a child, taught mainly by his mother, as well as the information he derived from his colleagues.<sup>180</sup> However, he did not personally apply the parenting principles he taught to others because he did not have any children of his own. John had a positive relationship

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<sup>176</sup>Stephen Tompkins, *John Wesley: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Wm Eerdmans, 2003), 155.

<sup>177</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, January 23, 1771,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Richard Heitzenrater and W. Reginald Ward (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 22:261-62.

<sup>178</sup>Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, “Sally Gywnne and Molly Vazeille: The Wives of the Wesley Brothers,” *Touchstone* 26 (January 2008): 54.

<sup>179</sup>J. Keith Cheetham, *On the Trail of John Wesley* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2003), 156.

<sup>180</sup>Heitzenrater, “John Wesley and Children,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Bunge, 298.

with children, but he did not have an opportunity to see his ideologies concerning children and parenting placed into practice in his personal life.

Some have criticized his teachings on children because he did not have the opportunity to see the teachings actualized on a personal level. After speaking in Manchester, Wesley reflected in his journal, “I brought strange things to the ears of many in Manchester, concerning the government of their families, and the education of their children. But some still made that very silly answer, ‘O, he has no children of his own!’”<sup>181</sup> His response was, “Neither had St. Paul, (that we know) nor any of the apostles. What then? Were they, therefore, unable to instruct parents? Not so. They were able to instruct everyone that had a soul to be saved.”<sup>182</sup> Wesley’s teachings related to children, parenting, and family continue to affect many positively today.

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<sup>181</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, March 29, 1768,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. John Emory (New York: Methodist Church, 1758), 2:273.

<sup>182</sup>John Wesley, “Journal Entry, March 30, 1768,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Heitzenrater and Ward (1993), 124.

## CHAPTER 4

### MODELS OF FAMILY MINISTRY

The church has a responsibility to minister not only to individuals but also to families. In recent years there has been an awareness brought to the church around this mandate. The knowledge comes to fruition in what many people term “family ministry.” Both students and parents are at the core of family ministry. Several models for family ministry are used within the church today. This chapter focuses on the definition of family ministry, reasons for family ministry, and the various models associated with it.

#### **Parental Influence**

Researcher Christian Smith, and sociologist Melinda Lundquist Denton, along with the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), conducted extensive research related to the importance of religion in the lives of American teenagers.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of their research was to identify and describe influences on the religious and spiritual lives of American young people.<sup>2</sup> From their research, they found a direct correlation between the faith of families and the faith of children.<sup>3</sup> They learned that youth were frequently

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>National Study of Youth and Religion, “Research Purpose,” accessed April 19, 2017, <http://youthandreligion.nd.edu/research-purpose/>, describes their actions as to research the shape and influence of religion and spirituality in the lives of American youth; to identify effective practices in the religious, moral, and social formation of the lives of youth; to describe the extent and perceived effectiveness of the programs and opportunities that religious communities are offering to their youth; and to foster and informed national discussion about the influence of religion in youth’s lives, in order to encourage sustained reflection about and rethinking of our cultural and institutional practices with regard to youth and religion.

<sup>3</sup>Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 120.

willing to take on the faith of their parents with little questioning.<sup>4</sup> The students in the study merely adopted their parents' faith without fully understanding or sometimes even caring what they believed.<sup>5</sup> Researchers referred to this as a "whatever" religion.<sup>6</sup>

Smith and Denton unveiled a new term in their book, *Soul Searching*, known as "moralistic therapeutic deism."<sup>7</sup> The term refers to the faith they and their research team found prevalent among teens.<sup>8</sup> According to Smith and Denton, the term offers an overall perspective of the information drawn from the research and interviews. Through the process, the researchers identified five theological propositions: "god" is personal and creative; yet this god is generally uninvolved with daily life until problems arise; this god prizes kindness and fairness as among the chief human virtues; happiness and self-fulfillment are the paramount human goals; and good people enjoy heaven after death. Smith and Denton further explained moralistic therapeutic deism as someone who lives a good, moral life and is responsible at work and self-care, and strives to be successful.<sup>9</sup> Smith held to the argument that "contrary to popular misguided cultural stereotype's and frequent parental misconceptions, [he] believes that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents."<sup>10</sup> Teens are quite observant of their parents and are aware of how little their

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<sup>4</sup>Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 120.

<sup>5</sup>Smith and Denton write, "Most religious teenagers either do not really comprehend what their own religious traditions say they are supposed to believe, or they do understand it and simply do not care to believe it." *Ibid.*, 133-34.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 118-71.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 261.

parents believe, as well as how many churches have adapted to the prevailing culture.<sup>11</sup>

### **Definition of Family Ministry**

Most areas of ministry emerged with a well-defined indication of its purpose and direction. In contrast, family ministry emerged without a clear understanding of its definition and role in the church.<sup>12</sup> Family ministry typically recognizes the importance of discipleship to children beginning with the parents and continuing with the church coming alongside.<sup>13</sup> It understands that both the church and parents are responsible for the biblical training of their children. Therefore, most models of family ministry include intentional training to the parents while integrating students with their parents for various aspects of ministry within the church. Leading contributor to the development of family ministry, Timothy Paul Jones, defines family ministry as “the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”<sup>14</sup> While Jones affirms the responsibility of parents in family ministry, he also recognizes the church’s responsibility to disciple and partner with people from every age group and social background.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism—The New American Religion,” April 11, 2005, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/04/11/moralistic-therapeutic-deism-the-new-american-religion-2/>.

<sup>12</sup>See Chap Clark and his statements concerning the origins of family ministry in Chap Clark, *The Youth Workers Handbook to Family Ministry: Strategies and Practical Ideas for Reaching Your Students’ Families* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 13.

<sup>13</sup>Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones write, “Family ministry describes how a church partners with parents so that the Christian formation of children occurs not only at church but also in the household.” Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, “Introduction: The Problem with Family Ministry,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 15.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, “Foundations for Family Ministry,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 40.



Family ministry is not a pre-packaged ministry that a pastor can present as a programmatic approach to reaching children and parents.<sup>16</sup> Family ministry should be focused on intentionally planning ministries that draw parents and children closer together instead of (intentionally or unintentionally) pushing them apart. Further, family ministry requires more than merely making a slight adjustment to the present youth and children's ministry.<sup>17</sup>

A biblical foundation for family ministry must be established for the ministry to be lasting and effective. Thus, the ministry leadership should recognize, identify, and embrace a clearly defined family ministry identity with precise goals. All future family ministries should be funneled through the filter of the church's goals for family ministry.

The church and the family are both important in the discipleship process, ordained by God, and the agents for passing on faith to the next generation.<sup>18</sup> Family ministry must include a healthy partnership between students in youth and children's ministry, the parents, and the church at large. Youth and children's ministry must be deeply embedded into the overall ministry of the church.<sup>19</sup>

### **Biblical Foundation for Family Ministry**

Although "family ministry" is a term used more frequently in recent years, it is

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<sup>16</sup>Jones stresses that a church should make family ministry a reorientation of priorities instead of a programmatic approach. Thus, a church need not add an additional "program" to their list of activities, but rather a church should make a shift in the church, allowing ministry to families to have greater priority and purpose, weaving it into every aspect of the current flow of the church. Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Jones, 41.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* Family ministry requires more than giving one's present youth or children's ministry the new name of family ministry.

<sup>18</sup>For more information, see Wayne Rice and the insight he gathered after forty years in youth ministry. Wayne Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again): From Bells and Whistles to Flesh and Blood* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 169-70.

<sup>19</sup>Chap Clark, "The Strategy of Adoptive Youth Ministry," in *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, ed. Chap Clark (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 17.

not a new concept. Family ministry has a biblical foundation. The Bible is clear that parents are to train their children according to God's Word. The primary avenue for passing on biblical truth was by parents engraving this truth in their children's hearts (Deut. 6:4-7). Daniel Block explains that Deuteronomy 6 begins with a call to a covenantal love, which is then to be passed down throughout generations.<sup>20</sup> By declaring the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one," Israelites were stating their undivided allegiance to Yahweh, separating themselves from the seducing gods of Canaan.<sup>21</sup> It was their monotheistic confession to the one, true God.<sup>22</sup> Moses desired for the people to follow through on their verbal commitment and express it in wholehearted love.<sup>23</sup> Each family was personally responsible for obedience to the covenant.<sup>24</sup> The nation depended on the faithfulness of its families.<sup>25</sup>

Parents were given imperatives to hear, love, impress, talk, tie, and write. Central to the imperatives for parents was the teaching to "love the Lord your God" (Deut 6:5). As McConville explains, the "love of Yahweh as covenant loyalty" is expressed in specific ways, chiefly as gratitude to Him for His love toward them.<sup>26</sup> Gratitude should be expressed in obedience to His commands.<sup>27</sup> Parents were to tell and retell the

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<sup>20</sup>Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 180.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 181-82.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>Telford Work, *Deuteronomy*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 95.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 142.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

messages in Scripture to their children. In biblical times and throughout Jewish history, parents used songs and ceremonies to teach and shape their child's faith. Israelite parents used daily activities as opportunities to talk about biblical truths while sitting at home, walking along together, lying down to rest, and waking up. Deuteronomy 6:8-9 instructs parents to bind God's commands on their hands, keep them close to their eyes, and write them down in their home. D. A. Carson says that even what the Israelites wore and how they decorated their home were to serve as reminders of God's law.<sup>28</sup> One way the Israelites accomplished the retelling of God's faithfulness in the home was through the practice of Passover. Passover created a special time for parents to teach their children the story of Israel's redemption (see Exod 13:14-22).

In Psalm 78:1-8, the psalmist begins with an appeal for his people to listen to his teaching. As Tremper Longman points out, the object of the psalmist's teaching is the next generation (vv. 4-8).<sup>29</sup> The psalmist shares his wisdom and knowledge, which was given to him from his ancestors. The psalmist uses a parable in reference of Israel's history in an effort to emphasize both the theological and ethical significance of Israel's past events.<sup>30</sup> The psalmist calls for fathers to train their children in the statutes of the God of Israel (Pss 44:1; 78:1-8). Parents must impart their wisdom to the next generation.<sup>31</sup> Future generations are dependent upon the current generation to pass on biblical truths.

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<sup>28</sup>D. A. Carson, "Deut. 6; Psalm 89; Isaiah 34; Revelation 4," *The Gospel Coalition*, June 2, 2017, accessed January 3, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/d-a-carson/deut-6-psalm-89-isaiah-34-revelation-4/>.

<sup>29</sup>Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 289.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 289-90.

According to the Bible, parents have the responsibility to teach their children and care for them holistically, meaning they are to feed and clothe them, discipline them, instruct them, and bless them (Isa 49:15; Matt 7:9-11; Gal 4:1-2; 2 Cor 12:14; 1 Tim 5:8-14).<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the psalmist instructs the reader to tell future generations the praises of the Lord so that they might know and put their confidence in God (Ps 78:2-7). Psalm 145:4 also conveys that one generation is to tell God's works and mighty acts to another generation.

The book of Ephesians speaks of the godly relational expectations within the home of believers. In Ephesians, the lives of the Gentiles are contrasted with the lives of the believers (4:17-5:21).<sup>33</sup> Regarding this, Paul lays out specific instruction for family relationships: husbands and wives, and parents and children (5:22-6:9).<sup>34</sup> In Ephesians 6:4, Paul uses the command with a promise taken from Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 to instruct parents to bring their children up in the training and instruction of the Lord.<sup>35</sup> Paul's command is not toward adult children, but in reference to children still under their parents' care.<sup>36</sup> In the preceding verses, children are commanded to obey their parents (6:1). As in the Old Testament, children who obeyed and honored their parents were also given a promise, the promise of full life.<sup>37</sup> Both the Old and New

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<sup>32</sup>Robert L. Plummer, "Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord: Family Discipleship among the First Christians," in *Trained in the Fear of God*, ed. Stinson and Jones, 46.

<sup>33</sup>D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 496.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>Jason S. DeRouchie, "Is Every Promise "Yes"? Old Testament Promises and the Christian," ed. D. A. Carson, *Themelios* 42, no. 1 (2017): 16-45.

<sup>36</sup>G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 829.

<sup>37</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 444.

Testaments instruct parents to teach their children godly principles repeatedly and consistently.

### **Family of God**

The people of God are often referred to collectively as the “family of God.” Throughout the Bible, God’s people are also called his “children” (Deut 14:1 and John 1:12). According to Paul, in saving sinners, God adopts them into his family (Rom 8:15-23 and Gal 4:5). Thus, when a believer is adopted as one of God’s children, he or she becomes part of a larger family (Matt 12:48-50).

It is not uncommon to see New Testament writers apply the family metaphor as they encourage believers to view one another as brothers and sisters. Jesus also referred to his followers unashamedly as “brothers” and “sisters” (Heb 2:11-12). Christ reflects on those in his family as the ones who do the will of God (Mark 3:32-35). Thus, as Hellerman describes, using the metaphor of the church as family informed the surrogate sibling relationships of Christians in the New Testament.<sup>38</sup> As he points out, in the early church, the relationship between siblings took priority.<sup>39</sup> This truth is foundational when reflecting on the importance of authentic relationships being formed and developed within community. In Christian community, the church has significant opportunity to minister to the family of God as they equip and encourage one another.

### **Children as Part of the Church**

Scripture speaks of the importance of children repeatedly (Matt 19:13-14; Mark 9:36-37; Matt 18:10). New Testament writings describe the birth and childhood of

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<sup>38</sup>Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 41.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 40-41.

Jesus (Luke 2; Matt 1). The New Testament also reveals Jesus taking time to complete miracles for children of concerned parents (John 4:46-52; Luke 8:49-55; Matt 17:14-18).

Robert Plummer, along with W. A. Strange, offers insight that children were present and active in the early church.<sup>40</sup> Ephesians 6:1 gives a specific command to children to obey their parents. Paul references the image of child in 1 Corinthians 13:11. In Acts 21:5, wives and children joined with male disciples to kneel in prayer. Romans 16:5 references the fact that early churches often met in homes of believers. One can assume that at least the children of the host family would have been present. These biblical references and others suggest that children were part of the larger body of Christ and ultimately the family of God. Thus, the spiritual education and Christian formation of children was important to the early church. Likewise, the discipleship of children should be included in the overall discipleship of the church. Jones writes, “Children have become not only gifts to be nurtured, but also sinners to be trained.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Reasons for Family Ministry**

Family ministry is necessary because, as Randy Stinson suggests, “Families are under siege.”<sup>42</sup> Spiritual warfare is taking place over families and they are under continual spiritual attack. The enemy’s strategy has long been to undermine the family.<sup>43</sup> The world is competing for children, teen, and family time. Countless activities, including sports, clubs, performing arts, and many more activities continually demand the

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<sup>40</sup>See Plummer’s article for more insight along this thought. Plummer, “Bring Them Up,” in *Trained in the Fear of God*, ed. Stinson and Jones, 54. Also see W. A. Strange, *Children in the Early Church: Children in the Ancient World, the New Testament, and the Early Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004).

<sup>41</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, “Developing a D6 Vision for Our Families: Parenting from the Perspective of a Story That’s Bigger than Me,” in *Practical Family Ministry: A Collection of Ideas for Your Church*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and John David Trentham (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 120.

<sup>42</sup>Randy Stinson, “Foreword: Family Ministry and the Future of the Church,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Jones, 1.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*

time and attention of families. These activities, while good in nature, often lead to distractions with a family in a home. Additionally, teens face the pressure of achieving good grades, being accepted into a good school, and participating in honors classes. One reason for family ministry is to guide and shepherd families in their walk with Christ as they go about their daily lives. Parents need advice when making decisions that affect each member of the family. Families need guidance, and the church needs to provide it.

Another argument for family ministry is that it draws families closer together. It is challenging for the hearts of parents and children to turn toward one another when the church continually separates them.<sup>44</sup> The church must reorient its priorities and programs in a manner that draws families together instead of pushing them apart. One common model for ministry to youth and children that many churches have tried and is still commonly used is the segmented-programmatic model of ministry. In this model, every age group is discipled separately from another. This ministry model is sometimes known as a “silo-ministry” approach, where youth and children’s ministries operate as separate entities from the remainder of the church.<sup>45</sup> Many chose this ministry approach because of the ability to direct teaching styles in accordance with a child’s learning capacity and social needs. While this ministry style was created for positive reasons, over time the church has continued to segment various age groups to the degree that frequently only educated, hired leaders are chosen to minister to youth and children. Thus, an unintended consequence of the “siloed” approach sometimes causes parents to leave most of the spiritual instruction of their children to the church.<sup>46</sup> Culminating is

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<sup>44</sup>See Jones, “Foundations for Family Ministry,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Jones, 19, 40. Jones references two biblical passages related to this point: Mal 4:6 and Luke 1:17.

<sup>45</sup>Silo-ministry uses the imagery of a silo, filled with very valuable crops, standing in isolation on a farm, similar to ministries in the church, operating distinct one from another.

<sup>46</sup>Ron Hunter, “The D6 View of Youth Ministry,” in *Youth Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Five Views*, ed. Chap Clark and Fernando Arzola, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 147.

segmented or silo ministry, often representing isolation, inhibiting interaction among parents and children.

Finally, a reason for family ministry associated with Smith and Denton's research, reveals that the faith of parents is linked to the faith of children, and that teens typically follow in the manner their parents raise them. Therefore, family ministry must train parents to cultivate their faith, defend their faith, and share their faith with their children. A large emphasis of family ministry is typically centered on training and equipping parents due to the significant influence parents have on their children's faith.

### **Models for Family Ministry**

In the twenty-first century, pastors, scholars, and practitioners have expressed a need for biblically motivated parental involvement in the discipleship process of children.<sup>47</sup> As a result, three primary models of family ministry have emerged during the past couple of decades<sup>48</sup>: the family-based model, the family-integrated model, and the family-equipping model.

#### **Family-Based Model**

In the 1990s, Mark DeVries pioneered and authored material on the family-based model.<sup>49</sup> In the family-based ministry model, ministries within the church continue without any significant changes. Typically in this model churches simply add intergenerational curriculum, activities, and events.<sup>50</sup> Although no major changes occur

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<sup>47</sup>See Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, "The Problem and Promise of Family Ministry," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 40. Nelson and Jones believe a generation of rising family ministry leaders are calling for parents to function as the primary faith-trainers in their children's lives.

<sup>48</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 130.

<sup>49</sup>Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

<sup>50</sup>In the family-based model, various ministries of the church sponsor events and activities to draw families and the generations together.



in the internal structure of the church, DeVries indicates that to begin this ministry, there must be a shift in perception.<sup>51</sup> DeVries' opinion is that the family-based model is not a new one, but rather "a radical return to God's original design."<sup>52</sup>

DeVries states that his first priority is to empower or train parents.<sup>53</sup> His second component is to train the extended family of the church.<sup>54</sup> Examples of ministries in a family-based ministry model include father-daughter banquets, community outreaches where generations serve together, family camps, mission trips, and generational game nights. The goal for family-based ministry is to bring generations together in mutual respect and understanding toward each other.<sup>55</sup> There is no official guide for implementing this model. The family-based model is expressed in diverse fashions among various churches.

Twenty years after DeVries published his book, the *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* Forum interviewed him.<sup>56</sup> The forum asked if he would say anything differently in his book after the passing years. He replied,

The one correction I would like to bring . . . is this: The modern nuclear family, as we know it and often teach it, is a far cry from the biblical family. The biblical family, though not monolithic, was much more of an extended family, with lots of adults pouring into young people, rather than mom and dad feeling the total weight of responsibility . . . our goal is not adolescent disciples. It is adult disciples. And

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<sup>51</sup>DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 102. The perception he refers to is modifying their goal from having a strong youth ministry to assisting youth toward mature spiritual adulthood.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 163.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>55</sup>Jim Burns and Mike DeVries, *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry: The Practical Guide to Today's Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Colorado Springs: Gospel Light, 2003), 38.

<sup>56</sup>JDFM Forum, interview with Mark DeVries about *Family-Based Youth Ministry, Twenty Years Later, The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 4, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2014): 120.

adult disciples are shaped, as they move into adulthood, not simply by their parents' faith.<sup>57</sup>

DeVries' addition to his original statements is significant. His findings revealed the substantial number of individuals influenced in their faith by those other than their parents. DeVries' discovery indicated these influencers had just as much impact as a parent.<sup>58</sup> Related findings associated with Christian role modeling and mentoring offer motivation to a church to cultivate multi-generational relational opportunities.<sup>59</sup>

### **Family-Integrated Model**

Voddie Baucham, Jr., stands at the forefront of the family-integrated ministry model. He explains his concepts in his book *Family-Driven Faith*.<sup>60</sup> This model maintains simplicity by keeping everyone together, at all times. There is one worship service, which is the highlight of the week, and families sit together throughout the entire service.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, families remain together in small groups, which meet in people's homes during the week.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, all activities in this model are multi-generational, and a strong responsibility is assigned to parents to disciple their children in the home.

For churches using the family-integrated model, in some instances parental training takes place. The teaching is given to fathers who meet at the church on a monthly basis.<sup>63</sup> Beyond the designated time at church meant to accommodate family interaction,

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<sup>57</sup>JDFM Forum, interview with Mark DeVries, 120.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>I discovered many of these findings when completing my master's degree. My thesis centered on mentorship and apprenticeship discipleship.

<sup>60</sup>Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Family-Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

<sup>61</sup>Paul Renfro, "Family-Integrated Ministry: Family-Driven Faith," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Jones, 57-60.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 60.

time with family at home is expected. The church encourages parents to use their family time at home for training and educating their children. Since everyone is together at all times, this model eliminates age-segmented programming.

Family-integrated churches are not identical, and multiple denominations participate in this model.<sup>64</sup> Churches practicing this model share three commitments. They are commitments to (1) age-integrated ministry, (2) evangelism and discipleship in and through the home, and (3) biblical leadership.<sup>65</sup> A church desiring to transition to this particular family ministry model should understand it is typically an extreme change. Therefore, to ensure a smooth transition, it would be helpful to seek advice from those who have successfully made the switch to the family-integrated family ministry model.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, family-integrated churches strategically target families in their church with evangelism and discipleship. However, one aspect of this model, which appears missing, is its commitment toward the global mandate to reach the lost. Their determination in ministering to families inside their church is apparent, but their intention to move beyond solely targeting families is difficult to grasp.

### **Family-Equipping Model**

Timothy Paul Jones is leading the way in the development of the ministry he labeled, “the family-equipping model.”<sup>67</sup> Unlike the family-integrated model, the family-

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<sup>64</sup>Renfro, “Family-Integrated Ministry,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Jones, 61.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 62-65.

<sup>66</sup>Renfro provides ten transitional principles to churches considering using the family-integrated model: (1) Lay a biblical foundation in the church’s teachings. (2) Have leadership model family discipleship. (3) Equip heads of households to become spiritual leaders. (4) Encourage heads of households to evaluate their family’s priorities. (5) Begin having children and adults worship together. (6) Reduce age-segmented events. (7) Transition small groups to age-integrated groups. (8) Transition Sunday School towards age-integration (9) Transition ministries toward age-integration. (10) Transition mission efforts towards age-integration. Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>67</sup>Jay Strother, “Family-Equipping Ministry: Church and Home as CoChampions,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Jones, 144.

equipping model does not require the elimination of all age-segmented ministries. Rather, it restructures ministries and activities that are already in place. Further, it places a great emphasis on intergenerational interaction.<sup>68</sup> This model seeks to retain some age-organized ministries, but strategically restructures the church to partner with parents. This model is designed to train parents and then hold them accountable for the discipleship of their children.<sup>69</sup> This model also maintains certain ministries, such as youth and children ministries, while at the same time seeks to equip parents. Family-equipping churches take a firm stand on partnering with the two God-ordained institutions who are to form the spiritual lives of children: the family and the church. This model is a church-wide effort to plan every ministry in the church to champion the parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children.<sup>70</sup>

According to professor and practitioner Timothy Paul Jones, when a church makes a transition into the family-equipping model, the church will not actually be implementing new programs. Instead, the church will reorient their previous ministries to accomplish three objectives: to train, involve and equip parents (also known as the TIE test).<sup>71</sup> The TIE test is set in place to make sure every ministry in the church involving students will either train, involve, or equip parents as the primary disciple-makers in their children's lives.<sup>72</sup> For example, a church could "train" by turning age-segmented

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<sup>68</sup>Strother, "Family-Equipping Ministry," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Jones, 144. Strother points out that this model places a greater emphasis on intergenerational interaction than the family-based model. His reasoning is that, unlike family-based ministry, family-equipping ministry requires more than tweaking existing youth and children programs. Family-equipping requires restructuring congregations to strategically partner with parents in the discipleship of their children.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Jones, "Foundations for Family Ministry," in *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, ed. Jones, 43.

<sup>71</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 180. Jones adapted the TIE test after the "RTI Principle" found in Steve Wright and Chris Graves, *ReThink: Decide for Yourself, Is Student Ministry Working?* (Raleigh, NC: InQuest Ministries, 2007).

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

activities into training opportunities for parents; “involve” by allowing and encouraging parents to participate in the ministry with their children; and “equip” by providing parents with biblically based resources.<sup>73</sup> As a church makes the transition to a family-equipping model, they discover that many activities will need to be restructured or cut. There is no clear-cut, step-by-step guide for transitioning into a family-equipping model. However, books such as *Family Ministry Field Guide* and *ReThink*<sup>74</sup> offer suggestions and examples on making the switch from “segmentation to synchronization.” The switch to this model, as with any transition to a new family ministry model, will not happen overnight. The transition is a process that takes time and patience.

### **Training and Equipping Parents**

With the emphasis on family ministry in today’s church, many are specifically seeking a biblical perspective on God’s design and role of parents. Wayne Rice, cofounder of Youth Specialties, has been involved in youth ministry for over fifty years.<sup>75</sup> He believes, “The primary role of the youth pastor today should be focused more on equipping adults rather than teenagers.”<sup>76</sup> Generally, family ministry places a high importance on training parents to lead their children spiritually and to be living examples. Thus, with any model for family ministry therein lies the importance for churches to partner with parents to train them as they lead their children. The church has a responsibility to teach parents the powerful impact they have on their child’s religious outcome. Churches must

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<sup>73</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 182-87.

<sup>74</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*; Wright and Graves, *ReThink*. Jones’ *Family Ministry Field Guide*, is designed to help churches discover practical ways to equip parents to make disciples of their children. Wright and Graves’s *ReThink* combines research and Scripture-based teachings as basis for youth ministry.

<sup>75</sup>Wayne Rice, “About,” accessed May 1, 2017, <http://waynerice.com/about/>.

<sup>76</sup>Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again)*, 124.

also reiterate the teachings of the parents as they present the truth of the gospel to their children.

The initial training of parents in family ministry must come in the form of helping parents realize they are equipped by God through his Spirit, his Word, and the community of faith to lead their children spiritually (2 Tim 3:16-17; Eph 4:11-16). Then, the church must continue to communicate with parents. Family ministry must intentionally keep the parents informed and involved. Additionally, the church must assist parents in the equipping process of leading their children from a biblical position. As topics arise that the church does not fully understand, they can bring in professionals who are knowledgeable in their field to train on these topics. These components are key to partnering with parents in family ministry.

*Practical Family Ministry* shares “A Master Plan” for equipping parents.<sup>77</sup> In this plan, the word “master” is an acronym for Model what you expect parents to do; Articulate expected changes with key leaders; Schedule key checkpoints; Train every teacher to be a parent equipper; Empathize with parents who are struggling; and Recruit families to share testimonies.<sup>78</sup> One study revealed that the “combination of teenager’s parent religion, importance of faith, prayer, and scripture reading makes an enormous substantive difference in religious outcomes during emerging adulthood.”<sup>79</sup> Likewise, another study learned that the majority of young adults have the same religious beliefs as their parents or they share their parents’ preference for no religious affiliation.<sup>80</sup> The

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<sup>77</sup>Danny R. Bowen, “Be a Family by Equipping Parents,” in *Practical Family Ministry*, 75-76.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup>Christian Smith, Patricia Snell, and Kyle Longest, “Religious Trajectories from the Teenage Years into the Emerging Adult Years,” *Lifelong Faith Journal* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 14-27.

<sup>80</sup>Vern L. Bengston, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Bengston’s conducted a thirty-five-year longitudinal study of more than 350 families. Bengston learned that the faith of the young adult children was predominately the same as their parents.

studies affirm that the most influential person on the religious outcome of children is their parents.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the church must strategically train and equip parents to model authentic faith in Christ.

### **Family Ministry Does Not Address Every Concern**

Family ministry is not the answer to all of the issues within a church, nor do programs and models change people. Family ministry will not fix past, present, or future problems, and it will not transform lives.<sup>82</sup> Transformation comes through the gospel that must be taught and practiced.<sup>83</sup> The development of healthy families is not the answer to a church's problems either. Jones says it this way, "If family becomes the center of any church's ministry, family has become an idol—and that false god is no less odious in God's sight than the golden calves and fertility poles that Israel served in ancient times."<sup>84</sup> Rather than seeing family ministry as the answer for saving families, people, and churches, a better option is to see family ministry as a tool in the overall transformation and spiritual growth process.

An aspect of family ministry is providing resources to parents. The resources should always point to God and the message of the gospel. They are not a replacement for the gospel, but should serve as additional help, drawing from the wisdom of others.

Though the word "family" is used in this ministry, the overarching center or goal is not families. Jones and Stinson explain, "The gospel of Jesus Christ must stand as the center and the goal, even of family ministry models."<sup>85</sup> The purpose of family

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<sup>81</sup>Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 261. Smith, Snell, and Longest, "Religious Trajectories," 14-27; Bengston, *Families and Faith*; S. M. Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 858-66.

<sup>82</sup>Nelson and Jones, "The Problem and the Promise of Family Ministry," 36-43.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup>Jones and Stinson, "Family Ministry Models," 155-81.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 178.

ministry is spiritual transformation. The ministry should be focused on spiritual growth as children progress through childhood, adolescence, and into emerging adulthood. Families must be diligent to grow in Christ together and share the gospel with the world around them.



## CHAPTER 5

### WESLEY'S MODEL FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Sociological research indicates that young adults whose parents engaged in regular religious activity (e.g., prayer and Scripture reading) are more likely to practice religion themselves.<sup>1</sup> John Wesley understood this particular dynamic and wrote of its importance, as well.<sup>2</sup> Wesley placed priority on prayer and Scripture reading as he frequently taught of their importance and personally responded with daily interaction in the Word and prayer and taught parents to do likewise.

Though nearly three hundred years old, Wesley's instructions and methodology are relevant for contemporary family ministry, both within the home and the church.<sup>3</sup> The formative reading of Scripture is an aspect of Wesley's teachings that has frequently been ignored or left to specialists. Wesley's model encompasses wise truths related to Scripture reading and prayer, consistent with his Evangelical contemporaries.<sup>4</sup> He left a

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Smith, Patricia Snell, and Kyle Longest, "Religious Trajectories from the Teenage Years into the Emerging Adult Years," *Lifelong Faith Journal* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 14-27; Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Vern L. Bengston, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); S. M. Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 858-66. This information is also treated in chap. 4.

<sup>2</sup>This information is treated in chaps. 2 and 3.

<sup>3</sup>While this study focused specifically on John Wesley's teachings as applicable for today's church and family ministry, it is noted that other historical materials from previous writers may also be relevant for today's Christian church.

<sup>4</sup>One notable contemporary was Philip Doddridge, author of *The Family Expositor* (1745). An earlier influential work was that of Puritan Matthew Henry (1662—1714), whose *A Church in the House* (1704) also addressed this topic.

rich legacy when he specified a methodology. In light of this data, Wesley's model fills a need in contemporary family ministry.

### **Others' Insight on Wesley and the Formative Reading of Scripture**

Wesley's practical teachings for daily Christian living serve as a model in the Christian formation process, both individually and corporately. His model is a straightforward methodology for both individuals and groups to implement. Some within the Methodist denomination still utilize various aspects of Wesley's teachings and practices in multiple settings (e.g., small groups and denominations).<sup>5</sup> Due to its vast content, researchers continue to unravel profound truth from Wesley's writings.

In *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading the Bible as Scripture*, Joel Green and David Watson compiled extensive material from various authors who wrote on John Wesley's approach of reading Scripture. Some in the book target Wesley's transformational approach to Scripture reading as a means of grace. The book describes Wesley's method in current practice in multiple settings. In the book, Randy Maddox writes of his hope for people to acknowledge Wesley's formative impact on traditions, which stem from his ministry, but also his example for current lives and vocations.<sup>6</sup> Though many in the book target Wesley's Scripture reading as an avenue of faith formation, none present his teachings as a model applicable for family discipleship.

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<sup>5</sup>The United Methodist Church implements John Wesley's General Rules. The "rules" are intended to be a plan of discipleship. His society meetings, or small groups, offered a place of accountability and encouragement. John Wesley, "General Rules (1743)," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. John Emory (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1839), 5:191; Sondra Matthaei presents various works of John Wesley that contribute to the spiritual formation in a Christian's life. She offers structures for teaching Wesley's works and those of the early Methodists. See figure 4 and figure 5 in Sondra Higgins Matthaei, *Making Disciples: Faith Formation in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 142, 160-61.

<sup>6</sup>Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley—A Man of One Book," in *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading Bible as Scripture*, ed. Joel B. Green and David F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 4.

Philip McKinney is another author who discovered Wesley's impact on current practice. He wrote an article entitled "John Wesley and the Formative Reading of Scripture and Educating Children."<sup>7</sup> McKinney concluded from his study of Wesley's writings that "perhaps" a more systematically organized approach to Wesley's formative reading of Scripture and a young person's religious education is necessary.<sup>8</sup> Studies related to the Christian formation of students indicate that structured, disciplined, and consistent approaches are not "perhaps" necessary, but undeniably necessary. McKinney is right to suggest John Wesley's approach to reading Scripture has value for contemporary discipleship among children and teens. While his analysis is a helpful starting place, he considered only one portion of Wesley's approach, namely Wesley's *Notes on the Old Testament*,<sup>9</sup> This limited approach may have produced his timid approval of the value of Wesley's method, but a more comprehensive examination of Wesley's methodology as provided in this thesis leads me to affirm that Wesley's way of reading Scripture provides a methodology. In a similar fashion, Andrew Dragos authored an online article related to Wesley's approach to reading Scripture, entitled "Six Steps to Reading the Bible Like John Wesley."<sup>10</sup> Dragos outlines six steps to reading Scripture as John Wesley.

### **Overview of Wesley's Model**

This chapter seeks to integrate aspects of Green and Watson's book, findings from McKinney and Dragos' articles, as well as contributions from Klauss and Muto's

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<sup>7</sup>Philip McKinney II, "John Wesley and the Formative Reading of Scripture and Educating Children," *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 4, no. 1 (2013): 12-24.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>John Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament: Genesis to Ruth* (Bristol, England: William Pine, 1765), 8.

<sup>10</sup>Andrew Dragos, "Six Steps to Reading the Bible Like John Wesley," *Seedbed*, April 11, 2014, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://www.seedbed.com/6-steps-reading-bible-like-john-wesley/>.

articles. When read together, a model for family discipleship emerges. This model relies on Wesley's account of the formative reading of Scripture. Wesley's contribution to spiritual formation using Scripture engagement techniques is helpful for both church and home alike. Thus, John Wesley left an enduring model for family ministry that will aid in co-championing the church and the home.

Wesley has already laid a foundation through his teachings to provide a resource for family discipleship assisting and linking both the church and parents. The approach presented in this thesis seeks to advance co-championing "the church's ministry and the parent's responsibility."<sup>11</sup> The model presented in this thesis addresses the challenges associated with family ministry of fulfilling the need for biblically-motivated teaching and training materials for both parents and churches that cultivate spiritual growth among families.

### **Individual and Corporate**

Wesley's model and practice of searching Scripture for spiritual transformation was both an individual and corporate discipline. Though individuals should take responsibility for their personal spiritual growth, Wesley did not believe individuals should grow alone. While he expected people to take personal responsibility for their spiritual health, he also expected the Word to be taught in churches, class meetings or small groups, and family worship settings. Wesley believed a better understanding of Scripture might come by reading with other believers<sup>12</sup> and he thought interpreting Scripture should be done in community with others.<sup>13</sup> Because aspects of Wesley's model for Christian growth place an emphasis on small group ministry, both church and home are applicable settings.

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<sup>11</sup>Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, "The Problem and the Promise of Family Ministry," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010): 40.

<sup>12</sup>Randy L. Maddox, "The Rule of Christian Faith, Practice, and Hope: John Wesley on the Bible," *Methodist Review* 3 (2011): 17.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Wall, "Wesley as Biblical Interpreter," in *The Cambridge Companion to John*

## Holy Spirit

One aspect of Wesley's model was the continual work of the Holy Spirit in the discipleship process.<sup>14</sup> Wesley penned, "The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists those who read it with earnest prayer."<sup>15</sup> He encouraged believers reading Scripture to prayerfully seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for direction and examination of one's life.<sup>16</sup> While leaning on the Holy Spirit for direction, Wesley encouraged participants of small groups to include time for asking one another how and what they had been doing since their last session. He believed that how people were doing internally (their soul) was directly connected to what they were doing externally (their actions).<sup>17</sup> These connections shaped his expectations for small groups in that his model of discipleship allowed for accountability.<sup>18</sup> The accountability fostered a holistic approach to ministry, while leaning on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

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Wesley, ed. Randy Maddox and John Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 166.

<sup>14</sup>Attention to Wesley's writings related to the Holy Spirit is found in chaps. 2 and 3.

<sup>15</sup>John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: J. Soule and T. Mason, 1818), 573.

<sup>16</sup>David F. Watson, "Scripture as Canon," in *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading Bible as Scripture*, ed. Green and Watson, 165.

<sup>17</sup>David Werner, "John Wesley's Question: How Is Your Doing?" *The Asbury Journal* 65, no. 2 (2010): 68-93.

<sup>18</sup>Paraphrasing John R. Tyson, Wesley linked both inner and outer sins and believed the root of sin was connected to the human will. Tyson continues by explaining that Wesley connected personal sin to societal evil and social injustice in John R. Tyson, "Sin, Self, and Society: John Wesley's Hamartiology Reconsidered," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 44, no. 2 (1989): 77-90. Insight from Wesley's view on sin is referenced in John Wesley, "Salvation by Faith," 1:122-45; "The Marks of a New Birth," 1:419-21; and "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," 1:269, in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984). Randy Maddox describes Wesley's anthropology and the duplexity found between body and soul, in Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 71. See also Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007). Charles W. Christian explains that although Wesley appeared a dichotomist in the technical sense, he still fostered a holistic approach to ministry, in Charles W. Christian, "John Wesley's Anthropology: Traditional and Innovative Elements," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 59, nos. 1-2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 140.

## Wesley's Formative Reading of Scripture

Wesley's method for Christian growth involved active participation of several steps in reading the Bible. Collectively, the steps have become known as the formative reading of Scripture.<sup>19</sup> Essentially, the formative reading of Scripture moves beyond reading the Bible for information into reading Scripture for the formation of the heart. This type of reading parallels a critical, exegetical method into more of a reflective and personal approach.<sup>20</sup>

The formative reading of Scripture is not a new concept. For centuries, people have utilized various avenues for practicing the presence of God through reading, meditating, praying, preaching, and teaching Scripture.<sup>21</sup> Though the Bible was neither published nor readily available during early times, churches typically had a copy of the

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<sup>19</sup>Wesley's version of the Formative Reading of Scripture appears to be rooted in his understanding of *Lectio Divina*. Neil Richardson points out that from the time of Wesley and beyond, Methodists have practiced at least three principles (reading, meditating, and praying) of *lectio divina* without naming it that. Neil Richardson, "Lectio Divina—A Methodist Reflection," *Holiness* 2, no. 2 (2016): 236. For more on *Lectio Divina* see chap. 1n11. Fred Sanders states, "'Formative reading' is perhaps the latest attempt to find a serviceable technical term to name the way Christians treat the Bible as a means of grace, a place where God is to be encountered." Fred Sanders, "The Formative Reading of Scripture," *The Scriptorium Daily*, August 1, 2012, accessed May 31, 2017, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/scriptorium/2012/08/the-formative-reading-of-scripture/>.

<sup>20</sup>Susan Muto, "The Art and Discipline of Formative Reading: Revisiting Holy Scripture with Humble Receptivity," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 1 (2012): 100-16.

<sup>21</sup>*Lectio Divina*, a sacred Scripture reading practice, is rooted in the third century with Origen (184/5–253/4). Origen's *On First Principles* (ca. 225) reveals his belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture. Duncan Robertson explains that Origen believes that to understand Scripture, one must rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal important meanings, in Duncan Robertson, *Lectio Divina: The Medieval Experience of Reading* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 43-50. Origen encouraged Gregory of Ceasarea' to pray while reading:

While you attend to this divine reading seek aright and with unwavering faith in God the hidden sense which is present in most passages of the divine Scriptures. And do not be content with knocking and seeking, for what is most necessary for understanding divine things is prayer, and in urging us to this the Savior says not only, "Knock, and it shall be opened to you," and "Seek, and ye shall find," but also "Ask, and it shall be given you."

Origen's letter is recorded in Allan Menzies, ed., *The Anti-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 9:296. Bernard McGinn studied the mystical elements in early Greek Christianity, in Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroads, 2002), 84-130.

text. Due to its limited availability and the fact that illiteracy was prevalent, leaders within the church took time to read and learn the text in order to share it with those in the congregation.<sup>22</sup> Believers spent ample time each week listening to the Bible and meditating on its truth. As time progressed, and education increased, people began to read more for biblical knowledge. Thus, for years, Christians struggled to find the balance of reading and learning Scripture for both biblical knowledge and for personal application.<sup>23</sup>

Later in the eighteenth century, Wesley returned to spiritual disciplines akin to *lectio divina*, the ancient monastic sacred reading practice.<sup>24</sup> Wesley found a connection between the Bible and the early church and its fathers.<sup>25</sup> One finds similar aspects, such

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<sup>22</sup>Those who were illiterate depended on others to read and teach them the truths of the Bible. For this reason, Wesley was inspired to open Christian schools. This information is treated in chap. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Tom Schwanda and James C. Wilhoit explain the beginnings of *lectio divina* and the challenges associated with scholarly biblical reading as people became more educated. They present a brief analysis that church traditions, such as Catholics and Protestants, saw times of recovery and decline concerning reading for spiritual transformation. People like English Puritan pastor Thomas Watson taught to find the balance of Biblical reading with both head and heart. Tom Schwanda and Jim Wilhoit, "Introduction to the Special Theme Issue: The Formative Reading of Scripture," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 1 (2012): 3-4. Evan Howard and James Wilhoit also offer a historical analysis of *lectio divina*, while also offering readers practical information of the practice as a method for spiritual formation. James C. Wilhoit and Evan Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life* (Downers Grove: IL, IVP, 2012).

<sup>24</sup>Several writers influenced John Wesley's understanding *lectio divina* practices. See Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 72; Richardson, "Lectio Divina—A Methodist Reflection," 240; Howard F. VanValin, "Mysticism in Wesley," *The Asbury Journal* 12, no. 2 (2017): 8; Randy Maddox, "John Wesley's Reading: Evidence in the Book Collection at Wesley's House, London," *Methodist History* 41, no. 3 (2003): 118-33; Jeanne Guyon, *A Short and Very Easy Method of Prayer*, trans. Thomas D. Brook (1685; New York: Cosimo, 2007); John Wesley, *An Extract of the Life of Madame Guion* (London: R. Hawes, 1776). For further insight on Wesley's journey of acceptance and rejection of Christian mysticism, see Elaine A. Heath, "Reading Scripture for Christian Formation," in *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading Bible as Scripture*, ed. Green and Watson, 217; Jean Orcibal, "The Theological Originality of John Wesley and Continental Spirituality," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ed. Rupert Davies and Gordan Rupp (London: Epworth, 1965), 83-111; VanValin, "Mysticism in Wesley," 235-46.

<sup>25</sup>Recorded in John Wesley, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, near the City Road, London," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (1872; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 7: 424, Wesley writes,

This is the religion of the Primitive church, of the whole Church in the purest ages. It is clearly expressed, even in the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp; it is seen more at

as reading, praying, and meditating, in his teachings and sermons.<sup>26</sup> Each step was distinctly intentional. Wesley stated aspects of his formative reading of Scripture best in his preface to “Sermons on Several Occasions.”<sup>27</sup> His brother, Charles, captivated the technique in his hymn, “When Quiet in My House I Sit.”

When quiet in my house I sit,  
Thy Book be my companion still,  
My joy thy savings to repeat,  
Talk o’er the records of they will,  
And search the oracles divine,  
Till every heartfelt word be mine.

O may the gracious words divine  
Subject of all my converse be!  
So will the follower join,  
And walk and talk Himself with me;  
So shall my heart His presence prove,  
And burn with everlasting love.

Oft as I lay me down to rest,  
O may the reconciling Word  
Sweetly compose my weary breast!  
While on the bosom of my Lord,  
I sink in blissful dreams away,  
And visions of eternal day.

Rising to sing my Savior’s praise,  
Thee may I publish all day long;

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large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyprian, and even the fourth century, it was found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macrius.

<sup>26</sup>See John Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 89-90; Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8.

<sup>27</sup>In Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 89-90, Wesley states,

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,” Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights: “Lord, is it not Thy word, ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God’? Thou ‘givest liberally, and upbraidest not.’ Thou hast said, “If any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know.” I am willing to do, let me know, Thy will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.



And let thy precious word of grace  
Flow from my heart, and fill my tongue,  
Fill all my life with purest love,  
And join me to the Church above.<sup>28</sup>

Wesley desired for people to read and understand the Bible.<sup>29</sup> Wesley continued with specific direction on reading Scripture formationally in his commentary, *Notes on the Old Testament*.<sup>30</sup> Wesley intended for people to spend time in the Word, reading and hearing what it had to say. His desire was for them to gain a better understanding and knowledge of the Word. He also hoped the Word would shape their hearts and actions, thus engaging them in a transformative spiritual process of growth.

The formative reading of Scripture involves the reader thinking reflectively and critically to ultimately be formed into a faithful follower of Christ. Thus, as family ministry places importance on Christian growth in keeping with Wesley's method, there

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<sup>28</sup>Charles Wesley, "When Quiet in My House I Sit," accessed January 10, 2018, [https://hymnary.org/text/when\\_quiet\\_in\\_my\\_house\\_i\\_sit](https://hymnary.org/text/when_quiet_in_my_house_i_sit).

<sup>29</sup>This desire is expressed in the beginning of his commentary on the Old Testament. Wesley writes, "I design only, like the hand of dial, to point every man to This: not to take up his mind with something else, how excellent soever: but to keep his eye fixt upon the naked Bible, that he may read and hear it with understanding. I say again, (and desire it may be well observed, that none may expect what they will not find.) It is not my design to write a book, which a man may read separate from the Bible: but barely to assist those who fear God, in hearing and reading the Bible itself, by shewing the natural sense of every part, in as few and plain words as I can." Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8.

<sup>30</sup>His direction for reading formationally are as follows: "If you desire to read the Scripture in such a manner as may most effectually answer this end, would it not be advisable, (1) To set apart a little time, if you can, every morning and evening for that purpose? (2) At each time if you have leisure, to read a chapter out of the Old, and one out of the New Testament: if you cannot do this, to take a single chapter, or a part of one? (3) To read this with a single eye, to know the whole will of God, and a fixt resolution to do it? In order to know his will, you should, (4) Have a constant eye to the analogy of faith; the connexion and harmony there is between those grand, fundamental doctrines, Original Sin, Justification by Faith, the New Birth, Inward and Outward Holiness. (5) Serious and earnest prayer should be constantly used, before we consult the oracles of God, seeing "Scripture can only be understood thro' the same Spirit whereby it was given." Our reading should likewise be closed with prayer, that what we read may be written on our hearts. (6) It might also be of use, if while we read, we were frequently to pause, and examine ourselves by what we read, both with regard to our hearts, and lives. This would furnish us with matter of praise, where we found God had enabled us to conform to his blessed will, and matter of humiliation and prayer, where we were conscious of having fallen short. . . . And whatever light you then receive, should be used to the uttermost and that immediately. Let there be no delay. Whatever you resolve, begin to execute the first moment you can. So shall you find this word to be indeed the power of God unto present and eternal salvation." Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8-9.

will be an emphasis on searching the Scriptures and reading the Word for spiritual formation and transformation. The goal through this process is for families to be formed into faithful followers of Christ together. The method involves the church actively implementing the formational reading of Scripture as its model in various settings. As churches implement the model and share the technique with parents, they will then witness changed families. Changed families then influence and affect the church and the world around them.

## Reading

This chapter continues to develop the information found in Wesley's steps and offers them as an applicable model for family discipleship.<sup>31</sup> The first and foundational step places a significant emphasis on reading Scripture. The foundational step of Wesley's model, which I propose can also be a model for family ministry, is reading the Word. Individuals, small groups, and families can follow Wesley's formative reading of Scripture approach to spiritual growth. The first step is directly connected to each of the following steps.

Reading Scripture is foundational to each of the steps associated with Wesley's formative reading of Scripture. An aspect of Wesley's formative reading of Scripture was the unique aspect of searching the Scripture. Wesley encouraged searching Scripture daily by inviting the Holy Spirit to one's reading time, pausing to meditate, and intentionally listening to the Spirit while examining oneself.<sup>32</sup> McKinney explains that Wesley believed

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<sup>31</sup>Wesley's formative reading of Scripture method encouraged Scripture reading in the morning and evening from the Old and New Testament. His method follows a similar pattern as the Lectionary, a Scripture reading plan found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. The lectionary in the *Book of Common Prayer* shaped Wesley's method. He sent a revised version of the *Book of Common Prayer* to his ministers, which would have included the lectionary. Maddox, "John Wesley—A Man of One Book," in *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading Bible as Scripture*, ed. Green and Watson, 9. See also Ted A. Campbell, "Wesley's Use of the Church Fathers," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 1 (1996): 57-70.

<sup>32</sup>John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (1872; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 8:323. This information was also discussed in chap. 2.

that, through Scripture, one comes to a knowledge of God and then that knowledge and understanding of Scripture forms one's heart toward holiness.<sup>33</sup>

**Morning and evening.** Wesley's formative reading of Scripture plan involves setting apart specific time to read the Bible. He teaches that, if possible, one should read both in the morning and the evening.<sup>34</sup> This method follows the Daily Office Lectionary found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Wesley says to set aside intentional time twice a day to read. In order to read the Bible formationally, Wesley stressed reading it in both the morning and the evening. The basis of the formative reading of Scripture is not the speed of one's Scripture reading; it is simply a matter of spending time in the Word. Regular, consistent times of reading Scripture is essential in Wesley's model.

The church can use this method to train parents to lead their children in times of Bible reading. Since Wesley believed reading the Bible formationally was best accomplished when done both morning and evening, the church could provide daily resources and reminders to help parents accomplish this goal. For example, the church could provide families a Bible reading plan that included portions of Scripture for morning and evening. Additionally, the church can assist families by modeling Wesley's method in a large or small group setting.

**Old and New Testaments.** Wesley proceeded to encourage people to read from both the Old and New testaments: "At each time if you have leisure, to read a chapter out of the Old, and one out of the New Testament: if you cannot do this, to take a single chapter, or a part of one?"<sup>35</sup> Wesley's model is not based on the amount of Scripture people can read in one day—it is about simply reading. By following his method of

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<sup>33</sup>McKinney, "John Wesley," 12-24.

<sup>34</sup>Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8-9.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid. This method follows the Daily Office Lectionary found in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

reading both morning and evening, families can read a chapter from the Old Testament either morning or evening and read a chapter from the New Testament another time of day.<sup>36</sup>

**Will of God and analogy of faith.** Next, Wesley taught to read the Bible while keeping the whole will of God in perspective. One must read with an openness to know God's will for one's life. Wesley states,

To read this with a single eye, to know the whole will of God, and a fixt resolution to do it? In order to know his will, you should, Have a constant eye to the analogy of faith; the connexion and harmony there is between those grand, fundamental doctrines, Original Sin, Justification by Faith, the New Birth, Inward and Outward Holiness.<sup>37</sup>

He further admonished his readers to put into practice the will of God. According to Wesley, those who read Scripture with minds open to God's will must also follow through with obedience to the word they have read.

Wesley believed the core doctrines of the faith aided and enhanced one's understanding of Scripture. He further taught to read with an eye on the "analogy of faith," or "rule of faith." Wesley used this phrase in his *Notes on the Old Testament: Genesis to Ruth*,<sup>38</sup> but also in his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, specifically in his note on Romans 12:6.<sup>39</sup> Here, he explains the "analogy of faith" as an interpretive principle.<sup>40</sup> Wesley believed that every use of Scripture must be in alignment with the central beliefs of the Christian faith. Thus, the "rule of faith" used by the early church encompassed that

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<sup>36</sup>Though John Wesley encouraged reading from the Old and New Testament, he did not specify which specific Scriptures to read.

<sup>37</sup>Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>John Wesley, "Comments on Romans 12:6," in *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1976), 569.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

which was unifying in Scripture and, therefore, could be used as a tool when reading the Bible. Some examples of early church documents used to teach basic Christian doctrine, which Wesley would have referenced were The Apostles Creed and The Lord's Prayer.<sup>41</sup> David F. Watson writes that using Scripture in a communal way involved reading Scripture "in dialogue with the historic Christian faith."<sup>42</sup>

## Praying

The second step in Wesley's formative reading of Scripture involves prayer. He continues in his *Notes on the Old Testament* stating, "Serious and earnest prayer should be constantly used. . . . Our reading should likewise be closed with prayer, that what we read may be written on our hearts." He emphasized the importance of Scripture coupled with prayer on more than one occasion. Wesley's commentary on the New Testament is such an example. It states,

The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer. Hence it is so profitable for doctrine, for instruction of the ignorant, for the reproof or conviction of them that are in error or sin, for the correction or amendment of whatever is amiss, and for instructing or training up the children of God in all righteousness.<sup>43</sup>

Wesley prayed before, during, and after his times of reading Scripture. While reading Scripture coupled with prayer, Wesley sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the interpretation of Scripture followed. While quoting Thomas à Kempis to Bishop William

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<sup>41</sup>Wesley learned the Apostles Creed and the Lord's Prayer at an early age and they continued to be influential throughout his lifetime. John Wesley used the language of the Apostles creed in several writings, including Sermon 74, "Of the Church." Wesley, "Of the Church," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 3:45-57. See also Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 239. Wesley included questions and answers concerning the Lord's Prayer in his catechetical work for children. Wesley also included a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer in his discourse on the Sermon on the Mount. John Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: VI (1748), Sermon 26," in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 223-38.

<sup>42</sup>Watson, "Scripture as Canon," 165.

<sup>43</sup>John Wesley, "Comments on 2 Tim. 3:16," in *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 794.

Warburton, Wesley said, “We need the same Spirit to understand the Scripture which enabled the holy men of old to write it.”<sup>44</sup> The formative facet is evident as Wesley encouraged a less informative and a more personal approach by prayerfully inviting the presence of the Holy Spirit to enter one’s space while reading Scripture.

Wesley prayed to know God’s will while reading Scripture. Wesley says,

Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights: “Lord, is it not Thy word, ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God’? Thou ‘givest liberally, and upbraidest not.’ Thou hast said, ‘If any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know.’ I am willing to do, let me know, Thy will.”<sup>45</sup>

Concerning prayer, Wesley suggested “The Collect” for the first Sunday of Advent in the *Book of Common Prayer* to readers of the Bible:

I advise every one, before he reads the Scripture, to use this or the little prayer: “Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of the holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou has given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.”<sup>46</sup>

His brother, Charles, offers hymns referencing the Holy Spirit’s work in Scripture reading.

In the first two stanzas of “Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearst Inspire,” Charles writes,

Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,  
Let us thine influence prove  
Source of the old prophetic fire,  
Fountain of life and love.

Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,  
Let us thine influence prove

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<sup>44</sup>John Wesley, “Letter to Bishop of Gloucester,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 11:524. Maddox says of Wesley, “While he affirms God’s guidance of the original authors, Wesley’s focal emphasis is encouraging present readers to seek the Spirit’s gracious assistance in reading Scripture!” Maddox, “The Rule of Christian Faith, Practice, and Hope,” 15.

<sup>45</sup>Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 1:105.

<sup>46</sup>“The Collect” for the First Sunday of Advent in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Wesley taught this portion in John Wesley, “To the Reader,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Emory (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1853), 7:582.

Unlock the truth, thyself the key,  
Unseal the sacred book.<sup>47</sup>

Again, in Charles' hymn "Come Divine Interpreter," he prayerfully requests the Holy Spirit's presence during Scripture reading.

Come, divine Interpreter,  
Bring me eyes thy book to read,  
Ears the mystic words to hear,  
Words which did from thee proceed,  
Words that endless bliss impart,  
Kept in an obedient heart.

All who read, or hear are blessed,  
If thy plain commands we do;  
Of thy kingdom here possessed,  
Thee we shall in glory view,  
When thou comest on earth to abide,  
Reign triumphant at thy side.<sup>48</sup>

One learns from Wesley that prayerfully reading Scripture can be a means of experiencing transformation.

## Comparing

The third step of Wesley's formative reading of Scripture for use as a model for family discipleship is the art of comparing. Following Wesley's step to prayerfully read Scripture, he presents, "I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual."<sup>49</sup> Though Wesley was known as a "man of one book,"<sup>50</sup> he was also known to compare Scripture with commentaries, parallel passages, various translations, and studied the ancient Greek and Hebrew of the

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<sup>47</sup>Charles Wesley, "Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearts Inspire," accessed January 10, 2018, [https://hymnary.org/text/come\\_holy\\_ghost\\_our\\_hearts\\_inspire\\_let\\_u](https://hymnary.org/text/come_holy_ghost_our_hearts_inspire_let_u).

<sup>48</sup>Charles Wesley, "Come, Divine Interpreter," accessed January 10, 2018, [https://hymnary.org/text/come\\_divine\\_interpreter](https://hymnary.org/text/come_divine_interpreter).

<sup>49</sup>Wesley, "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 1:105

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

text.<sup>51</sup> Thus, moving into the technique of comparing, one may compare various versions of the Bible; various books within the Bible; and a multitude of available scholarly tools found primarily online.

To read comparatively, Dragos suggests asking various questions to guide one's experience.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, comparative reading involves learning the historical and cultural customs of the time it was written. Wesley refers to this as knowing the context. In *An Address to the Clergy*, Wesley mentions, "Know the context and parallel places" for any passage.<sup>53</sup> In "Farther Thoughts upon Christian Perfection," he also mentions the context: "Try all things by the written word, and let all bow down before it. You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour, if you depart ever so little from Scripture; yea, or from the plain, literal meaning of any text, taken in connection with the context."<sup>54</sup> By reading Scripture in context, one safeguards against "allegorizing or spiritualizing."<sup>55</sup>

In reference to his commentaries, Wesley did not want people to read them "separate from the Bible."<sup>56</sup> Rather, he intended his commentaries to be an aid meant to enhance a reader's understanding of certain passages. Likewise, comparative reading is purely an aid and contributing attribute of the formative reading of Scripture.

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<sup>51</sup>Maddox, "The Rule of Christian Faith, Practice, and Hope," 7-10.

<sup>52</sup>Dragos, "Six Steps to Reading the Bible." His suggested questions include, "Where does this passage sit in the grand narrative of Scripture? Are there other places the Bible speaks to this topic? Do Jesus or the apostles provide further direction on earlier revelation?"

<sup>53</sup>John Wesley, "An Address to the Clergy," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 10:490.

<sup>54</sup>John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in vol. 11 of *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 366-446.

<sup>55</sup>John Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Reverend Mr. Wesley and Others," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 8:317.

<sup>56</sup>Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8.



## **Meditating**

The fourth step in Wesley's formative reading of Scripture to apply in family ministry is meditation. He states, "I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable."<sup>57</sup> Biblical meditation is intentional times of pausing for personal reflection on the Scripture previously read. Wesley admonishes,

It might also be of use, if while we read, we were frequently to pause, and examine ourselves by what we read, both with regard to our hearts, and lives. This would furnish us with matter of praise, where we found God had enabled us to conform to his blessed will, and matter of humiliation and prayer, where we were conscious of having fallen short.<sup>58</sup>

Reading Scripture as Wesley instructed involves moving beyond a basic reading of the Bible into deliberate times of individual reflection on the verses read. This aspect is critical to the formative reading of Scripture as it requires moving beyond analytical reading to a more reflective reading of Scripture.<sup>59</sup>

This step of the formative reading of Scripture requires each person to take adequate time to examine him or herself, in particular their personal heart and life. It is a time of monitoring one's heart to sense God's movement and to possibly highlight a specific word, phrase, or sentence for personal reflection.<sup>60</sup> Meditation is the place one quiets oneself amidst the many distractions and allows time for personal prayer and reflection based on the Scripture read. It requires leaning on the Holy Spirit to reveal aspects of one's life needing adjusting. As the Holy Spirit illuminates areas of one's life

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<sup>57</sup>Wesley, "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 1:105.

<sup>58</sup>Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8.

<sup>59</sup>See John Jefferson Davis, *Meditation and Communion with God: Contemplating Scripture in an Age of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012). Davis adapts his formula for biblical meditation from Trappist monk, M. Basil Pennington. Davis uses four steps for meditation: (1) Intention and Invocation, (2) Reading and Reflection, (3) Prayer, and (4) Recollection. See also Klaus Issler, "Approaching Formative Scripture Reading with Both Head and Heart," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 1 (2012): 117-34.

<sup>60</sup>Issler "Approaching Formative Scripture Reading," 117-34.

needing adjusting, individuals should respond with repentance, then thanks for Christ's insight and guidance.

### **Consulting**

The fifth step in Wesley's formative reading of Scripture to be used as a model for family discipleship is consulting. Wesley takes time to consult others. Wesley articulates, "I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak."<sup>61</sup> It is wise to seek the insight and wisdom of others. It could be that Wesley was not necessarily referring to consulting those with scholarly expertise, but rather those with mature Christian character and possibly perceptive in their discernment of interpreting Scripture.<sup>62</sup> Wesley encouraged people to consult others as part of their reading and discipleship plan.

Wesley also admonished people to not neglect reading Scripture in communal settings. An aspect of consulting is reading in conference with other believers. In Wesley's sermon "Catholic Spirit," he acknowledges the human frailties associated with reading Scripture independently. He says,

Although every man necessarily believes that every particular opinion which he holds is true (for to believe any opinion is not true, is the same thing as not to hold it); yet can no man be assured that all his own opinions, taken together, are true. Nay, every thinking man is assured they are not, seeing humanum est errare et nescire: To be ignorant of many things, and to mistake in some, is the necessary condition of humanity.<sup>63</sup>

It is clear that Wesley was secure and confident enough to seek the consultation of others. In keeping with Wesley's formative reading of Scripture, family ministry should also

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<sup>61</sup>Wesley, "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 1:105.

<sup>62</sup>Some have made this observation, such as Maddox, "The Rule of Christian Faith, Practice, and Hope," 17, with insight from Andrew C. Thompson, "Outler's Quadrilateral, Moral Psychology, and Theological Reflection in the Wesleyan Tradition," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 46, no. 1 (2011), 49-72.

<sup>63</sup>John Wesley, "Catholic Spirit, Sermon 39," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 2:84.

practice and teach children to have a spirit of openness in spiritual conversations with others concerning the Bible.

## **Teaching**

The final step in Wesley's formative reading of Scripture is teaching. This step highlights the fact that Wesley's method is part of a continuum. Wesley says, "And what I thus learn, that I teach."<sup>64</sup> In "The Law Established by Faith," he also states, "At the same time that we proclaim all the blessings and privileges which God hath prepared for his children, we are likewise to teach all the things whatsoever he hath commanded."<sup>65</sup> Wesley's formative reading of Scripture method has the potential to continue indefinitely as people share the knowledge they gain while searching the Scriptures with others. This applies to pastors who teach their staff and congregants; pastors and leaders who teach parents; parents who teach their children; and children who share and teach others that which they learn.

The teaching step of Wesley's model is also reflective of his belief that an essential quality of searching Scripture is application. He writes, "And whatever light you then receive, should be used to the uttermost and that immediately. Let there be no delay. Whatever you resolve, begin to execute the first moment you can. So shall you find this word to be indeed the power of God unto present and eternal salvation."<sup>66</sup> Wesley included in his method outward, practical application of the inward working taking place in his heart and life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Wesley moved beyond private, inward reflection toward outward focused, active participation with the world around him.

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<sup>64</sup>Wesley, "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 1:105.

<sup>65</sup>John Wesley, "The Law Established by Faith: Discourse Two, Sermon 36," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. John Emory (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1872), 1:323-29.

<sup>66</sup>Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, 8-9.

Leadership in the church should model Wesley's final step of teaching. Then, the resources and information from Wesley's formative reading of Scripture can be used as an aid to equip believers in their spiritual growth process and can be continually taught to others. The final step of teaching should be encouraged because it fosters spiritual transformation of families, thus impacting many.

### **Wesley's Practical Application and Resources**

Wesley's formative reading of Scripture is rooted in his belief that Christian formation is achieved through Bible engagement.<sup>67</sup> Wesley faithfully modeled application of this belief by his daily reading of the Word. Another area John Wesley modeled was journaling. Journaling is a practical application of the meditation phase of the formative reading of Scripture. People often use journals to write down particular areas where they are pondering, learning, and growing. Journaling resources meditative practices and assists families experiencing digital overload.<sup>68</sup> Another tool families use to assist in daily meditation is placing the written Word in a central, visible location. Additionally, Scripture memorization aids Biblical meditation.<sup>69</sup>

As families engage in Scripture reading, an additional practical help Wesley provided related to the formative reading of Scripture is catechisms. Because Wesley valued the "analogy of faith" so highly, he suggested catechetical instruction as a means of

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<sup>67</sup>Wesley believed searching Scripture was one of the ways people grew in their relationship with Christ. See John Wesley, "Means of Grace, Sermon 16," in *John Wesley's Sermons*, ed. Outler and Heitzenrater, 157-72.

<sup>68</sup>The World Health Organization includes excessive gaming as a mental health disorder. The problems associated with excessive gaming results in impairment in areas such as personal, family, social, and academic. Barbara Booth, "Apple Urged to Take Action on Smartphone Addiction Some Call 'Digital Heroin,'" *CNBC*, January 8, 2018, accessed January 12, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/08/jana-partners-urges-apple-to-take-action-on-smartphone-addiction.html>.

<sup>69</sup>M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1985), 153.

teaching this faith to children.<sup>70</sup> Some describe catechesis as passing down oral religious instruction of central Christian truths to a new generation.<sup>71</sup> Though not widely used among some traditions, catechetical practices still have a place in family discipleship ministries today.<sup>72</sup> Some still believe that catechizing is a ministry of the church that allows people to be grounded in the gospel and is an avenue that fosters spiritual growth. Catechesis informs a person's faith, making him or her more confident and accurate in his or her beliefs. There is a great need for this specific practice in family ministry. Catechizing can be particularly helpful here because an increase in biblical knowledge and spiritual growth both take place in the parents and children due to the repetitive nature of catechetical ministry. Many Christians cannot state what or why they believe that which they do. Catechisms help inform and teach beliefs to children and families. Catechisms thus function as a tool of apologetics ministry, informing and building this family ministry model.

Many seem to be realizing the need, as well as the benefit to revitalizing catechesis. Similar to Wesley's mission for people to not only know Christian doctrine but grow in holiness, the United Methodist Church also desires for the use of catechisms to ultimately form and grow one in holiness of heart and life.<sup>73</sup> Noted teacher J. I. Packer

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<sup>70</sup>Catechetical training was not to take the place of Bible reading. Its purpose was to be a supplement to one's reading and to enhance one's formative reading of Scripture. The use of catechisms was intended to be an aid to parents and leaders to teach the basic doctrines of the Christian faith to children.

<sup>71</sup>Timothy Tennent, "The First Step in 'Making Culture' is Catechesis!" March 28, 2011, accessed May 31, 2017, <http://timothytennent.com/2011/03/28/the-first-step-in-making-culture-is-catechesis/>.

<sup>72</sup>Traditions using catechisms teach basic tenants of the Christian faith, such as the Apostles Creed, the Sacraments, The Lord's Prayer, and The Ten Commandments. See J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 62. Packer and Parrett offer an outline on identifying "sound catechetical content for application in contemporary congregations." *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>73</sup>Teddy Ray, "Why the United Methodist Church Needs a Catechism," *Seedbed*, August 6, 2012, accessed August 15, 2017, <http://www.seedbed.com/why-the-united-methodist-church-needs-a-catechism/>.

believes Evangelical churches are weak due to the absence of teachings on confessions and doctrine. He adamantly advises new pastors to teach them, and to understand and practice catechizing.<sup>74</sup> Other denominations, such as Pentecostals, have not routinely used catechisms as part of their discipleship process.<sup>75</sup> Coming to an understanding of its importance in recent years, Pentecostals released a discipleship manual, entitled *iBelieve*.<sup>76</sup> It is designed as a resource to help children “learn, own, and live the Pentecostal faith.”<sup>77</sup>

Practicing the art of catechesis for family discipleship purposes is as simple as selecting a question for the week and enfolding that question into daily life, at home, and at church.<sup>78</sup> Catechisms equip parents in the discipleship process of their children, and aid in the opportunity for engagement between students, parents, and the church. Wesley’s catechism for children falls in direct line with contemporary arguments to continue an ancient tradition for use in current family ministry practices.

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<sup>74</sup>J. I. Packer, quoted in Warren Cole Smith, “Patriarch: In His Ninth Decade, J. I.,” *World Magazine*, December 5, 2009, accessed May 8, 2017, <https://world.wng.org/2009/11/patriarch>.

<sup>75</sup>Lance Colkmire, “Pathway Press Releases iBelieve,” *Faith News Network*, June 19, 2012, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://www.faithnews.cc/?p=12292>.

<sup>76</sup>John R. Harris, Jr., *iBelieve Discipleship Manual for Church and Home* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2012). In addition to the manual, Pathway offers an entire kit, including lesson plans, question and answer booklets, and activity cards for use in church and home. In a press release, Harris said, “The use of a catechism gives children the opportunity to learn the doctrine of the church and help with living out that doctrine as they engage God. In a postmodern world filled with pluralism and individualism, this is especially necessary. We want our children to make a difference in the world by being deeply rooted in the Christian faith. In order for that to happen, they must have a clear understanding of the God who is revealed in Scripture so then can then live out their life with assurance and confidence.” John R. Harris, Jr., quoted in Lance Colkmire, “Pathway Press Releases iBelieve,” *Faith News Network*, June 19, 2012, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://www.faithnews.cc/?p=12292>.

<sup>77</sup>Colkmire, “Pathway Press Releases iBelieve.”

<sup>78</sup>Peter R. Schemm, Jr., “Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 186.

## Conclusion

Often it is helpful for people to look back and reflect before moving forward. As one looks back and reflects on John Wesley's teachings for reading Scripture formationally, one clearly discovers an applicable model for family ministry today. This project aimed at recovering the long-neglected practice of the formative reading of Scripture as an applicable solution to the problem associated with family discipleship. The problem associated with family discipleship this thesis addressed is the need for biblically-motivated resources for parents. Most believing parents know they should disciple their children; however, many do not feel equipped to do so or rely solely on the church for the faith training of their children instead. This thesis offered a solution to this problem with Wesley's Scripture-engagement plan (formative reading of Scripture) as a method for Christian formation.

Reflecting on Wesley's transformation after his Aldersgate experience, it is to be noted the difference in his attitude toward spiritual disciplines. Before Aldersgate, Wesley practiced spiritual disciplines out of religious obligation, duty, and tradition. After Aldersgate, Wesley practiced the disciplines with a changed attitude and heart. He desired to spend quality time with God and grow in his relationship with Christ. Thus, the implication for parents is to remember that Wesley's model for family discipleship should be conducted with hearts and attitudes longing to witness spiritual transformation and Christian growth.

The central goal of this thesis was to provide families with a model for discipleship. By integrating aspects of Green and Watson's, *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading Bible as Scripture*, facets of McKinney and Dragos' articles, and insights from the articles by Klauss and Muto, a model for family discipleship emerged. John Wesley's formative reading of Scripture is a model for family discipleship today.

As people learn and practice his preferred approach, known as the formative reading of Scripture, they become equipped to lead others on a spiritual journey of transformation. Through the formative reading of Scripture, one finds a model for

continued spiritual growth for both the home and church setting. This applicable family ministry model reflects Wesley's discipleship goal of seeing people come to Christ and grow in their personal walk with Him. He expressed his goal when he wrote, "I have one point in view, to promote, as far as I am able, vital, practical religion; and by the grace of God, to beget, preserve and increase the life of God in the souls of men."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>John Wesley, "Letter to the Rev. Mr. Walker, of Truro," in *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.: Fellow of Lincoln College* (London: James Nichols Printer, 1825), 2:206.



## APPENDIX

### A MODEL FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

#### **More than a Textbook: The Word that Transforms**

*An 8-week Course Introducing a Family Ministry Model //*

*Based on John Wesley's Writings // Centered on the Word of God*

This 8-week course introduces a family ministry model for adults, children, and teens with an emphasis on the Word of God. The model is based on John Wesley's writings, offering readers a guide for reading and understanding the Bible. It is designed for use in a small group setting. The following is an outline for each of the lessons:

**Week 1: Overview**

**Week 2: Read**

**Week 3: Pray**

**Week 4: Compare**

**Week 5: Meditate**

**Week 6: Consult**

**Week 7: Teach**

**Week 8: Review/Combination -**

*Combining the various steps into one model for home and church*

#### Lesson Aim:

The aim of the weekly lessons is to teach people of all ages a pattern for studying the Word of God.

Lesson Goal:

The goal is spiritual transformation due to time and practice in the Word of God. Additionally, the goal is for parents to *duplicate* Wesley's example for studying the Word, as a model for family devotions/discipleship in the home.

Lesson Outline:

Each lesson will include four components: Introduction; Lesson; Reflection; and Action. The lessons are simply a guide for the teacher to develop further, depending on the size and age of the small group.

Emphasis on Church and Home:

This study is designed with lessons for a small group setting and to be duplicated in the home for several reasons:

- To emphasize the importance of both the church and parents to be co-champions together in the religious education of children and teens.
- To encourage communication between parents and children.
- To encourage communication between the generations represented in the church.
- To equip parents to discipline/train their children according to the Word (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).
- To keep every generation on the same topic/theme for 6-8 weeks.
- To offer a model for studying the Word of God that can be continued and applied in various church classes/small groups, as well as family discipleship/devotions in the home.
- To make clear the importance of family ministry throughout the totality of the church.

## John Wesley Writings

### *Related to Scripture Reading*

“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, Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights: “Lord, is it not Thy word, ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God’? Thou ‘givest liberally, and upbraidest not.’ Thou hast said, ‘If any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know.’ I am willing to do, let me know, Thy will. ‘ I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.”

*(Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions)*

“If you desire to read the scripture in such a manner as may most effectually answer this end, would it not be advisable,

1. To set apart a little time, if you can, every morning and evening for that purpose?
2. At each time if you have leisure, to read a chapter out of the Old, and one out of the New Testament: if you cannot do this, to take a single chapter, or a part of one?
3. To read this with a single eye, to know the whole will of God, and a fixt resolution to do it? In order to know his will, you should,
4. Have a constant eye to the analogy of faith; the connexion and harmony there is between those grand, fundamental doctrines, Original Sin, Justification by Faith, the New Birth, Inward and Outward Holiness.

5. Serious and earnest prayer should be constantly used, before we consult the oracles of God, seeing "scripture can only be understood thro' the same Spirit whereby it was given." Our reading should likewise be closed with prayer, that what we read may be written on our hearts.

6. It might also be of use, if while we read, we were frequently to pause, and examine ourselves by what we read, both with regard to our hearts, and lives. This would furnish us with matter of praise, where we found God had enabled us to conform to his blessed will, and matter of humiliation and prayer, where we were conscious of having fallen short." (*Preface to Explanatory Notes of the Old Testament*)

"The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer. Hence it is so profitable for doctrine, for instruction of the ignorant, for the reproof or conviction of them that are in error or sin, for the correction or amendment of whatever is amiss, and for instructing or training up the children of God in all righteousness." (*Notes on the New Testament: 1 Corinthians – Revelation*)

Searching the Scriptures by:

(i.) Reading: Constantly, some part of everyday; regularly, all the Bible in order; carefully, with the Notes; seriously, with prayer before and after; fruitfully, immediately practicing what you learn there?

(ii.) Meditating: At set times? by any rule?

(iii.) Hearing: Every morning? carefully; with prayer before, at, after; immediately putting in practice? Have you a New Testament always about you? (*Minutes of Several Conversations between Wesley and Others, Works, 8:355-56*)

## Week 1: Overview

This lesson is designed to provide an overview of the course, leading to the family ministry model. The model is based on a few of John Wesley's writings. John Wesley was intentional about reading Scripture and writing about its importance. Therefore, Wesley's emphasis on Scripture and how to read the Word is the core of the model. The included John Wesley writings are the foundation for the teachings featured in this course/model.

### Before the Lesson: Teacher // Things to Do

- During the first week together, it is encouraged to provide background information for John Wesley. References can be found online at:  
<http://www.umcmmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/The-Wesleys-and-Their-Times/Account-of-the-Life-of-John-Wesley> and  
<http://www.umcom.org/learn/10-fascinating-facts-about-john-wesley-and-united-methodism>
- In the provided writings by John Wesley, underline or highlight every time you see the words (or related words) for **read, pray, compare, meditate, consult, and teach.**
- It is important to make sure every person is equipped with a Bible. It is also suggested for each student to have a journal or notebook in order to take notes with from week to week.

### Introduction:

Everyone should share with the small group (or someone close to them, depending on the size of the class) where/how they obtained their Bible.

### Lesson:

Wesley offers a guide for spending time in the Bible. Read the provided writings by Wesley. Before you read, encourage students to try and listen for the various instructions Wesley provides for studying the Bible. After reading the quotes, ask students if they heard any of the instructions. Point out and list the six instructions Wesley offers: read, pray, compare, meditate, consult, and teach. Explain that these are the six attributes for studying the Word that will be further explained as the weeks continue.

Explain, especially to parents, that the intention is for them to take the six attributes for studying the Word and duplicate them as a model for family devotions/worship in the home. Therefore, not only will the individuals grow spiritually, parents will be equipped to model and teach their children a plan for studying the Word together. It is the goal of the course to demonstrate that the Word of God is more than a textbook. It has the power to transform. Read John 1:1 and Hebrews 4:12.

### Reflection:

For Wesley, Scripture was a very important part of his life. His sermons were full of Scripture. He placed a high value on the Word, even as a means of grace. Reflect on what lessons you have learned on your spiritual journey as it relates to the Word of God. Offer the opportunity for people to share the lessons they have learned by having the Word of God present and active in their life.

### Action:

Explain that in order to prepare our hearts for the upcoming lessons, let us try and read one chapter from the Old Testament and one chapter from the New Testament each day until the next session.

## **Week 2: Read**

This lesson is designed to provide a practical guide on reading the Word of God consistently.

### Before the Lesson: Teacher // Things to Do

- Provide printed copies of designated portion of Scripture to be passed out to everyone. Use a chapter from the Old Testament and a chapter from the New Testament.
- Provide highlighters and colored pencils.
- Provide index cards and markers to each student.
- Bring a roadmap to class as an object lesson.
- Print a one-week Bible reading plan to be passed out to everyone. Include one chapter from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. Examples can be found at: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans> and <https://www.esv.org/resources/reading-plans/>

### Introduction:

Have everyone share one of his/her favorite Bible verses.

### Lesson:

Pass out the index card and markers. As a way to visually grasp the model you are teaching each week, have them write down: 1. Read. Each week they should bring it back and add to it. (Optional: Provide journals and allow them space to take notes.)

Pull out the roadmap. Explain that in life, the Word of God acts a roadmap for one's life, pointing the Way one should go. Wesley believed the Word showed the way to salvation. Read Psalm 119:105 and 2 Timothy 3:16.

Wesley understood the importance of reading the Word daily. In fact, he

recommended reading the Bible both in the morning and evening. He also suggested reading a portion of the Old Testament and the New Testament everyday. Have someone read Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:1-2.

Wesley believed in the importance of reading the Bible privately and in a group setting. Reading the Bible like Wesley means reading the Bible formationally. This means allowing the Word to transform you. One way to do this is reading smaller portions at a time. Another way to accomplish this is to read the Bible with the will of God in mind for your life.

Go back to the Wesley quotes and re-read the portions that speak directly to reading the Word.

As a class, make a list of how/when people typically read the Word: in a hurry, right before bed, only a devotion book, etc. Encourage the class to set aside special time throughout the following week for the reading of God's Word.

#### Reflection:

Pass out the printed copies of Scripture. Read the portions of Scripture together. Pass out the highlighters and colored pencils. Encourage everyone to circle every reference to God. Have them underline every verb. Read James 1:22-25 emphasizing the importance of not only hearing the Word, but also practicing the Word.

Ask them to locate any portion of Scripture they would like to memorize and reflect on why they would like to memorize it. Allow some people to share their response. Next, give students an opportunity to reflect on when their best time is to read Scripture.

#### Action:

Pass out the Bible reading plan you have provided for everyone. Encourage people to read from their plan and jot down an observations they have concerning the



Scripture they read. Encourage them to be consistent with their reading, setting aside distraction-free time each day. Also, encourage them to memorize the portion of Scripture they picked earlier.

### **Week 3: Pray**

This lesson is designed to provide a practical guide on praying during ones time in the Word of God. The purpose of prayer while spending time in the Word allows the Holy Spirit an opportunity to transform one into the image of Christ.

#### Before the Lesson: Teacher // Things to Do

- Provide index cards and markers to each student.

#### Introduction:

Have the class list possible acronyms for the word “P.R.A.Y.”

#### Lesson:

Have students pull out the index cards (journals) from last week and write the next point for the study: 2. Prayer.

The emphasis of the prayer time during reading the Word is focused on seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can help one understand the meaning of the Word and how it applies to his/her life. The work of transformation is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must seek His presence and direction during our time in the Word. Read John 16:13 and 2 Corinthians 3:16.

We must turn our hearts to Christ and put our focus on Him while we read. This is accomplished by inviting the Holy Spirit to illuminate our hearts. This allows us to receive His Word as more than words on a page, but as instruction for life; for transformation; as Truth bringing life. Read John 16:14.

Go back to the Wesley quotes and re-read the portions that speak directly to praying.

Reflection:

Take a few moments to practice praying before reading portions of Scripture together. After the prayer, read and discuss Matthew 13:1-9 together.

Action:

As you read the Word this week, invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate His Words and illumine your mind.

Pass out the index cards and markers. Have them write the words of Psalm 119:18 on it. Use this Scripture as a prayer throughout the week.

## **Week 4: Compare**

This lesson is designed to help readers of the Word learn to compare it with other spiritual writings. Other spiritual writings include related verses in Bible, ancient historical texts, Bible maps, and commentaries.

### Before the Lesson: Teacher // Things to Do

- Bring a variety of reference books, such as commentaries, Bibles with cross references, and parallel Bibles.
- Bring at least two food items that are the same, but made by different companies.
- Bring copies of a designated portion of Scripture and the matching commentary for it for each student.

### Introduction:

Pull the various food items out and ask the class what is similar and what is different about them. After the response, have a few people read the ingredient list. Encourage the class to compare the ingredients for the same items, made by different companies.

### Lesson:

Have students pull out the index cards (journals) from last week and write the next point for the study: 3. Compare.

Wesley wholeheartedly believed in the supremacy of Scripture. He also believed it was divinely inspired and had primary authority. Yet, Wesley was diligent to compare the Word with other sources. Wesley used the Apostles' Creed and other sources to align himself with the Bible and these additional teachings. Consider what other teachings and books might be used to compare.

Go back to the Wesley quotes and re-read the portions that speak directly to comparing.

Reflection:

Pass out the reference books and allow students to flip through them. Give them a Scripture and allow them to look through the books for related information to the text.

Have students read some of their findings. Point students to the website:

<https://www.blueletterbible.org> as an additional reference.

Assist the students with ways to use the website and books to compare the Bible with other biblical sources. Encourage them to research the historical significance of portions of Scripture. Show how maps play a role in gaining a broader understanding of the Word. Read Acts 17:11.

Action:

Pass out the copied Scripture and commentary. Encourage students to spend time reading it and using the commentary to bring further light on the Word. Remind them to continue to pray and to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to illumine the Word.

## **Week 5: Meditate**

This lesson is designed to help readers of the Word take time to reflect on what they just read. Meditation will be taught as a step of the Bible reading method.

### Before the Lesson: Teacher // Things to Do

- Bring paper and pens.
- Video clip and equipment to display it.

### Introduction:

Show a funny video clip of a cartoon character trying to “meditate” in a crisscross seated style. Explain that the meditation you will be discussing does not need to look like that.

### Lesson:

Have students pull out the index cards (journals) from last week and write the next point for the study: 4. Meditate.

Wesley encourages readers of the Word to pause or mediate and reflect often. It has already been explained to read, pray and compare. It is also important to not rush the process of what God wants to accomplish – transformation. Meditation is part of the transformational process. Meditation allows time for reflection on how God is speaking directly to you. Read Psalm 119:15 and 119:97. It is encouraged to read your Bible in the morning and then reflect on the words all throughout your day.

Go back to the Wesley quotes and re-read the portions that speak directly to meditating.

Reflection:

Read Hebrews 4:12-13. Encourage students to highlight or underline the words, “discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Take time to reflect on what the Spirit is discerning in you as you read the Word, which is alive and active. Pass out the paper and pens. Allow time to reflect on the Word and write down on the paper or in your own journal what God is speaking to you. Allow time for some to share.

Action:

As you continue with your Bible reading plan this week, praying and comparing, take time to meditate on what the Spirit is speaking to you through the Word. Reflect on the words as they minister to you. What is the Spirit saying? What is He pointing you toward? Use the paper or journal to continue the time of reflection throughout the week. Pause and reflect on what action you need to take once God speaks to you.

## **Week 6: Consult**

This lesson is designed to help readers of the Word learn to appreciate and lean on others during the spiritual journey, especially as it relates to reading the Word of God together. We must consult one another in order to be transformed.

### Before the Lesson: Teacher // Things to Do

- Bring paper and pen for everyone.

### Introduction:

Ask people to share who their go-to person is whenever they have a question related to the Bible.

### Lesson:

Have students pull out the index cards (journals) from last week and write the next point for the study: 5. Consult.

Why do you think it is important to consult others when studying the Bible? Wesley reveals that reading the bible is not always to be done privately, for one's personal use. It should also be done communally. Not only did Wesley affirm comparing and consulting other books of reference, he also encouraged the consultation of others. We draw strength and courage from one another. We are able to consult with one another and gain godly wisdom. The Word has the power to transform mind, body, heart, and soul. The added dimension of consulting others assists in the transformation process.

As noted in previous lessons, parents can duplicate this system for reading/studying the Word of God together. Another avenue for consultation to occur is in the home with families. Reading the Word of God together as a family also has the power to transform.



Go back to the Wesley quotes and re-read the portions that speak directly to consulting.

Reflection:

Have everyone turn to the same chapter in the Bible. Go around the room allowing each person to read a couple of verses at a time. Continue until everyone has had a turn and the chapter has been read.

Pass out paper and pen to everyone. Make a list of people in your life right now that you can talk to about the Bible. Include everyone seated in the room.

Action:

The book of Proverbs features several verses relating wisdom with seeking and heeding counsel. Write these verses down and read them this week: Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 27:17, Proverbs 1:5, Proverbs 19:20, and Proverbs 23:22.

Optional: Join an online reading plan group: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/819-lets-read-the-bible-together-part-one> Join a Facebook group with similar interests, such as Bible journaling.

## **Week 7: Teach**

This lesson is designed to help readers of the Word learn that they must be doers of the Word and not hearers only. They must in turn make disciples.

### Before the Lesson: Teacher // Things to Do

- Bring paper and pen for everyone.

### Introduction:

Pass out paper and pens. Give the class time to reflect and make a list of the people who have taught them about God and the Word.

### Lesson:

Have students pull out the index cards (journals) from last week and write the next point for the study: 6. Teach.

Wesley understood that the Word was not meant to transform one and then do nothing. Rather, as the Word transformed one mind, body, heart, and strength, he/she must use the transformation as a way to help and teach others about the process. Wesley also understood salvations. In an effort to witness more salvations and more disciples, we must be persistent in reaching and teaching in order to fulfill the Great Commission. Each person must learn to share the Gospel message with others.

Another way of understanding the teaching step is to insert the word “share” for “teach.” That which you learn, be willing to share with others. Do not keep it bottled up inside, only for yourself. Go the extra mile and share it with others. That is what the Christian life is all about. Duplicating. Multiplying. Making disciples. Do not stop with you. Share with others and teach them the Truth.

Go back to the Wesley quotes and re-read the portions that speak directly to teaching.

Reflection:

Think about the list you made earlier of the people who taught you something about Christ. Reflect on the fact that others need to know Him too, in order to be transformed into His likeness.

Think about the number of people you come in contact with on a weekly basis that have never heard the Good News. Allow students time to make a list of their unsaved friends and family. Invite them to pray over the people in their life who need Christ and reflect on what they can share with them.

Action:

Reflect on the information you have recently learned through this class. Make a list of some of the verses you have learned and have ministered to you. Share some of the stories, verses, and information with others this week. It can be an opportunity to encourage and teach other Christians. It can also be an opportunity to share the Good News with the people you meet who do not know Christ.

## **Week 8: Review/Combination**

This lesson is designed to review the various steps that have been learned for reading the Word in a manner so that it becomes more than textbook. It will become the Word that transforms.

### Before the Lesson: Teacher // Things to Do

- Bring paper and pen for everyone.
- Make copies of the Wesley writings.
- Bring zoomed-in picture and zoomed-out picture.
- Bring a puzzle box with puzzles pieces inside.

### Introduction:

Display a picture of an object extremely zoomed in – to the point that it may be unrecognizable. Next, display the same object zoomed out – the point that it is recognizable.

Hold up a puzzle piece. Explain that by itself, you cannot see the big picture of what it is suppose to be. It still holds importance, but it is not complete alone. Next, hold up the puzzle box, showing the overall picture of what the completed puzzle will look like.

Use both object lessons to explain the importance of each step we have been discussing in recent weeks, but how much more valuable they will be combined together.

### Lesson:

Ask the question and allow some of the students time to respond: Which step has been something new for you? Which step have you enjoyed doing?

Pass out copies of the Wesley writings. Read through the Wesley quotes and encourage everyone to highlight each time they see the words: read, pray, compare,

meditate, consult, and teach. It's time to get the overall picture of what Wesley had in mind. His goal was to make the Bible more than a textbook. He desired for the Word to transform you. The method he suggested for this to occur is: read, pray, compare, meditate, consult, pray again, and later teach or share. He knew there was power in searching the Scriptures. Therefore, he provided methods for making your time in the Word most beneficial and ultimately transformational.

Reflection:

As a way to reflect on the recent teachings, as a class, take time to reflect on a portion of Scripture together, using the various methods: read, pray, compare, meditate, consult, pray, teach/share.

Action:

Now it is time to make this method personal. Take the various steps and implement what you have learned. Throughout the week, read Scripture and use the various methods you have learned. Parents, duplicate the method in your home for family discipleship. Start with this portion of Scripture: Matthew 13:1-23.

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## ABSTRACT

### JOHN WESLEY'S FORMATIVE READING OF SCRIPTURE AS AN APPLICABLE MODEL FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

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This thesis examines John Wesley's formative reading of Scripture and its usefulness as an effective model for family discipleship. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the need for resources related to family discipleship. Wesley's writings provide a wealth of information about Scripture reading. In particular, the thesis presents Wesley's formative reading of Scripture as an applicable model for parents involved in family discipleship in the home.

Chapter 2 presents the influences on Wesley writings. Wesley's parents had an impact on the shaping of his understanding of Scripture. His sisters, his education, and the writings of many influenced Wesley. Also, his audiences themselves shaped Wesley's writings.

Chapter 3 offers Wesley's teachings related to the reading of Scripture. Included is a look at Wesley's writings containing commentaries, sermons, journals, and letters. Additionally, the chapter examines a look at the movements Wesley's teachings influenced. Through past and present contexts, the practical side of Wesley's theology is offered, as well as teachings related to families and children, and the impact these teachings had on society.

Chapter 4 demonstrates an understanding of family ministry. It employs the importance of family ministry, including training parents to be lead disciple-makers in the home.



Chapter 5 provides implications for the broader church. The chapter also discusses specific ways Wesley's formative reading of Scripture impacts individuals and families, discovers the usefulness of his model related to family discipleship, and presents the importance of family discipleship in today's church. This last chapter also offers the effect a changed family has on the church and the world.

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