



GROWING *in* GRACE

Dori Barber • Kenda McVeigh



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Dori Barber
Kenda McVeigh

LEADER'S GUIDE WITH
PARTICIPANT PAGES



heartscript
PUBLISHING

Growing in Grace
Leader's Guide with Participant Pages

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TABLE *of* CONTENTS



About the authors	4
Introduction	5
Leader information	6
Scripture coloring page	8
Chapter 1: God Goes First	9
Participant pages	17-19
Scripture coloring page	20
Chapter 2: The Aim of the Christian Life	21
Participant pages	28-29
Scripture coloring page	30
Chapter 3: Better Together	31
Participant pages	39-43
Scripture coloring page	44
Chapter 4: Walking into the World	45
Participant pages	52-54

ABOUT *the* AUTHORS



Dori Barber served for nine years as the Director of Women’s Ministries at The Woodlands Methodist Church where she continues to write and teach impactful Bible studies. She has an MA in Theological Studies from Asbury Theological Seminary, and a BFA in Theatre from Southwestern University. A gifted teacher and speaker, Dori uses her talents and education to create studies and retreat presentations that positively impact the faith of those who learn from her. Before relocating to the Houston area, Dori was Director of Education in Uvalde, Texas. While there she collaborated with Dr. William J. Abraham in the development of *Basic Christianity, A Contemporary Catechumenate*.

She has also led national training events for both *The Logos Program* and *Basic Christianity*. Dori has provided leadership for retreats for a variety of ministries including United Christian Ashrams, Community Bible Study, and Jubilee Prison Ministry. Dori is a wife to Keith and a mom to Claire, Caleb, and Josh. When she isn’t studying, volunteering, or teaching she might be feeding cattle, building fence, or hiking and hunting at her parent’s ranch near Medina.

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Kenda McVeigh has enjoyed teaching, leading, and serving in a variety of churches and church ministries for over 35 years. In addition, she has served on the staff of The Woodlands Methodist Church as Women’s Ministry Director, training leaders, planning programs, and organizing Bible studies. She also worked for the church’s Creative Services Department as a copywriter — writing, editing, and developing resources for church use. One of her main joys over the last 10 years has been leading *Disciple Bible Study*. Kenda graduated from Texas Tech University with an English Literature degree and started her early career as a community college Writing Center Director. Kenda and her

husband Bryan are the parents of two adult children, Jacqueline, who is married to Nasir, and Matthew. Kenda and Bryan are enthusiastic sports fans, faithfully following their favorite teams — Go Astros!

INTRODUCTION



One of the most beautiful gifts God has given to us is his grace. As Christians, we hear about it, sing about it, and celebrate it. To experience the grace of God is a miraculous feeling. To think that the God of the universe, our Creator, would love us so much that he would offer his Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice so we could have a personal relationship with him — that grace is just beyond our understanding.

Growing in Grace is a study designed to help participants grasp the depth and meaning of this amazing gift God has given us. The study will cover how God is the one who makes the first move to woo us to him, and then it walks us through the layers of grace that follow our acceptance of his love. We will explore the importance and necessity of being in community with other Christians and strive to understand how our inward change is meant to be shared with the world around us.

When a popular country music star launches into a moving rendition of *Amazing Grace* and the entire audience rises to their feet to join her in song, it's evident that people across all walks of life are longing for the peace and forgiveness that God's grace provides. *Growing in Grace* takes us on a journey into the true measure of God's grace, showing us how to love God more deeply and love others more intentionally.

LEADER INFORMATION



USING THE GUIDE

- The guide can be used for classes that meet monthly or small groups that need a short-term weekly lesson.
- Each lesson is written for the leader or facilitator.
- Suggestions for leaders are provided in italics for each section of the lesson.
- Participant Pages to be copied for the lesson are provided at the end of each lesson to distribute to each member of the group.
- A creative coloring page can also be copied and handed out to the group.
- The leader may copy other pages in the lesson as needed for use in this study only.

SECTIONS FOR EACH LESSON

Gathering

Welcome everyone to the study and go over any information that needs to be shared. It's a good time to get to know the group. Use any questions in this section as a warmup for discussion before getting to the heart of the lesson. You can pass out the coloring page and allow people to color or doodle during the class time as some people find it relaxing and enjoyable. However, others find art anxiety producing so explain that it is purely for their own enjoyment and there is no pressure to complete it.

Focusing Our Hearts

At this time we begin to help our group settle in and start to focus on their time together with God. Each lesson may differ in the focusing method provided so follow the instructions in the lesson. The focusing activity may be on the Participant Page for some lessons.

Reading God's Word

We introduce the scripture for the lesson in this section. Share this scripture with the group. You can read it aloud, have other members of the group take turns reading, ask people to read it from their Bibles, or put it on a slide for people to follow. Please feel free to be creative in sharing this scripture with the group.

Reflecting on Scripture

This is the main content of the lesson. It will need to be read aloud to the group by you or other members who may want to take turns reading portions of the material. Don't rush through the reading. You might want to repeat important points or reread certain sections. Find ways to make it easy for the group members to listen to and understand the content.

Engaging Together

You'll find questions to help with discussion about the lesson in this section. These questions are on the Participant Page so the group members will have them in

front of them for discussion. Discuss as a group, in pairs or divide into smaller groups for discussion.

Responding in Faith

The activities in this section of the lesson are designed for group members to have concrete next steps. We don't want to only give information in our time together, but we want to move our group to live transformed lives. Follow the leader directions. These activities are on the Participant Page for the members to take with them after their time together.

Sending Forth

Bring closure to your time together with a brief restatement of the content of the lesson. Perhaps you will want to take a moment to summarize thoughts from the discussion time and connect them with the lesson content and then use the sending forth prayer, litany or verse that is included. It is also on the Participant Page so the group members can respond together as needed. Dismiss the group after this section.

LEADER TIPS

Cover your class in prayer as you prepare for the lessons.

Before asking someone to read aloud, check with them ahead of time and make sure they are comfortable reading in front of others.

At the start of each lesson, ask the members to turn off or silence their cell phones.

Start and end on time. Honor their commitment by being mindful of their time.

Give participants time to process and respond to questions, allowing for silence as they formulate their thoughts. Don't jump in too early but be ready to share if needed.

Try to listen fully to the responses of the members. Avoid interrupting, dismissing, or judging their participation.

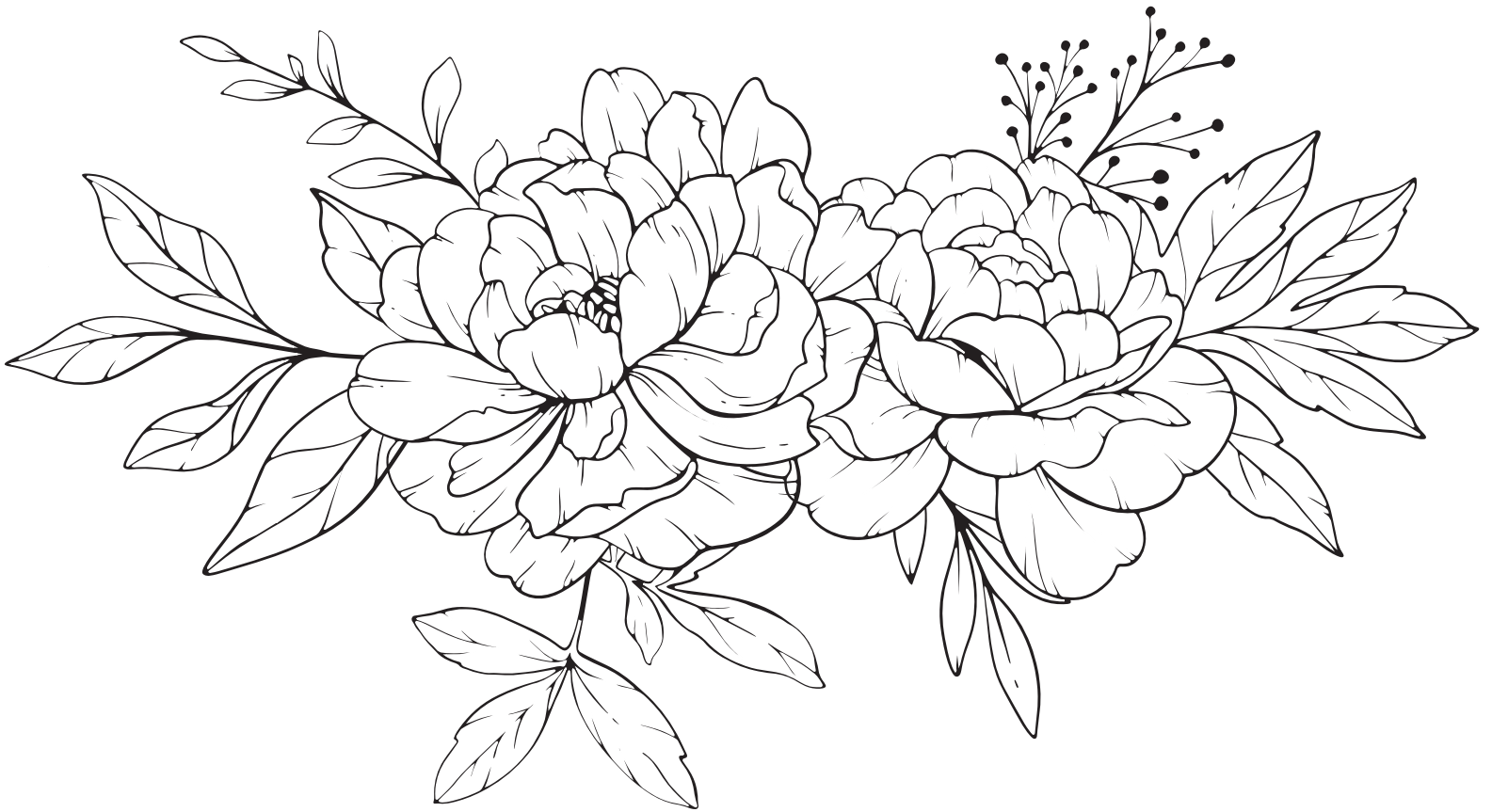
Avoid allowing one person to dominate the discussion. As the member finishes responding, ask someone else if they have anything to say or add to the conversation.

Enjoy your time with the group remembering that your role is to help them understand the information and find meaningful ways to apply it to their everyday lives.



But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8





1

GOD GOES FIRST

Kenda McVeigh

Gathering

Lesson preparation:

- *Copy the Participant Pages to hand out for Lesson 1*
- *Copy the Scripture Coloring Page*
- *Provide markers or colors*

Welcome! It's so good that we can come together to read and study God's Word. Before we dive into the lesson, let's think about what brings us together today.

Start the conversation by discussing these questions in pairs or as part of the large group.

How did you decide to join this group of ladies today? Through a friend, church communication, or another avenue?

What do you hope to gain from meeting together regularly?

In what ways can you grow each other's faith?

You probably have special people in your life who were kind or inviting or good listeners that began to open your heart and your mind to the truths about a loving God. Think about all the events and people in your life that paved the way for you to be gathering with these women today. Did you ever consider that God was the author of those grace-filled moments that led you to become a Christ follower? Let's explore this more in our time together today.

Focusing Our Hearts

The prayer below is found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 1.

Read the Psalm and then pray together.

"Praise the Lord.
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever." Psalm 106:1

Lord,
You are good — so, so good.
We praise you and give thanks for this time together where we can share in your goodness, your mercy and your grace.
We ask that you help us center our thoughts only on you for this time. Take away all other distractions or concerns that might steal our hearts away from your presence.

Come Holy Spirit and join us right here,
right now.
In Jesus name we pray,
Amen

Reading God's Word

Read aloud and explore God's Word

Romans 5:6–10 (NIV)

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Reflecting on Scripture

Read aloud/ allow others to read

Prevenient Grace

When you consider your Christian journey, do you ever reflect and wonder “How did I get here? When was I first aware of a loving God?” Did you realize that God was at work in your life before you were even aware of his presence? Our scripture gives us some important insight into God’s work in our lives before we knew him, before we had everything worked out, before we even said yes to him.

Let’s start by talking about the Wesleyan understanding of grace and the good news it brings. To begin with, God shares his grace with everyone before any of us even deserve it, earn it or are aware of it. Many times, we don’t even know that God is the first one to reach out to bring us to him. In the beginning of this passage from Romans, Paul makes it clear that God takes the initiative in his relationship with us. He writes in Romans 5:6, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” And those ungodly people – they’re us. In Romans 3:23 Paul writes, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” So, when we were still powerless, when we didn’t know God or we were unaware of his saving grace in our lives, Christ died for us – the ungodly. Isn’t that amazing? He doesn’t wait for us to have it all together to offer us a relationship. It’s in the midst of our imperfections that God is loving us and wooing us to come to faith in him.

This love that God has for us while we are still sinning, before we are faithful, before we may even know him, is called

prevenient grace. It’s the grace that God lavishes on us before we even decide to follow him. In *Four Great Wesleyan Doctrines*, Dr. Timothy Tennent states that according to the Wesleyan doctrine of grace, “God’s grace comes to us before we even become Christians. It is prevenient grace which enables us to respond to the gospel.”¹ God goes before us to bring us into a relationship with him even in our imperfect state. Just to make sure we understand, Paul phrases it another way, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) Just think about this for a second, don’t rush past it — while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were being unloving or dishonest or deceptive, God sent his son to the cross for us anyway. God sent his son, Jesus, first. This grace that goes before we ask for forgiveness or acknowledge our sin is the work of a loving and forgiving God, and it paves the way to our salvation.

“It is prevenient grace which enables us to respond to the gospel.”

Dr. Timothy Tennent

What does this look like, this grace that goes before, in our lives? John Wesley describes it as the front porch to the house – the place we go as we prepare to enter the house. What might be your front porch experiences in your faith journey? It’s possible that you had a faith-filled teacher who believed in you and provided encouragement during your adolescence, or possibly you were raised in a home with parents who had a relationship with Jesus and shared that with you. Maybe you didn’t

know Christ, and someone simply invited you to church and welcomed you at the door so you could walk in together. Joe Iovino describes it this way in *God at Work Before We Know It: Prevenient Grace*, “Those who showed you the healing, forgiveness, and restoration available by faith in Jesus Christ came to you by God’s prevenient grace.”² Once you recognized this grace showered on you by a loving God, you were free to make an important decision. You could turn around and walk away from God or accept his invitation and prepare to cross the threshold into a new life with our loving Lord.

In the midst of our imperfections, God is loving us and wooing us to come to faith in him.

Justifying Grace

Now here’s the best part, once we decide to accept God’s grace that “goes before” and come to a living faith in Jesus Christ, he continues to pour his grace upon us as we experience God’s justifying grace. Paul explains in Romans 5:9–10 that Christ’s death on the cross, the blood he shed for our sins, puts us in a right relationship with God. The sacrificial death of Jesus justifies us – or makes things right for us – so we can

experience salvation through our faith in Christ. Wesley describes justifying grace as the doorway to the house and crossing over that threshold signifies our desire to enter a new place and begin a new experience in our relationship with God.

Justifying grace means that when we come to our faith in Jesus and bring our sin to him, asking for forgiveness, we don’t have to feel guilt and shame for past behavior because Christ’s sacrifice has taken away that sin. Maybe before we recognized God’s grace in our lives, we made some choices that affected the trajectory of our life or hurt people we love, or we neglected to offer support to those around us who were in need. The beautiful thing about justifying grace is that through Jesus, God provides an expansive grace that covers our past sins and allows us, when we come to faith in Jesus, to start fresh in our relationship with God and with others.

So, as you reflect on your faith journey, consider that God has been the author of grace in your life from the very beginning, even before you accepted and acknowledged him. God’s love for you is unconditional. He loves you even when your life seems crazy or messy or you just feel unlovable. And it’s through his grace that he has pursued you, providing a pathway for you to enter into the beautiful life he has waiting for you.

Engaging Together

*Find the questions below on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 1.
Read and discuss together.*

1. In your own words, how do you understand prevenient grace?
2. What does it mean to you that while we were still sinning, Christ died for us?
3. Where have you seen God's prevenient grace in your own life? *(Share in pairs)*
4. What was the result of this grace? *(Share in pairs)*
5. What does it mean to you that God was seeking you out before you really even knew him?
6. Discuss your understanding of justifying grace.
7. Why is justifying grace important?
8. How does justifying grace impact your relationship with God? *(Share in pairs)*

Responding in Faith

The activities below are found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 1. Read the following instructions aloud.

Below are some actions for responding to our lesson before we are together again. Read over these and discuss which ones you feel God is calling you to pursue. What might be some obstacles you encounter?

Reach out to a person who God sent as an instrument of prevenient grace in your life. Let them know the impact of their interaction with you. You can send them an email, text, letter or give them a call.

Pray a regular prayer of gratitude for God's prevenient grace in your life naming specific instances where God called you to him.

Reflect on opportunities God may have to use you to be a vessel of his grace for someone else. Be intentional about acting on this opportunity. Share these interactions with another member of your group next time you meet.

Read and reflect on the following scriptures to gain a deeper understanding of prevenient and justifying grace. Write down the ones that are most meaningful to you and read them as a reminder of God's love and forgiveness during your day.

Prevenient Grace

John 1:9

Ephesians 2:8-9

Titus 2:11-12

Justifying Grace

Galatians 2:15-16

Romans 3:21-26

Romans 5:1-2

Write: During such a challenging time in our society and our world, can you think about situations where the Wesleyan understanding of prevenient grace and justifying grace might bring reconciliation? Journal about those possibilities.

Sending Forth

*The prayer below is found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 1.
Read the following paragraph aloud.*

God's deep and abiding love for each one of us started before we were even fully aware of him. And as we grow closer to him, we understand the price he paid for us, even as imperfect and flawed as we are. This is grace, God's grace, that pursues us and then paves the way for us to be in relationship with him through his son Jesus Christ. We are invited to accept his love and step across the threshold into a new life with Christ.

Instruct the group to read and reflect on this prayer quietly before praying aloud together.

God,

I am loved by you.

I am forgiven.

On the days I fail, you hold me.

On the days I doubt, you listen to me.

On the days I deny, you stay with me.

On the days I am weak, you strengthen me.

Your love for me is relentless, eternal, overwhelming and unconditional.

I am loved by you.

I am made new.

In Jesus' beautiful name,

Amen

Endnotes

1. Tennent, Dr. Timothy. "Four Great Wesleyan Doctrines - July 2016 - Asbury Theological Seminary," Asbury Theological Seminary, June 27, 2016. <https://asburyseminary.edu/mlink/four-great-wesleyan-doctrines-july-2016/>.
2. Iovino, Joe. "God at Work before We Know It: Prevenient Grace," The United Methodist Church, March 2, 2018. <https://www.umc.org/en/content/god-at-work-before-we-know-it-prevenient-grace>

GOD GOES FIRST PARTICIPANT PAGES

Focusing Our Hearts Prayer

“Praise the Lord.
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is
good;
his love endures forever.” Psalm 106:1

Lord,
You are good — so, so good.
We praise you and give thanks for this time together where we can share in your
goodness, your mercy and your grace.
We ask that you help us center our thoughts only on you for this time. Take away
all other distractions or concerns that might steal our hearts away from your
presence.

Come Holy Spirit and join us right here, right now.
In Jesus name we pray,
Amen

Engaging Together Questions

1. In your own words, how do you understand prevenient grace?
2. What does it mean to you that while we were still sinning, Christ died for us?
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7. Why is justifying grace important?
8. How does justifying grace impact your relationship with God? *(Share in pairs)*

(To be copied for class)

Responding in Faith Activities

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Titus 2:11-12

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Romans 3:21-26

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Write: During such a challenging time in our society and our world, can you think about situations where the Wesleyan understanding of prevenient grace and justifying grace might bring reconciliation? Journal about those possibilities.

Sending Forth Prayer

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Your love for me is relentless, eternal, overwhelming and unconditional.

I am loved by you.

I am made new.

In Jesus' beautiful name,

Amen

(To be copied for class)

Notes



(To be copied for class)



Love the Lord your God with your heart,
mind, soul and strength.

Mark 12:30





2

THE AIM *of the* CHRISTIAN LIFE

Dori Barber

Gathering

Lesson preparation:

- *Copy the Participant Pages to hand out for Lesson 2*
- *Copy the Scripture Coloring Page*
- *Provide markers or colors*

Start the conversation by reading the passage below and discussing the questions.

As we begin today, let's think about goals or dreams. Did you have a dream for your life as a child? Maybe it was a career goal kind of dream. You dreamed of being a doctor or a ballerina. Maybe your dreams were a little more short-term like getting to sit next to your friend on the bus on the next field trip or winning the spelling bee or the 50-yard dash. Do you remember one of your childhood dreams? Share one or two with your neighbor.

Let's turn our attention to a little bit more recent goals or dreams. Think of a dream or goal you were pursuing sometime in the last few years. Share this goal with your neighbor.

Focusing Our Hearts

Pray together.

This prayer can be led in many ways. The leader can simply start it and share a thanksgiving i.e. "God I'm thankful for my job." "Lord, I see our church reaching out in our community. Thank you for guiding us." Continue around the group, until all have had the opportunity to share. If you have women in your group who might not be comfortable praying aloud, simply pass a Bible around and ask for members to pray aloud or silently when they are holding the Bible.

As we move from looking back at dreams and goals from our past, let us take a minute to reflect on a dream or a goal we have seen realized in our own life or the life of another. *(Pause)*

Now, let us prayerfully give thanks for a dream or goal we have seen realized in our own life or in the life of another.

Reading God's Word

Read aloud and explore God's Word

Mark 12: 28-34 (ESV)

²⁸ And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³² And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. ³³ And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your mind
and with all your strength.

Mark 12:30

Matthew 5: 43-48 (ESV)

⁴³ You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'
⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Reflecting on Scripture

Read aloud or ask someone else to read it aloud.

In our achievement-oriented world, we often encounter motivational speakers quick to remind us that we need to dream of the future we want and then we need to set goals. We can think back in our lives to goals we set and achieved or others we pursued and perhaps somewhere recognized the goal as unworthy of the time or money it was costing us. At other times, we might have simply found a goal unachievable.

Last month we reflected on God's grace and on how God's grace woos us and enables us to respond to his love. God's grace reaches out to us before we have even the smallest understanding of who God is, calling us to enter a relationship with the One who is both closer than a best friend and greater than our mind can conceive. We discussed this grace that goes before and allows us to enter a relationship with God as prevenient grace. We also discussed justifying grace. This is the grace that allows us to receive forgiveness by faith.

John Wesley used the helpful image of a house, teaching that prevenient grace was the porch of the house and justifying grace was the door to the house. It is sanctifying grace that is living in the house. It is sanctifying grace that calls us and empowers us as we live in relationship with Jesus. It is sanctifying grace that allows us to grow in this relationship and to know Jesus and to embrace his lordship of all our lives.

Growing in relationship with Jesus and loving like Jesus is the goal of the Christian life. It is God's sanctifying grace that gives us this goal, calls us to this goal

and allows us to move towards this goal. One of the passages from scripture that we read today centers around this topic when Jesus is asked, "What is the most important commandment?"

He responds with the beginning of the Shema, the passage of scripture from the Old Testament that the Jews recited three times a day. The Lord our God is one. You should love the Lord your God with your heart, mind, soul and strength. Jesus then states a second commandment saying, "love your neighbor as yourself." In this call Jesus centers the ethical life for a believer. Grow in love for God and in love for others.

"We don't have to live morally defeated lives."

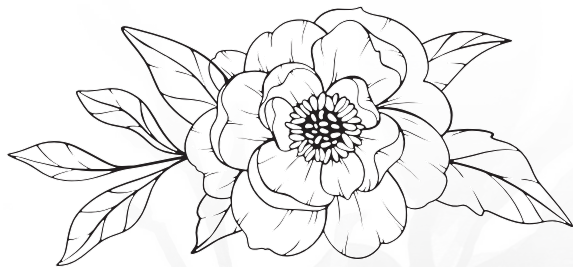
William J. Abraham

You may have heard this goal of loving God and others spoken of as sanctifying grace or Christian perfection, or perfect love or holiness. Whichever way you choose to talk about this call to holiness, remember it is not a holier than thou holiness, put on to let your neighbors know you are "a super Christian," and they are not. (You might have experienced this version and quickly realize there is nothing loving in this attitude.)

Perfect love is spoken of throughout scripture. We see Paul write about this goal as he calls the first churches to pursue love or when he challenges them to continue towards maturity or entire sanctification. We see Jesus' actions and words invite his followers to move beyond knowing him as our savior to trusting him to empower us to live lives centered on perfect love. His self-sacrificing love took him to the cross and his teaching in his parables and sermons makes

clear an ethic of perfect love is our goal. In the passage of Matthew we looked at earlier, we hear Jesus discussing love. He says; “be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.”

At first glance we look at this and want to say, I can't do it. I am not perfect! Maybe you have often been comforted when considering mistakes by repeating a version of “I'm not perfect, only human.” Perhaps you have even struggled with perfectionism and don't want to return to an unhealthy obsession with achievement. Perfectionism is centered on our own performance. This is not the perfect of which we believe Jesus was speaking. He is discussing perfection in the context of teaching on love, and his culture didn't see perfectly defined as without mistakes, but as whole or complete.



Consequently, our movement towards Christian perfection is seeking to be motivated by perfect love, not perfect performance. We are human and there will always be errors or unknowing mistakes. One way to consider this is to think of the Mother's Day card that a child full of love joyfully presents to her mom. Words may be misspelled, and the art may need a significant amount of explaining, but it is motivated by perfect love.

Our understanding of God's sanctifying grace is the natural next step. First, God enables us and woos us, inviting us to enter into a relationship with him. We think of this

as God's prevenient grace. Then God accepts and forgives us. He justifies us as we repent of our sins: we speak of this as justifying grace. As we are justified, we begin to experience God's sanctifying grace. We begin to respond to his calling that enables us to grow in the Christian life. We get to become more like our all loving, all powerful Creator. We are empowered to love God more and to love others more.

This is the reality that God doesn't just forgive sin. The Holy Spirit frees us from the bondage to sin allowing us to use the agency that prevenient grace has restored in us. Through our agency we can pursue holiness in our day-to-day life. Methodist theologian, William J. Abraham explained sanctification saying: “We don't have to live morally defeated lives.”¹

Note as we think of the goal of Christian perfection given to us, it is not a striving or working. It is a praying and asking. Sanctification is a gift of God's grace not of works. Of course, we don't only pray to be made holy and do nothing. We pursue it using practices like prayer, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, Bible study, and other time-honored means of grace, but at a deep level, we recognize it is God at work in us.

Finally, as we close this lesson, it is significant to remember with our goal of loving God and loving others, this love is not a sweet sentimental feeling. It is not a cheap, easy affection that makes God into the image of us. This sanctifying grace is what John Wesley termed “holy love.” It is given to those who have experienced justifying grace, and the love is understood not by the latest self-help theory, or by making God into a doting, but out of touch grandpa. This “holy love” is understood by all that is revealed to us from the scriptures.

Engaging Together

*The questions below are on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 2.
Read and discuss together.*

1. How might you summarize this teaching on sanctifying grace?
2. How does having a different understanding of the word perfect distort our goal of Christian perfection?
3. Is there a word or phrase that would be better to use in our contemporary culture when discussing Christian perfection, sanctification or holiness?
4. The church in the west can appear to forget the goal of the Christian life. It is not only to experience justifying grace, receiving forgiveness of our sins by faith. That is just the beginning. The goal is a sanctified life lived pleasing to God. How and why do you think we have gotten off track with this message? Why are many of us content to “live in the doorway?”

Responding in Faith

*The activities below are found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 2.
Read the following instructions aloud.*

Below are some actions for responding to our lesson. Read over these and discuss which one you feel called to pursue. Consider if God is inviting you to participate in one or several of them. Also consider what might keep you from responding to these invitations.

Take time daily to pray for your growth in perfect love.

Bring Christ into your friendships that you might encourage one another to move toward holiness and reassure one another when the growth does not appear to be moving ahead.

Read *Perfect Love* by Kevin Watson to learn more about a Wesleyan understanding of sanctifying grace.

Add a time of Bible study and prayer to your daily rituals.

Sending Forth

The Love Litany below is found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 2.

Read the introduction to the Litany to the group before asking them to join in the Litany.

We have focused today on the Christian goal of sanctifying grace and the goal of holiness in our lives. We concentrated on perfect or complete love with Jesus' call to love God and love our neighbors. John Wesley wrote, "Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more but more of the love described in the thirteenth of Corinthians. You can go no higher than this, till you are carried to Abraham's bosom."²

Considering this charge from the founder of the Methodist movement. Let us read together the Love Litany provided for you.

Love Litany

Leader: What if I speak with the languages of men and of angels?

Response: If I don't love others, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

Leader: What if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains?

Response: I would be nothing unless I loved others.

Leader: What if I gave away all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned?

Response: I would gain nothing unless I loved others.

Leader: Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God.

Response: Love is patient and is kind. Love doesn't envy. Love doesn't brag, and is not boastful, proud, or rude.

Leader: The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love.

Response: Love doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked.

Leader: This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him.

Response: Love rejoices with the truth; it takes no account of evil.

Leader: This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins.

Response: Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Leader: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Response: God is love, and those who remain in love remain in God and God remains in them.

Leader: Now faith, hope and love remain.

All: But the greatest of these is love.

Passages of scripture from 1 Corinthians 13: 1-8, 13:13, Mark 12:30 & 31 NIV and 1 John 4: 7-10, 16b CEB.

Endnotes

1. William Abraham, "The Teachings of John Wesley: with Dr. Billy Abraham," The Remnant Radio, YouTube, July 13, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gT6-CMnH8b8>
2. John Wesley, *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Prayers, Hymns, Journal Notes, Sermons, Letters and Treatises*, ed. Richard J. Payne and Frank Whaling, The Classics of Western Spirituality, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 362.

THE AIM *of the* CHRISTIAN LIFE PARTICIPANT PAGES

Engaging Together

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Add a time of Bible study and prayer to your daily rituals.

(To be copied for class)

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Leader: Now faith, hope and love remain.

All: But the greatest of these is love.

Passages of scripture from 1 Corinthians 13: 1-8, 13:13, Mark 12:30 & 31 NIV and 1 John 4: 7-10, 16b CEB.

(To be copied for class)



Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will
fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2





3

BETTER TOGETHER

Dori Barber

Gathering

Lesson preparation:

- *Copy the Participant Pages to hand out for Lesson 2*
- *Copy the Scripture Coloring Page*
- *Provide markers or colors*

In this section draw the members attention to the hiker's picture on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 2.

Ask the members the following questions. You may want to begin in groups of 3 or 4 and then move to larger group discussion. This will depend on the size of your group.

What words come to mind as you look at this picture?

Continuing to look at the picture, are there any past experiences that come to mind?

It could be that having a different narrative of what is occurring in this picture changes the words that come to mind. If I told you this was a group of longtime friends on an annual trip what other words come to mind?

What different words come to mind if I told you that the situation was more like that of the Von Trapp family in *The Sound of Music*, and the group was climbing over the mountains to flee.

Take a minute to discuss possible narratives and our impression of the picture in different situations.

Wrap up your opening discussion by saying something like this.

Our journey toward holiness at times may seem like an enjoyable hike with friends. At other times it can feel grueling, long, and a little frightening. Before we look more closely at how we walk toward our goal of perfect love together, let us focus our hearts on Christ with the hymn, *Be Thou My Vision*.

Focusing Our Hearts

The hymn is included in the Participant Pages, both with the music and without.

If you choose to sing it, your group might appreciate the music. If you choose to listen to it, then perhaps following along with the words will be more meaningful without the music.

You have many choices as to how to utilize this song for your group. It can be meaningful to have a member of your church sing the song for you, sing it as a group or to listen to it or watch and listen to it on YouTube or to utilize another media source for your group. A favorite YouTube Version can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihJAJA4ibEs>

BE THOU MY VISION

By Dallan Forgaill, 8th century

(translated by Eleanor H. Hull and versified by Mary E. Byrne)

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Reading God's Word

Read aloud and explore God's Word.

Matthew 26: 36- 46 (NIV)

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴² He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

⁴⁵ Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Reflecting On Scripture

Read aloud/ allow others to read.

From the story of creation, we often remember we humans were created in the image of God, but perhaps we forget that we were also created with a need for others. We were not meant to walk alone. As Genesis 2:18 states, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Note also that the man in this creation story was experiencing sinless fellowship with God in a beautiful garden. Even with these blessings, God says more was needed.

This truth is made clear throughout the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the stories of Moses give us clear examples of our need for others to journey with us. In Exodus 17 we see Joshua leading a band of men to defend the Israelites against the attacking Amalekites. Joshua’s warriors alone could not win the battle. When Moses held up his staff the Israelites were successful, but when he lowered his staff, the Israelites were overcome. The soldiers needed Moses holding up his staff. Moses was willing, but he grew weary. He needed others to assist him. Aaron and Hur brought a stone for him to sit on and they stood beside him and held up his arms.

Our Christian life is similar to these Old Testament narratives. We were not created to be alone and, when we face trials and challenges, we can see clearly how companions on our journey exhort and encourage us through the day-to-day challenges and in the beguiling temptations we face throughout our lives. We do better together.

In the New Testament, we read wisdom that says; “let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds, and not give up meeting together, as some are

in the habit of doing but encouraging one another” Hebrews 10:24 - 25. We also see the value of deep relationships in the life of Christ, who spent most of his ministry years teaching and living life with his twelve disciples. Then from within the twelve there were three who shared life with him at an exceptionally close level. Remember, Peter, James and John, the inner circle of three? They were with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration, the raising of Jairus’ daughter and were asked to go further into the garden of Gethsemane to pray with Jesus on the night of his arrest.

It is not good for man to be alone.

Genesis 2:18

While our sacred text has highlighted this need for thousands of years, modern social science continues to share information confirming what scripture has made clear. We have studies of infants left without warm loving touch that attest to children’s failure to thrive when there is a lack of emotional connection.¹ In a recent meta-analysis, neurobiologists confirmed loneliness and social isolation were associated with a 26% increase in the risk of all-cause death compared to people who were not socially isolated.² This reiterates our lesson from Genesis. “It is not good for man to be alone.” We were created for connection.

This need for each other isn’t only true for our emotional and physical life, it is also true for our spiritual life. We need the encouragement and accountability that we gain from each other. We need fellow believers who will walk beside us and become family to us — celebrating and lamenting with us in every season of life. We need those who will remind us we are forgiven when we fail and who will lovingly

call us back to our faith when we forget the Father's love and dream of the far country.

In the previous lessons we considered how God with his prevenient grace enables us to freely choose him. God woos us and invites us into relationship. We studied that when we have repented and trusted in Christ through faith God justifies us and we begin our journey toward sanctification, the goal of the Christian life. Now, we reflect on another significant aspect of this journey, we need community. The Christian life was never meant to be lived in isolation. Methodism's founder John Wesley speaking against the desert monastic movement of seclusion wrote: "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness."³

John Wesley learned as he preached that people having a rich experience with God, where they encountered his justifying grace, was often not enough to allow the believer to grow in the sanctified life. They needed to experience true fellowship.

The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.

Not the pseudo fellowship where the topic is the neighbor's sin, but the deep holy conferencing where the topic is our own journey with God. Wesley provided for Christians under his care by organizing them in groups named classes.

While the small groups of about twelve were called classes, they were not like Bible classes or Sunday School classes we might encounter today. These class meetings weren't centered on Bible study — the goal was not to impart information. Nor were

they a prayer group. Though there was prayer and often a scripture was shared. The goal was transformation. Wesley Scholar, Kevin Watson writes of the class meeting's primary function saying:

First, it held people accountable to keeping the General Rules. Second, the class meeting was a place where Methodists were encouraged to give weekly to the relief of the poor. Third, and most central to the time spent in the weekly meeting, it was a place where every Methodist answered the question, "How is it with your soul?"⁴

What if a Christian in Wesley's care didn't have a group where they could discuss how their life with God was going? Wesley wrote advice to one sister saying if she was to be an "altogether Christian" she "must remember you cannot be warm alone; you must needs find one, if not more, with whom you can converse freely on the things of God."⁵

As we close this reflection, may we take Wesley's advice to heart. May we find those with whom we can converse freely on how our life is with God. Remember, Jesus with Peter, James, and John in the garden. He shared with them his struggles and asked for prayer. This is how we follow Galatians 6: 2 and carry one another's burdens. This takes investing in relationships, and it means truthful transparent conversations. It takes intentionality to meet with other believers where the goal is checking in on the experiences and growth of each other. It takes intentionality to move our conversations from the sermon evaluation to the personal sermon application, from our neighbor's sin struggles to our own and even from gratitude for a bargain, to thankfulness for an awareness of God's forgiveness.

Engaging Together

*The questions below are on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 3.
Read and discuss together.*

1. When have you sensed God's grace or grown in your faith because of your contact with another Christian?
2. What are the biggest obstacles in your community keeping Christians from more intentionally carrying each other's burdens?
3. Where are the obstacles in your own life to pursuing more intentionally transparent fellowship?
4. How would you feel about answering the question "How is it with your soul?" or "How is your life with God?"
5. What blessings can you see that could come from a conversation using the question: "How is it with your soul?"
6. What would be challenging about answering these questions about your life with God?
7. What are concrete steps that we can do to add spiritual depth to our relationships?

Responding in Faith

*The activities below are found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 3.
Read the following instructions aloud.*

Below are some actions for responding to our lesson. Read over these and discuss which one you feel called to pursue.

Pray for a Transformational Small Group Ministry at your church.

Read or lead a study group on *The Class Meeting* by Kevin Watson.

Reflect on your relationships, and ask God to show you how you might add more transparency and deep Christian fellowship to your conversations. Deeply honest friendship doesn't happen quickly.

Sending Forth

*Read this conclusion statement and share the prayer together.
The prayer is found in the Participants Page at the end of Lesson 3.*

In our time together, we started looking at a picture reflecting on the teamwork we saw there. We have been reminded that we are better together. We need each other as we continue to move toward loving God and loving our neighbor.

We began by looking at the hiking picture. Let's look at it together again.

On our journey some days the climb seems easy and filled with pleasantness, an afternoon hike with a picnic waiting. Some days we are keenly aware of the brokenness of our global family, our church family, and our own family. The mountain seems too steep and the path slick. Our own neediness can bring us to our knees as we recognize selfishness and sin that slinks into our own stories.

Let us pray this prayer together.

Lord, remind us we were adopted into your family.

Help us to carry one another's burdens.

Strengthen us to be followers who are trustworthy and transparent.

Save us from pride that would burden us with a false sense of self-sufficiency.

We want to be better together for your kingdom.

Amen.

Endnotes

1. Read more on the work of René Spritz in *A General Theory of Love* by psychiatry professors from UCSF School of Medicine, Thomas Lewis, M.D., Fari Amini, M.D., and Richard Lannon, M.D.
2. The large meta-analysis found that being socially isolated was associated with a 26% increase in the risk of all-cause death compared to people who were not socially isolated. Social isolation, loneliness linked to increased risk of all-cause mortality in *Medical News Today*, by Robby Berman, June 27, 2023 <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/social-isolation-loneliness-linked-to-increased-mortality-risk-research-finds>
3. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Third Edition.*, vol. 14 (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872), 320–322.
4. Kevin Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience*, (Asbury Seedbed Publishing), p.39.
5. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Third Edition.*, vol. 13 (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872), 116.



(To be copied for class)

BETTER TOGETHER PARTICIPANT PAGES

Be Thou My Vision *Consecration*

1. Be Thou my Vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
 2. Be Thou my Wis - dom, and Thou my true Word;
 3. Be Thou my ba - ttle Shield, Sword for the fight;
 4. Rich - es I heed not, nor man's em - pty praise,
 5. High King of Hea - ven, my vic - tor - y won,

Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
 I ev - er with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
 Be Thou my Dig - ni - ty, Thou my De - - light;
 Thou mine In - - her - i - tance, now and al - - ways:
 May I reach Heav'ns joys, O bright Hea - ven's Sun!

Thou my great best Thought, by day or by night,
 Thou my soul's Fa - ther, and I Thy true son;
 Thou and Thou Shel - ter, Thou my high To - - wer:
 Heart of my own heart, what - - ev - er be - - fall,

Wa - king or sleep - - ing, Thy pre - sence my light.
 Thou in me dwell - - ing, and I with Thee one.
 Raise Thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
 High King of Hea - - ven, my Trea - sure Thou art.
 Still be my Vi - - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Words: Attr. Dallan Forgaill, 8th Century. Translated by Mary Byrne, 1905 and Eleanor Hull, 1912. Music: 'Slane' Traditional Irish. Setting: Mark Hamilton Dewey, 2007. copyright: public domain. This score is part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2008 Revision. All portions of the setting that were not already public domain were released to the public domain by the arranger on 27 July 2007. He already had released the parts and the versification (except for a few changes in the third verse, which he released to the public domain in 2007) to the public domain in 2006.

(To be copied for class)

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By Dallan Forgaill, 8th century

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Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
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Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
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Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
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Sending Forth Prayer

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Help us to carry one another's burdens.

Strengthen us to be followers who are trustworthy and transparent.

Save us from pride that would burden us with a false sense of self-sufficiency.

We want to be better together for your kingdom.

Amen.

(To be copied for class)

Notes



The only thing that counts is faith expressing
itself through love.

Galatians 5:6





4

WALKING *into the* WORLD

Kenda McVeigh

Gathering

Lesson preparation:

- *Copy the Participant Pages to hand out for Lesson 4*
- *Copy the Scripture Coloring Page*
- *Provide markers or colors*

Start the conversation by reading the passage below and discussing the questions.

Over the last several weeks, we have explored the layers of God's grace as he calls us into a relationship with him. Now let's look at how growing in our love for God and others begins to spill over into our outward actions.

Think for a minute and discuss: What are some of the best things Christians are known for? What have been some of their best contributions to society? How has Christianity made a difference in the world?

Focusing Our Hearts

The prayer below is found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 4.

Pray together

Dear Lord,
Be here, in this place, with us today.
Open our ears to hear and our eyes to see
Your people.
Your people, made in your image.

Grant us a caring heart,
A giving spirit and a serving hand
To share with the neighbors, community,
and countries
Where you have placed us.
Help us to focus on you and your word today
and meet us in this place.
In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.

Reading God's Word

Read aloud and consider God's Word.

James 1:27 (NIV)

²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Matthew 25:34–40 (NIV)

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

³⁷ “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

⁴⁰ “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’

Micah 6:8 (NIV)

⁸He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

Reflecting on Scripture

Read aloud/ allow others to read

Previously, we explored the idea that for us to grow in the sanctified life, we need meaningful fellowship where we examine our journey with God alongside other Christians. As we share and grow with their support, we continue our journey toward understanding God's grace in our lives. We can now begin to see that his call goes beyond our own personal spiritual growth — he calls us to loving action.

John Wesley believed that striving toward Christian perfection, loving others, and sharing Christ with the world were all necessary aspects of the authentic Christian life. On the Asbury University website, an article entitled *Wesleyan Holiness Theology* summarizes it this way “When, by the grace of God infused into the soul through the Holy Spirit, one's love for God and others is made pure and complete, their lifestyle cannot help but increase in virtue, finding expression in loving, selfless actions. Faith working outwardly through love (Gal. 5:6) was one of Wesley's favorite biblical themes.”¹

Through this outward expression of the love we have for God, we can share the love of Christ with all people. Christian mission work is an integral part of loving others and sharing Christ with the world. It's important to see that the transformation caused by allowing God to nurture and grow us toward holiness results in serving others in the name of Jesus.

We find this call for loving, selfless action throughout the Bible. In James 1:27, we hear a call to help the widows and orphans. Why? They were among the most powerless people in their culture. Before and during the time

of Jesus, if a woman lost her husband and did not remarry, she had nothing — no rights, no property, no money. She was left to fend for herself, and the outcome of her life was not very promising. Orphans too, then, and now in many cultures, had no safety net to rely on when they were left without parents. Caring for those who are alone and in need is an outward expression of our transformed lives when we grow in the love and grace of God.

So, what does this mission work look like? That question is answered in Matthew 25:34-40 when Jesus shares how our hands and feet and hearts can help those in need. Jesus' call to minister to those in need gives us very specific instructions — feed the hungry, cloth the naked, show hospitality to the stranger. He emphasizes the importance of providing to those in need by saying that when we serve them, we are serving Christ himself. Wesley believed that to truly serve people who were suffering, we needed to be with them — meet their needs in person. He taught that we should see them, attend to their physical and spiritual needs, and share the love and promise of knowing Jesus Christ.

Feed the hungry.

Cloth the naked.

Show hospitality to the stranger.

As we consider where God is calling us to serve, we might start locally, with our own community. Local missions might involve helping foster children in the community. An organization called The Champion Project pairs foster children in residential group homes with churches who provide mentors to the foster children. The children or teens and their mentors gather for planned activities, to discuss short Bible

lessons, learn life skills, take day trips, and share prayers and meals. Imagine a Christmas party with ninety foster children whose overall Christmas experience might be fraught with uncertainty and a feeling of loss. At this party, they delight in gifts from donors, a delicious meal, fun activities, and the freedom to feel the joy of Christmas.

Toward the end of the party, they all gather in one room to sing Christmas carols and listen to a compelling speaker share the love and hope of Jesus' birth. Now imagine as they are singing the last worship song, a young 8-year-old boy is so overcome by the message of Christ and the worship music that he begins to weep and tell his mentors that he feels Jesus is with him. In that moment the grace of God touches his heart, and maybe, just maybe, that experience provides strength for him throughout the course of his uncertain future. While the mentors came to bring joy to these children, Jesus was able to bring hope.



Some people are called into the international mission field and full-time mission work. They may be missionaries whose life-long calling is to work with those in other countries and cultures. Many of us are concerned that if we open our lives to mission work, God will ask us to give up everything and call us to faraway places. However, the work of international missions

involves so many other opportunities to reach out to those in need. We can use our resources – time, talents, and money – to bring the love and hope of Christ to people in other countries or cultures.

Volunteers can go on short term mission trips to work with children or build homes or churches or partner with medical teams to provide support for medical missions. They might go on a trip to a Christian children's home in Costa Rica where part of the team works on building worship centers, schools, or gyms for the kids, while others play with the children, read them stories, and provide Vacation Bible School. Throughout their time together, the volunteers are sharing their talents for helping and their hearts for Christ. Others can give generously to overseas mission projects or create opportunities to raise money for these missions or causes in other countries.

The distinguishing characteristic of Christian missions must be the combination of serving the community with sharing the love of Christ. This is where the true transformation of the world takes place. While works of mercy and justice are so important, as Christians, we must be set apart from the rest of the culture by adding conversations about Jesus Christ, prayer and sharing his message of love, hope and salvation to those we serve. Most importantly, we must serve others with humility as found in Micah 6:8, "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." We must submit ourselves to Christ and then enter into the lives of others with a desire to learn about them, to walk their journey with them and humbly speak the truth of Christ into their lives.

Engaging Together

The questions below are on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 4. Read and discuss together.

1. How should Christian missions differ from a secular view of helping others?
2. What does serving others with humility look like?
3. What are some of the things that get in the way of helping those in need?
4. Discuss in pairs where you might feel called to serve?
5. What are some ways we can humbly share our faith with others as we address their physical needs?
6. If you have been involved in Christian missions either locally or internationally, share your experience and the impact it had on your spiritual growth.

Responding in Faith

The activities below are found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 4. Read the following instructions aloud.

Below are some actions for responding to our lesson. Read over these and discuss which ones you feel called to pursue.

Read and gather information about the international cultures your group may be called to support.

Pray about where God might be calling you to reach out and serve others.

Locate a local mission through your church or community that you could support with your time and/or your financial resources.

Lead the mission efforts of your group if needed. Sometimes a group just needs one person to begin to research and organize them for action.

Sending Forth

The prayer below is found on the Participant Page at the end of Lesson 4.

Read the following paragraph aloud.

As our lives are filled with God's beautiful grace, we are changed, and we feel compelled to share the love of Christ with all who will hear us. Sometimes, we simply start with our families, neighborhoods, and communities. But soon the growth and urgency of Christ's love in our own lives leads us to take this message out into our country and our world until all may know the power and transformation that comes from a deep and abiding relationship with Christ.

Let's pray together:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

— *St. Francis of Assisi*

Endnotes

1. "Wesleyan-Holiness Theology – Asbury University," Asbury University, <https://www.asbury.edu/about/spiritual-vitality/wesleyan-holiness-theology/>.

WALKING *into the* WORLD PARTICIPANT PAGES

Focusing Our Hearts Prayer

Dear Lord,
Be here, in this place, with us today.
Open our ears to hear and our eyes to see
Your people.
Your people made in your image.

Grant us a caring heart,
A giving spirit and a serving hand
To share with the neighbors, community, and countries
Where you have placed us.
Help us to focus on you and your word today and meet us in this place.
In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.

Engaging Together Questions

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4. Discuss in pairs where you might feel called to serve?
5. What are some ways we can humbly share our faith with others as we address their physical needs?
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(To be copied for class)

Responding in Faith Activities

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Sending Forth Prayer

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Notes





Growing in Grace is the study we've needed to help give us a deeper understanding of the incredible scope of God's grace for each believer. Based in the richness of the Wesleyan view of grace, this book helps remind us of the true foundation of our faith. Whether you're a new believer or someone longing for renewed passion in your faith, this study will awaken your sense of awe and grasp of God's amazing grace!

— *Dr. Jessica LaGrone,*
Dean of Chapel, Asbury Theological Seminary



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