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ARTICLE

Session 14: The More Excellent Way

PREPARATION

Read Scripture and background information. Reflect on the questions in the participant book. Review links suggested in the lesson outline below.

Train of Thought

The church exists to serve the world and to invite all people into a community of Jesus Christ that reaches out with God's love to the world. Leaders in the church name current reality, listen to God and to the people so that they can articulate a vision of desired reality, design appropriate systems for making disciples and spreading the gospel, and monitor the entire system to identify points for improvement. As the world changes, the community of faith is ready to respond, meeting people where they are to help them discover their place in the body of Christ.

Desired Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants should be able to:

- Recover the historic understanding of discipleship, stewardship, and fellowship.
- Recognize the importance of practicing the spiritual disciplines.

Lesson Supplies

- [Posters](#)
- Candle and matches, Bible
- Information on John Wesley
 - One-page [Summary Handout](#)
 - [Wesley websites, books, videos](#)
 - [Pocket Story of John Wesley](#)
- Information on Spiritual Practices
 - One-page [Summary Handout](#)
 - [Upper Room devotional material](#)
 - [Spiritual book and movie reviews](#)
 - [Young Adult Spirituality](#)

EXPLORATION AT GROUP SESSION

Total time: 50 minutes

Light the worship candle with these words, "John Wesley believed that the world could be transformed into the kingdom of God." Pray together the prayer on page 119 in the study book. Wesley pushes us to live differently in our daily lives. Ask participants to bring a symbol of their daily life to add to the worship center next week.

Invite comments and questions on this session's daily readings. You can share the complete text of [Wesley's sermon](#) for participants who would like to read it. Be prepared to share information about John Wesley from your preparation.

Focus Study: Day 3

This reading emphasizes discipline and spiritual practices as a way of building our relationship with God. This sermon urges a discipline of an ordered day, prayer, and meditative reading. Wesley's "means of grace" are spiritual practices that

open a space of receptivity to God's grace. Wesley's "means of grace" is the focus of *FaithQuest* session 15. Ask group members, "What spiritual practices have you found helpful in turning your attention toward God?" Distribute copies of the [Summary Handout](#) of spiritual practices. How do practices affect our daily lives?

Ask participants to experiment with one new practice for 2 weeks.

Transition to Our Time

Discuss the questions at the top right column of page 125, A Reflective Moment Along the Way. Read Psalm 18:6 (day 3 reading). What does this verse tell us about ourselves and God?

DISCOVERY – APPLYING IDEAS TO THE CONGREGATION

Total time: 45 minutes

Discussion Questions (30 minutes)

Discuss the questions on page 126 of the Bible study. Understanding how the primary task of the congregation relates to discipleship, stewardship, and fellowship is important if we are to create fully functional faith-forming communities. Figure 14C and the exercise add one more dimension to viewing our congregation as a complex system.

Feedback & Evaluation (5 minutes)

The final four sessions of *FaithQuest* push us to apply what we are learning to our lives as individuals and as a congregation. How is this session a challenge to our congregation?

Sending Forth (10 minutes)

"It is a radical, transforming love that moves people to deep levels of Christian service" (*FaithQuest* Bible Study, page 125). To close the *FaithQuest* group session, invite participants to a time of silence to remember a person for whom this statement is true. Ask how the people they are remembering have influenced them. Allow silence for memories to surface. Ask participants to pair up and tell each other about the person each remembers. The pairs should close their conversation by praying for each other.



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BUILDING LEADERS FOR TODAY'S CHURCH

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DISCIPLESHIP

- **To believe in Jesus is to be a disciple.**
- **Discipleship is to the Christian life what childhood and adolescence are to human maturing.**
- **Discipleship is the period when Christian believers learn fully what following Jesus Christ means.**

STEWARDSHIP

- In its fullest sense, stewardship is the way we manage all the resources and gifts given to us by God.
- If discipleship is learning, stewardship is doing.
- “There are so many talents which are committed to our trust . . . we have the use of all these; but as stewards, not as proprietors.”

— *John Wesley*

FELLOWSHIP

- **Fellowship is where faith moves from concept to practice.**
- **Fellowship is where the abstract and the concrete meet.**
- **Fellowship is where Christians gain identity, clarify the mission, and focus on the vision.**



John Wesley

Born: June 17, 1703, in the Epworth Church parsonage, Lincolnshire, England.

Died: March 2, 1791 in London, England.

Family

Father: Samuel Wesley, the rector of the Epworth Parish, was a highly respected and well-known member of the clergy.

Mother: Susanna, a highly intelligent and devout churchwoman, was a significant influence on Wesley. She dedicated herself to the education and development of her children.

Brother: Charles Wesley is best known for his contribution as a church musician. He did much to shape the rich musical tradition of The Methodist Church.

Education

John Wesley attended Charter House and Oxford University. He was highly respected among his academic peers.

Major Accomplishments

Wesley and the Methodist Movement have become best known for the emphases on education, social justice, and the nurture and development of Christian disciples. Wesley was also known for the development of circuit riders, open air preaching, and an emphasis on small cells or house churches that provided members with a community of prayer, support, and accountability.

“I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath; and when my voice is lost in death, praise shall employ my nobler powers, My days of praise shall ne’er be past, while life, and thought, and being last, or immortality endures.”

— John Wesley, *United Methodist Hymnal*, 1989

Several FaithQuest groups have viewed videos about John Wesley.

Videos, such as *John Wesley: The Proud Methodist* and *John Wesley: The Preacher*, are available from Annual Conference resource libraries. Videos about Wesley are also available for purchase from companies such as Gideon Productions (*John Wesley: God’s Man for All Seasons*) and Vision Video (*John Wesley: A Biography*).

Lists of Christian Spiritual Practices

<u>John Wesley's List</u> <small>(more in Session 15)</small>	<u>Soul Tending List</u>	<u>Dorothy Bass' List Practicing Our Faith</u>	<u>A Website Alphabet List</u>
Prayer Study of Scripture Lord's Supper Worship Conferencing Fasting Holy reading Works of mercy	Baptism Bible Study Eucharist Almsgiving Catechesis Chastity Confession Covenanting Devotional Reading Discernment Dying Well Evangelization Fasting Forgiveness Honoring the Body Hospitality Justice Keeping Sabbath Meditation Ordination Prayer Reconciliation Self-denial Singing Simplicity Solitude Speaking Truth in Love Spiritual Direction Spiritual Friendship Stewardship Stillness Testimony Thanksgiving Worship	Honoring the Body Hospitality Household Economics Saying Yes and Saying No Keeping Sabbath Testimony Discernment Shaping Communities Forgiveness Healing Dying Well Singing Our Lives	Attention Beauty Being Present Compassion Connections Devotion Enthusiasm Faith Forgiveness Grace Gratitude Hope Hospitality Imagination Joy Justice Kindness Listening Love Meaning Nurturing Openness Peace Play Questing Reverence Shadow Silence Teachers Transformation Unity Vision Wonder X – The Mystery Yearning You Zeal