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## **Abstract**

### **THE RENEWAL EFFECT UPON THE CONGREGATION BY SMALL GROUPS USING AN ADAPTATION OF JOHN WESLEY'S BAND MODEL**

**Forbis Lee Kivett**

The focus of this dissertation is upon the cause-and-effect relationship which has been said to exist between small groups experiencing spiritual renewal and the onset of renewal in the larger congregation. In view of the fact that the need for renewal is sensed periodically in the lives of individuals and churches, a greater understanding of the effectiveness of small groups as a catalyst for renewal is desirable.

In Chapter One the need for renewal is defined and then illustrated by exploring the spiritual dynamics of one particular congregation. A review of previous research reveals an absence of any known empirical studies using John Wesley's band model. Thus, a plan is presented whereby a contribution may be made to both the spiritual renewal of the one congregation and the field of knowledge concerning church renewal. It is hypothesized that a significant change toward renewal will be experienced by those in small groups engaged in a program of spiritual formation and in the rest of the congregation with whom the small group participants associate in the natural flow of activities and events of congregational life.

In Chapter Two the life and times of John Wesley, his theology of spiritual formation, and his strategy of using small groups for church renewal are explored. A descriptive analysis of Wesley's network of graded nurture

groups is presented. A detailed examination of Wesley's band model reveals its appeal, activities, and effectiveness.

In Chapter Three the spiritual formation program is described and appropriately named "Walking With Wesley in Spiritual Formation." A Christian life questionnaire is constructed by including in a list of statements those characteristics which numerous authorities have named as appropriate indicators of renewal. The questionnaire served as the data-gathering instrument for the project, being administered before and after the ten-month program.

In Chapter Four the data gathered by the questionnaire are analyzed and interpreted. The renewal level of all groups is reported in three categories: attitude, behavior, and the composite of both categories. The statistics reveal that the Wesley Groups experienced a significant advance in renewal. However, their renewal was not transferred to the rest of the congregation in a significant way. Subjective observations by the pastor and participants in the Wesley Groups confirm the increase of renewal among the small groups and some instances of renewal among those not in the small groups. The potential for renewal in the congregation is enhanced by the presence of small groups for spiritual formation.

In Chapter Five the overall project is summarized. Specific recommendations are made concerning the extension of the duration of the renewal program for small groups and the design of a more intentional sharing of the renewal experience by the small groups with the rest of the congregation. Ways in which the findings of this project may be applied in ministry are described.



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UPON THE CONGREGATION BY SMALL GROUPS  
USING AN ADAPTATION OF JOHN WESLEY'S BAND MODEL

by  
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## AUTHORIZATION

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

"Of all of the enemies of Christ, none is more damaging than a tired old religion."<sup>1</sup> With this bold statement, Elton Trueblood rivets attention on the necessity for renewal of the church in the second half of the twentieth century. He is persuaded that for the church to survive as a redemptive force in the world it must experience a significant renewal of commitment to Christ and his declared mission for the church.

In the eighteenth century John Wesley gave himself to "restoring our decaying Christianity to its primitive life and vigour, and the supporting of our tottering and sinking Church."<sup>2</sup> Although the Anglican Church had the form of godliness, it did not have the power. The vitality with which to inspire its members and to redeem the masses outside the church was lacking. Throughout his lifetime, Wesley pursued his avowed purpose of restoring New Testament Christianity to the Anglican Church.

The primitive life and vigor to which Wesley referred is recorded in the New Testament.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

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<sup>1</sup> Elton Trueblood, The Incendiary Fellowship (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 71-72.

<sup>2</sup> John Emory, ed., The Works of the Reverend John Wesley (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), VII, 400. (Hereafter to be referred to as Works.)

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Praising God, and having favour with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (or, as were being saved).<sup>3</sup>

This account identified four practices which were performed faithfully by the early church: study of the scriptures and the accompanying preaching of the apostles (Bible study), fellowship which was a total sharing of life (group caring and conversation), breaking of bread (Communion), and prayer. Flowing from these practices were the following experiences:

- A sense of reverential awe before God inspired by the signs and wonders done by God through the apostles.
- A spontaneous mutual sharing of resources so that everyone's needs were met.
- A love for one another and an atmosphere of goodwill toward everyone.
- A unity of purpose, especially related to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.
- A desire to worship together frequently (daily).
- A ready and contagious expression of praise to God.
- A surge of new life as new converts were added to their company daily.

Many observers would agree that the practices and experiences of the New

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<sup>3</sup>Acts 2:41-47. (All biblical references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.)



Testament Church would be the cure for "a tired old religion" in any age.

Renewal of spiritual vitality probably is a by-product, much like happiness, and is not achieved by direct search. Man may be able to cultivate and nourish it, as a gardener would do with his plants, but he cannot create spiritual life. That life comes only from God.

However, spiritual renewal has occurred over and over throughout church history whenever persons have participated in the "conditions of its emergence"<sup>4</sup> such as repentance, close attention to the Bible, Christian reading and dialogue, and commitment to personal discipline. The key to spiritual renewal for individuals and congregations today may lie in this combination of its by-product nature and the conditions of its emergence.

### The Problem

The need for renewal is found at some point in the life of almost every church. This section describes the need for renewal in one local congregation and the method by which this need was addressed.

### Introduction to the Problem

Lyle Schaller is one of the foremost parish consultants in the 1980's. Reflecting on his experience as seminar leader with the Yokefellow Institute and interaction with many congregations, pastors, and denominational leaders, he observed:

On any given day thousands of ministers and hundreds of thousands of the laity experience varying degrees of frustration because the congregation of which they are members does not

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<sup>4</sup> Trueblood, 55.

display the vitality, the sense of mission, the joy, the concern for persons outside the membership, the enthusiasm, and the vigor that is presumed to be a part of the ongoing life of a called-out community of the followers of Jesus Christ. They feel the passivity of that congregation has deafened the members to the call of the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

There was a similar frustration with the lack of vitality present in the Liberty Wesleyan Church, Summerfield, North Carolina. Several persons in this congregation lamented what seemed to them to be a decline in "spiritual" quality within the worship services in comparison with the time when the first-generation members were present in the services. These early members were remembered as being deeply religious; their very presence had given spiritual energy to the atmosphere of any service. They had displayed love and concern for others; they often had talked to people about matters of the soul. The second- and third-generation members were perceived by some persons as being less spiritually vital. Some of the observers declared their desire to grow spiritually; they wanted to be part of the spiritual renewal of their church. This desire on the part of the members and pastor of Liberty Wesleyan Church provided the impetus to offer a planned opportunity in the interest of church renewal.

Many who write about church renewal maintain that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the activity of small groups for spiritual renewal in the local congregation and renewed life within the total congregation.

Steve Harper has stated in Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, "We must bring the vitality of the group into the mainstream of institutional

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<sup>5</sup> Lyle Schaller, Activating the Passive Church: Diagnosis and Treatment (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 64-65.

life. In this way, the energy of the group can find larger expression in the church, and the larger church will be enriched and renewed by the spiritual life coming to it from the group."<sup>6</sup>

Howard A. Snyder summarized in his book, The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal, "The whole tenor of this book suggests the need for some sort of committed small group structures for the vitality and renewal of the larger church."<sup>7</sup>

Speaking about the causes of the lack of vitality in the church, Lyle Schaller said:

An excessive degree of passivity tends to be found in those congregations in which (a) there is a lack of a consistent and continuing emphasis on opportunities for personal and spiritual growth for adults, and (b) there is a comparatively low level of competence in the members, and especially the leaders, in articulating their faith (this characteristic often is reinforced by the lack of any programmatic emphasis to help people develop this ability).<sup>8</sup>

These three authors have maintained that small groups for spiritual renewal can have a positive effect upon the whole church. They have pointed out also that a negative effect will occur in a church if such opportunities for personal and spiritual growth and for training in expressing one's faith are absent.

In view of the ongoing need of training for spiritual leadership in every church, of the widespread agreement with Schaller's assessment of frustrated church members, of the assertions by these authors concerning

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<sup>6</sup> Steve Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 63.

<sup>7</sup> Howard A. Snyder, The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 162.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

the part small groups can play in spiritual renewal, and of the desire for spiritual renewal within the Liberty Wesleyan Church, this project-dissertation was designed. This local church and many others may benefit by information concerning the link between the activity of small groups for renewal and renewed spiritual vitality in the congregation.

### Statement of the Problem

The claim can be made that small groups which provide for personal and spiritual growth and for the development of competence in articulating one's faith can be at least one tool which will have a renewal effect upon the congregation.

This project evaluated the effect of renewal that small groups have upon the congregation over a ten-month period. John Wesley's band" model with some adaptation was used for the small groups. Spiritual renewal was measured using a questionnaire which included appropriate indicators of spiritual renewal.

Research on the problem was approached through three hypotheses. "An hypothesis is a logical supposition, a reasonable guess, an educated conjecture, which may give direction to thinking with respect to the problem and, thus, aid in solving it."<sup>9</sup> An hypothesis, since it is an educated guess, suspends any claim to validity until it has been supported by the facts and their interpretation.

Thus defined, the hypotheses of this project were as follows:

Based on the pre/post questionnaire responses,

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<sup>9</sup> Paul D. Leedy, Practical Research: Planning and Design, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1980), 6.

1. There will be a significant difference in attitude and behavior among the participants of the small groups after the ten-month period. (These small groups were known as Wesley Groups.)
2. There will be a significant difference in attitude and behavior among those not in the small groups after the ten-month period. (This group was known as the at-large group.)
3. There will be a significant difference in attitude and behavior among the combined participants of the Wesley Groups and the at-large group after the ten-month period. (This was not a third group of people but rather was created by combining the scores of the previous two groups. The strengths and weaknesses of both groups were combined to produce a statistical picture concerning renewal of the total congregation. This was known as the whole congregation.)

### Significance of the Study

The literature on passivity versus renewal often suggests or assumes a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the presence of spiritual renewal groups and the spiritual vitality of the whole congregation. This project evaluates this supposed cause-and-effect relationship. The information may increase the understanding of this important relationship.

Little research has been done in church renewal using John Wesley's band model. Wesley designed this model to promote spiritual development

related to the Christian's affections and attitudes.<sup>10</sup> It is of substantial interest to investigate the activities and progress of persons using this group model toward the goal of spiritual renewal. Since there is widespread opinion today that local churches need ways to foster renewal, the information gained by this study concerning the use of the band model in a renewal program may assist both clergy and laity in their pursuit of renewal in the local church.

### Literature Review

The literature related to the two topics of church renewal and John Wesley's ministry is extensive. Interest in church renewal has increased in the last half of the twentieth century and this trend has given birth to much writing on the subject. In many of these publications reference is made to the impact John Wesley has had in the promotion of spiritual renewal. Add to this a re-discovery of Wesley in the areas of the sources of his spiritual and theological formation, his ministry of spiritual direction through the medium of letter writing, and his insightful approach in the spiritual formation and training of church leaders. In light of the tremendous volume of resources and the narrow focus of this project, the literature review has been representative rather than exhaustive.

The literature review is organized topically as follows: the problem, the solution, previous research, and research design. The review follows the sequence of the development of the perspective for this project. The entries are annotated to describe their importance to the subject area and

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<sup>10</sup> Works, V, 182-183.

their place in relation to this project.

### The Need for Spiritual Renewal

Initially, interest was drawn to the need for renewal in the church by two books. Carl S. Dudley explored the popular theme of effectiveness in the work of the church in Making the Small Church Effective. He maintained that a church must be healthy before it can become effective. Healthiness is related to the personal feelings, values, beliefs, and personal choices of the people in the church. Healthiness grows out of a clear identity with a God who touches them with love and enables them to love others within the church and beyond.

Lyle Schaller's book, Activating the Passive Church, offers the diagnosis and treatment of churches afflicted with complacency, lethargy, and passivity. It submits that the two leading cures for passivity are personal religious experience and an intervention by the Holy Spirit. These two books gave rise and focus to this project-dissertation.

The following resources further supported the need for renewal and suggested a plan to bring about renewal in the church. In his book, Dry Bones Can Live Again, Robert E. Coleman described the deepening crisis in the church as complacency threatens to become the norm. The best approach toward solving this crisis is through small group discipline--the strategy of fellowship, prayer, and Bible study. He believes that this nucleus of inspired and informed people will transform the entire church.

Howard A. Snyder stated in The Problem of Wineskins that fewer people are interested in the church today and that the church is suffering from a fellowship (Koinonia) crisis. The church must provide structures that

will facilitate renewed fellowship. He maintains that the small group structure best accomplishes this goal. John Wesley's use of such groups is presented as an example of this structure.

In his article entitled, "Renewal that Lasts," which appeared in Leadership, Summer, 1984, Snyder outlined five dimensions of renewal which must be engaged if renewal is to be ongoing. He focused on the need for every Christian to be a part of a small group in which he can grow in openness to others and to the work of the Holy Spirit. He charged pastors to make the forming and nurturing of such groups a high priority.

These sources demonstrated the need for renewal in the church and suggested that the key structure for encouraging renewal was a small group ministry.

### The Way to Spiritual Renewal

The pursuit of this project led to the discovery of materials which focused on John Wesley and his use of small groups for spiritual formation.

William Law's book, A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, was one of John Wesley's favorite devotional books. It describes the necessity of "intentionality" in the quest for spiritual growth. This principle was embraced by Wesley and can be seen in his approach to spiritual formation. The Preface by John W. Meister was particularly helpful to the focus of this project. Meister described the spiritual transformation of his church through the activity of a small group of men who met weekly for silence, prayer, and serious discussion of Law's book.

In his book, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, Steve Harper described the devotional life of Wesley and presented a detailed explanation



of Wesley's teaching on the "means of grace." One of these means of grace was Christian conference or spiritual nurture groups. The key elements present in these groups were nurture, study, encouragement, stewardship, witness, and service. Wesley believed all these are important ingredients in the life of a growing Christian and that they could be mediated best through the small group experience.

The Works of John Wesley includes his journal, letters, and sermons. Wesley described the beginnings of the society, class, and band groups in a letter to Reverend Mr. Perronet entitled, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists." He discussed these groups in terms of who attended (composition), what took place (content), and benefits derived (contributions). Obviously, this was the major primary source for this project-dissertation.

The following four books added helpful information on Wesley's theology of grace which inspired and undergirded his approach to spiritual growth: John Wesley's Message for Today, by Steve Harper; Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition, by Thomas A. Langford; Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit, by Albert C. Outler; and John Wesley's Theology Today, by Colin W. Williams.

In his book The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal, Howard A. Snyder outlined the historical development of the "band" group model. This was the first group model used by Wesley and it is said to have remained his favorite. This information assisted in the selection of the band model for use with the small groups in the Liberty Wesleyan Church.

John W. Drakeford included a chapter on Wesley's groups in his book, People to People Therapy. He approached them as a psychologist and

described each group as meeting specific personal and psychological needs. Since the band group model operates on the principle of open sharing of attitudes, moods, and affections of the heart related to the Christian life, a psychological discussion of the dynamics of the band meeting was instrumental in the design of the small group materials for Liberty Wesleyan Church.

### Previous Research

The Comprehensive Dissertation Index, including the available abstracts, for years 1861-1985 reveals only twelve entries relating specifically to John Wesley's use of small groups. Passing reference only has been given to the band model. No project-dissertation has been completed using this model for spiritual renewal. No study could be found that tested the cause-and-effect relationship claimed by numerous writers to exist between small groups and the church relative to spiritual renewal.

A Doctor of Ministry dissertation by Richard Eugene Lyddon, Jr., "The Relevance for the Contemporary Church of the Eighteenth Century British Methodist Class Meeting,"<sup>11</sup> explores Wesley's class model and how it may be used today to promote the dual objectives of personal spirituality and social welfare. No project using the class model in a church was conducted to test this thesis; the dissertation relied on documentary research altogether.

A Ph. D. dissertation by David Lowes Watson, "The Origins and Significance of the Early Methodist Class Meeting,"<sup>12</sup> presents the historical

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<sup>11</sup> School of Theology at Claremont, 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Duke University, 1978.

development of Wesley's society-class-band system in light of Wesley's theology. Watson's more recent book, Accountable Discipleship, presents much the same material and provides a complete explanation of covenant discipleship groups as a model for use in the church today. Watson maintained that the leadership fostered by these groups will be the spiritual muscle of the church. This assertion is the point at issue in this project-dissertation.

A Ph. D. dissertation by David Michael Henderson, "John Wesley's Instructional Groups,"<sup>13</sup> analyzes Wesley's groups from the standpoint of the instructional aims of each group. This helped to put the band model in perspective in the continuum of instructional groups.

In Spiritual Renewal of the American Parish, author Earnest Larsen presents a model for parish renewal. He explains the interrelatedness of "inner" spiritual renewal and "outer" programmatic renewal. He points out the necessity of programs aimed at building the spirituality of leaders in the church. This is a key element in the plan to bring renewal to the parish. This aspect is of strategic interest to this project-dissertation. His list of vital signs of parish renewal was instructive for the development of the questionnaire.

### Design of Research Questionnaire

The questionnaire method of measuring levels of spiritual renewal was adopted early in the project. The primary task was to include in the questionnaire those elements which were considered by authorities on renewal

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<sup>13</sup> Indiana University, 1980.

to be appropriate. The following books by recognized leaders within several denominations in the field of church renewal provided information toward the development of the questionnaire: The Measure of a Church, by Gene A. Getz; Turning to Christ, by Urban T. Holmes; Dynamics of Spiritual Life and Renewal as a Way of Life, by Richard F. Lovelace; New Life in the Church, by Robert A. Raines; The Company of the Committed and The Incendiary Fellowship, by Elton Trueblood.

C. Gratton Kemp, in Small Groups and Self-Renewal, presented an overview of several kinds of small groups and described the group process. He included a variety of self-evaluation questionnaires designed to reflect personal development as the result of participating in a small group. These sample questionnaires provided an orientation for the design of a questionnaire related to the renewal groups in this project.

"Can Spirituality Be Engineered?" is the title of a forum reported in Leadership, Spring, 1986. Four pastors who had conducted renewal programs in their congregations recently reported insights gained from these ventures. Several characteristics of spiritual renewal were cited as outgrowths of these programs. This timely article underscored the contemporary relevance of this project-dissertation.

### Theoretical Framework

The contextual project was conducted within the following theoretical framework. These basic assumptions and definition of terms provide the opportunity for researcher and reader alike to view the project from the same vantage point.

## Assumptions

"Assumptions are what the researcher takes for granted."<sup>14</sup> They establish the obvious conditions upon which the research project is based. For this reason, it is important for both researcher and reader to know what the assumptions are. Assumptions are stated without substantiating data because they "can neither be verified nor denied."<sup>15</sup>

This project-dissertation made the following assumptions:

First, church people will respond to opportunities for spiritual renewal by participating in the groups and by participating in the questionnaire process.

Second, the use of a questionnaire is an acceptable methodology for collecting data for the purposes of this project.

Third, the similarity of congregational life from year to year is such that the spiritual renewal influences, other than the activity of the small groups for spiritual formation, will be considered a constant.

## Definition of Terms

The terms defined in this section were used with these meanings in this project-dissertation. The first three terms were critically important to the experimental focus of the project--renewal, passivity, and indicator. The other three reflect the nature of the activity of the small groups--band, spiritual formation, and Walking With Wesley Groups.

Renewal: "The state of being renewed"<sup>16</sup> by virtue of being quickened,

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<sup>14</sup> Leedy, 55.

<sup>15</sup> John S. Savage, The Apathetic and Bored Church Member: Psychological and Theological Implications (Pittsford, New York: Lead Consultants, Inc., 1976), 7.

<sup>16</sup> "Renewal," The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language.

revived, and replenished so as to produce fresh growth and vigor. With respect to a congregation, it is the condition marked by an increase of vitality and effectiveness in one's personal devotion to God, an increase in fellowship with other Christians, and an increase in the sense of mission toward non-Christians. Believers rise from lethargy and complacency to a greater level of awareness of and commitment to life in Christ.

This new level of spiritual vitality is expressed in numerous ways which may be prefaced with the word new: affection for the Lord, discoveries in prayer and the Bible, bonds of fellowship within the body of Christ, awareness of God's presence in one's life, readiness to praise God through testimony and song, eagerness to contribute time-talent-money to the work of the Lord, sense of urgency about the mission of the church regarding the Great Commission, and new interest in creative avenues of ministry. Newness characterizes one's total spirituality as the result of genuine renewal.<sup>17</sup>

Passivity: The dictionary defines passivity as "being without response to something normally expected to provoke expressions of emotion or feeling; not active; inert."<sup>18</sup> In the congregational setting, the people are not sensitive and responsive to the religious and personal needs of others. There is no vision of ministry beyond their own members. The church does not expressly seek to foster personal spiritual growth. The psychological tone of the congregation may be described as complacent, lethargic, tired, uninspired, and resistant to change. The focus of ministry narrows.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> These characteristics were collected from several sources which are listed in the Appendices under the title, "Appropriate Renewal Indicators."

<sup>18</sup> "Passive," The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language.

<sup>19</sup> Schaller, 40-70.

Indicator: "A device which makes information available."<sup>20</sup> In this project an indicator was a testing device which provided information about the presence and strength of a specific attitude or behavior. One indicator consisted of a statement accompanied by a 5-point response scale. Data regarding the level of renewal being experienced by group members were gathered by administering the questionnaire before and after the ten-month period.

Indicators are used in other fields of interest, for example, economics.

Michael B. Lehmann has stated:

Economists have never agreed on a single economic indicator to predict the future. Some indicators are better than others, but none is consistently accurate. . . . To deal with this, economists have devised a composite or combination of statistical series drawn from a broad spectrum of economic activity, each of which tend to move up or down ahead of the general trend of the business cycle. These series are referred to as leading indicators because of their predictive quality, and a dozen have been combined into the composite index of 12 leading indicators.<sup>21</sup>

Some of these well-known indicators are average workweek for production workers and manufacturing, average weekly initial claims of state unemployment insurance, new building permits for private housing units, new orders for consumer goods and materials.

[The composite of the twelve leading indicators] provides a statistic that is more reliable and less erratic than any of the individual components. . . . [These help one] build an understanding of the timing, direction, and strength of the business cycle.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, with regard to this project-dissertation, several indicators were grouped together within two categories, attitude and behavior. This design gave a more reliable measure of renewal than any single indicator could

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<sup>20</sup> "Indicator," The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary.

<sup>21</sup> Michael B. Lehmann, The Dow Jones-Irwin Guide to Using the Wall Street Journal (Homewood, Illinois: Dow Jones-Irwin, 1987), 249.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 250

have given.

Band: A small group designed by John Wesley in the eighteenth century for Christian nurture. Participants were Christians of considerable spiritual maturity who wanted "some means of closer union." Usually the number of participants in a band ranged from five to eight. Each band consisted of persons of the same sex and marital status. They were regulated by operating guidelines and these were agreed to before a person was admitted into the group. Members sought to grow in love for Christ and one another, in holiness of heart, and in purity of intention.<sup>23</sup>

Spiritual Formation: The late Reverend Dr. Frank B. Stanger defined spiritual formation as "growth in spirituality according to the image of Christ. It is the journey of the total person toward wholeness."<sup>24</sup> He gave four viewpoints of spiritual formation:

1. Scripturally, it is growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Theologically, it is the process by which the image of Christ is formed in us.
3. Psychologically, it is the pursuit of maturity.
4. Professionally, it is developmental.<sup>25</sup>

Those involved in the small groups in this project sought to develop Christlikeness in their attitudes and behavior.

Walking With Wesley in Spiritual Formation Groups: This was the

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<sup>23</sup> Works, V, 182-183.

<sup>24</sup> Frank B. Stanger, "Spiritual Formation in the Local Church" (Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky), 16 January, 1986. (Lecture)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



official name of the band-type groups instituted in the Liberty Wesleyan Church for this project. This name originated with the present writer. Its intention was to represent the nature of these groups and to have a positive appeal to the congregation.

### Methodology

An overview of the research plan used in the contextual project is presented here. A more detailed description is presented in Chapter Three. In addition to the overview, the length of the project and its scope and limitations are described.

### Nature of the Project

The nature of this project-dissertation involved both documentary and experimental research. The documentary research included both primary and secondary sources related to John Wesley's theology of grace and his system of interlocking groups for spiritual formation. Church renewal sources were consulted to provide adequate understanding of renewal and to determine appropriate indicators of spiritual renewal. Small-group psychology sources were consulted for an understanding of the dynamics of the small group meeting. This understanding assisted in the preparation of the materials for the group meetings and of the design of the questionnaire.

The experimental research included the following plan:

1. Five small groups participated in a process of spiritual formation using John Wesley's "band" model adapted for this project. These groups met twice each month for approximately ninety minutes during a ten-month period. Content

materials were prepared by this writer for use by the five groups. The rest of the congregation was not involved in the small group process. The contact of the participants in the small groups with those in the rest of the congregation occurred naturally as all went about the regular activities of church life.

2. A questionnaire containing spiritual renewal indicators was administered to the small group participants and the rest of the congregation before and after the ten-month period. The response scores of the small groups recorded before and after the ten-month period were compared. A similar comparison was made with the before and after scores of the rest of the congregation.
3. Conclusions were made on the basis of changes in response scores. Any improved scores were viewed as a possible indication of the presence of spiritual renewal. Any improved scores of both the small groups and the rest of the congregation were viewed as possible support for the supposed cause-and-effect relationship being tested.

### Length of the Project

The idea for this project began to take shape in the spring of 1985. Information was gathered concerning John Wesley's band model. A review of previous research was conducted. Several authorities were consulted in the process of developing the questionnaire. The plan for the experiment was approved in August, 1986.

The experimental phase of the project began in August, 1986, and ended in July, 1987. The small groups for spiritual renewal met twice each month during the period of September, 1986, through June, 1987.

### Scope and Limitations

The project was limited to one congregation: Liberty Wesleyan Church, Summerfield, North Carolina. This was a church of approximately one hundred families. Any conclusions made must be understood in view of this limited setting.

The time established for this project was ten months during which the small groups met. This time period was selected because it met the basic time requirement of the Doctor of Ministry program and because it coincided conveniently with the public school year during which time the greatest number of parishioners faithfully attend church activities.

The indicators used in the questionnaire were selective rather than comprehensive with regard to the total field of renewal. In keeping with the expressed needs of the participating congregation, the indicators related primarily to a Christian's devotional attitude and behavior and to a congregation's relational and worship tone. The findings and generalizations were confined to these indicators. Also, the results of this project were limited to how attitudes and behavior were perceived by the subjects and to their willingness to express these perceptions.

No formal attempt was made to control extraneous factors that could exert a spiritual renewal influence upon the subjects. A log was kept of unusual or eventful occurrences within the congregation such as death of a member, revival services, conversions, evident victories, and miraculous

answers to prayer. Any conclusions related to the cause-and-effect relationship would need to take these extraneous factors into consideration.

Documentary research was restricted to sufficient representative materials to construct the questionnaire, to develop informational resources concerning John Wesley's band model, and to provide for an adequate analysis of the cause-and-effect relationship.

Additional research will need to be done in order to expand understanding both within the narrow focus of this project and in those issues which relate to it in the broad field of spiritual renewal.

## CHAPTER TWO

### John Wesley's Spiritual Formation Groups

Documentary research for this project explored the historical, theological, and practical influences which contributed to the development of John Wesley's spiritual formation groups. Special attention was given to the band group because it served as the model for use in the contextual project. This chapter flows naturally from its title: John Wesley's (history), Spiritual Formation (theology), Groups (taxonomy).

#### History

It has been estimated that "over 200 biographies or biographical studies on Wesley have come from the presses."<sup>1</sup> Realizing the existence of such a wealth of information about the life and times of Wesley, this chapter seeks to follow a narrow path within the life of this intriguing and influential Christian leader. This brief look at his family and the social and religious context prevailing during the early years of Wesley's life provides a "feel" for the mission to which he gave his lifelong energies.<sup>2</sup>

#### Family

John Wesley was born on June 17, 1703, in Epworth, England. He was the fifteenth of nineteen children born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley.

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<sup>1</sup> Howard A. Snyder, The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 4.

<sup>2</sup> An expanded review of the early years of Wesley is provided in the Appendices: Wesley Groups, meetings 2-6.

Both of Wesley's grandfathers were talented ministers in the Non-Conformist movement. However, Wesley's parents had chosen the church of the establishment, the Anglican Church. They made that choice primarily because they could not agree with the Calvinistic teaching of predestination which prevailed in the Dissenting Church. John Wesley no doubt was influenced by his parents' attitude toward Calvinism as reflected in his view that it was "paralyzing to moral effort."<sup>3</sup>

The Anglican Church was home for Wesley. He remained throughout life an ordained minister within it and steadfastly resisted the separation of the Methodist Movement from its fold. Only after his death did the separation occur. His goal was to bring spiritual renewal to his beloved Church.

Wesley died on March 2, 1791, in London, "having done a work which had largely revolutionized the religious condition of the English lower and middle classes."<sup>4</sup>

### Society

Eighteenth-century society was in a state of upheaval. The agrarian society was being rushed into the industrial age. Men, women, and children were swept from the countryside into the cities to work in the factories or into small communities surrounding the mines in which they labored. Working conditions were hazardous, exhausting, and often cruel. Overcrowding caused living conditions to range from meager to pitiful.

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<sup>3</sup> Williston Walter, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 461.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 463.

"Illiteracy was wide-spread, law savage in its enforcement, jails sinks of disease and iniquity."<sup>5</sup> "Every sixth house in London was a saloon, and drunkenness became so universal throughout the whole land that the very nature of the people was changed. . . . At no period in all the history of the English people had morals sunk to such a low ebb."<sup>6</sup>

The winds of change were blowing within the philosophical and scientific segments of British life also.

The most potent instruments in effecting this change of atmosphere were the rise of modern science and philosophy, with the immense consequent transformations in outlook upon the universe and upon man's position in it, and the subsequent development of the historic method of examining and interpreting thought and institutions.<sup>7</sup>

Man now was the measure of knowledge and he ordered the universe and daily life based upon his accumulated experience. John Locke was one of the most influential English philosophers. He addressed the question "how do men know?" when he wrote Essay Concerning Human Understanding in 1690. He maintained that "all that claims to be knowledge is justly subject to criticism as to its reasonableness judged by reason based on experience."<sup>8</sup> Locke had little patience with mystery in religion, believing that it was enough to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and to practice the moral virtues he taught.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 454.

<sup>6</sup> William W. Sweet, Methodism in American History (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), 36.

<sup>7</sup> Walker, 426.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 429.

## Church

The ascendancy of reason infiltrated the world of religion. In the eighteenth-century Anglican Church, the influence of religious rationalism was pervasive. It was known as Christian Deism and it taught that God had established certain religious principles or rules of morality by which man is to live. Furthermore, God had removed himself from the day-to-day activities of man, leaving the world to operate according to natural law and man under the obligation of ethical conduct. The reliability of knowledge based upon supernatural revelation was denied. As an outgrowth of the influence of Deism, the typical sermon in the Church of England was a "colorless essay on moral virtues."<sup>10</sup>

The clergy of the Anglican Church were generally "at ease in Zion" and preoccupied entertaining themselves.

For example, the dean of one of the largest cathedrals in Bristol, Reverend Samuel Creswicke, was an avid sportsman who had little time for religious duties, farming them out to his assistants while he gave his attention primarily to cock-fighting. He had constructed a cock-pit beneath the dining room window of his rectory so that he and his guests could watch the cock-fights as they dined.<sup>11</sup>

Into this arena of skepticism, rationalism, and religion with form but without power came John Wesley. Rather than perceive England as a hopeless cause, Wesley capitalized on the situation. The following report provides a sample of his optimism.

We came to Newcastle about six; and, after a short refreshment, walked into the town. I was surprised: so

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 454.

<sup>11</sup> David Michael Henderson, "John Wesley's Instructional Groups" (Ph. D. dissertation at Indiana University, 1980), 83, citing John Charles Pollock, George Whitefield and the Great Awakening (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday, 1972), 40.



much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing, (even from the mouths of little children) do I never remember to have seen and heard before, in so small a compass of time. Surely this place is ripe for Him who "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."<sup>12</sup> (Emphasis added)

Wesley's optimism was well-founded. It was not a mere "whistling in the dark" because undergirding that optimism was real substance, a dynamic theology of spiritual formation.

### Theology

Much of Wesley's theology was developed in his sermons, many of which were made available in printed form. These sermons have been read by thousands of the clergy and laity, analyzed by numerous theologians, and explained by a host of authors. The discussion in this section will be limited to issues related to his theology of spiritual formation.

What is meant by the term "spiritual formation?" This question may be answered in a variety of ways, depending upon one's perspective. It is answered here with definitions from contemporary sources, Wesley, and Scripture.

Spiritual formation is "growth in spirituality according to the image of Christ. It is the journey of the total person toward wholeness."<sup>13</sup> It is the "process of being conformed to the image of Christ."<sup>14</sup> It resonates in "every action taken, every response made, every dynamic of

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<sup>12</sup> Works, III, 253. (Journal, May 28, 1742)

<sup>13</sup> Frank B. Stanger, "Spiritual Formation in the Local Church" (Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky), 16 January, 1986. (Lecture)

<sup>14</sup> M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1985), 27.

relationship, every thought held, every emotion allowed."<sup>15</sup>

Wesley described spiritual formation as change in a person because of Christ, through Christ, and into the image of Christ. This change involves

the new birth; that total change, from the image of the earthly Adam into the image of the heavenly; from an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into the mind that was in Christ. . . . the whole mind that was in Christ, enabling you to walk as Christ walked.<sup>16</sup>

Scripturally, spiritual formation includes King David's plea, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."<sup>17</sup> It is the positive response to these exhortations of the Apostle Paul: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God;"<sup>18</sup> "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;"<sup>19</sup> "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."<sup>20</sup> Further, it is the developmental process described by the Apostle Peter: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>16</sup> Works, II, 484. (Sermon: "On Living Without God")

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 51:2,10.    <sup>18</sup> Romans 12:2.    <sup>19</sup> Philippians 2:5.

<sup>20</sup> Philippians 2:12-13.

<sup>21</sup> II Peter 1:4-7.

Thus defined, what were some of the theological principles that guided Wesley's ministry of spiritual formation?

### Divine-Human Synergism

The salvation process in a person's life addresses the issues of God's grace and man's depravity. "The term synergism means literally 'working together' and is associated with the view that in the work of individual salvation both man and God cooperate."<sup>22</sup> Wesley maintained that salvation is initiated by God and cooperated with by man, and that this pattern is intended by God to be continuous whereby outward righteousness and inward holiness are effected. His teaching concerning synergy is represented in these words:

If then you say, "We ascribe to God alone the whole glory of our salvation;" I answer, So do we too. If you add, "Nay, but we affirm, that God alone does the whole work, without man's working at all;" in one sense, we allow this also. We allow, it is the work of God alone to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify; which three comprehend the whole of salvation. Yet we cannot allow, that man can only resist, and not in any wise "work together with God;" or that God is so the whole worker of our salvation, as to exclude man's working at all. This I dare not say; for I cannot prove it by Scripture; nay, it is flatly contrary thereto; for the Scripture is express, that (having received power from God) we are to "work out our salvation;" and that (after the work of God is begun in our souls) we are "workers together with him."<sup>23</sup>

Wesley agreed that initially man is "dead in trespasses and sins" but maintained that God's prevenient grace arouses in man a sense of responsibility for his sins and contributes to man the response-ability to accept

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<sup>22</sup> Everett F. Harrison, ed., Baker's Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1960), 510.

<sup>23</sup> Works, VI, 42. (Treatise: "Predestination Calmly Considered")

God's forgiveness. As theologian H. Orton Wiley has commented: "The Spirit of God leads the sinner from one step to another, in proportion as He finds response in the heart of the sinner and a disposition to obedience."<sup>24</sup> And, Wesley would add, the beneficent effects of God's grace, "if we yield to them, increase more and more."<sup>25</sup>

Historically, Wesley followed James Arminius (1560-1609) in a mediating position between Pelagianism (c. A. D. 400) and Augustinian predestinationism as systematized by John Calvin (1509-1564). Pelagianism minimized man's depravity and the corresponding need for God's grace. Calvinism maximized man's depravity to the extent that man was totally incapable of cooperating with God and that man's salvation could be accomplished only by God's decree. Wesley believed that both of these views were out of harmony with both the Scriptures and the early church fathers.<sup>26</sup>

Wesley's insistence upon Divine-human synergism in the salvation process was the foundation upon which his theology of spiritual formation was established and the fountain from which that theology flowed.

### Progressive Perfection

Wesley taught that salvation is experienced through a gradual advance from prevenient grace to glorification. However, the advance is not even in progress. The advance is interrupted by instantaneous advances at the

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<sup>24</sup> H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1958), II, 352.

<sup>25</sup> Works, I, 385. (Sermon: "The Scripture Way of Salvation")

<sup>26</sup> Wiley, II, 346-357.

time of the new birth and entire sanctification experiences. These interventions of God instantaneously raise man to a higher plane.<sup>27</sup>

Wesley placed the advancing stages of salvation in the following order: "repentance or conviction, justification (including the New Birth), sanctification (here in the sense of entire sanctification or Christian perfection), and glorification."<sup>28</sup> The entire process is aimed at the perfection of man, a "process of recovery, the object of which is to restore man to the image of God."<sup>29</sup>

This idea of perfection as a dynamic process was informed by the devotional writings of the Eastern Orthodox Church.<sup>30</sup> Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-c. 395) was one of those writers. In his book, The Life of Moses, Gregory presented a theology of the spiritual life in which he explained how the stages of Moses' life represent a pattern of advancing Godward which may be repeated in the lives of other Christians. Gregory taught that "Conversion restores man's capacity to reflect the divine nature. There is an incessant transformation into the likeness of God as man stretches out with divine infinity; there is an ever-greater participation in God."<sup>31</sup>

Gregory maintained that this progress in God (i.e., stretching out with divine infinity) is eternal. Perfection is not static but dynamic. It

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<sup>27</sup> Harold Lindstrom, Wesley and Sanctification (Wilmore, Kentucky: Frances Asbury Publishing Company, n.d./c. 1980), 121.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.      <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>30</sup> Albert C. Outler, Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), 70.

<sup>31</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, trans., The Life of Moses by Gregory of Nyssa (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 11-12.

is a process, not a completed state. He explained,

It is therefore undoubtedly impossible to attain perfection, since, as I have said, perfection is not marked off by limits: The one limit of virtue is the absence of a limit. How then would one arrive at the sought-for boundary when he can find no boundary?

.....  
 We should show great diligence not to fall away from the perfection which is attainable but to acquire as much as is possible: To that extent let us make progress within the realm of what we seek. For the perfection of human nature consists perhaps in its very growth in goodness.<sup>32</sup>

Wesley's theology reflected this teaching. He taught that a "real change" takes place in man at the new birth and that this change issues into the likeness of Christ as man cooperates with God's grace.

For him, certainly since his own discoveries of the early fathers, "perfection" meant "perfecting" (*teleiosis*), with further horizons of love and of participation in God always opening up beyond any given level of spiritual progress.<sup>33</sup>

Wesley described salvation as progress in perfection in his sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation:"

From the time of our being born again the gradual work of sanctification takes place. We are enabled, "by the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body," of our evil nature; and as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go from grace to grace, while we are careful to "abstain from all appearance of evil," and are "zealous of good works," as we have opportunity of doing good to all men; while we walk in all his ordinances blameless, therein worshipping him in spirit and in truth; while we take up our cross, and deny ourselves every pleasure that does not lead us to God.

It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification; for a full salvation from all our sins,--from pride, self will, anger, unbelief; or, as the apostle expresses it, "go on to perfection." But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>33</sup> Outler, 73.

love "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in every thing giving thanks."<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Wesley founded the salvation process upon the cooperation of God and man and set the goal of salvation as "going on to perfection." A practical question arises at this point: "How may man be helped to cooperate with God and keep on a true course toward perfection? The answer for Wesley was "the means of grace."

### Means of Grace

Wesley defined what he meant by "means of grace" in his sermon by that title:

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 sanctifying grace.<sup>35</sup>

Wesley did not limit God's working to the means of grace and he made it clear that the means were not an end in themselves. Further, he instructed that the observance of the means of grace was not meritorious for one's salvation; observance primarily was a way of positioning oneself to receive God's grace.

Wesley divided the means of grace into two groups: "the instituted means (those ordained by Christ), and the prudential means (those ordained by the Church)."<sup>36</sup> The instituted means were prayer, searching the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conference or better

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<sup>34</sup> Works, I, 386.

<sup>35</sup> Works, I, 137.

<sup>36</sup> Steve Harper, John Wesley's Message for Today (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan/Frances Asbury Press, 1983), 79.

known today as Christian nurture groups. The prudential means were listed as three headings with practical ways of implementing them listed under each heading: doing no harm, doing good, and attending to all the ordinances of God related to private and public worship.<sup>37</sup>

Wesley recognized that spiritual growth is not automatic or accidental; it requires faithful attention. As one author explains:

The key to Christian growth is not feeling but faithfulness. God has expressed his faithfulness by providing means of grace. We express our faithfulness by taking advantage of them. And in that God-human encounter, the connection is made, grace flows into our lives, and we are led to greater conformity to the image of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

Faithful attention to the means of grace is the practical way to merge God's grace and man's need on a daily basis. Man's experience with the Lord grows in depth and vitality as he follows the means of grace; his experience falters if the means are ignored.

Wesley was convinced that fallen man, lifted by God's grace, can remain in that grace only when he seeks to use it in obedience to God's commandments. He was further convinced that we can grow in grace only by constant attendance upon the means of grace, and that the neglect of these leads to that falling away which is the occasion of sin.<sup>39</sup>

In summary, Wesley's theology of spiritual formation contained at least these three principles: Divine-human synergy as its foundation, progressive perfection as its goal, and the means of grace as its practical implementation.

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<sup>37</sup> An expanded treatment of the means of grace is provided in the Appendices: Wesley Groups, meetings 8-14.

<sup>38</sup> Harper, John Wesley's Message for Today, 85-86.

<sup>39</sup> Colin W. Williams, John Wesley's Theology Today (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 130



One of these means of grace was Christian conference or Christian nurture groups. The focus of these groups was upon the supervision and encouragement of the faithful implementation of the rest of the means of grace. Nurture groups were so important to Wesley that he developed a graded system of groups. The kind of importance which Wesley attached to these groups can be seen in the following comments:

His system had little to do with publicity or public image but everything to do with building the community of God's people. From the beginning of Wesley's great ministry in 1738, the secret of his radicality lay in his forming little bands of God-seekers who joined together in an earnest quest to be Jesus' disciples.<sup>40</sup>

### Groups

Wesley's goal of addressing the spiritual needs of the masses outside the Anglican Church and of effecting the renewal of New Testament Christianity within the Church called for innovative strategies. History reveals that the two most effective strategies for Wesley were open air or field preaching and Christian nurture in the setting of small groups.

Open air preaching made it possible for Wesley to take the message of hope and life-changing power in Christ directly to the people. They heard him gladly! The hundreds became thousands who responded and sought salvation through Christ. Many from the ranks of the Anglican Church attended these preaching services because they were drawn by Wesley's message of vital Christianity.

Wesley recognized that this growing number of spiritually awakened people needed regular fellowship and instruction. Therefore, he gathered

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<sup>40</sup> Snyder, 2.

them for worship at times when services were not scheduled by the Anglican Church and in meeting houses other than those specified by it. These "congregation type" gatherings were known as "societies." While the size of the society was appropriate for preaching and teaching, it was too large for purposes of discussion and sharing of spiritual needs. Smaller groups were needed. Wesley's response to that need is the subject of this section.

Wesley's unique design of groups for spiritual formation has been a valued legacy, one which the church is re-discovering as a priority for ministry in this latter half of the twentieth century.

### Wesley's Group Strategy

The first look at Wesley's groups will involve these groups as both a priority strategy and an innovative strategy.

Groups as a Priority Strategy. "Why were nurture groups given such a high priority by Wesley?" A variety of reasons supported his choice of using nurture groups as a priority strategy in his ministry. Undoubtedly, all of these reasons passed the tests which Wesley exacted of all matters of the spiritual life, namely, Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.<sup>41</sup>

Wesley included Christian conference or nurture groups in the list of five instituted means of grace. He did this because of its significance in Scripture; specifically, Jesus called together the twelve disciples, the koinonia of the New Testament church, and exhorted them to faithfully

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<sup>41</sup> Williams, 23-38. These four tests of authority and authenticity are discussed at length.

assemble together for worship.<sup>42</sup> Wesley considered certain key elements were needed in a believer's life--"Nurture, study, encouragement, stewardship, witness, and service"--and that these could be mediated best through the group experience.<sup>43</sup> For Wesley, the Christian life could not be developed without face-to-face interaction with other Christians.

In a letter to the Reverend Vincent Perronet, Wesley refers to the precedent of the early church.

Upon reflection, I could not but observe, this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity. In the earliest times, those whom God had sent forth "preached the gospel to every creature." . . . as soon as any of these were so convinced of the truth, as to forsake sin and seek the gospel salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these. . . . "catacumens" (as they were then called), apart from the great congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, and for them, according to their inward necessities.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, the precedent of preparing inquirers for initiation by instructing them had existed from apostolic days. Moreover, during the time of the early church fathers (A.D. 200's), this process had been systematized.<sup>45</sup> Wesley was well aware of this precedent.

Experience convinced Wesley that preaching by itself was inadequate; it needed a companion instrument which could extend its impact. That instrument for Wesley was nurture groups. He wrote:

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<sup>42</sup> For an expanded presentation about *koinonia* as a support for the priority of nurture group ministry, consult: Robert Raines, New Life in the Church (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 78-86; and, Howard A. Snyder, The Problem of Wineskins (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 89-99.

<sup>43</sup> Steve Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 54.

<sup>44</sup> Works, V. 177-178. (Letter: "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist," dated 1748)

<sup>45</sup> Walker, 85.

That part of our economy, the private weekly meetings for prayer, examination, and particular exhortation, has been the greatest means of deepening and confirming every blessing that was received by the word preached, and of diffusing it to others, who could not attend the public ministry; whereas without this religious connection and intercourse, the most ardent attempts by mere preaching have proved of no lasting use.<sup>46</sup>

Wesley perceived nurture groups to be a conservation tool. In 1743, he wrote, "I determine, by the grace of God, not to strike one stroke in any place where I cannot follow the blow."<sup>47</sup> Twenty years later he visited a location where group meetings had been neglected. He reported:

I was more convinced than ever, that the preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened, and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer. How much preaching has there been for these twenty years all over Pembrokeshire! But no regular societies, no discipline, no order or connection; and the consequence is, that nine in ten of the once-awakened are now faster asleep than ever.<sup>48</sup>

Wesley did not mount a formal crusade against the institutions of oppression in English society. Rather, he sought to overcome evil with good. He declared the benefits of God's grace to the poverty-stricken and vice-ridden masses and then invited them to receive those benefits by faith in Christ. Immediately he organized those spiritually awakened into groups whose primary goal was to fashion their behavior according to the virtues of a Christian lifestyle. In this way he sought to transform society from the bottom upward, one-by-one, group-by-group. As the leaders of these groups taught sobriety, industry, cleanliness, and godliness, the lower class became the middle class. Wesley's upward mobility of grace

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<sup>46</sup> Works, quoted by Henderson, 195-196.

<sup>47</sup> Works, III, 282. (Journal, March 13, 1743)

<sup>48</sup> Works, VI, 156. (Journal, August 25, 1763)

(reflected in his steps of salvation from prevenient grace to glorification), and his upward mobility in group levels (ranging from the society to the select band), also was effected in the English class system and in public morality. The irresponsible and godless became the responsible and godly.<sup>49</sup>

Wesley's strategy for effecting spiritual renewal in the Anglican Church grew from a seed-thought planted by a book he read while at Oxford. The book had been published first in 1680 and was entitled, The Country Parson's Advice to His Parishioners. The following words made a lasting impression upon Wesley:

If the good men of the Church will unite together in the several parts of the kingdom, disposing themselves into friendly societies, and engaging each other . . . in all good Christian ways, it will be the most effectual means for restoring our decaying Christianity to its primitive life and vigor.<sup>50</sup>

A later influence concerning the strategy for effecting renewal came from the Moravians. In 1722 a Moravian settlement was established in Germany on the estate of their leader, Count Zinzendorf. This settlement became the model for later Moravian communities. They were motivated to take the message of salvation by faith throughout the world.

Zinzendorf saw these new Moravian communities as a way to extend dramatically the ecclesiolae in ecclesia or "little churches within the church" approach to church renewal. The Moravian Brethren would not be a new or separate church but a dynamic missionary force throughout Christendom.<sup>51</sup>

Today it is widely accepted that Wesley profited by his associations with the Moravian renewal movement. He undoubtedly viewed the

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<sup>49</sup> Henderson, 40.

<sup>50</sup> Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, 56, citing Samuel Emerick, ed., Spiritual Renewal for Methodism (Nashville: Methodist Evangelistic Materials, 1958), 12.

<sup>51</sup> Snyder, 24.

Methodist societies as the little churches within the Church of England. But also, like the Moravians, he sensed a mission to the whole world, a world larger than the Anglican Church.

Wesley's willingness to allow non-Anglican Dissenters in the Methodist societies and his openness to the Moravians and other groups show that he saw Methodism as an evangelical order, not within the Church of England only, but within the universal church. The ecclesia was not just Anglicanism; it was broader. And Methodism was out to reform not just the church of England, but the Christian church everywhere.<sup>52</sup>

Wesley's selection of nurture groups as a priority strategy for ministry was motivated by at least these six reasons: authority of Scripture, pattern of the early church, companion to preaching, conservation of converts, reformation of society, and renewal of the church.

Now that the "why" has been stated, another question seems to be in order: "How did Wesley use these groups?"

Groups as an Innovative Strategy. Wesley administered his nurture groups through pragmatic innovation. His primary interest was whether needs were being met and, if not, what could be done to meet those needs. He used a variety of group designs until he finalized his well-known network of groups in the early 1740's. He adapted group designs to fit the circumstances.

It is true that the use of groups for spiritual growth, church renewal, and charitable social service had been a part of the Christian heritage even from the first century. Indeed, Wesley referred to the primitive church as the authority and inspiration for his group strategy. The uniqueness of

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 129.

Wesley was his ability to sift through a variety of group models, identify those features which would serve his ministry goals and the needs of his people, and blend those features into a network of groups, each group distinct in purpose but all complementary in effect.

Wesley defended his innovative approach when some of his followers objected to the changes he was making.

Some objected, "There were no such meetings when I came into the society first: And why should there now? I do not understand these things, and this changing one thing after another continually." It was easily answered: It is pity but they had been at first. But we knew not then either the need or the benefit of them. Why we use them, you will readily understand, if you read over the rules of the society. That with regard to these little prudential helps we are continually changing one thing after another, is not a weakness or fault, as you imagine, but a peculiar advantage which we enjoy. By this means we declare them all to be merely prudential, not essential, not of divine institution. We prevent, so far as in us lies, their growing formal or dead. We are always open to instruction; willing to be wiser every day than we were before, and to change whatever we can change for the better.<sup>53</sup>  
(Emphasis added)

His innovative approach has been summed up by these words:

He was able to satisfy himself that his innovations were justified either as having early church precedent or as being both of necessity, or both. His pragmatism was, he felt, therefore both reasonable and scriptural. . . . His principles were plain: change nothing that does not need changing; but change anything that clogs the free flow of the gospel.<sup>54</sup>

Wesley's excellence as an innovator has been recognized by many informed people. Dr. John Drakeford, professor of psychology and counseling at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas gives this evaluation:

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<sup>53</sup> Works, V, 180.

<sup>54</sup> Snyder, 121-122.

Many of the basic books on group counseling look back to 1905, when J. H. Pratt held classes for his tuberculosis patients, as the starting point for group counseling. But an unbiased observer must conclude that the Wesleyan Band was in many ways a group therapy experience 150 years before the modern practice commenced.<sup>55</sup>

Wesley's remarkable ability for pragmatic innovation may become clearer as some specific instances are noted.

First, the basic conceptual innovation was developed during the early years of his life within the nurturing atmosphere of his home. Here his role was one of receiving a ministry of the "care and cure of souls" from his parents. Samuel and Susanna Wesley gave themselves to encouraging personal spiritual growth in the lives of their children and the lives of those in the church. Primarily, Samuel preached and counseled it in the parish and Susanna implemented it in their home.

Susanna devoted one hour each week to each child to discuss spiritual matters. These sessions were not cold and formal but rather were warm and intimate. John's turn came on Thursdays. He looked forward to this close and personal review of his spiritual progress. The lasting impact of these sessions was revealed by his fond recollections.

Years later, while he was a student at Oxford, he fondly recalled these intimate times of spiritual conversation which he had shared with his mother. In fact, he was able to remember many of those talks well enough to quote the major topics.<sup>56</sup>

This experience of individual, intimate discussion of his spiritual progress within a nurturing atmosphere on a weekly basis was so beneficial

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<sup>55</sup> John W. Drakeford, People to People Therapy (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 22.

<sup>56</sup> Henderson, 26, citing John A. Newton, Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism (London: Epworth Press, 1968), 77.



to Wesley that it became a priority ministry goal for him. His innovative skill replaced the setting from his home to a small, caring group whose members would assist one another to discuss their spiritual progress and give them support for remedying any deficiencies. This concept became the centerpiece of the Methodist movement.

Second, a conceptual refinement was made during Wesley's association with the Holy Club at Oxford University. In 1729 he was appointed to serve as tutor for a number of undergraduates. Three of these students had been meeting four nights per week to study the classics and read from the Greek New Testament. One of these three was John's younger brother, Charles. John soon became the leader of this group and gave it a more disciplined approach.

The highly disciplined manner of this group brought a reaction from other students, deriding them with such names as "The Holy Club" and "Methodists." Activities of the group included regular periods of prayer, fasting, discussion of devotional topics, and frequent partaking of communion. Also, they looked for opportunities for practical ways to help others such as visiting the sick, elderly, and imprisoned and by providing clothing and financial help to the poor as they were able.

Essentially, this followed the design of the Religious Societies which had been founded in the latter half of the seventeenth century by Dr. Anthony Horneck and which were closely associated with the Anglican Church. Wesley, now in the role of the leader of such a group, perceived that the process of Bible reading and discussion of principles for Christian living stopped short of what was needed. Each person needed to be accountable for specific goals in spiritual progress. In addition to hearing

the truth, they needed to be doers also. This was to become strikingly true ten years later as the unchurched responded to Wesley's open air preaching in Kingswood and were gathered into Wesley's groups. Thus, with the Holy Club, Wesley incorporated the expectation of behavioral change through the group process. By this innovation, Wesleyan accountable discipleship was born.<sup>57</sup>

Third, an operational innovation made by Wesley was the provision for a variety of group levels. However, this did not happen all at once but developed out of practical responses to circumstances over a period of time reaching from 1735 to 1742.

In 1735 Wesley sailed to Georgia where he became the pastor of the Anglican churches at Savannah and Frederica. Here on the American frontier he was more at liberty to design his ministry as he desired. So, using the Holy Club/Religious Societies model, he advised the parishioners to form themselves into little societies and "to meet once or twice a week, in order to reprove, instruct, and exhort one another."<sup>58</sup> Then, he selected out of these "a smaller number for a more intimate union with each other."<sup>59</sup> The little societies were available to everyone; the smaller group was open only to those invited. It is significant that in his first pastoral role Wesley initiated a small group design having more than one level of participation. This was a pragmatic innovation because, whereas the Oxford Holy Club consisted of men highly motivated to pursue spiritual growth, the church consisted of some people who were slightly motivated

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<sup>57</sup> Henderson, 35.

<sup>58</sup> Works, III, 23-24. (Journal, April 17, 1736)

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

and some who were more highly motivated. Wesley discerned this and created two levels of participation based upon spiritual readiness.

The Moravians contributed to further innovations. In the summer of 1738, shortly after his Aldersgate experience, Wesley visited several Moravian settlements in order to meet Count Zinzendorf and to collect information about their customs. Among the many things he observed was the organization of the settlement of Herrnhut into groups called "choirs" and "bands."<sup>60</sup> The choirs included everyone and this represented a wide range of spiritual readiness. The bands consisted of those who were more serious about furthering their spiritual growth. The choirs provided basic supervision and instruction concerning Christian living; the bands provided mutual sharing and encouragement for those who already had progressed beyond the basics.<sup>61</sup> Later, Wesley would separate the functions of instruction and encouragement and match them with two separate groups. This innovative change in operation became part of the unique Wesleyan system of groups.

The "class" model was developed out of an operational innovation in 1742, in the Bristol Society. A plan for collecting finances on a weekly basis turned out to be the answer to a greater need. While the Societies were growing with the daily appearance of new followers, Wesley was frustrated by his inability to give personal spiritual oversight to them. Also, the majority of the Methodists were not participating in a band group. An entry-level group was needed, one which would appeal to

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<sup>60</sup> Works, III, 101. (Journal, August 12, 1738; "An Extract of the Constitution of the Church of the Moravian Brethren.")

<sup>61</sup> David Lowes Watson, Accountable Discipleship (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1984), 28.

everyone regardless of their level of spiritual readiness. Thus, when the proposed financial plan provided a leader for every eleven people in the Society, and a plan for these twelve to meet together weekly, Wesley said, "This is the thing; the very thing we have wanted so long."<sup>62</sup> Wesley placed the class between the society and the band. As an entry-level group, it became the most influential and durable group model.

In addition to these three levels of group participation, a Select Band or Society was added for leaders and those most devoutly seeking after personal holiness. A fifth group level was the Penitent Band which was designed to restore those who had backslidden.

This continuum of levels of group participation was a witness to Wesley's genius as a pragmatic innovator. Dr. John Drakeford has stated it well: "The Wesleyan groups were a monument to John Wesley's superb administrative ability. He showed remarkable insight into group processes by providing such a variety of group experiences."<sup>63</sup>

To summarize, Wesley's strategy for fostering spiritual growth and renewal was the use of small groups. This strategy was motivated by its priority nature and was administered creatively by Wesley's innovative response to practical needs.

### Wesley's Group Taxonomy

Already in hand are the "why" and "how" of Wesley's groups. Attention now is focused on "What were his various groups and the distinguishing

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<sup>62</sup> Works, V, 179.

<sup>63</sup> Drakeford, 22.

characteristics of each?" An overview of the network model is presented first, followed by a close-up view of the band model.

Network Model. The word "taxonomy" is appropriate when applied to Wesley's network of groups because it denotes a classification system based upon principles and natural relationships.<sup>64</sup> Wesley differentiated the groups according to function. Each group was a formal and distinct unit with a unique contribution. At the same time, all groups were connected to each other in the common purpose of the Methodist movement. Each group served as the foundation and inspiration for the next as the levels moved from general to more specialized. This ascending ladder represented an openness to God's grace which was evidenced by increasing perfection in love, holiness and good works.

An analysis of Wesley's network of groups appears on the next two pages. The analysis was based on information in the writings of Wesley and numerous other authors. Care was taken to represent Wesley's groups faithfully while at the same time recognizing the natural limitations in fact-gathering and interpretation of this present researcher. The column headings proceed in turn to answer the following questions:

- What is this group?
- Why is this group?
- Who is in this group?
- When does this group meet?
- How does this group meet?

The "how" is addressed in terms of

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<sup>64</sup> "Taxonomy," The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language.

Figure 1. Wesley's Groups and distinguishing characteristics

Group Model	Scripture Theme	Membership	Frequency
		1. Admission 2. Number attending 3. Mixed or Divided	
Society	Matt. 3:7,8; 1:21 The desire "to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins."	1. Open to members and visitors. 2. 50+ 3. Mixed (all ages, married and single, male and female, converted and unconverted).	At least once weekly  Most popular service was Sunday evening
Class	Matt. 3:7,8; 1:21 Emphasis on: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."	1. Assigned to a group in neighborhood; based on location of residence. Faithful attendance was evidence of seriousness. 2. Approximately 12 3. Mixed	Weekly
Band	James 5:16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."	1. Invited-Screened-Accepted process. Key: personal testimony of conversion (forgiveness of sins & peace with God). 2. Approximately 5-8 (no visitors) 3. Divided into peer groups of same sex, marital status, and age or maturity.	Weekly
Select Society or Band	Heb. 6:1; 13:20,21 "Let us go on unto perfection" . . . Make you perfect in every good work to do his will."	1. Invitation (For leaders by virtue of office or advanced spiritual progress) 2. Small number 3. Mixed	Weekly on Monday morning
Penitent Band	I Pet. 2:25 "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."	1. Mutually arranged 2. Small number; included individual counseling on special needs. 3. As needs dictated.	Weekly on Saturday evening

Figure 1. Continued

Focus	Model Expectation	Participant Expectation	Leadership Style
Head (Cognition)	Instruction & Evangelism  Scriptural doctrines with practical ways of application.	Association (To know)  Involved as a listener.	Leader - a Teacher.  Lecture method; no dialogue with listeners.
Hands (Performance)	Personal accountability and Evangelism  Examine performance related to teachings; Exhort obedience to God.	Assimilation (To change)  Involved as an accountable member.	Leader - both a spiritual diagnostician and director.  Elicit testimony from each member as to behavior during the previous week. Advised, reproved, comforted, and exhorted as needed.
Heart (Affections; attitudes; intentions; emotions)	Confession of temptations and lack of inward holiness in attitude and intent.  Mutual love and encouragement.	Aspiration (To Grow in holiness)  Involved as a "soul friend."	Leader - both a model and facilitator.  Set the pattern by confessing matters of own heart and then shared leadership with the others in asking and answering probing questions and praying for the needs shared.
Whole Person (Wholistic inward and outward life of holiness, love and good works)	Stimulate "going on to perfection" and being models of inward and outward holiness.  Training in leadership.	Actualization (To abound in holiness)  Involved as a spiritual leader.	Leadership - shared among colleagues in leadership roles. Wesley and others shared their hearts, thoughts, and plans and received mutual counsel.
Will (Renewed obedience to God and group)	Exhortation and Counseling  Restore to favor with God and group.	Accreditation (To begin again)  Involved as an unfaithful member.	Leader - a spiritual guide.  Wesley was often the leader. He applied the "threats" and "promises" of God and counseled regarding special difficulties.

- .Focus of attention
- .Objective expectation
- .Subjective expectation
- .Leadership style

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the network of Wesley's groups as it existed during the fifty years of his dynamic ministry.

Within this network of groups is the "band" model. Since it was selected for use in the contextual project of this project-dissertation, a more specialized presentation of the band model is appropriate.

Band Model. The Methodist band model was important to Wesley and it may have been his favorite group. There were several reasons why this model was important to him.

First, Wesley was drawn to it by disposition and experience. The band appealed to those who were serious about spiritual growth, and Wesley was serious. As a young man in his twenties, he wrote his mother saying, "Leisure and I have taken leave of one another."<sup>65</sup> This was an expression of his committed lifestyle. Another glimpse of his serious nature was revealed in a journal entry in 1740. While he and Charles were out for a walk in the countryside one day, Charles began laughing and, as the laughter grew louder and more infectious, John joined in. Later upon reflection he was disturbed that he could have been so caught up in such surface hilarity.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to his serious disposition, Wesley's spiritual growth leading

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<sup>65</sup> Works, quoted by Henderson, 32.

<sup>66</sup> Jerry L. Mercer, "Toward a Wesleyan Understanding of Christian Experience," Wesleyan Theological Society, Atlanta, Georgia, 3 Nov. 1984.



up to the Aldersgate experience had been enriched by such experiences as warm and intimate sharing, questioning that searched his soul, and the quest for inner holiness. All of these elements were central to the band model. The occasions for these experiences were many but two of the most influential were the Thursday meetings with his mother and the conversations he had with Peter Bohler concerning Wesley's assurance of personal salvation. Thus, by both disposition and experience, the band was dear to Wesley.

Second, the band was important to Wesley because it was the first group he officially organized which continued as an integral part of the Methodist system. The other groups sprang from the band as new needs arose. Chronologically, the document organizing the bands, "Rules Of The Band-Societies," was dated December 25, 1738; the "United Societies" began in 1739 with the organization of the Foundery Society (a full year after the bands); and the first class was organized in 1742 with the Bristol Society (a full three years after the bands).

Wesley had invested a great deal of his personal energy and vision into the establishment of the bands, and this interest did not wane as the years went by. In 1788, just three years before his death, he wrote one of his assistants: "You should speak to every believer singly concerning meeting in a band. . . . No circuit ever did, or ever will flourish, unless there are bands in the large Societies."<sup>67</sup> It is clear that Wesley maintained a high estimation of the value of the band model from its inception until his death.

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<sup>67</sup> Henderson, 176, citing Leslie F. Church, More About the Early Methodist People (London: The Epworth Press, 1949), 151.

Third, there was a theological reason directly related to spiritual formation that caused the band model to be important to Wesley. During the summer following his Aldersgate experience in 1738, Wesley toured several Moravian settlements. The Herrnhut settlement had organized its members into "choirs" and "bands." The choirs were arranged according to residential patterns and these members met for religious discipline. The bands consisted of those from the choirs who wanted to further their spiritual growth and the criterion for membership was "spiritual affinity."<sup>68</sup> That spiritual affinity for Wesley was the conversion or "new birth" experience. The first three questions asked of candidates for admission into the Methodist bands involved a personal report of this saving grace. Wesley believed that the new birth "effects a real, inherent change in the human soul"<sup>69</sup> and raises man from sinner to saint. This transaction raises man to the level which makes possible his progress toward entire sanctification; it is the beginning of growth in grace. From the perspective of Wesley's network of groups, the society taught the new birth, the class promoted it and assisted people in receiving it, and the band enjoyed the benefits of it, namely, going on to perfection.

Fourth, the band was important to Wesley because of the mighty way God worked in the lives of its members. Wesley gave the following report:

Great and many are the advantages which have ever since flowed from this closer union of the believers with each other. They prayed for one another, that they might be healed of the faults they had confessed; and it was so. The chains were broken, the bands were burst sunder, and sin had no more dominion over them. Many were delivered from the temptations

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<sup>68</sup> Watson, 28.

<sup>69</sup> Lindstrom, 123.

out of which, till then, they found no way to escape. They were built up in our most holy faith. They rejoiced in the Lord more abundantly. They were strengthened in love and more effectually provoked to abound in every good work.<sup>70</sup>

In light of these four reasons, it is obvious that the band model was highly important to Wesley. At this point, it is natural to ask, "How did the band operate? What were the guidelines which Wesley built into it? What were Wesley's instructions?"

The following presentation of the "Rules" and the "Directions" of the band-societies faithfully includes all of the original language but the outline of both documents has been adapted and six interpretive phrases have been added in brackets.<sup>71</sup>

## Outline of RULES OF THE BAND-SOCIETIES

Drawn Up December 25, 1738

### I. PURPOSE

The design of our meeting is, to obey that command of God, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." -James 5:16

### II. GOALS

To this end, we intend, --

- A. To meet once a week, at the least.
- B. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
- C. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.

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<sup>70</sup> Works, V, 183.

<sup>71</sup> Works, V, 192f. (Reference of these documents)

- D. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt, since our last meeting.
- E. To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.
- F. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptation.

### III. MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

Some of the questions proposed to everyone before he is admitted among us may be to this effect: --

#### [Spiritual Status Testimony]

- A. Have you the forgiveness of your sins?
- B. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
- C. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God?
- D. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?
- E. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?

#### [Agreement For Probing Questions]

- F. Do you desire to be told of your faults?
- G. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home?
- H. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
- I. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?
- J. Do you desire that, in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
- K. Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

### IV. PROCESS -- [Heart To Heart]

Any of the preceding questions may be asked as often as occasion offers; the four following at every meeting: --

- A. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
  - B. What temptations have you met with?
  - C. How were you delivered?
  - D. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
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Outline of  
**DIRECTIONS**  
 GIVEN TO THE BAND-SOCIETIES

December 25, 1744

**You are supposed to have the faith that "overcometh the world." To you, therefore, it is not grievous, --**

I. CAREFULLY TO ABSTAIN FROM DOING EVIL; in particular, --

[Abstain = Focus on Self]

- A. Neither to buy nor sell anything at all on the Lord's day.
- B. To taste no spirituous liquor, no dram of any kind, unless prescribed by a Physician.
- C. To be at a word both in buying and selling.
- D. To pawn nothing, no, not to save life.
- E. Not to mention the fault of any behind his back, and to stop those short that do.
- F. To wear no needless ornaments, such as rings, ear-rings, necklaces, lace, ruffles.
- G. To use no needless self-indulgence, such as taking snuff or tobacco, unless prescribed by a Physician.

II. ZEALOUSLY TO MAINTAIN GOOD WORKS; in particular, --

[Serve = Focus on Others]

- A. To give alms of such things as you possess, and that to the uttermost of your power.
- B. To reprove all that sin in your sight, and that in love and meekness of wisdom.
- C. To be patterns of diligence and frugality, of self-denial, and taking up the cross daily.

III. CONSTANTLY TO ATTEND ON ALL THE ORDINANCES OF GOD: in particular, --

[Worship = Focus on God]

- A. To be at church and at the Lord's table every week, and at every public meeting of the Bands.
- B. To attend the ministry of the word every morning, unless distance, business, or sickness prevent.
- C. To use private prayer every day; and family prayer, if you are at the head of a family.
- D. To read the Scriptures, and meditate therein, at every vacant hour. And, --
- E. To observe, as days of fasting or abstinence, all Fridays in the year.



In summary, John Wesley faced with optimism the widespread immorality within British society and the pervasive decline of spiritual vitality within the Anglican Church. His optimism was grounded in the Scriptures, energized by the Holy Spirit, and confirmed by experience.

Wesley's primary objective was to form "a genuine people of God within the institutional church. He concentrated not on the efforts leading up to decision but on the time after decision. . . .[He organized] to turn converts into saints."<sup>72</sup> (Author's emphasis)

Wesley believed this objective could be achieved best through a ministry of small groups. Perceptively, he understood that not all people were at the same stage of development spiritually. Thus, he devised a network of five group models, each with its own unique focus.

One of these groups was the band. This model involved persons who professed the conversion experience and desired to grow in grace. The underlying principle was "that spiritual maturity is fostered as persons of the same sex meet in very small, confidential meetings."<sup>73</sup> This underlying principle was the key element in the decision to use the band model for the small groups in the contextual project.

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<sup>72</sup> Snyder, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, 59.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology: Design and Implementation

This project-dissertation involved both a contextual project in the Liberty Wesleyan Church and a dissertation which incorporated the project along with supporting research in the subject area of the project. This chapter presents a description of the design and implementation of the contextual project. Attention is given to the population used as the participants, to the procedures followed in gathering the data by which to test the hypotheses, and to the analysis of the data.

Technical assistance related to the design and implementation of this project was sought early in the process. Consultation arrangements were made with Dr. Robert L. Wilson, Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina. Dr. Wilson was serving as the Director of the J. M. Ormond Center for Research, Planning, and Development, and also as Research Professor of Church and Society at Duke Divinity School.

#### The Population

The population refers to the people who were involved in the contextual project. A biographical sketch of the congregation from which the subjects were selected is provided here. The identity of the sub-groups and the nature of their treatment plan are described.

#### Subjects

The subjects used as participants in this project were the regular attenders of Liberty Wesleyan Church, Summerfield, North Carolina. Regular

attenders were those persons, members and non-members, who were normally present on any given Sunday during morning worship.

Liberty Wesleyan Church celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1986. The church was born in an atmosphere of revival. Prior to making the arrangements for an evangelist and a tent, neighbors in the community had experienced an increasing desire for a revival. They united in prayer and God gave them a wonderful revival. The year was 1910. The positive spiritual impact of the revival inspired them to organize a class which met regularly in a community social hall. Then, in February of 1911, this class was organized officially into a Wesleyan Methodist Church with twelve charter members. The membership doubled during the first year. The story of those beginning days has been told repeatedly with joy and enthusiasm. In view of the spiritual dynamics which have been so much a part of the life of this church, it was appropriate to study spiritual vitality through the participation of persons who make up this congregation.

The church is located in a rural setting but is only twelve miles outside of the third largest city in the state, Greensboro. Four other cities are nearby and form a circle of urban life. Many of the people who live in the community are employed in the surrounding cities. Although many of them in time past worked their farm in addition to being employed in the city, now their farming consists of such chores as cutting the grass and light gardening.

The majority of persons attending the church have ancestral roots in the community and the church. Some have moved into the community because of marital ties. Thus the church people are closely identified with the geographical setting and share a seventy-five-year story.

Approximately one hundred families participate in the church. The family income range is approximately \$15,000 - \$30,000 annually, except for a



few above or below these figures. The composition of the congregation by age groups is approximately: 0-17=38%; 18-44=39%; 45-65=17%; 66 & up=6%. Church membership is 187 of whom sixty hold an office or perform an official ministry. The average Sunday morning worship attendance of all ages during the period of this project was 125. This average attendance represents 67% of the total membership present on any given Sunday.

The regular attenders, members and non-members, provided the population pool for this project. They were the persons to whom the questionnaire was administered and from whose ranks persons were selected to participate in the small groups.

### Groups

The persons who were normally present on any given Sunday during morning worship formed the population pool for the participants in this project. This population pool was designated "whole congregation."

Whole Congregation. The whole congregation consisted of the combined total of those persons in all of the small groups and all those persons who were not in the small groups. The whole congregation represented the most inclusive grouping of persons involved in this project. The whole congregation included everyone who participated in the before and after testing.

The population pool, designated "whole congregation," was divided into two distinct and separate groupings, namely, an "at-large group" and "small groups."

At-Large Group. The at-large group consisted of persons who were part of the whole congregation but who did not participate in the small

groups. These persons were not in a small group because they were not invited or they declined when invited. Persons in the at-large group participated in the before and after testing process.

Persons were selected to participate in the at-large group through a random sampling plan. The pre-post administration of the questionnaire included all persons eighteen years of age and older who were present in the morning worship service on a given Sunday. No prior announcement that a questionnaire would be administered was made. The randomization was accomplished by the choice of some persons to attend church or not to attend on a given Sunday.

The at-large group was not given any special treatment, that is, no Wesley study materials or instruction in spiritual formation. However, the renewal plan called for the small group participants to have a renewal influence upon the at-large group participants through the normal, everyday associations of church life. This influence was not prearranged and was not known to be an objective. The plan called for the influence for renewal to be accomplished by the process of "leavening."

The leavening process occurs when a modifying or quickening element is mingled with something.<sup>1</sup> The modifying element causes a change in the receiving substance such as yeast added to dough causes fermentation so that the bread rises. A small amount of yeast is sufficient to effect a significant change in a much larger amount of dough. The key to the process is association of the two elements.

The Bible refers to this process. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven

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<sup>1</sup> "Leaven," Webster's Third International Dictionary.

is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."<sup>2</sup> The Apostle Paul charged the Corinthians to refuse to approve those persons among them who were committing sins. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"<sup>3</sup>

In this project the small groups represented the quickening agent that was mingled with the at-large group. The leavening function took place as the small group participants interacted with the at-large group participants in the regular associations of worship, fellowship, and ministry activities. The small groups were not aware that their influence for spiritual renewal upon the at-large group was being studied. Their interaction with the at-large group was spontaneous and without any acknowledged mission to change the at-large group.

Small Groups (Wesley Groups). The small group program in the Liberty Wesleyan Church was known as the "Walking With Wesley in Spiritual Formation Groups." This title appropriately described the purpose and content of the group process. This title was used throughout the year but often it was shortened to "Wesley Groups." The shorter form will be used hereafter to refer to the small groups in this project.

The participants in the Wesley Groups were selected from the whole congregation. The whole congregation was informed of the planned small group program by public announcement during Sunday morning worship and by printed announcement in the worship bulletin. This announcement was

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 13:33.

<sup>3</sup> I Corinthians 5:6.

followed by personal letters of invitation to persons selected to participate in the Wesley Groups. It was stated to the congregation that the persons invited to participate were selected by a random sampling plan and that those not invited this year would be on the list of potential participants whenever the program is offered again. A telephone call was made to each person invited in order to offer additional information and to confirm each person's response.

The persons who were invited to be in the Wesley Groups were selected by random sampling from a "pool of potential participants." This pool was created by selecting out of the congregation those persons who would be "suitable" to participate in the Wesley band model.

John Wesley's band groups operated on the basis of admitting only those who were suitable for the purpose and content of the band. The determination of one's suitability was made by Wesley or his representative. Suitability was measured by reference to a list of criteria written by Wesley in December, 1738, entitled "Rules of the Band Societies."<sup>4</sup> These criteria related to the person's salvation experience with Christ and readiness to participate wholeheartedly and harmoniously with the other participants in the band. Once these criteria had been met satisfactorily, the person would be matched to a band whose participants were of the same sex, marital status, and maturity.

The selection of persons for inclusion in the pool of potential participants in the Wesley Groups was governed by a list of five criteria developed by this writer, as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> Works, V, 192-193.

1. Person is a regular attender of Liberty Wesleyan Church.
2. Person is eighteen years of age or older.
3. Person has made a public profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ.
4. Person who is married must be living with that spouse (i.e., not separated, divorced, or widowed). Single persons (never married) are acceptable for singles band.
5. Person is relatively free from extenuating circumstances which would make participation difficult (such as out-of-town work, extended illness, habitual inability to interact acceptably with others).

Seventy persons were selected to form this pool of potential participants of the Wesley Groups. The pastor and his family members were excluded from the pool as a strategy to separate the influence of the pastor from the dynamics of the Wesley Groups. These seventy persons were alphabetically organized into five columns according to age, sex, and marital status, as follows:

1. Single/Younger/Women
2. Married/Younger/Women
3. Married/Older/Women
4. Married/Younger/Men
5. Married/Older/Men

A random sample plan which had been approved by the consultant was employed in order to select out of the seventy those persons to be invited to participate in the Wesley Groups. The names were in alphabetical order in the five columns. Beginning with the first name in each

column, the names were numbered in order "1" or "2" and the sample plan called for the 2's to be invited. If someone who had been invited declined, the next person numbered two was invited. This process continued until the goal of five-to-eight persons in a group had been reached. At the conclusion of this selection process, thirty-five persons had accepted the invitation to participate in the Wesley Groups. Thus, there were five groups with an average of seven participants in each.

The ratio of Wesley Group participants to the whole congregation was appropriate for the band model. "The records of the Foundery Society show that of 2200 members in its society and class meetings, only 639 were involved in the bands, and 300 of these were on trial."<sup>5</sup> The ratio of 639 to 2200 was 29% of the society (whole congregation) who were in bands. If the 300 on trial were removed, the ratio of 339 to 2200 would be 15% in bands. Further examples reveal that "about twenty percent of Methodists took advantage of this form of spiritual formation."<sup>6</sup>

The total church membership for the year of this project was 187. The ratio of 35 in the Wesley Groups to 187 total membership was 19%. This ratio was nearly identical to that in the original bands under Wesley.

The five group leaders were selected by the pastor from among those in the pool of potential participants in the Wesley Groups. The following criteria were used in the selection of these leaders:

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<sup>5</sup> David Michael Henderson, "John Wesley's Instructional Groups" (Ph. D. dissertation at Indiana University, 1980), 176.

<sup>6</sup> Steve Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 60.

1. Known to the congregation as a Christian in faith and practice.
2. Currently a leader in the church by election or appointment.
3. Longevity in the congregation sufficient to appreciate the historical roots and experience in a personal friendship with at least one of the first-generation spiritual leaders in the church.
4. Ability to work well with people, having demonstrated this ability previously in an office of leadership.

Each of these five leaders served as the convener and facilitator of a group. They did not function in the role of instructor or director but rather related to the group members as a peer, colleague, and fellow traveler. This was in the same spirit of the band leaders in Wesley's original bands. "The leaders gave the lead to the group by 'speaking their own state' first, . . . The leader was to be both a model and a facilitator, setting the example and guiding the processes of interaction between the members of the group."<sup>7</sup>

Training of these leaders was conducted by the pastor. The leaders were interviewed initially and individually in order to give them a complete orientation and to clarify what was expected of them. Four leadership training sessions were conducted--one before each new unit of study. Also, the pastor met informally each month with each leader to give support and to receive feedback.

This process of selecting leaders and training them was highly similar

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<sup>7</sup> John W. Drakeford, People to People Therapy (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 17.

to that practiced by Wesley. Wesley's use of laypeople as leaders of groups for spiritual formation was part of his great legacy. He not only selected them but he also trained them. This was an in-service type of training. The leaders would meet with their groups and then meet with Wesley to discuss their experience and to receive his instruction. This process resembles what is referred to today as the clinical education model.<sup>8</sup>

The renewal plan for the Wesley Groups consisted of participation in a specific group model and the study of materials related to John Wesley's teaching concerning spiritual formation.

The group model was the band group as designed by John Wesley. However, two adaptations were made in this model for the purposes of this project. The first adaptation changed the frequency of meetings from weekly to twice a month. This was an accommodation to the busy schedules of the participants. The second adaptation expanded the group process beyond the confessional and mutual caring to include the study of prepared materials on themes of spiritual formation. Wesley's original design of the band involved confessional sharing, prayer, and singing but did not include programmed study.<sup>9</sup>

Each Wesley Group met twice each month for approximately ninety minutes. The location was the church facilities. Each group decided on the date and time for its meeting. The activities of the meetings followed outlined materials prepared by the pastor. After each meeting

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>9</sup> Henderson, 105.



the participants inserted the lesson materials into a specially prepared Wesley Group folder. These materials were in printed form so that all the participants would receive identical information and the effect of leader bias would be reduced.

The following components were built into the meetings of the Wesley Groups:

1. Inspirational Component (singing, scripture reading, or devotional writings)
2. Informational Component (Wesley's life, ministry, or teachings on spiritual formation)
3. Relational Component (activities to lower resistance to openness and to build trust among group members)
4. Confessional Component (sharing of feelings, attitudes, affections, inclinations, and needs)
5. Devotional Component (praying together for one another)

All of these components were present in Wesley's bands with the exception of the informational component. The purpose of the Wesley Groups in this project was to provide an environment in which the group members could experience the dynamics of Wesley's band model.

In addition to participation in a specific group process, the Wesley Groups studied prepared materials related to John Wesley's life, ministry, and teaching concerning spiritual formation. An annotated outline of the twenty lessons and the complete text of the study materials have been included in the Appendices.

### Data Gathering

The hypotheses anticipated that there would be a significant difference in attitude and behavior among each of the three groups (Wesley Groups, at-large group, and the whole congregation) after the ten-month period. In order to determine whether a difference did occur, an appropriate method of measurement was needed.

### Questionnaire

The process of data gathering involved the selection and design of an instrument with which to collect the data needed to test the hypotheses. These steps prepared the way for the application of the instrument to the experimental setting. Care was needed in structuring the overall process so as to reduce the influence of contaminating factors.

Selection. Early in this project the questionnaire method of gathering data was selected. The interview method was considered but was rejected on the basis it would require the selection and training of persons outside Liberty Wesleyan Church to serve as interviewers and on the basis that the highly personal nature of the needed information would be closer to reality in expression if reported with anonymity, a feature which a face-to-face interview would not provide.

The questionnaire method was appealing because it could be administered to a large number of people at the same time, it did not require more than one person to administer it, and it provided the desired anonymity to the respondents.

Further support for choosing the questionnaire method came from statements of authorities to the effect that "questionnaire studies can yield

valuable information."<sup>10</sup> One authority had demonstrated the usefulness of the questionnaire method with a study of small groups for personal renewal. That study used self-evaluation scales to measure how a group member evaluated his progress after participating in a small group. Categories were listed and each was accompanied with a numbered scale of intensity such as 1 through 7, with the instruction to "circle the number in each category which agrees most with your conclusion regarding yourself."<sup>11</sup> These two authorities were joined by the research consultant for this project who stated that in his opinion the questionnaire method would be appropriate for this project as the data-gathering method.

Design. It was agreed by the consultant and this researcher that the key to developing an effective questionnaire was in the selection of appropriate categories or indicators of spiritual renewal. Investigation into this process yielded "a relatively efficient method for constructing an attitude scale."<sup>12</sup> The method followed these three steps:

1. Collect a pool of statements that characterize the attitude.
2. Select the best descriptive statements.
3. Give each statement a weighted scale.

If the weighted scale ranged from 1 through 5 (1 the minimum and 5 the maximum), on a fifty-item questionnaire, the maximum score would be 250 (50 x 5) and the minimum score would be 50 (50 x 1). This process was

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<sup>10</sup> David R. Krathwohl, How to Prepare a Research Proposal (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Bookstore, 1977), 30.

<sup>11</sup> C. Gratton Kemp, Small Groups and Self-Renewal (New York: The Seabury Press, 1971), 242.

<sup>12</sup> David A. Payne, The Assessment of Learning (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1974), 166.

adopted for use in the construction of the questionnaire for this project.

The search for a pool of appropriate statements that characterize spiritual renewal consisted of a review of the writings of numerous authorities in the field of spiritual renewal.<sup>13</sup> The combined resources of these authors provided a consensus list of renewal characteristics which were used as renewal indicators in this project.

These indicators were placed in statement form; twelve statements related to attitude and seven related to behavior. Each statement was assigned a 5-point response scale with 1 representing the minimum score and 5 the maximum score. Six biographical questions were placed ahead of the attitude and behavior statements.

The final step in the design of the questionnaire was accomplished when the consultant gave his opinion that the questionnaire was appropriate for use in this project and that it should provide the data needed to test the hypotheses.<sup>14</sup>

Administration. The questionnaire was administered to both the at-large and the Wesley groups before and after the ten-month period.

The pretest was administered to the whole congregation near the end of the Sunday morning worship service. At the time, no invitations for persons to be in a Wesley Group had been issued. The congregation was not divided into the at-large group and the Wesley Groups when the pretest was administered. The questionnaire had not been mentioned to the congregation prior to the moment it was distributed to them.

The congregation was informed that the ushers would distribute a

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<sup>13</sup> See list for sources and characteristics in the Appendices.

<sup>14</sup> See copy of the consultant's letter in the Appendices.

"Congregational Christian Life Questionnaire." They were asked to "please circle the number that most nearly applies to you." They were instructed to omit signing their name so that each questionnaire would remain anonymous. However, in order to assign some way of distinguishing one questionnaire from any other, they were asked to write the last four digits of their Social Security number in the upper right-hand corner of the front page. The ushers collected the questionnaires as they were completed and passed to the center aisle.

These pretest questionnaires were placed in a folder and were not tabulated until after the posttest. This was done as an attempt to eliminate any bias which the pretest scores could have had on the pastor as he trained the five leaders and wrote the study materials.

The posttest questionnaire was administered after the ten-month period to the at-large group and the Wesley Groups. It was administered to the Wesley Groups at the close of their final meeting. This was a meeting of all five groups combined. It was administered to the at-large group on the following Sunday at the close of the morning worship service.

#### Control of Contaminating Factors

Special effort was made to structure the experimental situation so that data could be gathered with the least amount of contamination. It was understood that "every study is a compromise between what it is realistically possible to control and those variables that would be nice to control in that most perfect of all possible worlds."<sup>15</sup>

The project sought to determine the renewal impact that small groups

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<sup>15</sup> Krathwohl, 31.

for spiritual formation have on the whole church. The two variables which were introduced into the experimental situation were the intentional process of the band model with the Wesley Groups, and the interaction of the participants of the Wesley Groups with the at-large group.

Extraneous Variables. It was acknowledged that influences other than the presence of the Wesley Groups might possibly contribute to the spiritual renewal of the at-large group. Also, it was similarly recognized that influences outside of the meetings of the Wesley Groups might possibly contribute to their renewal. However, it was maintained that all groups potentially were subject to such intervening influences; this potential was equally possible among the at-large group and the Wesley Groups since they were part of the same congregation.

The attempt to control the influences in an experiment has been described as finding the best balance by one of the following approaches: "Either by (1) the best possible means, elimination, (2) the next best, measure and eliminate, or (3) if necessary, build into comparison."<sup>16</sup> The third alternative was the approach of this project. The possibility of uncontrolled influences having an impact for renewal upon any of the groups was real and this possibility was taken into consideration in the comparison of the groups.

In view of this possibility, an attempt was made to chronicle as many of these influences as came to the attention of the pastor. A log of special influences was maintained which recorded the more overt happenings in the life of the church during the ten-month period. The more subtle influences undoubtedly remained unreported.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>17</sup> See the log in the Appendices.

It was believed that any attempt to control the experimental situation further would have jeopardized the experiment in that too much attention would have been drawn to the existence of an experiment in progress. This belief was supported by this statement: "Our problem, then, is to provide some controls over our observations without calling so much attention to what we are doing that the situation is unnatural or extraordinary."<sup>18</sup>

In some situations additional control groups are formed as a technique to test additional variables. However, this would have been difficult in this project because everyone in the church was included in either the at-large group or the Wesley Groups.

Pretest Effect. Any pretest might alert the experimental group concerning what they will be expected to learn in preparation for a posttest.<sup>19</sup> Several precautions were taken in this project in order to minimize the pretest effect.

1. No mention of a pretest was made to the congregation prior to the Sunday morning worship service when it was administered. This silence was intended to prevent advance discussion and preparation.
2. No mention was made prior to the posttest Sunday that there would be a posttest. The pretest was intended to appear as a one-time survey. Since the Wesley Groups had not been formed at the time the pretest was administered, it was

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<sup>18</sup> Samuel Southard, Religious Inquiry: An Introduction to the Why and How (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1976), 81.

<sup>19</sup> Krathwohl, 34.

unlikely that they anticipated that the questions on the questionnaire were topics they should study in order to score well on a retest.

3. The questionnaire was not referred to publicly in any congregational gathering or in any meeting of the Wesley Groups during the ten-month period.
4. No comment was made to any group that a comparison would be made of the pretest and posttest scores.
5. The prepared materials used by the Wesley Groups did not mention the questionnaire or even hint that the Wesley studies and the questionnaire were in any way connected.

The congregation had not become test-wise by being asked to participate in other questionnaires in their recent history. No other surveys or questionnaires had been administered in this congregation within the previous six years, at least, and perhaps longer. This fact suggested that the congregation did not view the pretest as a cue for specific topics to be studied.

Hawthorne Effect. This is a term which came into the language of experimental design as the result of experiments conducted by the Western Electric Company at its Hawthorne Plant. Productivity increased even though working conditions (such as lighting) were made poorer. The special attention of the researchers was enough incentive by itself to increase performance.<sup>20</sup>

The possibility existed for the special attention by the pastor to be

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<sup>20</sup> Southard, 80-81.



a determining factor in motivating persons in the Wesley Groups to perform well. Without precautionary measures, his constant presence as leader of any group could have been more influential than either the study materials or the dynamics of the group process. The participants possibly would have shown improved responsiveness to spiritual renewal issues because they wanted to please their pastor.

In view of this possibility, an attempt was made to minimize the face-to-face leadership of the Wesley Groups by the pastor. Laypersons were selected to give leadership for each of the five groups. The role of these leaders was that of a peer who had no particular agenda except the group process. The direct leadership exerted by the pastor was limited to the four meetings when the five Wesley Groups were combined into one group (that is, orientation, two love feasts, and communion). This was in harmony with John Wesley's leadership role with the bands.<sup>21</sup>

Any special attention given to the Wesley Groups by the Pastor was necessary for the administration of this project in his church and was consistent with the contextual project requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree.<sup>22</sup>

#### Data Analysis

The hypotheses anticipated a significant improvement in the total scores of the Wesley Groups and the at-large group after the ten-month period. The scores were collected by administering a questionnaire before

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<sup>21</sup> Works, V, 183

<sup>22</sup> "The Doctor of Ministry Program in Spiritual Formation," Asbury Theological Seminary, 1984. (Program description and requirements)

and after the ten months.

Each questionnaire was tabulated by using three categories: attitude score, behavior score, and combined score (attitude plus behavior). Each category had a total score. The category score was collected from each questionnaire within a group and combined to make a group category score. This procedure was followed with the pre- and posttests of the at-large group and the Wesley Groups.

The Apple II C computer was used for all the calculations relating to statistical significance. The statistical program used was "Stats Plus," written by Stephen Madigan and Virginia Lawrence, and published by Human Systems Dynamics of Northridge, California. The Mann-Whitney Non-Parametric Statistical Test was used because it was designed to determine statistical significance among groups of unequal size. This was appropriate for this project since the at-large group was larger than the combined Wesley Groups.

The level of statistical significance was set at .05, meaning that the probability of change in the group scores occurring by chance was less than five times out of one hundred. This level of significance had been used by a recognized study of active and inactive church members conducted in the context of the local church.<sup>23</sup> The wide acceptance of the scholarship of that study commended the same level of significance for this project.

The information provided by the tests of statistical significance formed the basis for interpretation, inferences, and conclusions relative to the hypotheses and to the entire project.

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<sup>23</sup> John S. Savage, The Apathetic and Bored Church Member: Psychological and Theological Implications (Pittsford, New York: Lead Consultants, Inc., 1976), 54.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

The primary concern of this chapter is to examine the results of the questionnaires which were administered before and after the ten-month period during which five Wesley Groups met twice monthly. This evaluative process included an analysis of the statistical data generated by the questionnaires and an interpretation of these findings. All interpretations and inferences were based upon the following combination of sources: data which revealed statistical significance, other data which suggested trends, and subjective observations by the pastor and by participants of the Wesley Groups. The overall process of analysis and interpretation included these three steps: tabulation of the questionnaire scores, determination of statistical significance, and presentation of the data accompanied by interpretation.

#### Tabulation of Scores

The first step in evaluating the results of the questionnaires was to tabulate the responses. The questionnaire format consisted of nineteen (19) statements--twelve (12) related to attitude and seven (7) related to behavior.<sup>1</sup> Each statement had a response scale of one through five.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendices. The attitude statements were #7, 11, 16-25; behavior statements were #8, 9, 10, 12-15. Since the primary focus of the band model was on attitude, more attitude than behavior statements were included.

<sup>2</sup> If no response was marked, the lowest possible score (1) was given.

The numerical response for each statement was listed under its proper category title, either attitude or behavior. These responses were added to produce a total score for each category. In order to develop a composite score, the attitude and behavior categories were added together. In this manner a score was recorded for each questionnaire in the three categories. The scores within a category for an entire group (e.g., Wesley Groups) were added and the sum was the group score in that particular category. This procedure was followed in tabulating the responses of the pretest and posttest of the Wesley Groups and the at-large group.

The next step was to enter the scores into the computer in order to determine the level of significance of any change which may have occurred between the pretest and posttest.

#### Determination of Significance

The importance of determining the significance of the questionnaire scores was related to the hypotheses of this project. The hypotheses anticipated that the activity within the Wesley Groups over a ten-month period would produce changes in attitude and behavior among the participants which would be statistically significant. Also, it was anticipated that the influence of these changes within the Wesley Groups would radiate into the lives of the remaining members of the congregation so that they too would develop changes in attitude and behavior which would be statistically significant. The degree of change between the pretest and posttest was the point at issue. If that degree of change proved to be statistically significant, then the hypotheses would be supported; if not,

the hypotheses would fail to be supported.

The technical instrument used to determine the statistical significance of the scores was the Mann-Whitney Non-Parametric Statistical Test. This computer program was designed to determine statistical significance among groups of unequal size.

The Mann-Whitney Test was appropriate for this project because the ratio of the total participants in the Wesley Groups compared to those in the at-large group was thirty-five (35) to ninety (90) respectively.<sup>3</sup> The unequal size of the test groups may be demonstrated further by the fact that, through the random sample process at the time of administering the questionnaires, twenty-eight (28) individuals in the Wesley Groups and sixty-five (65) in the at-large group completed a questionnaire. Thus, the two test groups were unequal in size both in population and in questionnaires completed.

The Mann-Whitney Test is an analytical formula built into a computer program. Accordingly, the pretest and posttest scores of the groups were entered into this computer program which made the statistical analysis.

It was not sufficient to determine whether a difference existed between the pretest and posttest scores; the difference was required to be statistically significant. An acceptable level of significance had to be met. The level of significance for this project was set at .05, based upon other respected research which had been done in the field of church life.<sup>4</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup> The ninety (90) was established by subtracting the thirty-five from the average attendance in Sunday morning worship service, 125. If the total membership figure of 187 were used, the difference in size of the groups would be even greater.

<sup>4</sup> John S. Savage, The Apathetic and Bored Church Member: Psychological and Theological Implications (Pittsford, New York: Lead Consultants, Inc., 1976), 54.

level of significance meant that the probability of change occurring by either chance or random error was less than five times out of one hundred. A change measuring .05 or less would indicate statistical significance.

In addition to this test of statistical significance, the mean score was calculated for each group on both the pretest and the posttest. "The mean is the arithmetical average obtained when we add all scores and divide by the number of scores."<sup>5</sup> The mean score was consulted in order to detect trends in a group's performance. A bar graph chart was prepared for the groups in order to visually report the mean score data.

After the test scores were calculated, what were the findings and what did they mean?

#### Presentation and Interpretation of Data

The third step in the evaluative process addressed the central issue of this project-dissertation: the cause-and-effect relationship which may exist between small groups for renewal in a congregation and the increase of renewal within that congregation. This project was instituted to evaluate the existence of such a relationship. The data were gathered in relation to each of the three hypotheses of this project.

#### Hypothesis One (Wesley Groups)

The first hypothesis stated there would be a significant difference in attitude and behavior among the participants of the Wesley Groups after the ten-month period.

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<sup>5</sup> Lee J. Cronbach, Essentials of Psychological Testing (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 78.

There were five Wesley Groups consisting of five to eight members each. The questionnaires of these five small groups were combined because these groups were treated as one group in the design of the project. Twenty-three (23) questionnaires were completed in the pretest and twenty-eight (28) in the posttest. As in the case of all the groups, the primary focus was upon the difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The statistical analysis determined the significance of the difference. This analysis was conducted for three categories: attitude, behavior, and composite of attitude and behavior. Interpretation followed the report of the data.

Attitude. The analysis to determine statistical significance resulted in  $P=.04$ . There was a difference between the pretest and the posttest and it was significant. This indicated that a positive change in attitude had occurred by the end of the ten-month program.

The mean score on the pretest was 43.78 and on the posttest it was 47.39. The obtained difference was 3.61, reflecting a positive growth trend in renewal. Chart 1 represents these mean scores and the corresponding advance in renewal.

Behavior. The analysis for statistical significance resulted in  $P=---$ . The difference between the pre- and posttest scores was so slight that no statistical value of significance could be reported. Thus, there was no significant difference in the behavior category.

The mean score on the pretest was 23.26 and on the posttest it was 24.93. The obtained difference was 1.67, reflecting a positive trend toward renewal in behavior. Even though the improvement in the mean score was small, yet it was tending in the direction of renewal. Chart 2 represents

this trend.

Composite. The analysis to determine statistical significance resulted in  $P=.04$ . This represented a significant difference after the ten-month program. The significance was recorded because the strength of the attitude category was sufficient to overcome the weakness of the behavior category.

The mean score on the pretest was 67.04 and on the posttest it was 72.32. The obtained difference was 5.28, surpassing all other obtained differences recorded among these groups. Since it was greater than the obtained difference of the attitude category, it indicates that the behavior category had some value which it contributed toward the overall tendency of the Wesley Groups toward growth in renewal. Chart 3 reports this positive trend.

Interpretation. Hypothesis One was supported partially. The attitude category reported a significant improvement in renewal after the ten-month program; the behavior category failed to display significance. Yet, the composite category achieved significance on the strength of the attitude category. The mean scores reflected improvement in renewal in all three categories, ascending in strength from behavior to attitude to composite.

Attitude was leading the way for behavior which corresponds to the natural progression of spiritual renewal.<sup>6</sup> In the natural progression, "knowing" the truth precedes and promotes "doing" the truth. In similar fashion, attitudinal change precedes and promotes behavioral change. Following this logic, it would seem that the trend toward renewal in the behavior category might have developed into significance if the program

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 10:1-17, 12:1-2; II Peter 1:1-11.



had been continued for a period longer than ten months. In summary, spiritual renewal had taken place among the participants of the Wesley Groups and this renewal was becoming increasingly more pronounced in their lives.

### Hypothesis Two (At-Large Group)

The second hypothesis stated there would be a significant difference in attitude and behavior among those not in the Wesley Groups after the ten-month period. This group was designated "at-large group."

The questionnaire was administered to the at-large group before and after the ten-month period. Forty-one (41) questionnaires were completed in the pretest and thirty-five (35) in the posttest.

Attitude. The analysis for statistical significance resulted in  $P=---$ . No value was assigned because the statistical change was not great enough for computation. Thus, there was no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores in the attitude category.

The mean score on the pretest was 46.51 and on the posttest it was 45.57. The obtained difference was .94 toward the negative. This indicated a slight moving away from the spiritual vitality level reported before the ten-month period. Chart 4 depicts this negative trend.

Behavior. The statistical analysis for significance resulted in  $P=---$ . The change was too slight to provide a P value. There was no significant change.

The mean score on the pretest was 23.88 and on the posttest it was 23.91. The obtained difference was .03 in the positive. Realistically, this was a negligible difference and it was interpreted as no change. Chart 5

reports this condition.

Composite. The statistical test for significance resulted in  $P=---$ . There was no significant change in the combined categories of attitude and behavior.

The mean score on the pretest was 70.39 and on the posttest it was 69.49. The obtained difference was .90 in the negative, indicating a slight reduction in the level of vitality expressed in the pretest. Chart 6 reveals the performance of the composite category.

Interpretation. Hypothesis Two was not supported in any category. The statistical test failed to report any P value at all. Although the mean scores reflected a slight downturn in vitality, this was not substantial enough to produce a statistical significance in the negative.

The slight downturn in the mean score of the attitude category of the at-large group was unexpected. It may have occurred as a natural function of the random sampling plan for the at-large group. This plan called for questionnaires to be distributed to all persons eighteen years of age and older who were present for morning worship on a given Sunday. This plan governed the pretest and posttest. The posttest was conducted in June, 1987, on a Sunday when several adults were away on vacation. Their absence had not been anticipated. The result of this turn of events was that only fourteen (14) of the thirty-five (35) persons who participated in the posttest had previously participated also in the pretest. Based only on the supposition of this writer, perhaps some of these twenty-one (21) were more conservative in the way they perceived themselves than were those who participated in the pretest. If that were the case, it would explain the slight downturn in the mean score of the attitude category.

This possibility might have been avoided by having the same persons complete before and after questionnaires.

The performance of the at-large group corresponded more to the status quo than anything else. The lack of significant change meant that the renewal experienced by the Wesley Groups was not transferred in a significant way to the at-large group. This may have been due to the design of the project relative to the contact between the two groups. The contact was to be informal and without any conscious effort to transmit the Wesley Groups experience. There was no announced mission to influence the at-large group. No meetings or strategies were devised for the specific purpose of influencing the at-large group. Therefore, a more intentional design for interaction between the two groups may have resulted in a significant change toward renewal.

It may also be said that a more positive result might have been achieved had the Wesley Groups program lasted longer than ten months. A longer duration would have extended the contact time between the participants of both groups. Also, the longer duration might have allowed the trend toward full renewal within the Wesley Groups to come to fruition. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that a more significant result might have been achieved if more intentional contact had been engineered during the same time the renewal of the Wesley Groups was in progress.

Perhaps it would be helpful to comment further on the importance of these two factors: the duration of the project and the contact between the two different groups. Both of these factors were described in Chapter Three as functions of the renewal plan.

First, the duration of the program was related to a key principle of

spiritual formation. Several authorities in the field of spiritual growth have indicated that time or duration is an integral factor in its development. Iris Cully, in her book Education for Spiritual Growth, said that spiritual "nurturing happens gradually."<sup>7</sup> Elton Trueblood stated, "The logic of renewal, when we understand even a little of it, makes us see that our principle is the principle of development."<sup>8</sup> Maxie Dunnam described spiritual formation as a "dynamic process" by which the Christian continues to be alive in Christ. "To be alive in Christ is constant and continuous. We are not finished, but are 'under construction,' maturing into the 'measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'"<sup>9</sup> James Mannoia explained that "God's will is to quicken us from the dead, and then to sustain us with His life. Here is the forming work of the Holy Spirit. . . . Spiritual formation is a gradual aspect of sanctification at work in us through the agency of the Holy Spirit."<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that all of these authorities maintained that spiritual formation is a developmental process which is gradual and continuous. The longer one participates, the greater the potential for development. Conversely, the shorter the time, the smaller the potential for development.

This project was designed as a ten-month process because it was a convenient period for this congregation and it met the requirement of the degree program. The Wesley Groups and the at-large group existed and

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<sup>7</sup> Iris V. Cully, Education for Spiritual Growth (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 168.

<sup>8</sup> Elton Trueblood, The Incendiary Fellowship (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 75.

<sup>9</sup> Maxie Dunnam, Alive in Christ (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 109.

<sup>10</sup> V. James Mannoia, "Spiritual Formation: Christ Formed in Us," The Preacher's Magazine, December-January-February 1985-86: 33.

functioned during the same ten months. Ten months was sufficient time to allow significant spiritual renewal to develop in the attitude category of the Wesley Groups. The improved mean score in the behavior category suggested that further participation might have allowed significance to be achieved in it. This interpretation was based also on the biblical principle that spiritual growth advances from awareness to attitude to behavior. On the other hand, the at-large group did not record a significant level of renewal. Since the span of time was identical for both groups, something other than time is needed to explain the lack of renewal in the at-large group.

The second factor which was an important part of the renewal plan was the contact or interaction between the two groups. This contact was the means by which renewal was to be effected in the at-large group. It was informal in nature, whereas the means through which renewal was to be effected in the Wesley Groups was formal.

Iris Cully has described the difference between a formal and an informal approach. She said that informal nurture is "a natural mode of being."<sup>11</sup> It occurs when a person who is spiritually aware manifests a gracious spirit among other people. "Those who come into proximity with such a person sense that by that other one they themselves are blessed."<sup>12</sup> Cully likened formal nurture to an educational process which "introduces deliberately structured experiences that include reflection on action."<sup>13</sup> This includes the practice of such disciplines as Bible study, prayer, and

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<sup>11</sup> Cully, 166.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 168.

service to others.

Richard Foster, in his book Celebration of Discipline, presented several spiritual disciplines which could be included in a formal nurture program. One of these disciplines is "study." He said study is "one of the central ways God uses to change us."<sup>14</sup> He listed four components of study: repetition, concentration, comprehension, and reflection.

In this project the difference in renewal levels of the two groups was seen by this writer to have resulted from the use of these two different approaches, formal and informal. The Wesley Groups renewal plan was focused and intentional; that of the at-large group was diffused and unintentional. The Wesley Groups experienced renewal; the at-large group did not. Therefore, a more formal renewal plan for the at-large group might have effected the desired renewal. This perhaps could have included occasions when the Wesley Groups could have shared experiences and insights with the at-large group.

Based upon the foregoing description of the relatedness of time and contact, the ten-month period was not sufficient to allow the diffused and unintentional plan to effect spiritual renewal in the at-large group. Whether a longer time would have made renewal possible is a question for further research.

### Hypothesis Three (Whole Congregation)

The third hypothesis stated there would be a significant difference in attitude and behavior among the combined participants of the Wesley Groups

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<sup>14</sup> Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 54.

and the at-large group after the ten-month period. This combined group was designated "whole congregation." This was not a third group of actual people but rather was a "statistical group" created by combining the scores of the Wesley Groups with those of the at-large group. Their strengths and weaknesses combined to produce a statistical picture of the whole congregation's renewal level.

The data source for the whole congregation was the combined questionnaires of both the Wesley Groups and the at-large group: sixty-four (64) questionnaires involved in the pretest and sixty-three (63) in the posttest.

Attitude. The analysis for statistical significance resulted in  $P=.14$ . This did not represent a significant difference. However, there was a measurable difference which allowed a P value to be calculated. This was not the case with the at-large group alone but when it was combined with the strength of the Wesley Groups, a trend toward renewal was created. This suggests that without the Wesley Groups there would have been no trend toward renewal in the statistical picture of the whole congregation.

The mean score on the pretest was 45.53 and on the posttest it was 46.38. The obtained difference was .85, reflecting a slight trend toward renewal. Here again the scores of the Wesley Groups made a difference in the combined statistical picture. The slight regression in the attitude category of the at-large group alone was transformed into a slight progression when combined with the statistical strength of the Wesley Groups. Chart 7 reveals this slight trend toward renewal.

Behavior. The test for statistical significance resulted in  $P=---$ . No value was assigned because the difference was too small. This was

understandable in light of the fact that neither group had recorded a significant difference in behavior.

The mean score on the pretest was 23.66 and on the posttest it was 24.37. The obtained difference was .71, reflecting a slight positive trend toward renewal. This was caused by the small trend in behavior reflected by the improved mean scores of the Wesley Groups. Chart 8 reflects this trend toward renewal.

Composite. The significance test resulted in  $P=.20$ . The change over the ten months was not significant. However, the change was sufficient enough to allow a statistical value to be calculated. The chief reason for the emergence of this statistical value was the strength of the attitude category of the Wesley Groups; this was reflected also in the composite category of the Wesley Groups.

The mean score on the pretest was 69.19 and on the posttest it was 70.75. The obtained difference was 1.56, reflecting a trend toward renewal. This was a natural development because both attitude and behavior categories had registered improved mean scores. Chart 9 portrays this composite trend toward renewal within the whole congregation.

Interpretation. Hypothesis Three was not supported. However, improvement in mean scores reflected a trend toward renewal. This trend was effected by the significant renewal among the participants of the Wesley Groups when combined with the at-large group.

An object lesson may illustrate further how this trend toward renewal was effected. Imagine three glasses sitting side by side on a table. Moving from left to right, the first glass is filled with red-colored water; the second glass is somewhat larger and is filled with clear water; the third glass is



larger than either of the other two and it is empty. At this point both the red water (Wesley Groups) and the clear water (at-large group) are poured into the third glass (whole congregation). This mixing of the two waters (groups) produces pink water in the third glass. The change from clear to pink was effected solely by the influence of the red (Wesley Groups).

In this project, the at-large group represented all those in Liberty Wesleyan Church who were not participating in the Wesley Groups. The combination of the at-large group and the Wesley Groups represented the total of the persons making up this congregation. The participants of the Wesley Groups were part of this whole congregation and to that extent renewal was present in Liberty Wesleyan Church even though renewal was not transferred to those outside the Wesley Groups.

It may be said that without the Wesley Groups the statistical picture of the whole congregation would have remained status quo. The Wesley Groups provided a resource for renewal by which the rest of the church could benefit. Thus, the possibility for renewal in the whole congregation was enhanced by the presence of the Wesley Groups. This interpretation was in agreement with an observation by Robert E. Coleman in Dry Bones Can Live Again. He stated:

With a group of dedicated people as a nucleus, the Church as a whole can be inspired and directed in the service of Christ. Of course, until this committed minority is present, there is not much use talking about getting the larger congregation involved in the task.<sup>15</sup>

Although actual renewal did not take place throughout the membership of Liberty Wesleyan Church, the Wesley Groups established themselves as an

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<sup>15</sup> Robert E. Coleman, Dry Bones Can Live Again (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1969), 73.

instrument by which actual renewal may be effected. Without this nucleus, the prospects for renewal would be diminished.

### Summary of Interpretation

- Hypothesis One was supported in the attitude category but not in the behavior category.
- Hypothesis Two was not supported in the attitude category or the behavior category.
- Hypothesis Three was not supported in the attitude category or the behavior category.
- The attitude category reported progress in renewal in the Wesley Groups and the whole congregation while behavior in these same groups made less progress. This leadership role by attitude was acknowledged to be in harmony with both human experience and biblical teaching related to spiritual formation.
- A positive trend toward renewal in the behavior category was reflected in the Wesley Groups and the whole congregation by their improved mean scores. This was interpreted to mean that the positive influence of growth in attitudinal renewal was effecting the beginning of behavioral renewal in these two groups.
- The Wesley Groups effected a positive trend toward renewal in the statistically created group known as the whole congregation. This trend was caused by the statistical strength of renewal in the Wesley Groups when combined with the status

quo of the at-large group.

- Based on the foregoing statements, the Wesley Groups might have effected the hypothesized significant difference in both attitude and behavior in the at-large group and the whole congregation if the program had lasted longer than ten months. The potential for this would have been enhanced further if the contact of the participants in the Wesley Groups with those in the at-large group had been more intentional with regard to effecting renewal in them.

An overview of the performance of all three groups is presented in charts 10, 11, and 12.

### Subjective Evaluation

The purpose of this chapter has been to report and interpret the objective data generated by this contextual project. A great deal of this process has dealt with statistics and these have given rise to several important insights. However, statistics cannot tell the whole story. The subjective point of view has yet to make its contribution. An evaluation by those who lived the experience of the ten-month program may give life to the statistics.

### Pastor

The present writer functioned as the pastor of the congregation which was the context for this project. It was rewarding to prepare the study guides and meeting agendas, to train the five group leaders, and to observe the emergence of the marks of spiritual renewal.

Attitude. It was particularly gratifying to experience the positive attitudes of all of the participants in the Wesley Groups. Indeed, an attitude of inquisitive cooperation was evident at the first meeting and grew stronger and more steadfast as the project progressed.

The psychological tone of the groups underwent a positive transformation. The early meetings were more like a formal class session but the later meetings became warmer and more intimate, more open and trusting of each other and of the process of expressing personal experiences.

This transformation of the psychological tone of the groups prepared the way for the emergence of koinonia, a deep caring for one another centered in their faith in Christ. It was developed while together they studied the Bible and Christian growth, discussed their spiritual successes, failures, and questions, prayed, and participated in Holy Communion.

The emergence of koinonia is the very heart of Christian spiritual renewal. It was inspiring to observe it happening among the participants of the Wesley Groups. This inspiration was felt by some who were not in the Wesley Groups. They asked what the Wesley Groups did and stated their desire to belong to such a group.

Behavior. Undoubtedly there were alterations in behavior which were not known by the pastor. Yet some changes were observed. For instance, several participants exhibited a heightened loyalty to the worship services, Sunday school, and the adult choir. These persons began to attend more regularly, even on Sunday evening, and with a new sense of spiritual earnestness.

One incident was particularly noteworthy. The young-single-women's Wesley Group became aware of needs beyond their group. The desire to

reach out to others began to grow. It was not long until they decided to collect food products and take them to a needy family at Christmas. This servant spirit was fostered by the quality of their group experience.

Another example of renewal involved the organization of a Meals-On-Wheels ministry. One year previous the invitation had been extended for this church to join with several other churches to provide a community meals-on-wheels ministry. This invitation was presented to Liberty Church but no one was interested in participating. However, after the Wesley Groups had been meeting seven months, the invitation was extended again. This time the wife of one of the Wesley Group members volunteered to serve as the coordinator and nine of the sixteen drivers who volunteered were members of the Wesley Groups. This interest in a new ministry was inspired by the renewal being experienced in the Wesley Groups.

Renewal in behavior was evidenced still further by a surge in lay leadership. The five group leaders exerted positive leadership throughout the entire ten months. While they had not led such a group before, they displayed increasing confidence and satisfaction.

An example of lay leadership was the readiness of group members to begin the group process whenever it was necessary for a leader to arrive late or even to be absent. On such occasions they would select a leader and then enthusiastically follow the agenda of the meeting.

Still another example of emerging lay leadership occurred with the young-single-women's group. They recognized the need for a young adult organization in the church. They asked the local board of administration for permission to organize such a group. Immediately after permission was granted they developed a mailing list, held their first meeting, and published

a one-page newsletter. The leaders of this new organization were the members of this Wesley Group.

In summary, the pastor observed spiritual renewal in the form of increased participation of Wesley Group members in worship services, the creation of new ministries to persons in the congregation and to those outside its ranks, new vigor in the adult choir and in the young adult group, and a greater prominence of lay leadership.

### Participants in the Wesley Groups

All five Wesley Groups met together for the twentieth meeting. An opportunity was given for everyone to share what the ten-month group experience had meant to them. The following are some of their comments.

- "I got to know everyone better."
- "You discover that you are not the only one with a particular problem or feeling. When you share with each other, it opens your eyes so you can see others are like you; you're not alone."
- "Opening up to someone else was just what I needed."
- "I liked the sharing and I'd like to have more of it."
- "The small size of the group made it easy to share in a way I never would have in a bigger group."
- "Our group of single women used the group as a confessional."
- "We often meet people on Sunday morning and say 'Hi' but we don't really get to know them. In the group we got to know each other in a way we want other people to know us."
- "Prayer times meant a lot to me."

- "I was glad to learn that Wesley wasn't perfect; that gave me hope even with all my mistakes."
- "The group really helped me grow spiritually, to see how much I can improve in my devotional life."
- "I've grown tobacco all my life but I'll not do it next year. God has spoken to me about this and I am going to obey Him."

This chapter has presented an analysis of the experience of the Wesley Groups program from an objective and a subjective perspective. Both perspectives revealed that spiritual renewal had taken place in the Wesley Groups and that these groups provide the process and materials by which renewal may be effected among those who did not participate in the Wesley Groups.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Summary and Implications

This final chapter gathers up the key elements of the preceding four chapters and restates them in a concise summary. The summary includes five features which are presented in this order: problem statement, methodology, limitations, findings, and conclusions. With this information in hand, the following question is addressed: "What may happen as a result of this project?" In response to this question, the implications of this project are presented in relation to these four areas of interest: impact on existing knowledge, application to ministry, further research, and long-range consequences.

#### Summary

The history of the Christian church reports many instances of the decline of spiritual vitality and the subsequent renewal which restored spiritual health to the church. Indeed, the need for renewal characterizes nearly every church at some point in its life. The following is a summary of how the need for spiritual renewal in one congregation was addressed and the evaluation of that experience.

#### Problem Statement

There were several members of the Liberty Wesleyan Church in Summerfield, North Carolina who sensed a need for spiritual renewal in their church. A contributing factor to this perception was the fact that nearly all of the first-generation members had died. Their absence from the scene had left a



spiritual void which the second and third generations had not filled sufficiently. The void was perceived to be most critical in two areas: The feeling tone of the worship services and the quality of religious leadership by lay persons. In addition to pointing out the need for renewal, these members expressed a desire to have the renewal of the church begin with them.

The pastor of Liberty Wesleyan Church had been interested for many years in the process of effecting renewal in a local church. This interest merged with the interests of these concerned members to form the basis for this project-dissertation. The approach to this project came into focus when early research revealed the effectiveness of John Wesley in effecting spiritual growth and renewal among Christians through his small group ministry. One of Wesley's group models, the band, seemed appropriate for this project. It was selected and used with some adaptation.

In addition to providing a needed ministry to the members of this church, a technical issue was addressed. Several authors in the field of church renewal maintained that small groups engaged in a program of spiritual renewal would cause the onset of renewal within the whole congregation. This cause-and-effect relationship was the technical point at issue for this project. Its evaluation was a major emphasis in the total project.

### Methodology

The methodology involved two concerns: the provision of a spiritual renewal program for the members of the church, and the evaluation of data related to the cause-and-effect relationship of the small groups in this church. The first concern required the selection of small group participants and the preparation of materials for their twenty meetings. The second

concern called for the development of a way to gather the proper data by which to evaluate the renewal effect the small groups had upon the church.

The context of this project was the Liberty Wesleyan Church, Summerfield, North Carolina. Approximately 100 families were represented by its 187 members. The total population pool consisted of all who were eighteen years of age or older and who were normally present for Sunday morning worship. From this population, thirty-five (35) persons were selected to participate in a small groups program named "Walking with Wesley in Spiritual Formation." All remaining persons were considered members of the at-large group.

The thirty-five persons were divided into five separate groups according to sex, marital status, and age or maturity level. These five groups were known as "Wesley Groups." Each group consisted of five to eight persons. These met twice each month over a ten-month period. Lay persons were selected and trained to lead all five groups. The content of the meetings included study of the life and teachings of John Wesley, mutual sharing of personal experiences in the Christian life, singing, Bible reading, and prayer for one another.

The at-large group did not meet and did not receive any of the study materials used by the Wesley Groups. The contact between the participants of the Wesley Groups and the at-large group was informal and without any announced intention for the Wesley Groups to influence them. Any transfer of renewal from the Wesley Groups to the at-large group was to be accomplished through natural association.

Data related to the technical issue of this project were collected by a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of statements keyed to

specific characteristics of spiritual renewal either in attitude or behavior. Each statement had a five-point response scale. The questionnaire was administered to the Wesley Groups and the at-large group before and after the ten-month program. The scores were analyzed to determine the level of change in the groups. The level of significance was set at .05. The cause-and-effect relationship was evaluated on the basis of the presence or absence of a significant difference between the before and after scores.

### Limitations

There were some limitations in this project which were acknowledged. The influence of these limitations was considered with regard to the conclusions.

The entire project was conducted within the context of one congregation composed of approximately 100 families. This fact limited the extent to which generalizations may be made.

The time period of the program involving the Wesley Groups was limited to ten months. This exposure time may have been too limited to produce changes as significant as a longer period would have produced. Generalizations based on the findings were limited to a ten-month experience.

The questionnaire was constructed to reflect attitudes and behavior related to spiritual renewal. The usefulness of the questionnaire process was dependent upon how a respondent perceives oneself and upon one's willingness to report those perceptions accurately.

No formal attempt was made to control extraneous factors that could have exerted a renewing effect upon the participants. Some extraneous factors were preaching, singing, revivals, and answers to prayer. It was

considered that additional controls would have altered the natural environment to the extent that the participants would have been aware they were being observed for test purposes and thereby would have adjusted accordingly. The conclusions related to the cause-and-effect issue were made with the acknowledgment of this limitation.

### Findings

A process of statistical analysis was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the pretest and posttest scores and to expose any emerging trends. The Mann-Whitney Non-Parametric Statistical Test was used to determine significant differences. The mean scores were compared in order to detect trends.

All statistical analyses were related to the three hypotheses of this project. The hypotheses anticipated a significant difference in attitude and behavior after the ten-month period among the participants of the Wesley Groups, at-large group, and whole congregation.

The findings revealed that significance was accomplished in the attitude category and the composite category of the Wesley Groups; it was not accomplished with the at-large group and the whole congregation in any category. Hypothesis One was supported partially; Hypotheses Two and Three failed to be supported.

The mean scores revealed a trend toward renewal in all the categories of the Wesley Groups. In the at-large group no category showed a trend toward renewal. All three categories of the whole congregation reflected a renewal trend.

When the subjective evaluations of the pastor and the participants

were joined with the statistical findings, it was evident that renewal had been experienced among the participants of the Wesley Groups.

No actual change toward renewal in the whole congregation can be affirmed. However, when the statistical data of both the Wesley Groups and the at-large group were combined, a statistical picture of a trend toward renewal was created.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of this project, it was concluded that small groups engaged in a program of spiritual formation, using an adaptation of John Wesley's band model, have good reason to expect spiritual renewal. The spiritual renewal within these small groups may not be transferred to other persons in the congregation unless the interaction between them is intentionally structured for that purpose. However, the potential for church renewal is enhanced by the presence of renewed small groups. This potential is further enhanced if increasing numbers of church members become active in a Wesley Group.

### Implications

In view of the stated findings and conclusions, what are some of the possible implications? How may the field of knowledge related to church renewal benefit? In what ways may the insights from this project be helpful to Christian ministry? What avenues for further research are suggested? These issues are addressed here.

### Impact on Existing Knowledge

This project may contribute to a better understanding of the renewal

effect of small groups upon the congregation. Authors have long maintained that such a cause-and-effect relationship exists. The findings of this project provide empirical data related to what others have asserted.

Previous studies may benefit from this project. One example is the Doctor of Ministry dissertation by Richard Eugene Lyddon, Jr., "The Relevance for the Contemporary Church of the Eighteenth Century British Methodist Class Meeting."<sup>1</sup> That study was based on historical literature research alone without an empirical project. It concluded that spiritual vitality had been effected among the early Methodists by means of the class meeting and that it would benefit the contemporary church in a similar fashion. However, this contention was not tested by a contextual project. Thus, the empirical data and findings of this project supplement Lyddon's dissertation and other studies which rely on literature research only.

### Application to Ministry

There is widespread opinion today that local churches need ways to foster spiritual renewal. Various publishing houses are seeking to meet this felt need by producing a variety of resource materials. The present study may serve as a resource to program developers. It provides a description and an analysis of the implementation of a small group program for renewal that has been experienced in a local church.

Congregations often are interested in providing a program for target groups such as new converts, older adults, and for men only or women only. This project presents Wesley's band model as a program of spiritual growth and renewal directed toward men and women who are already Christians.

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<sup>1</sup> School of Theology at Claremont, 1978.

The information and understanding of this project may serve as a resource for churches who want to design a renewal program of their own.

Another application to ministry could be in the area of leadership training for lay persons. The group leaders in this project received training before meeting with their groups. Then followed the application of this training through interacting with the group members. Then they shared their experience with the trainer and received his feedback. This provided an excellent cycle of leadership training.

Also, lay leadership training took place among the group participants. It was mutually understood by all participants that each one was to take personal responsibility for the success of each meeting rather than leave it up to the designated leader. They fulfilled that role.

Training in leadership skills was provided to the leaders and members alike. Therefore, this project may serve as a resource to those churches interested in developing spiritual leadership among the laity.

### Further Research

All research is part of a circle. Knowledge developed in the past provides the foundation for present research which in turn produces additional questions for future exploration. This project has revealed several intriguing options for further investigation in the field of church renewal through a small group ministry.

Duration of Program. The first recommendation for further research is related to the extension of the project and its benefits. It is anticipated that a program longer than ten months would allow the leavening process more time to impact upon those persons who were not in the small groups. This extension of program time seems especially pertinent when the contact

between the two groups is informal and unstructured.

Contact Between Groups. The impact of the small groups upon the rest of the congregation could be enhanced by a more intentional design of interaction between them. For instance, the participants of the small groups could be urged to share what they had been learning with the at-large group members. This could be done in worship services, retreat, or fellowship gathering. Outreach to those not in the small groups could be established as a primary mission goal.

Another suggested design would bring the small group members and the rest of the congregation together in planned activities. It would be helpful to select from the congregation an at-large group which would be equal in size to the number in the small groups. The equal size of the two groups would facilitate joint activities and testing of identical people before and after the program period. The joint activities would not include the sharing of small group study materials. The way in which the small groups would influence the at-large group could be either informal or structured and with or without a stated mission of outreach to the at-large group.

Multiple Group Designs. Further research could involve several churches in an effort to measure the effectiveness of small groups as a catalyst for renewal in a local church. The present project was conducted within the context of one congregation.

An alternate approach would expand the research to include several churches. For example, some churches would organize small groups for spiritual renewal, other churches would organize small groups for fellowship and recreation, and still other churches would have small groups but they would never meet as a group except to fill out the questionnaire. A



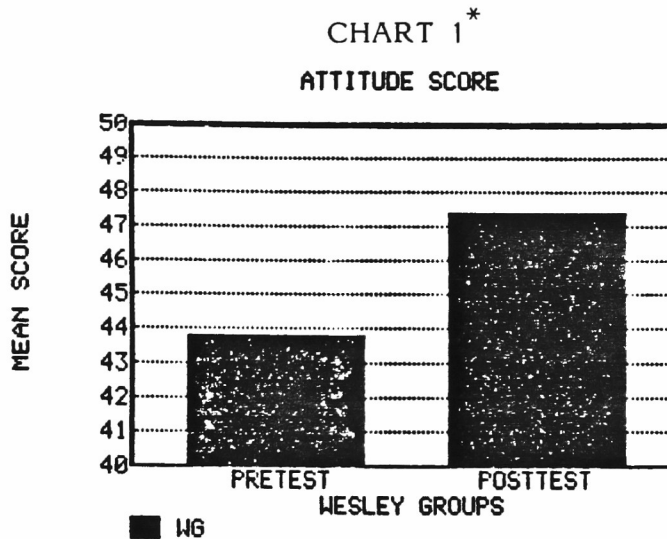
questionnaire would be administered to all of the groups before and after a program period. This approach would seek to evaluate the effectiveness of small groups which experienced an intentional program for spiritual renewal as a catalyst for renewal in a local church when compared to small groups for other purposes.

### Long-Range Consequences

This was only one project, limited to only one congregation with a membership of about one hundred families. The impact of its findings and conclusions must be viewed in light of the stated limitations. Yet, it serves as an example of an attempt to evaluate the role of small groups as a catalyst for spiritual renewal within a congregation. To this extent it makes a contribution to the field of knowledge and advances that knowledge in a small way. As long as renewal is sought in the church, this project may be helpful.

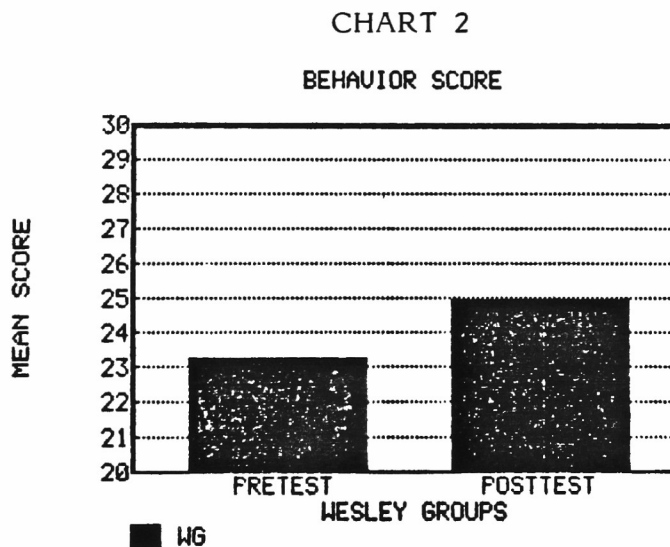
## **APPENDIX A**

### **Statistical Data Charts**



**SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:**  
Relationship of WG PRE to WG POST = Significance  
at the .04 level.

**MEAN SCORE:**  
Upturn from 43.78 to 47.39 = +3.61 difference.

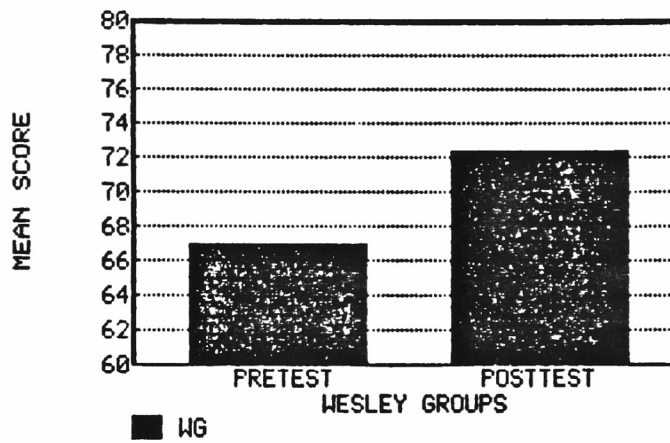


**SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:**  
Relationship of WG PRE to WG POST = No significance.

**MEAN SCORE:**  
Upturn from 23.26 to 24.93 = +1.67 difference.

\* Charts 1-12 report statistical levels of renewal among the groups in this contextual project.

CHART 3  
COMPOSITE SCORE



**SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:**

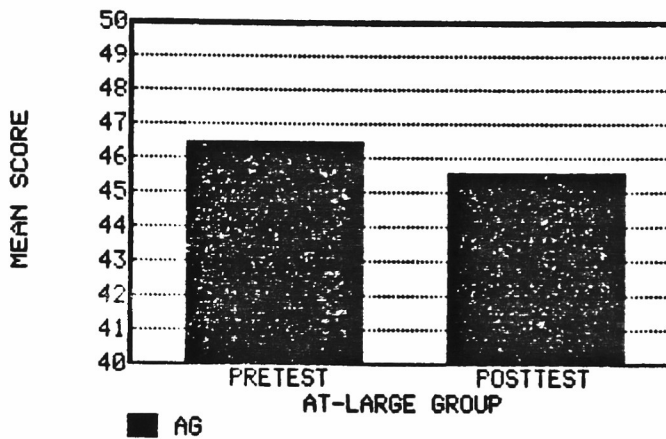
Relationship of WG PRE to WG POST = Significance  
at the .04 level.

**MEAN SCORE:**

Upturn from 67.04 to 72.32 = +5.28 difference.

CHART 4

## ATTITUDE SCORE



SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:

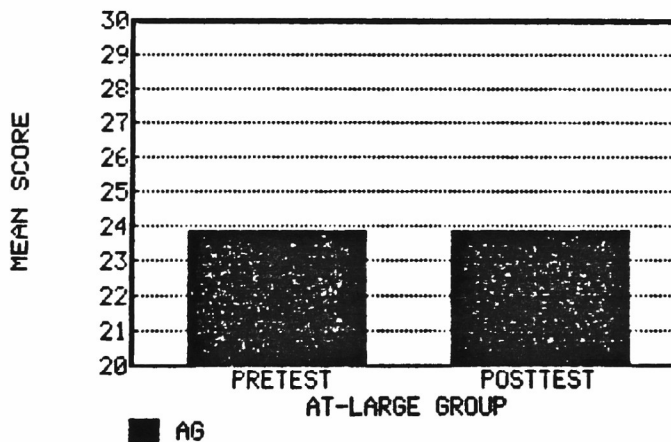
Relationship of AG PRE to AG POST = No significance.

MEAN SCORE:

Downtown from 46.51 to 45.57 = -.94 difference.

CHART 5

## BEHAVIOR SCORE



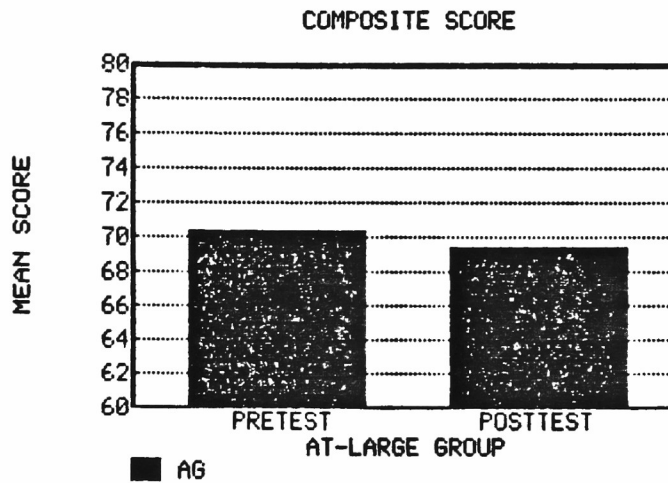
SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:

Relationship of AG PRE to AG POST = No significance.

MEAN SCORE:

The 23.88 to 23.91 = +.03 difference  
was interpreted as negligible.

CHART 6



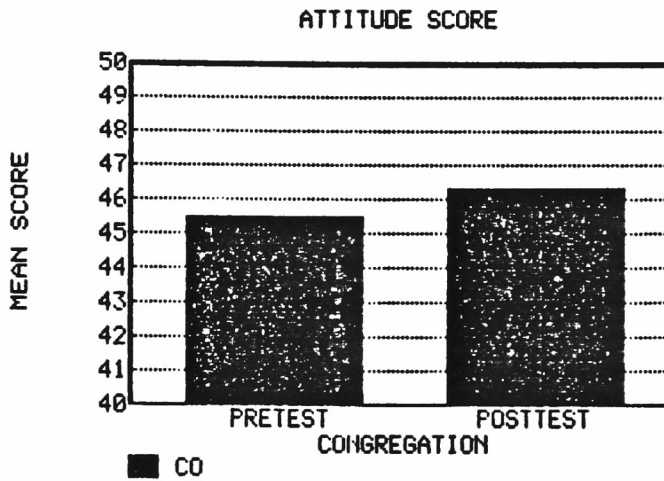
SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:

Relationship of AG PRE to AG POST = No significance.

MEAN SCORE:

Downturn from 70.39 to 69.49 = -.90 difference.

CHART 7



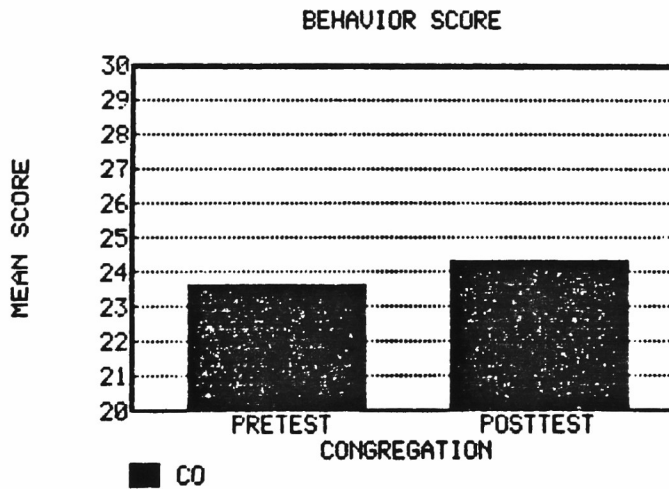
SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:

Relationship of CO PRE to CO POST = No significance.

MEAN SCORE:

Upturn from 45.53 to 46.38 = +.85 difference.

CHART 8



SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:

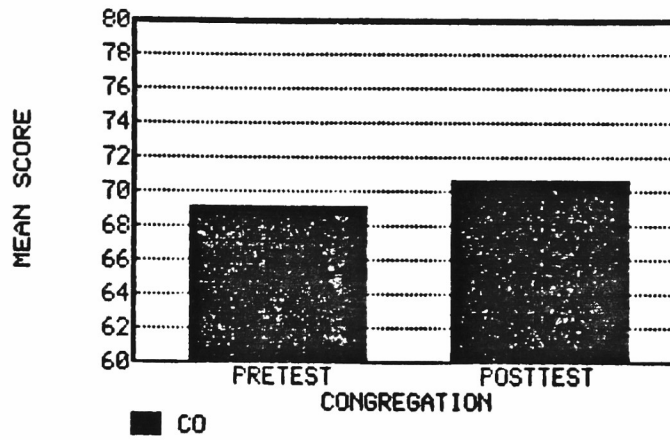
Relationship of CO PRE to CO POST = No significance.

MEAN SCORE:

Upturn from 23.66 to 24.37 = +.71 difference.

CHART 9

## COMPOSITE SCORE



SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:

Relationship of CO PRE to CO POST = No significance.

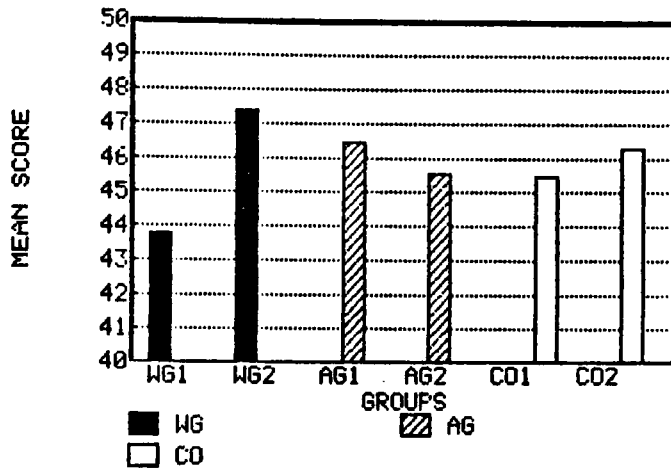
MEAN SCORE:

Upturn from 69.19 to 70.75 = +1.56 difference.



CHART 10

ATTITUDE SCORE



Note:  
 "1" = PRETEST  
 "2" = POSTTEST

CHART 11

BEHAVIOR SCORE

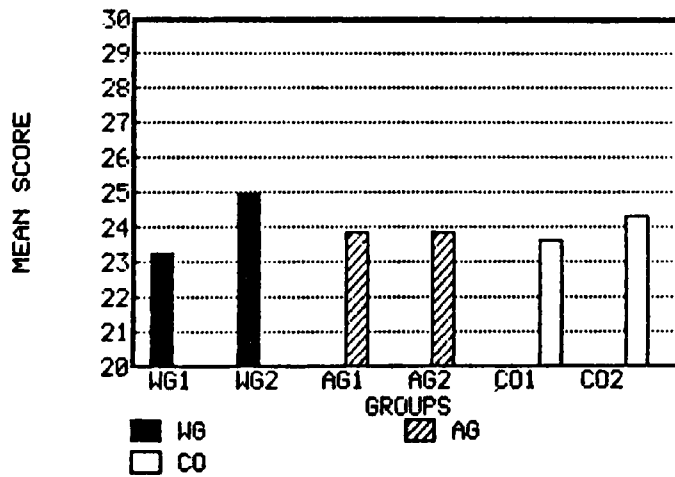
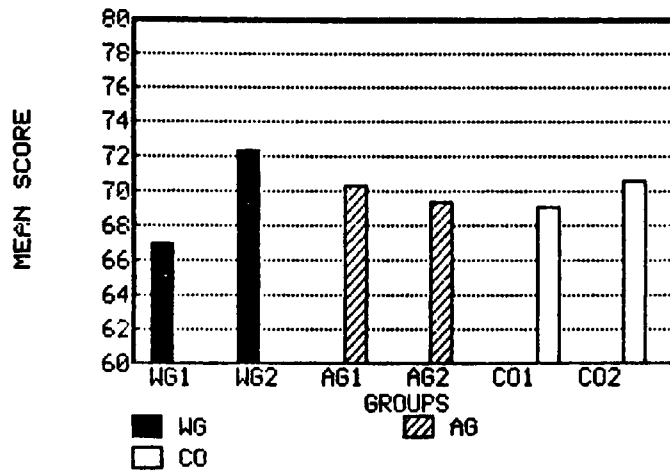


CHART 12

## COMPOSITE SCORES



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Log of Extraneous Influences**

### **Log of Extraneous Influences**

These events occurred in the Liberty Wesleyan Church during the year in which the contextual project was being conducted. Potentially, they were factors which may have had a renewal influence upon the participants in this project. These experiences were not part of the planned activities for the Wesley Groups or the at-large group. No device was used to control the possible influence such events may have had upon the outcome of the project.

#### November 1986

- Fall Revival: Five persons received spiritual help at the church altar.
- "The Lord came" on the service: Many testimonies, followed by a closing prayer with everyone gathered around the altar.
- High Attendance Day in Sunday school; a record "204" attending. This record attendance caused this church to beat another church in an attendance contest.
- A faithful member of the church died, Mrs. Betty James.
- Four new members were received into the church.

#### December 1986

- One adult was converted while he was in the intensive care unit at a local hospital.
- Another adult was converted at his home.

#### February 1987

- A faithful member died, Mrs. Lois James. She had served for many years as the secretary of the Board of Administration.
- "The Lord came" on the service: The spirit of God was at work and four persons came to the altar for prayer.

#### March 1987

- Mrs. Virginia Simpson shared her testimony during the morning worship service. She praised God for his grace during her year-long battle with leukemia.
- Spring Revival: Five persons were converted during this week.

May 1987

- A faithful member died, Mrs. Clara Strader. She was the wife of the only living charter member of this church.
- Received nine new members into the church.
- Baptized eleven persons.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Questionnaire**

### Appropriate Renewal Indicators

The process of constructing the questionnaire consisted of

- (1) collecting a pool of statements that characterize spiritual renewal, and
- (2) selecting from that pool those statements that best describe renewal in keeping with the nature of this project.

Nineteen characteristics of renewal were selected and are listed here.

The number preceding each characteristic corresponds to the number of the related statement on the questionnaire.

These characteristics, or indicators, were selected because they were mentioned often by several authorities representing a variety of theological affiliations in the field of renewal. In keeping with the expressed needs of the participating congregation, the indicators selected pertained primarily to a Christian's devotional attitude and behavior and to a congregation's relational and worship tone.

#### Renewal Indicators

- S 7. Self-Image
- S 8. Private Prayer
- S 9. Intercessory Prayer
- S10. Bible Reading
- S11. Personal Victory
- S12. Fasting
- S13. Personal Evangelism
- S14. Financial Participation

- S15. Frequency of Worship
- S16. Feeling Tone of Worship
- S17. Effectiveness of Worship
- S18. Corporate Prayer
- S19. Praise of God
- S20. Holy Communion/The Lord's Supper
- S21. Caring & Sharing
- S22. Bible Study
- S23. Lay Leadership
- S24. Ministry Opportunities
- S25. Church Mood: Survival or Growth

#### Sources of Renewal Indicators

- Coleman, Robert E. Dry Bones Can Live Again.
- Dunnam, Maxie. Alive in Christ.
- Getz, Gene A. The Measure of a Church.
- Harper, Steve. Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition.
- . John Wesley's Message for Today.
- Holmes, Urban T. Turning to Christ: A Theology of Renewal and Evangelization.
- Kelsey, Morton. Encounter with God.
- Larsen, Earnest. Spiritual Renewal of the American Parish.
- Lovelace, Richard F. Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal.
- . Renewal as a Way of Life.
- Raines, Robert A. New Life in the Church.
- Schaller, Lyle. Activating the Passive Church: Diagnosis and Treatment.



Snyder, Howard A. The Problem of Wineskins: Church Structure in a Technological Age.

---. The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal.

Trueblood, Elton. The Company of the Committed.

---. The Incendiary Fellowship.

## Letter from the Consultant

**Duke University**  
DURHAM  
NORTH CAROLINA  
27708

THE DIVINITY SCHOOL

November 12, 1985

TELEPHONE (919) 684-3234

The Reverend Forbis Kivett  
Liberty Wesleyan Church  
Route 1, Box 277  
Summerfield, North Carolina 27358

Dear Mr. Kivett:

Thanks for sharing the copy of your survey instrument with me. You have done a good job in designing this questionnaire. It should get the type of data you need.

Cordially,

  
Robert L. Wilson  
Professor of Church and Society

RLW:cys

## CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

### Questionnaire

I. D. # \_\_\_\_\_ (Last four digits  
of Soc. Sec. No.)

[Please check the items which best describe you]

1. AGE:    \_\_\_ 18 - 24                   \_\_\_ 45 54                   \_\_\_ 65 74  
          \_\_\_ 25 34                   \_\_\_ 55 64                   \_\_\_ 75 Older  
          \_\_\_ 35 44

2. GENDER:       \_\_\_ Female                   \_\_\_ Male

3. MARITAL STATUS:       \_\_\_ Married                   \_\_\_ Single

4. EACH AREA IN WHICH YOU ARE AN ELECTED OR APPOINTED LEADER  
(such as, director, chairperson, teacher, president, vice-president,  
secretary, treasurer, program chairperson, supervisor)

___ Bible Study	___ Committee or Board
___ Missions	___ Community service or crisis ministry
___ Music	___ Evangelistic outreach
___ Youth	___ Finance or property
___ Ushering	___ Men's or Women's Fellowship

OTHER:

5. AN ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF YEARS you have attended this church.

___ Less than 1 year	___ 6 10 years
___ 1 2 years	___ 11 15 years
___ 3 5 years	___ More than 15 years

6. AN ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF YEARS you have been a Christian.

(A Christian is to be understood: You asked Jesus to forgive your sins,  
you received him by faith as your personal Lord and Savior, and you  
have been serving him to the best of your ability.)

___ Less than 1 year	___ 6 - 10 years
___ 1 2 years	___ 11 15 years
___ 3 5 years	___ More than 15 years
___ I am not a Christian yet.	

Page - 2

[Please circle the number that most nearly applies to you.]

7. I feel my spiritual condition is

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 Weak or Empty                      About Half                      Strong or Full

8. I pray in my own private devotional time

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 Almost never    Sometimes    Once per week    Once daily    More than once daily

9. I pray for people (beyond those in my family) who have needs.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 Almost never    Sometimes    Once per week    Once daily    More than once daily

10. I read the Bible for my personal devotions and study.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 Once a year    Once a month    Once a week    Once daily    More than once daily

11. I am able to win over temptations to sin and over frustrations and difficulties in my Christian life.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 Almost never                      Half the time                      Always

12. I have "fasted" (given up a meal) in order to pray for a need.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 Never                      Once                      Several times                      Many times                      Each week

13. I share with non-Christians what Christ means to me and encourage them to receive Him as the satisfaction and peace for their hearts.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 Never                      Once                      Several times                      Many times                      Weekly

14. As an expression of my gratitude to God, I give from my income to the church

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 About 1%    About 5%    Nearly 10%    Full 10%    More than 10%

Page - 3

15. I attend worship services in this church

1	2	3	4	5
Twice each year	Twice each quarter	Once each month	Once each week	Twice or more each week

16. As I attend worship services in this church, I feel

1	2	3	4	5
Like an outsider; I'm uneasy.				Like I belong; I'm appreciated.

17. The worship services in this church put me in touch with God so that my faith is refreshed and my commitment is strengthened.

1	2	3	4	5
Almost never	Sometimes	Once a month	Once a week	Every service

18. Our congregational prayer times are

1	2	3	4	5
Routine and dull				Inspirational and expectant

19. The church has a mood of gladness and praise to God.

1	2	3	4	5
Almost never				Always

20. My Christian faith is strengthened through "The Lord's Supper" (Communion).

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Completely

21. This congregation has a sense of unity and caring, "bearing one another's burdens."

1	2	3	4	5
Hardly ever				All the time

22. My knowledge and understanding of the Bible have been helped through my association with the people of this congregation.

1	2	3	4	5
Almost none				Extremely much

Page - 4

23. Programs to train adults as leaders in the Christian life and in the ability to express their faith are provided (beyond Sunday School and mid-week prayer service).

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Never \_\_\_\_\_ Every week

24. Opportunities for people to become involved in ministry as an expression of their Christian witness are

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Very limited; Almost unlimited;  
 A few people New ways are  
 do everything. constantly being  
 created.

25. This congregation is

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Satisfied as they Eager to expand the  
 are; their best days program and reach  
 are in the past. new people; their best  
 days are ahead.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thank you.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Walking With Wesley In Spiritual Formation Groups**

**Letter to the Selected Participants  
of the Wesley Groups**

**Liberty Wesleyan Church**

HIGHWAY 158 EAST, ROUTE 1, BOX 277  
SUMMERFIELD, NORTH CAROLINA 27358

Forbis L. Kivett, Pastor

Church Office  
(919) 643-6968

Parsonage  
(919) 643-4176

You may recall that during the past three Sundays it has been announced that small groups were going to be gathered for an enriching adventure under the theme, **Walking With Wesley in Spiritual Formation**. This letter is a follow-up to those announcements.

You have been selected at random, along with seven other married of your age range, to participate in one of the four groups. Your group will meet twice each month, starting with this month of September and going through next June. The meetings will last between one hour to one hour and a half. The exact time of your meeting will be set by your group. The leader of your group will be

The nature of the meetings will be to experience together the way John Wesley went about nurturing spiritual growth among the Christians who had come to know Christ under his ministry. Wesley has been recognized as a person far ahead of his time because of his insightful, innovative and effective approach. Your group will enjoy video presentations about the life and times of John Wesley in the beginning meetings. All four groups will meet together at least twice during these months: first, for a 'Christian love feast' as done by Wesley; second, for Holy Communion, giving special emphasis to the 'means of Grace' feature as Wesley did.

Prayer and sharing each person's 'story' will be parts of every meeting. You will experience the special sense of 'belonging' and of 'being cared for' within the group. A 'closer walk' with one another and with the Lord will be part of the benefits of Walking With Wesley in Spiritual Formation.

Each person in the group should have experienced salvation through faith in Christ. Also, each person should intend to be present at all of the meetings if at all possible.

this is an excellent opportunity! I hope you can participate. I will phone you by this weekend to talk with you about being a part of this new venture in Christian living!

Cordially yours in Christ,

Forbis Kivett, Pastor



## WESLEY GROUPS MEETINGS

### Annotated Outline

<u>Meeting #</u>	<u>Theme</u>
#1 . . . .	Orientation: definition of spiritual formation and Wesley's band model, covenant of the participants, first meeting as each of the five groups left the assembly room for their room.

### UNIT A

Meetings 2 - 6 (Total of five meetings)

Each meeting began with a thirty-minute video\* on a particular facet of John Wesley's life or the early Methodist Movement.

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| #2 . . . | Video: "A Family Heritage"      Narrator shares recollections of the Wesley parents and grandparents, including their theological heritage.                           |
| #3 . . . | Video: "Formative Years"      Presents major influences of Wesley's childhood, his ministry in Georgia, and his Aldersgate experience.                                |
| #4 . . . | Video: "The Revival"      Explores Wesley's relationship with George Whitefield, the early open-air preaching success, and the beginnings of the societies and bands. |
| #5 . . . | Video: "Wesleyan Theology"      Explains some teachings Wesley wanted his people to accept, other teachings to avoid.   |
| #6 . . . | Video: "The General Rules of the Societies:      Presents the rationale for the high expectations of Christian lifestyle for a Methodist.                             |

---

\* The video series, "Charles Wesley Remembers," was produced by Good News Television, Atlanta, Georgia. Rental arrangements were made with Wesley Press, P. O. Box 50434, Indianapolis, IN 46250-0434.

- #7 . . . . "Love Feast" - All five Wesley Groups met together in the church fellowship building. The love feast was defined as to its Biblical basis, historical perspective, and use by Wesley. A single loaf of bread was passed and a beverage was served. Sharing of Christian testimonies, singing, and prayers were included.

#### UNIT B

Meetings 8 14 (Total of seven meetings)

Each meeting focused on a chapter in Steve Harper's book, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition. Each participant was presented a personal copy of this book.

- #8 . . . . Chapter 1 "John Wesley: Man of Devotion."  
 #9 . . . . Chapter 2 "Constant Company with Christ." (Prayer) This meeting began a study of what Wesley termed the "Instituted Means of Grace."  
 #10 . . . . Chapter 3 "The All-Sufficient Word. (Scripture)  
 #11 . . . . Chapter 4 "Food for the Journey." (The Lord's Supper/ Communion)  
 #12 . . . . Chapter 5 "Hunger for Righteousness." (Fasting)  
 #13 . . . . Chapter 6 - "Life Together." (Christian conference/small groups ministry)  
 #14 . . . . Chapter 7 - "Into the World." This meeting focused on what Wesley termed the "Prudential Means of Grace."  
 #15 . . . . "Communion Service" The groups met separately for a Bible study about communion and then they gathered together for the communion service.

**UNIT C**

Meetings 16 19 (Total of four meetings)

Each meeting focused on matters of the Christian heart.

- #16 . . . . "Rules of the Band Societies." There was mutual sharing related to Wesley's "starter questions."
- #17 . . . . Several relational activities and Wesley's starter questions were used.
- #18 . . . . More relational activities and Wesley's starter questions were used.
- #19 . . . . Wesley's definition of sin in the believer and his emphasis on intention in the life of a Christian were discussed.
- #20 . . . . "Love Feast" Food consisted of fruit, cheese, bread, and beverage. All five groups met together. They enjoyed an enthusiastic time of sharing what the Wesley Group experience had meant to them and what victories in their walk with Christ they had experienced during the ten months. Prayer together included special gratitude for the five group leaders.

## WALKING WITH WESLEY IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

### First Meeting

#### I. Assembly of all Groups

##### A. Two Songs:

1. "The More We Get Together"
2. "Blest Be The Tie That Binds"

##### B. Prayer

##### C. Definition of "Spiritual Formation," or, "Where does 'Walking with Wesley' fit in?"

"Spiritual Formation" is growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the process by which the image of Christ is formed in us. It has to do with the attitudes and activities that shape one's Christian life.

##### D. The Importance of John Wesley's emphasis on Christian nurture through groups.

1. Jesus' example of calling together the twelve: "And Jesus said unto them, Follow me" (Matthew 4:19).
2. The example of the Church immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Acts 2:42. Here fellowship was centered in the Christian Faith.
3. Wesley's experience in places where no small nurture groups existed. Wesley remarked after a visit to Pembrokeshire where no nurture groups were meeting: "the consequence is that nine out of the ten once-awakened are now faster asleep than before."
4. As a proper response to God's initiative. The Wesleyan equation was: "Grace plus response equals growth." Wesley taught that there are five (5) instituted means or channels through which God conveys his grace to believers. These were the normal ways that God used to help the believer to grow in grace. These five were "instituted" or ordained by Christ, namely, **Prayer, Scripture, the Lord's Supper, Fasting, and Christian group Fellowship.**

Using a variety of groups, Wesley saw several key elements put into practice: nurture, study, encouragement, stewardship, witness and service. All of these key elements were needed in the Christian life and they were best developed through the group experience.

##### E. Wesley's Christian Fellowship Groups

<u>Group</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Focus</u>
Society	Entire congregation (often more than a hundred)	Preaching/Teaching	Head
Class	Twelve persons divided into Classes according to neighborhoods. Men/women, adults/youths, saints/sinners.	Examination of Christian living	Hands
Band	Five ten persons. All were Christians; membership by invitation; grouped by gender, marital status, and age.	Full sharing or one's own 'story' and confessing of needs.	Heart

#### F. BAND Group (in Wesley's own words)

##### 1. Origin:

"By the blessing of God upon their endeavors to help one another, many found the pearl of great price. Being justified by faith, they had 'peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' These felt a more tender affection than before, to those who were partakers of like precious faith; and hence arose such a confidence in each other, that they poured out their souls into each other's bosom . . . These, therefore, wanted some means of closer union; they wanted to pour out their hearts without reserve. . . In compliance with their desire, I divided them into smaller companies; putting the married or single men, and married or single women, together."

[John Wesley's 'band' is a reminder that there are some things in the spiritual life that men need to share with men and women with women.]

##### 2. Benefits:

"Great and many are the advantages which have ever since flowed from this closer union of the believers with each other." Wesley named some benefits as

- healed of faults
- victories won over temptations
- fortified in the most holy faith
- rejoicing in the Lord abundantly
- strengthened in love
- inspired to every good work

#### G. Participation Requirements

1. Invitation Persons are to be a Christian; married and currently living with your spouse or single for a single's band. Persons are selected at random and then invited to participate.
2. Interest Persons are to begin with and maintain a positive interest in the content and activities of the group.
3. Intention Persons are to "covenant" with the members of your group to be present at every meeting unless it becomes impossible to be at a meeting. There will be twenty (20) meetings, usually two each month. Each meeting will last between an hour to an hour and a half. Each group will agree on its own meeting times.

## II. Meeting of Separate Groups

- A. Meet those in your group, including your leader.
- B. Agree on a time and place for your regular meeting.
  - Day of the Week: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Hour of the Day \_\_\_\_\_
  - Place (the church is fine) \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Conclude with a prayer together, specifically for God's blessings upon your group and each member in it as you begin this adventure in Christian fellowship!

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Second Meeting

**I. Video: "A Family Heritage" - Charles Wesley Remembers.**

Produced by Good News Television, Atlanta, GA.

[Outline & comments by Forbis Kivett]

The video presents Charles Wesley, John's brother, sharing recollections of the history of the Methodist movement with his daughter, Sally. Charles is eighty years of age at this time; the date is January, 1788. The setting is England. Keep in mind that Charles sometimes refers to John as 'Jackie.'

This outline is intended to highlight some spiritual formation influences presented in the video.

**A. SCHOLARSHIP AND STUDY OF GOD'S WORD, or**

"The Theological Touch"

1. Grandfather Samuel Annesley (Susanna's father) was an outstanding priest in the Church of England. As a young boy he established the habit of reading twenty (20) chapters in the Bible each day. This gave him a thorough knowledge of the Bible and a strong sense of moral right and wrong. He refused to give greater importance to any writing over the Bible, even the Prayer Book of the Church of England.
2. Grandfather John Westley (note the "t" in the last name; it was later dropped from the family name by Samuel), the father of John and Charles) was a classical scholar. He knew several languages including Greek, Hebrew and Latin.
3. Father Samuel Wesley was a classical scholar also. He was often invited to speak at convocations and was known as a great preacher everywhere he went except at the church which he pastored. He wrote poetry, a trait which was continued in his sons Samuel and Charles. John was an able writer too, evidenced by his diary, sermons and hymns. Although grandfather Rev. Westley was in the Dissenting Church, father Samuel Wesley chose the Church of England.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Page 2  
 Meeting  
 Second  
 Video: "A Family Heritage"

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

4. Mother Susanna Annesley Wesley was a deeply religious woman and was knowledgeable about the Bible, theology and Christian education.
    - a. She left the Dissenting Church because it leaned toward the Calvinistic teaching that persons are predestined to be either saved or lost. She joined the Church of England because it taught what she understood the Bible to say: "whosoever will may be saved."
    - b. She came from a large family, the last of either 24 or 25 children to be born into the Annesley family. She had an understanding of the developmental readiness of children and of their individual needs.
      - (1) She taught the children the alphabet and had them memorize the Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, the creeds of the Christian Faith.
      - (2) She arranged to spend special time with each child once a week. This was time just for the two of them to share and listen to each other. She helped them solve their problems and taught them truths about living the Christian life. Charles said this was one of the greatest factors in shaping his life.
- B. HUMAN REALITIES OF FAMILY LIVING, or "The Human Touch"**
1. Susanna came from a large family and gave birth to nineteen children of her own. Nine of these died in infancy. Three boys and seven girls survived. In view of the fact that nearly one-half of the children died early in life, this family was fully acquainted with grief and how thin is the thread of life that holds mankind.
  2. Samuel Wesley was somewhat impractical and had difficulty managing money so that he was often in debt. Once some people who wanted to get even with him caused him to be put in jail because of a debt. This matter was soon cleared up. Susanna was very practical, administering the household by the twin rules of hard work and thorough economy.

Page 3  
 Second Meeting  
 Video: "A Family Heritage"

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

3. The strong opinions and independent nature of both Samuel and Susanna caused a short 'separation' once. Samuel prayed for the current king of England but Susanna would not because she considered the exiled James line to be the rightful heirs to the throne. Samuel told her that if she did not pray for the current king he would never sleep with her again and would not even live in the same house with her. He left for a distant speaking engagement. While away he learned that he could have a job as chaplain on a British ship. Arriving back home, he told Susanna that he was considering taking the chaplain job. She pointed to their children and asked how he could desert them. Then he looked at her and saw how attractive she was and considered the strength of her character. He decided that she was right and they were reconciled. [It is interesting to note that within a year after they were reunited John Wesley was born -- 1703]

C. A SENSE OF DESTINY FOR JOHN, or  
 "The Divine Touch"

In 1709 the parsonage at Epworth was set on fire by rebellious sinners. Samuel had preached vigorously against the sins prevalent there, especially drunkenness and carousing. This was the second time fire had been set to the parsonage. It was thought that everyone had escaped from the burning house when John's cries were heard. Men lifted him to safety through a window that was encircled with flames. His mother and John always thereafter believed that God had a special mission for John since he had been rescued as "a brand plucked from the burning."

II. Personal History Giving - - - "Four Questions."

III. Prayer - Each person in turn.



Walking With Wesley In Spiritual Formation  
 Second Meeting  
Leader's Material

•Personal History Giving - "Four Questions"

History giving is the practice of simply sharing something of ourselves: where we are coming from, what some of our past experiences have been, and how we feel about some things in the present.

In some groups a deep level of mutual appreciation may be quickly formed as individuals share some of the **significant childhood memories** of their lives.

The four questions are listed below. Go around your group with the first question before sharing the second question, and so on.

1. Where were you living between the ages of 7 and 12?  
 What were the winters like?
2. How did you heat your house during this time?
3. What was the center of warmth in your life during this time? (This can be a place in the house, a person, or a time of year.)
4. When did God become a "warm" person to you and how did it happen?

- Idea from Lyman Coleman's Search the Scriptures,  
 Serendipity House Publishers, Box 1012, Littleton,  
 Colorado 80160

•Hymn - - "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love;  
 The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above.

We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear,  
 And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part, It gives us inward pain;  
 But we shall still be joined in heart And hope to meet again.

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Third Meeting

- I. Video: "Formative Years" - Charles Wesley Remembers.**  
Produced by Good News Television, Atlanta, GA.  
[Outline & comments by Forbis Kivett]

This outline is intended to highlight some spiritual formation influences presented in the video.

Here are four major experiences which had an impact on the Wesleys.

**A. HUMAN EXPERIENCE - "Hedi" - 1724**

1. Hedi was a daughter in whom father Samuel had taken special delight. She was intelligent to the point that she read the Greek New Testament along with her father when she was only eight years of age. She had been taught Christian morals from childhood. However, she made a mistake in judgment. Agreeing to elope after Samuel refused her permission to marry the lawyer, she also agreed to spend the night with her fiance in the inn on the basis of his promise that they would be married in the morning. The next morning he rejected her. Later she discovered she was going to have a baby. She went to her father for comfort and direction. Father had always been harsh with sin. He believed that sin had to be punished. He reacted in the manner of English custom rather than the spirit of Christ, doing this in spite of the fact that he had written a book on the life of Christ. He disowned her and told her not to return to his house, not even to attend his funeral. He made an effort at taking the harshness out of his actions by arranging for her to marry a rough laborer who also was often drunk. Although this hastily arranged marriage was intended to give the baby a proper name, the baby died at birth. It appears that father Samuel made a mistake also in that he left no room for reconciling grace. Hedi followed her heart without listening to her head; father Samuel followed his head without consulting his heart.
- 2.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**B. DISCIPLINED EXPERIENCE - "Holy Club" - 1729**

1. Charles Wesley and two other students felt the need to do better in college and so formed a little club to assist one another in their studies. These were very serious young men who were trying
    - To work out their own salvation,
    - To do the best work they could at the University of Oxford, and
    - To do as much good for others in the community as they could (such as, visiting the sick, ministering at the jail, getting medicine-food-fuel for those in need).
  2. A few months later John Wesley returned to the campus to be a teacher in Greek. The group asked John to be their Director and he agreed. John told them they were not getting enough work done and they would need to get up at 5:00 A. M. rather than 6:00. This gave them time to have devotions, study the Bible, prepare for class, exercise and have breakfast before going to class. They went to church and received Communion every Sunday. Then, John told them they could improve on what they were doing and to get up at 4:00 A. M. rather than 5:00. They really got the work done then!
  3. Understandably, some of the other students nicknamed them: 'Bible moths,' 'The Holy Club,' and 'Methodists.' This last nickname stuck with them and eventually became the name of a major denomination today.
  4. One of the primary books used as a devotional guide by this group was one written in 1728 by William Law, A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.
- C. PASTORAL EXPERIENCE - "Mission to America" - 1735-37**
1. High Hopes. Both John and Charles Wesley were priests in the Church of England sailing across the Atlantic to minister to those in the new Colony of Georgia established by Col. Oglethorpe in 1733. Mother Susanna gave her blessing even though she might never see them again because of the dangers of such a mission. (She was a widow now, her husband had died earlier this same year, 1735).

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

2. Difficulties and Disappointments.

- Charles took malarial fever and the sand gnats tormented him. The plotting and rumors by Mrs. Hawkins and Mrs. Welch caused suspicion between Charles and Oglethorpe. His ministry thus was undermined and he returned to England.
- John tried to talk to Mrs. Hawkins in order to straighten the rumors and accusations out but she came at him with a pistol in one hand and a pair of shears in the other. When her husband was pulling her off John she closed down on his coat sleeve with her teeth and tore it.
- John dated a prominent young lady but could not make up his mind to marry her. Her name was Sophy Hopkey. He told her she could marry another suitor if she wanted to and she did. She became less attentive to church attendance and did not give advance notice that she would receive Communion. John refused to serve Communion to her since she had not made proper preparation. The husband accused John of acting like a disgruntled suitor and improperly performing the duties of a priest. Legal suits were filed and John was harassed for six months. In December, 1737, John left Georgia for England.

D. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE - "Heart Strangely Warmed" - 1738

1. On their voyage to America John and Charles were impressed by the way the Moravian adults and children had no fear during storms at sea. The Moravians told them, "We have a faith of assurance; you have a faith of hope. We know we are in the hands of God regardless of what happens!"
2. Both John and Charles were despondent over their failings in Georgia. They talked to some Moravians who told them to trust God . . . to receive the grace of God through faith.
3. On May 21, 1738, Charles received the "assurance" from God that all was well. He was at his home at the time.
4. On May 24, 1738, while John was attending a little church on Aldersgate Street hearing the reading of Luther's Preface to the book of Romans, about 8:45 P. M., he 'felt his heart strangely warmed' and the "assurance" that all was well between his soul and God. This was the turning point in the lives of both men!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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**II. Group Activity: "Failure into Success."**

Share together passages/examples from the Bible where God turned seeming failure into success, such as,

- Joseph - "They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."
- Moses - Attempted to relieve the suffering of his people by killing the Egyptian guard but then had to flee for his life. Then, forty years later God used him to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery.

**III. Sing together: "He Touched Me."**

Share personal examples in your own life where God touched you and brought success or victory!

**IV. Prayer - Each in turn - Holding hands or arms around shoulders of the person next to you.**

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Fourth Meeting

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**I. Video: "The Revival" - Charles Wesley Remembers.**

Video produced by Good News Television, Atlanta, GA.  
[Outline and comments by Forbis Kivett]

John and Charles Wesley, after returning to England from Georgia, had no official appointment of religious service. However, inspired by their "spiritual experiences of assurance" in May, 1738, they preached whenever invited. Many pulpits of the Church of England were closed to them because of their "enthusiasm." Mainly, they spoke to groups of devoted believers known within the Church of England as "religious societies," and especially at the Fetter Lane Society in London which John and Charles had helped establish.

George Whitefield, an evangelist and previously a member with the Wesleys of the Holy Club at Oxford, returned from preaching in America. His style of preaching was not appreciated in the English churches and he soon was barred from the London pulpits. So he left London and went to Bristol.

Bristol, one hundred miles west of London, was a bustling port city of about 30,000 people, making it second in size to London in all of England. It was the coal mining center which supplied England's booming industrial revolution. Prosperity from international trade, including slaves, and the expansion of the number of ale houses (over 300) made Bristol a place where the gospel of Jesus needed to be preached.

On February 17, 1739, Whitefield preached for the first time in the open air to about 200 colliers (coal miners) at Kingswood. Within weeks the crowds had mushroomed to 10,000. Aware of John Wesley's preaching power and organizing skill, Whitefield called on Wesley for help.

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 Fourth Meeting  
 Video: "The Revival"

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Wesley didn't know what to expect; he had no prior plans. He listened to the request for help by his friend, Whitefield, asked the opinion of the Fetter Lane Society, and then went to Bristol to see what Whitefield was talking about. This proved to be the leading of the Holy Spirit similar to the Macedonian Call which came to the Apostle Paul in Acts 16:9-10.

Until now Wesley had preached only in regular church services in England. We get an insight into his thinking from Wesley's Journal entry for March 31, 1739:

In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (until very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.

On Monday, April 2, 1739, Wesley reports on his first open-air sermon:

At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people. The scripture on which I spoke was this, . . . "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." Journal.

Immediately Wesley began to organize. He formed a number of societies and bands. On May 9 he acquired a piece of property where he built his "New Room" as a central meeting place. When Whitefield returned to America in August, 1739, Wesley was left totally in charge of this growing work. The work soon spread from Bristol to London and then to Ireland and Scotland. The Wesleyan Revival had begun and would continue to feed goodness into life in England during the rest of the century!

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 Fourth Meeting  
 Video: "The Revival"

POINTS OF INTEREST

1. When the people did not come to the church, Wesley took the church to them! Wesley discovered true worship is possible in open air. He went to people who were hurting - poverty, disease, indebtedness, drunkenness, sinfulness. These people did not feel welcome in the church and did not feel like the priests could help them with their problems. Wesley offered them hope for them and their families; he offered them salvation from all sins; he offered them God's love and care; the invitation was whosever will. This is what God wanted to bless and bless He did!
2. Wesley discovered that laypersons may be anointed to preach just as well as ordained persons. Indeed, they may preach more what the Bible teaches than ordained preachers. Later he trained and sent out many lay preachers throughout the Methodist work.
3. Love is the way to win. He instructed his followers not to fight back when attacked. Even a brick to Wesley's face twice in the same service brought forth from him nothing but the message of love. When the opposition broke up their property and beat them physically, his followers responded with love. It wasn't long until love had won.  
 So often when a good work is being blessed by God, Satan is enraged and he stirs up opposition and strife. Love is the best response.
4. Charles Wesley wrote the Wesleyan theology into hymns. People loved to sing these Christian truths. One writer said that the Wesleys set England singing as a nest of singing birds!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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**II. Group Activity: "Affirmation"**

**III. Song: "My Desire"** (Sing or read together)

My desire, to be like Jesus  
My desire, to be like Him;  
His Spirit fill me, His love o'erwhelm me,  
In deed and word, to be like Him.

**IV. Prayer** -- Each person pray for the next person  
to the right until everyone has been prayed for.

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Fifth Meeting

**I. Video: "Wesleyan Theology" - Charles Wesley Remembers.**  
Video produced by Good News Television, Atlanta, GA.  
[Outline and comments by Forbis Kivett]

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**A. SOME MAIN BELIEFS**

1. The Wesleys believed that God created the universe and human beings as part of that creation. Man was without sin and in harmony with God.
2. The Wesleys believed that there came a time when man disobeyed God. This caused a blemish of soul, or put another way, a disease infected his soul. This blemish must be removed in order to restore harmony between that person and God.
3. The Wesleys believed that this blemish must be removed by repentance (a sorrow for sin in one's life and a turning from those sins) and faith in Jesus Christ as one's Savior. Before one makes this decision, the Holy Spirit deals with him in the process known as "Prevenient Grace," grace which goes before. In Biblical language, it is the grace that comes while we are "still sinners" (Romans 5:8).  
Salvation is a free gift of God. Works and good deeds before being saved have nothing to do with your receiving salvation because you cannot earn salvation. Afterwards your good works will evidence and grow out of your conversion, laying up treasures for you in heaven.  
At the time of this salvation, the sinner is "justified." The guiltiness is removed and it is as if the person had never sinned. This is what God does for us. He is covered by Christ's righteousness.

At the same time God does something in us through the "new birth" (John 3:3-8). Real change takes place within the heart of the person. (Compare 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Initial Sanctification begins with the new birth experience. This is what God begins in us, that is, the authentic development of the Christlike character along with the work of the Holy Spirit to purify and empower our lives. (Compare 2 Peter 1:1-11).

2. The Wesleys believed that we are to heed the scriptural call to "work out your own salvation" by making sure to cooperate with God's grace and thus to move forward in love, perfecting love as you go. This is part of the "healing process" of recovering from the effects of sin in one's heart and life. (Compare Philipians 2:12-13).

#### B. SOME DANGERS TO AVOID

1. Antinomianism - "unconditional eternal security. The antinomian says that salvation is the free gift of God given to us, giving us a new standing before God. That is, we are accounted (or imputed) righteous because of Christ's righteousness. After receiving it once, we are free to live like we want; even though we sin knowingly we will still go to heaven. Wesley rejected the notion of "once-saved-always-saved."
2. Latitudinarianism - "God loves everyone and will eventually save everyone." Wesley rejected this because it removed from man the responsibility of accepting salvation as a free gift from God. Those who will be saved are those who ask for and receive by faith in Christ this salvation as the free gift of God.

#### PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

3. Calvinism - "Some people are born to salvation and others to damnation, predestined by God." Susanna Wesley was followed by her sons in rejecting this teaching. They quoted John 3:16,17 as their understanding that salvation is offered to "whosoever will."
  4. Pharisaism - "Telling how good you are; religious pride" or a person making exaggerated claims for himself. Wesley said it is better to give a witness as to how good God's grace is. Let other people tell you how good you are. The matter of growth in grace must be guarded in order that we do not give a "better than thou" impression.
- C. SOME HELPS TO EMBRACE
- We should do these as ways of cooperating with God's grace toward Christlikeness.
1. Read the Bible. Wesley said he was a man of one book. Yet he read many other books. The Bible is the authority but other books help us understand the Bible.
  2. Be a giving person as an expression of love. There isn't any such thing as a selfish Christian. Jesus taught us to give because people have a need, not whether or not they deserve help. Have a motivation of love that makes you want to give to meet the needs of others.
  3. Participate in Communion/The Lord's Supper often. We need to be reminded of the suffering our Lord endured so that we could have the free gift of salvation. Such observance, sincerely done, renews and strengthens our faith and cultivates our fellowship with Christ.
  4. Meet with other Christians. People who meet regularly to examine their lives and to share with one another are most likely to make the most progress in spiritual growth.

## II. Group Activity: "Spiritual Friend"

Each of us would agree that it is important to have a spiritual friend. There is even a popular secular song which states:

"Everybody needs somebody sometime."

Christians have often felt warmth rise up within their hearts while singing the words of

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

Briefly share the story of how someone in your life has shown themselves to be a spiritual friend to you. This could be someone who has encouraged you, prayed for you in a special way, counseled you, stood by you in a crisis, etc.

**III. Prayer:** Affirm your "circle of spiritual friendship" by praying together "The Lord's Prayer" (using the word 'trespasses' instead of 'debts.')

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y  
IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Sixth Meeting

**I. Videos: "The General Rules of the Societies" - Charles Wesley Remembers.**

Video produced by Good News Television, Atlanta, GA.  
[Outline and comments by Forbis Kivett]

This video presents an explanation of the reasons for the high expectations of Christian living required of every Methodist.

**A. By Doing No Harm, By Avoiding Evil Of Every Kind**

1. Not to take the name of God in vain (cursing using the name of God).
2. Not to profane the day of the Lord. Six days shalt thou labor but the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord. Take one day a week for study and relief of the stress in one's life; you will be better for it.
3. Not to drink spiritous liquors except for required medicinal purposes. Methodists to leave beverage alcohol alone.
4. Not to fight, quarrel and sue one another. Do not argue with another person and then go about boasting how you got him told. You should return good for evil.
5. Not to misrepresent your goods in buying and selling. Do not try to fool people about your product.
6. Not to scheme to deceive the government about your tax responsibility. For example, do not bring items into the country and sell them without paying tax on them.
7. Not to repeat damaging rumors (of irregularities or sins) about church leaders and government leaders.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

8. Not to do unto others that which you would not want done to you.
9. Not to do those things that are not for the glory of God.  
Example: Putting on gold and costly clothing in order to impress other people. It would be better to contribute your money to support dispensaries (clinics), hospitals, Christian schools and other ways of doing good. Remember, there is a final Judgement and we must be prepared for it. Methodists are not to deal in the luxuries of life.
10. Not to enter into those diversions which cannot lead to the glory of God. Example: Singing popular songs of the day; reading lewd books. Remember, as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. It is much better to read God's Word and to sing songs of the Christian faith.
11. Not to have the luxuries and enjoy the life of ease. If you want a great reward in the hereafter, you have got to meet the conditions. No saint ever became a saint by living in luxury. You must risk all rather than just live in nice surroundings. You must apply stern discipline and self-denial.
12. Not to lay up treasures on the earth while at the same time ignoring one's responsibility toward God. (Compare the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 12:16) Now, there's no need to get down and be poor, but also there is no virtue in just trying to lay aside a lot of money either. Remember John Wesley's rule: Make all you can; Save all you can; Give all you can! Make sure your giving is what it ought to be.
13. Not to go into debt without the probability of repaying the debt. This can destroy a person and an entire family. The Methodists were accused of starting with the lower class and then switching to the middle class. Not so. The Methodists did start work with the poor in the slums, encouraging them to follow these rules. But soon these rules changed their ways of approaching life and soon they became the middle class. These rules do work!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**B. To Do Good of Every Kind By Being Merciful According To Your Ability.**

You can't measure your Christianity by the things which you haven't done which were wrong. You are never given an eternal reward because you didn't do that which was bad. Rather, you are given your eternal reward because you did something good.

Help people whose bodies are weak. Help people who have had tragedies (assist them with food, shelter, clothing, medical help). Visit those in prison. Do good not only when you feel like it but whenever the need for help arises.

**C. Attend The Ordinances Of God.**

1. Baptism - Usually done only once but necessary for spiritual well-being.
2. Communion - To be participated in often. Something happens in the soul of a person taking communion. He is drawn to Jesus; he is strengthened in the Faith.

**II. Group Activity: "You and Your Group."**

- A. Think back over all the groups you have been in and try to pick out the best group in each category below. Share a description with your group.
- The group I had the most fun with.
  - The group I could still call on if I were in serious trouble.
  - The group I would like to see again before I die.
  - The group that brought me closest to God.



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Sixth Meeting  
Video: "The General Rules of the Societies."

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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

- B. From the Scripture, what are the ground rules for spiritual relationships in a group like this? Put it in your own words. Read Philippians 2:3-4.
  - C. The foundation scripture for Wesley's Band groups was James 5:16. Read this together.
  - D. What's the big deal about sharing with others; why is that important? Read together 2 Corinthians 1:4.
- III. Prayer** - Receive any prayer requests and then each person lead in prayer, each in turn around the room.

**WALKING WITH WESLEY  
IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Seventh Meeting

**Theme: "Love Feast"**

- I. DEFINITION** - Love Feast was a common meal eaten by early Christians in connection with the Lord's supper to express and deepen brotherly love. They probably connected the two because of the closeness of the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples and the institution of the Lord's Supper or Communion (Matthew 26:17-30).
- II. BIBLICAL BASIS** The "feasts of charity" (agape) are mentioned only once specifically in the New Testament, Jude 12. There the reference is made to persons who are blemishes on the otherwise wholesome occasions of love feasts. However, the mention of breaking bread as associated with, yet distinguished from, the eating of a meal in Acts 20:7-11 indicates the practice by the church at Troas. Also, the practice could have grown out of the communal meals observed by the early Church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-47; 4:35; 6:1).
- III. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE** - The love feasts were in use in the early church until the middle of the fourth century at which time the Church leaders prohibited them to be held in the churches. This prohibition was based on abuses of the practice (I Corinthians 11:20-22, 33-34) and it seemed to be sacrilegious to have the love feast near the time of Communion. However, later these love feasts were revived, in all the purity and simplicity of the early church, by the Moravians and the people called Methodists.
- IV. METHODIST LOVE FEAST** - Wesley wrote in his account of the Methodist movement, "In order to increase in them a grateful sense of all His mercies, I desired that, one evening in a quarter, . . . both men and women [meet] together that we might 'eat bread,' as the ancient Christians did, 'with gladness and singleness of heart.' At these love feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name, as well as the thing, which was in use from the beginning) our food is only a little plain cake and water. But we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with the 'meat which perisheth,' but with 'that which endureth to everlasting life.'  
--from Wesley's Works
- V. GROUP ACTIVITY**
- As the single loaf of bread is passed, serve yourself. Beverage will be distributed also.
  - As we share the common bread, share with the group what you have been experiencing in the group meetings and what God is doing in your life.
  - The meeting will conclude with singing and prayer.

**WALKING WITH WESLEY**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Eighth Meeting

**I. Group Activity - "Who Am I?"**

This is a guessing game. On a slip of paper or card which will be provided, jot down a comparison which describes you beside each of the following five things. Write the number of the item and then your comparison. Then place your slip of paper or card with that of every-one else in your group. These will be shuffled and mixed.

Now, someone should reach into the pile and draw out a slip of paper. Read the five descriptions and then each person in your group should guess who it is. When it is your turn to guess, you may disguise yourself by guessing someone else. When everyone has had a guess, and someone has guessed correctly, let the person who wrote the answers say, "You guessed it right." Then another slip of paper is selected and handled the same way.

- FIVE ITEMS:**
1. Kind of dog (Example: French Poodle)
  2. Automobile: year/model/color
  3. Kind of music (Ex.: country; rock; blues)
  4. Animal in the zoo (Ex.: panda bear; lion)
  5. TV Character (Ex.: Phyllis Diller; Magnum)

-- From Body Building by Lyman Coleman and Serendipity House.

**II. "JOHN WESLEY: MAN OF DEVOTION" -- Chapter I**  
Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition, by Steve Harper.

Why look to John Wesley as a guide for our devotional life?

Biblically speaking, his primary scripture verses give us an insight into his devotional motivation. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39). His devotional life was for him an avenue through which he could more perfectly love God and others.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

## FIVE KEY ELEMENTS IN WESLEY'S DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES:

1. Wesley's Devotional Life Has A Realism About It.  
He was not perfect; he made mistakes just like we do. Rather than emphasize our mistakes, Wesley would have emphasize the healing, restoring grace of God.
2. Wesley's Devotional Life Has A Discipline About It.  
Wesley had dry times just like we have. He reminds us not to base our devotional life on our emotions but to center it in our will.
3. Wesley's Devotional Life Has A Breadth About It.  
He often referred to himself as "a man of one book." The Bible was his foundation. Yet he was free to search through devotional material from a wide variety of Christian sources. Thus, Wesley challenges us to break out of our devotional narrowness and listen to the saints of the ages, all the while testing all things by the Bible.
4. Wesley's Devotional Life Has A Community Nature About It.  
He often would discuss insights and share devotional materials with others. He established nurture groups known as "classes" and "bands." It was inconceivable to him that true devotion could ever remain individualized, internal or private. Authentic spirituality always thrusts the Christian into involvement with others.
5. Wesley's Devotional Life Has A Church Dimension About It.  
Wesley never allowed this personal spirituality or the societies to be a substitute for attending the church worship services. He saw that to be a Christian is to be a functioning member of the body of Christ.

**DISCUSS:** Which of these five elements appeals most to you? Why?

**III. Prayer — The Band leader will instruct you.**

W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y  
I N   S P I R I T U A L   F O R M A T I O N

Ninth Meeting

I. "CONSTANT COMPANY WITH CHRIST" (Prayer) -- Chapter 2  
Devotional Life In The Wesleyan Tradition, by Steve Harper.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**Introduction:** John Wesley sought ways to express his devotion to Christ throughout the entire day. For him the way to do this was by what he called **"the means of grace."** These were spiritual disciplines which people used to express their faith and receive God's grace. They were divided into two categories: the Instituted and the Prudential means of grace. The Instituted means were those disciplines evident in the life and teaching of Jesus. The Prudential means were those which had been developed by the church to give further order and expression to the Christian life. Taken together, they enabled a person to live a "devotional life."

More specifically, the Instituted means of grace were: Prayer, searching the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conference (small group sharing). Prudential means of grace were any rules developed by the church to structure Christian living. Wesley established the following disciplines for those in the classes and bands:

- (1) Doing no harm - As examples, Wesley spoke of the need to abstain from swearing, drunkenness, smuggling, extravagant dress, useless diversions, self-indulgence, miserliness.
- (2) Doing good - such as, caring for men's bodies, especially the poor, the sick, and the distressed; caring for men's souls by instruction, exhortation, and reproof, with particular responsibility for those of the household of faith.
- (3) Attending upon the ordinances of God - Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper, and regular attendance at the worship services of the church.

These prudential means of grace were changeable according to the needs of the church.

Wesley knew that these means would not create merit for our salvation; we are saved only by Christ's merit. However, the means of grace put us in a position of readiness to receive God's grace continuously.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**PRAYER**, for Wesley, was the chief means of grace. He called prayer "the grand means of drawing near to God!" Prayer had this importance because Wesley understood the Christian faith as a life lived in relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Thus, prayer was the key to maintaining this relationship. It is the "spiritual breathing" which sustains our life in Christ.

A. Wesley Prayed Privately

1. He prayed at the start of the day. He arose early but he went to bed early too. He managed between six and seven hours sleep per night.

He cultivated the skill of waking up creatively by having the mind of Christ formed within him at the start of the day. He utilized the common practice of having a weekly pattern, each day devoted to a particular topic. Also he used written prayers as well as extemporaneous prayers. Note, written prayers are not to be read but are to be prayed.

2. He prayed during the day. He developed the habit of praying a short prayer on the hour. This was an "internal" prayer. This was Wesley's application of what the Apostle Paul called "praying without ceasing." Today, people could use creative reminders to pray, such as, tape a prayer reminder on the telephone on one's desk or set one's digital watch to beep on the hour.

3. He prayed at the end of the day. Wesley reviewed the day and made appropriate confession for sins committed. He made resolutions to improve and committed himself to God's care during the night. By doing this, he was able to sleep in peace nearly all the days of his life. We too need to "turn loose" of our cares so we can sleep well.

B. Wesley Prayed Corporately

He knew private prayer was not sufficient for a healthy spiritual life, so he consciously looked for ways to pray with others. It signified that he was a member of the larger Body of Christ.

C. Wesley Prayed Using A Resourceful Variety of Ways

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. He varied the forms of his prayers, such as praying from the Anglican Church's Book of Common Prayer, his own prayer manual, other prayer books of his time, and prayers from the early church. He varied his prayers to avoid getting into a rut.
2. He prayed audibly and meditatively; aloud or silently, alone and in groups. He often enjoyed hymn singing along with praying out loud. "Mental prayer" allowed him to pray at any time.
3. His praying expressed the full range of prayer content. He praised, confessed, gave thanks, interceded for others and for his own needs. He expressed the full range of emotions: joy, sorrow, compassion, concern, trust. Honesty caused Wesley to bare his soul before God in doubts, questions and even cries of anguish (much like the Psalmist).
4. He read, studied, and used the prayers of others. He collected prayers, using insights from other people to advance his own prayer life. He shared these "prayer insights" with those who sought his spiritual counsel. Thus, we discover we are not alone in our spiritual pilgrimage; others have gone through stress, questioning, pain, defeats, and victories.

Wesley would want us to be convinced that we can know God in and through prayer. In the words of the hymnwriter, we really can "walk with him and talk with him." Now let us "go and do likewise."

**II. Group Activity -- Discuss the issues raised by our look at Wesley's prayer life.** The questions at the end of the chapter will help you focus your discussion.

**III. Additional Group Activity -- "Relational name you use for God."**

Archbishop Anthony Bloom, in his book Beginning to Pray, urges us to have a "nickname by which you can call the Almighty God, a nickname that has all the depth of your heart, all the warmth you

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are capable of." (p. 105) This isn't names with "the" in front of them, such as, "The Almighty," "The Lord," "The Creator," or "The Provider." Rather, it is a name like the expression which burst from the lips of David, "You, my Joy!" That is the moment when the Psalm comes to life! This is an expression from one person to another which was made possible by that relationship. It was a unique expression which describes what the person felt as he broke through to God. Bloom says, "Unless we can find the right name for God, we have no free, real, joyful, open access to Him." (p. 103)

**Think of your "nickname" for God.** You may have more than one and these may change as you continue in the Lord. If you have such a name and don't mind sharing it, please **Tell** the group and give your reason for this name. If you cannot recall such a name, be alert in the days ahead to discover one.

**IV. Prayer — Pray for whatever needs may have become known during your meeting.**



W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y  
IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Tenth Meeting

**I. Beginning Prayer -- Prayer by St. Francis of Assisi, 1226 A. D.**  
Read silently first. Next, as a group pray it aloud together.

"Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God,  
grant us in our misery [the grace]

to do for You alone

what we know You want us to do,  
and always

to desire what pleases you.

Thus,

inwardly cleansed,

interiorly enlightened,

and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,

may we be able to follow

in the footprints of Your beloved Son,

our Lord Jesus Christ.

And,

by Your grace alone,

may we make our way to You,

Most High,

Who live and rule

in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,

and are glorified

God all-powerful

forever and ever.

Amen."

**II. "THE ALL-SUFFICIENT WORD" (Scripture) -- Chapter 3**  
Devotional Life In The Wesleyan Tradition, by Steve Harper.

**Introduction:** For Wesley the second of the five Instituted Means of Grace was the Bible. He was committed to the centrality and authority of scripture. Although Wesley read hundreds of books and published approximately six hundred works on various themes, he continually referred to himself as "a man of one book." He said,

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"O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God!  
. . . here is knowledge enough for me."

The Bible gave Wesley two benefits: inspiration for his faith and direction for living. It led him into encounter with Almighty God and also provided him an objective base by which to "test the spirits to see whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1 RSV).

How did Wesley use the Bible to cultivate devotional life?

**A. Wesley Read The Bible Worshipfully**

He read in an unhurried, reverent manner, as in the presence of God. Early morning and late evening were his chosen times. These times allowed him quiet time in which to meditate on what he read. Quality was more important than quantity; often he would read a chapter or only a few verses.

**B. Wesley Read The Bible Systematically**

His system of reading enabled him to read through the Old Testament once and the New Testament more than once per year. Also, he used study aids (such as commentaries and Bible dictionaries) to gain a better understanding of the text. Further, he jotted down his discoveries so he could refer to them later.

**C. Wesley Read The Bible Comprehensively**

He developed a method which provided an unhurried and comprehensive experience. The main elements are:

1. Dailiness - morning and evening;
2. Singleness of purpose - to know God's will;
3. Correlation - to compare scripture with scriptures;
4. Prayerfulness - to receive instruction from the Holy Spirit;
5. Resolution - to put into practice what is learned.

**D. Wesley Read The Bible Purposefully**

He included two emphases:

1. The immediate application of God's word to his life. He used reflective reading, pausing frequently to examine his life by what he had read.

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

2. Seek to teach others what he has learned. Wesley shared insights with persons in either casual or formal occasions. Often he did this in response to a question or an experience the person had shared. He shared humbly, relying on the Holy Spirit to apply it to the person's heart.

E. Wesley Read and Used The Bible Corporately

He knew there was value for believers to sit together and hear God's word. So, he required Methodists to be faithful in attending services where the word of God would be preached and taught. Also, he required faithfulness in the reading and explanation of scriptures in family devotions.

Wesley led Methodist annual conferences in finding answers in the Bible to church administration problems. He and his brother, Charles, put biblical truths in their hymns. This gave the people another way to learn the biblical message as they worshiped.

In the spirit of Wesley, we should expect to meet God as we read and be willing to obey what He says to us.

Wesley would want to know that our time in God's word is changing us and bringing our lives into greater conformity to the image of Christ.

**III. Group Activity -- Discuss reading and studying the Bible, using the questions at the end of the chapter as a focus.**

**IV. Additional Group Activity -- An Experience in Bible Study.**

- A. Read Mark 4:35 - 41 (One person read while others follow)
- B. There are three storms in the scripture passage: weather, feelings, and faith. Complete the During and After parts of the storms.

	Weather Conditions	Inner Feelings	Faith Response
Before Storm	<i>Quiet</i>	<i>Peaceful</i>	<i>Running smooth</i>
During Storm			
After Storm			

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

C. My favorite way of dealing with pressure (storms) in my life is to:  
[check one]

1. take it out on everyone else
2. crawl into my shell
3. explode
4. get away from it all
5. seek counsel from a friend
6. do something for fun

D. In the scripture passage, the storm is described in two ways: cause (the wind), and effect (the waves). In my own life, the cause for stress is: [rank the top three -- 1 for greatest cause; 2 for the second greatest; 3 for the third greatest]

- \_\_\_ financial worry
- \_\_\_ pressure for good grades
- \_\_\_ drive to be successful
- \_\_\_ need to be popular
- \_\_\_ fear of failure
- \_\_\_ uncertainty about the future
- \_\_\_ feelings of inferiority
- \_\_\_ Something else (write it: \_\_\_\_\_ )

E. Share your answers to C. and D. with your group, each person in turn.

James 5:16 - "Confess your faults [needs] one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

V. Prayer - Pray that Jesus will speak to the storms in the lives of your group members: "Be quiet! . . . Be still."

[Note -- Lesson items IV. B,C,D are from Body Building, by Lyman Coleman and Serendipity House]

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Eleventh Meeting

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**I. "FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY" (The Lord's Supper / Communion)**  
**Chapter 4 -- Devotional Life In The Wesleyan Tradition,** by  
Steve Harper.

**Introduction:** Wesley insisted that true spirituality exists in relation to the Body of Christ, the Church. This principle is highlighted by the third of the five Instituted Means of Grace, the Lord's Supper or Communion. Wesley not only taught the importance of the Lord's Supper to spiritual growth, he practiced it. His diary reveals that he took part in the Lord's Supper on the average of once every four or five days.

**A. THE MEANING OF "THE LORD'S SUPPER."**

- What is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?
- What are we participating in when we receive the bread and grape juice?

Wesley provides a threefold answer.

1. The Lord's Supper Is A Memorial Meal.  
(Ref. Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:19; I Cor. 11:23-26.)

Both as an event and an experience.

- a. Event - The bread and juice direct our minds back to that once-for-all act of redemption of Christ's death in behalf of the whole world. Also, the effectiveness of that sacrificial death is still in force to whosoever will come to Christ.
- b. Experience - Wesley included but went beyond a mere recall or symbolic meaning. He emphasized the Hebraic meaning of 'remembrance' --to recall an event so thoroughly that the event comes alive, anew and afresh in the personal present. We should rise from Communion inspired, prepared and committed to serve the risen Savior!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

2. The Lord's Supper Communicates the Real Presence of Christ.

a. The Presence of Christ During the Lord's Supper

(1) Wesley did not mean transubstantiation or consubstantiation:

- Transubstantiation - The teaching that the bread and juice themselves change into the actual body and blood of Christ, although their appearance remains the same. This view is identified primarily with the Roman Catholic Church.

- Consubstantiation - The teaching that while the bread and juice are not changed in their composition, yet Christ is present in them, localized in them. This view grew out of the Reformation and has been historically identified with the Lutheran Church.

(2) Wesley preferred his Anglican Church view--"Real Presence"

"Real Presence" simply means that by his own choice the risen Christ is truly present whenever the Lord's Supper is observed. Christ does not come through the bread and juice; he comes through the Holy Spirit. The participant encounters the living Christ through the activity of the Holy Spirit. This divine-human encounter qualifies the Lord's Supper as a regular means of grace, instituted by Christ.

b. The Activity of Grace During the Lord's Supper

Wesley could never limit the activity of grace during the Lord's Supper. He saw it as communicating both

- Confirming Grace, whereby the follower of Christ is renewed, enriched, inspired, and re-committed to serve Christ; and
- Converting Grace, whereby the sinner (non-Christian) may receive preventive grace (preparing him for conversion), or justifying grace (conversion). And, the Christian may receive sanctifying grace (heart cleansing and filling by the Holy Spirit).

This is the reason Methodists always practiced 'open communion.' The invitation is given to anyone who truly and earnestly repents of sin. Grace is offered in the Lord's Supper and it can accomplish whatever God intends for the one who receives it.

One of Charles Wesley's hymns reflects this work of the Holy Spirit during Communion.

"Come, Holy Ghost, Thine influence shed,  
And realize the sign;  
Thy life infuse into the bread,  
Thy power into the wine.

"Effectual let the tokens be,  
And made by heavenly act.  
Fit channels to convey Thy love,  
To every faithful heart."

3. The Lord's Supper is a Pledge.

- a. Pledge of a future home in heaven.  
We hold in our hands and take into our bodies the physical dimension of God's promise to receive us to himself. Communion is a celebration begun here and looks forward to the banquet in heaven!
- b. Pledge of reunion with those who have gone to be with the Lord. Our reception of the bread and juice is a tangible contact with the great cloud of witnesses who have preceded us to be with the Lord!

B. SOME PRACTICAL CONCERNS.

1. The Problem of "eating and drinking unworthily."  
Some people do not take part in Communion because they feel unworthy and fear they will eat and drink damnation upon themselves (1 Cor. 11:27-29). Wesley said this arose out of a wrong interpretation of the Apostle Paul's words. Specifically, Paul was referring to the manner of taking Communion, rather than the character of the person receiving Communion. Everyone is unworthy, except the Lord. If we wait for perfection, no one will come to Communion. Only an unrepentant heart is a barrier to receiving Communion. Christ's commandment is, "Do this in remembrance of me." The call to Communion is a call to obedience more than it is a call to moral perfection.

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2. The Problem of Preparation  
Wesley instructs us to come to Communion with a repentant heart. If we refuse to repent, then we have a barrier to Communion and should not partake.  
Those who plan to participate in Communion should prepare by self-examination and prayer. The worship service should allow time to cultivate an open, humble and contrite attitude.
  3. The Problem of Frequency  
Wesley urged Christians to receive Communion as often as they could. He averaged receiving Communion more than once per week. However, frequency is not the primary issue. We should follow Wesley's 'spirit' about Communion first and his frequency second.
  4. The Problem of Children Partaking  
For us in the Wesleyan Church we should give attention to
    - "Spiritual Sensitivity" - having received Christ as their Savior; and
    - "Spiritual Instruction" - teaching children the meaning of taking the bread and juice and to have reverence for the event.
- II. Group Activity -- Discuss the issues of the Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace, using the questions at the end of the chapter as a focus.**
- III. Additional Group Activity -- Read together John 7:37-39. What is Jesus saying about the Holy Spirit in this passage? What does the Holy Spirit want to do in your life based on this passage? Discuss.**
- IV. Prayer -- for needs that you share with each other.**



W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y  
IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Twelfth Meeting

I. "HUNGER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Fasting) -- Chapter 5  
Devotional Life In The Wesleyan Tradition, by Steve Harper.

**Introduction:** The theme of "self-denial" is of major importance in the history of Christian spirituality. It emphasizes the view that the spiritual life concerns not only what we receive but also what we give up. It is this rhythm of giving and receiving which brings balance to our faith.

It is significant that Wesley included fasting as the fourth of the five Instituted Means of Grace. He was persuaded that fasting was "fully established in the church of God" and practiced by Christ himself (Matt. 6:16,17 -- "when ye fast" not "if ye fast," giving the meaning that he expected people to fast; Matt. 4:2 --He fasted).

Wesley was well aware of the abuses of fasting. [For more about these abuses, see in this lesson, II] He wrote, "Of all the means of grace there is scarce any concerning which men have run into greater extremes, than that of . . . religious fasting." Despite the abuses, Wesley believed the practice of fasting was a definite aid in spiritual growth.

A. MAIN FEATURES OF WESLEY'S TEACHING ON FASTING

1. Definition of fasting  
Wesley recognized the fundamental definition for fasting in the Bible: to abstain from food. His main concern was to advocate fasting as a discipline standing alone and without additional practices or regulations.
2. Times for fasting  
These varied widely in the Bible, ranging up to forty days. Wesley understood that the most common practice was one day's duration, from morning until evening. He noted that this was the usual manner of the early church also.

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3. Types of fasting  
Wesley was willing to recognize several types of fasting.
    - a. No food - The most common form called for not eating any food at all during the fast period. (Compare Jesus in Matt. 4:2 and Luke 4:2) Usually Wesley allowed the drinking of liquid during the fast.
    - b. Small amount of food - This was abstinence from normal amounts of food. It was a partial fast for occasions when one could not fast entirely, such as, in the case of a sick person who would need some food.
    - c. No pleasant/favorite food - This was selective fasting based on refraining from eating favorite foods or tasty delicacies. (Compare Daniel 10:3)
  4. Purpose of fasting
    - a. NOT for bodily mortification (subduing of passions or appetites). Wesley refused the notion of fasting as a way to prove one's spirituality. He wrote, "Yea, the body may sometimes be afflicted too much, so as to be unfit for the works of our calling. This also we are to diligently guard against; for we ought to preserve our health as a good gift of God."
    - b. For beneficial discipline, when approached sanely and from a biblical perspective. It could be used by those under conviction, those aware of intemperance in food and drink, and by those who wanted to find additional and special times for prayer. This connection between fasting and prayer was what Wesley wanted most to emphasize in the devotional life.
- B. WESLEY'S EXAMPLE OF FASTING**
1. Frequency - Wesley primarily observed fasting weekly on Friday and during the forty days of Lent, plus a few days established by the Church of England. Very early in the Methodist movement Friday became known as fast day.
  2. Duration - From Thursday after the evening meal until Friday prior to the evening meal. Usually he would drink some liquid during the fast, such as water, tea, or broth.

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3. Purpose - It was a time especially devoted to prayer. The only intention was to glorify God. It was a time of repenting, of receiving purifying grace, of drawing of the affections to things above, of increased earnestness to one's prayer, and of obtaining all the precious promises made to the believer by Jesus Christ. He also saw fasting as an act which God often chose to bless with revival among the people of the church.
  4. Result - A testimony was shared by Hannah Ball, an early Methodist: "...a fast-day to my body, but a feast day to my soul" . . . a time of "unusual freedom of spirit and communion with God."
- C. LESSONS FROM THE WESLEYAN TRADITION OF FASTING
1. Fasting is an act which glorifies God by providing additional, specific time for prayer.
  2. Fasting is an act which verifies the truth of the priority of spirit over the flesh.
  3. Fasting may serve as a protest to self-indulgent society, but never in a holier-than-thou attitude.

Today, when fasting has been either omitted or carried to extremes, the Wesleyan tradition serves us well in restoring fasting to a place of significance in the spiritual life.

**II. SELECTED THOUGHTS ON FASTING****A. NEGLECT OF FASTING**

Richard Foster, in his book Celebration of Discipline, states: "In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the Golden Arches and an assortment of Pizza Temples, fasting seems out of place, out of step with the times. In fact, fasting has been in general disrepute both in and outside the church for many years. For example, in my research I could not find one single book published on the subject of fasting from 1861 to

1954, a period of nearly one hundred years. More recently there has developed a renewed interest in fasting.' (p. 41)

#### B. BAD REPUTATION OF FASTING

The bad reputation of fasting is based upon the excessive and unhealthy practices which took place in the several hundred years which preceded the Reformation in the 1500's. This included a total renunciation of all physical comforts. Finally, it included various forms of self-inflicted bodily torture, such as wearing an animal hair shirt, sleeping in a sitting posture, wearing a spiked girdle.

These practices were based on false beliefs:

1. That God takes pleasure in man's suffering and hardship, that the hard path must be the will of God.
2. That exacting upon himself severe restrictions will earn merit from God, atoning for one's sins.
3. That the human body is of itself evil and in order to secure purity of soul man must separate the soul from all dependence upon the body. Thus, deny satisfaction of the bodily desires for comfort, sexual expression, sleep, or food. This was 'purity by subtraction.'

**III. GROUP ACTIVITY** -- Discuss fasting as a means of grace, using the questions at the end of the chapter as a focus.

**IV. PRAYER** -- Include prayer that in all we do we may glorify God, that we may seek him for the right reasons, that the attitudes and behavior of Christ may be formed increasingly in us all.

W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y  
IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Thirteenth Meeting

**1. "LIFE TOGETHER" (Christian Conference or small group ministry) --**  
**Chapter 6. Devotional Life In The Wesleyan Tradition, by Steve Harper.**

Introduction: No one can develop a mature spirituality alone. To be a Christian is to be called into community, to become a functioning part of the Body of Christ. Wesley thought this principle was so important that he made it a visible part of the lives of the early Methodists. He saw small group participation as an Instituted Means of Grace, the fifth in the list of five. He based its importance upon the example of Jesus when he called the twelve disciples and upon the New Testament's emphases on assembly and koinonia (Greek word which is most often translated "fellowship," specifically meaning mutual encouragement and admonition within the Body of Christ.)

Through a variety of group ministries, Wesley saw certain key elements mediated: **nurture, study, encouragement, stewardship, witness, and service.** All of these elements need to be present in the life of any believer, and Wesley believed they were best effected through the group experience.

**A. WESLEY'S GROUP MINISTRIES**

1. Society
  - a. Size - This was the largest unit of fellowship. The membership ranged from several hundreds to less than a hundred.
  - b. Purpose -
    - (1) "To pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation" -- Wesley's Works.
    - (2) For immediate nurture of those won to Christ. Wesley believed follow-up was necessary.
    - (3) For renewal of spiritual life and vigor like that of the early church described in Acts 2.

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- c. Frequency of meeting - Weekly in a 'preaching-house.
  - d. Membership requirement - Admission into the society had only one requirement, namely, "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins." Participation was voluntary.
  - e. Group activity - The content of these meetings was similar to a congregational worship service today, including singing, prayer, message, and mutual care. Leadership was by Wesley himself or someone he had appointed. In 1743 Wesley wrote the governing document for the societies, "The General Rules of the United Societies." The societies expanded rapidly.
2. Class
- Wesley came to see that the society group was too large to be effective. He knew that spiritual formation requires smaller, more intimate fellowship. So, the class meeting was developed as a second level of group life.
- a. Size - Each group numbered approximately twelve.
  - b. Purpose -
    - (1) To provide nurture more individually.
    - (2) To provide geographical participation in the Methodist fellowship. People were assigned to a class based upon where they lived.
    - (3) To exercise discipline, each week asking how they were going about living the gospel daily.
    - (4) To provide a basis for stewardship and mission. Weekly and quarterly offerings were received; each person was expected to give. Their monies went to aid the poor and support traveling Methodist preachers. This sense of mission kept the group from becoming ingrown and only interested in themselves.
  - c. Frequency of meeting - Weekly in a home.
  - d. Membership requirement - The members of the society were divided into classes of twelve. The one requirement was "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." Saved and unsaved were included. Participation was voluntary.

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- e. Group activity - Leadership was by a layman or laywoman. These 'class leaders' were actually sub-pastors in the Methodist system. The meeting consisted of hymn singing, prayer, and a time of questioning of each person by the leader as to state of his soul and behavior. Many were saved in these class meetings and many others were established in the faith.
- 3. Band
  - Wesley borrowed the idea for the 'band' from the Moravians, although it can be traced to a time even earlier than that. Originally, the band groups were the second level of group life but in 1742 they became third. "The Rules of the Bands" were written by Wesley in 1738, five years before the class groups began. Since the bands only admitted established Christians, an intermediate level was needed to include both saved and unsaved. Whereas the majority of those who attended the society participated in the class, only about 20% participated in the band groups.
  - a. Size - The average size was between five and eight, with apparently none larger than ten.
  - b. Purpose -
    - (1) For testimony and mutual examination.
    - (2) For open sharing of successes and failures in living the gospel.
    - (3) For progress in inner holiness.
    - (4) Underlying principles: that spiritual maturity is fostered as persons of the same sex meet in very small, confidential groups.
  - c. Frequency - Weekly.
  - d. Membership requirement - One must be a professing Christian, be invited, and participation was voluntary. There were separate bands for married women, married men, single women, and single men. The intensity and intimacy of sharing required that these persons have a deeper level of maturity than those in the classes.

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- e. Group activity - Prayer and hymn singing started the meeting. While in the class meeting leadership was focused on the 'class leader,' in the band one person initiated the sharing using the 'starter questions' Wesley had designed. In turn each person assumed leadership of the process. Particular attention was given to overcoming personal faults and struggles of the heart. While vulnerability and risking one's interior thoughts were called for, yet this brought about a wave of mutual encouragement and prayer support. This was a support group at its best.
- We should remember that the meetings of the societies, classes, and bands were 'in addition to' the regular services of the Church. Early Methodism during Wesley's lifetime existed as a renewal movement within the Church of England. Methodism was a 'church within the church' offering levels of spirituality which were not being duplicated by the larger denomination.

**B. WESLEYAN PRINCIPLES FOR TODAY'S GROUP MINISTRIES**

Steve Harper believes that we would see a resurgence of vitality if we would rediscover the dynamic of relational ministries. People today are hungry as in Wesley's day for opportunities to personalize their Christian experience. This does not mean we must return to Wesley's forms but rather to recover the principles upon which Wesley built.

1. Voluntary association - We must respect the right of persons to decide not to participate in small group interaction.
2. Variety - The group size, membership, and purpose may vary.
3. Mission to needs outside the group - Look outside of the inner circle for service projects to fulfill.
4. Potential of lay ministry - Give mature and willing Christian men and women opportunity to serve as leaders or be trained as leaders. The pastor should provide them training and supervision.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

5. Discipline - Those who desire to be a part of such a group must be willing to commit to those disciplines which will make for spiritual maturation. Without discipline the church will never achieve the maturity and power God intends.
6. Faithfulness to the larger church - We must not allow the small group experience to be a substitute for participation in the larger life of the church. Indeed, the vitality of the small group must flow into the mainstream of the larger church, enriching and renewing its spiritual life.

**II. GROUP ACTIVITY --- Discuss the following:**

- \*Review the three levels of Wesley's group structure (society, class, band), highlighting each group's size, membership requirements, and purpose.
- \*Reflecting on the three groups, which do you understand as being directed most at . . .the head? . . .hands? . . .heart? (that is, the understanding, the performance, the inner mood).
- \*Discuss Wesley's principles #1, #4, #5, #6 as to how these are a part of your group experience.
- \*Suggest how the following principles could help our church:
  - #3 "looking outside the group for ways of service"
  - #4 "training of laypersons for leadership"
  - #6 "enriching the spiritual life of our whole church"

**III. ADDITIONAL GROUP ACTIVITY --- Personal spiritual journey.**

- God was always having people in the Old Testament build memorials.  
Why? Read Joshua 4:1-7.
- \*If your children or a friend were to ask you to tell of one landmark in your spiritual journey, what would you tell them?

\*If you had to select three (3) items to put into the Ark of the Covenant to remind you of God's provision and grace on your spiritual journey, what would you choose to remind you of the time when (item may be a miniature object, a picture, or even an item you had with you on the occasion),

• God 'opened the waters' at the time things seemed impossible? \_\_\_\_\_

• You came to a 'fork in the road' and you had to choose? \_\_\_\_\_

• You came close to death? \_\_\_\_\_

[Ideas in III are from Body Building, Serendipity and Lyman Coleman]

**IV. PRAYER** --- Giving thanks for God's loving care in your lives . . . and praying for the needs expressed in your group.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

I. **"INTO THE WORLD" (Prudential Means of Grace) — Chapter 7.**  
Devotional Life In The Wesleyan Tradition, by Steve Harper.

Introduction: This chapter looks at Wesley's approach to living-out a comprehensive Christian spiritual life. It addresses the question, "How is the Christian life expressed in daily life according to the Wesleyan spirit?"

The Prudential Means of Grace is the companion category to what we have been giving attention to, namely, the Instituted Means of Grace (prayer, scripture, Lord's Supper, fasting, and small groups). The Instituted Means were those disciplines evident in the life and teaching of Jesus. The Prudential Means were additional means of grace whereby Christians fulfilled the social and relational dimensions of the gospel of Christ. These were the practically wise expressions of the Christian faith in society. Here is Wesley's wedding of piety (Instituted Means) and mercy (Prudential Means) which made the Methodists so effective in bringing renewal of Christian faith and practice to England. Today, holiness of both heart and life remain the twin peaks of vital Christian spirituality.

A. PRUDENTIAL MEANS OF GRACE

Wesley knew that to speak in general terms would not be sufficient enough to define and motivate ethical conduct. So he went further and added a list of examples under each general statement. Some of the examples were culturally and historically conditioned as we would expect. Wesley probably would make some changes if he were making a similar list of examples today. The primary point he was trying to make was that holiness of heart and life can be and must be expressed in specific, concrete acts in daily life.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. "Doing No Harm" -- Negative expression of Christian living.  
The Christian life can be expressed by what it does NOT do, as well as by what it does. This principle brought the element of avoidance into the Christian life. For Wesley this was not legalism but served as a necessary guide in the life of righteousness. Wesley's prohibitions were not 'binders' so much as they were 'boundaries.'
- In the 1960's and 1970's, the rise in popularity of the relativity of morals and the glorification of individual rights and privileges seriously undercut belief in universal standards of conduct. But, our Wesleyan heritage reminds us that such standards do exist. Avoiding some things will put us in position to experience the fullness of life rather than limit it. And since everything we say or do has an effect on others, our choice to avoid some things protects others from being needlessly hurt or given a bad example.
2. "Doing Good" -- Positive expression of Christian living.  
This represents the forward thrust of Wesley's spirituality into general society. Here is where the Methodists penetrated the needs of people and brought healing to lives, homes, and the nation. Note Wesley's three divisions of 'doing good.'

  - a. Do good to the bodies of others.  
This was the ministry of social relief: arranging for food, clothing, shelter, medical assistance for the needy; visiting the sick and the prisoners.
  - b. Do good to the souls of others.  
This was the ministry of evangelism and discipleship: concern for the eternal destiny of each person, including salvation and nurture to maturity.  
Also, Wesley urged the teaching of sound doctrine by which to show the error of false doctrine. Study was a companion to evangelism.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

- c. Do good to fellow Christians.  
This was the ministry to the body of Christ. This was not a bias toward preferential treatment of Christians over non-Christians. Rather, if Christians are to avoid evil and do good to all people, how much more we should be careful to apply this spirit to fellow Christians, seeing the world is no friend of grace. [Compare 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, Paul's analogy of Christians being the 'body' of Christ with the members dependent upon each other for support and service.]

Wesley maintained that true Christian spirituality is visibly and actively involved in doing good for others. He said: "Ye Christians are 'the light of the world' with regard both to your tempers [attitudes] and actions . . . a secret, unobserved religion cannot be the religion of Jesus Christ. Whatever religion can be concealed, is not Christianity."

3. "Attending to All the Ordinances of God" -- Positive reinforcement.  
In this list Wesley for the most part repeats the Instituted Means of Grace. There are two points he may have been making:

- a. Groundedness.  
He 'grounded' his social spirituality in those elements which are not subject to cultural and historical adjustments. Specific examples of 'doing no harm' or of 'doing good' might change with time and place, but the Instituted Means of Grace are transcultural and transhistorical. These gave 'roots' to Wesley's social dimension of the gospel.
- b. Connectedness.  
He removed the ability to put the spiritual life into neat, disconnected compartments (such as, acting one way on Sunday and another during the week). By repeating the Instituted Means here, he showed how personal, congregational, and social spirituality overlap and interact. Wesley will not let us rest until all three are reflected in our spiritual formation.

**B. POSTSCRIPT --**

These seven chapters have presented Wesley's principles and practices in the spiritual life. Hopefully you have a better understanding of what John Wesley said and did in his time regarding Christian spirituality. Now it remains to be seen whether or not you will make the connection between Wesley and your own life. As the Instituted and Prudential Means of Grace characterize your spiritual formation, you are practicing devotional life in the Wesleyan tradition.

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

**II. GROUP ACTIVITY --- Discussion**

- \*Look over the accompanying list of the early Methodist's Prudential Means of Grace, giving special attention to the examples of how to 'do no harm,' 'do good,' and 'attend to all the ordinances of God.'
- \*Name some of the examples which we still use today. . .Name some which do not fit our times and should either be omitted or replaced with something else or stated in another way.
- \*Name two examples which do not appear in the accompanying list that would be good expressions of our Christian faith today, two under the principle of 'do no harm' and two under 'do good.'
- \*Reflect on how the five Instituted Means of Grace provide the 'roots' for the Prudential Means, in terms of motivation, information, direction, and correction.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**III. ADDITIONAL GROUP ACTIVITY** --- **Bible Study & Application to life.**

In John 2:1-11 is recorded the occasion of Jesus' first miracle. It took place in Cana of Galilee at a wedding. In the Jewish wedding evidently there was much singing and dancing and "toasting" to the happiness of the marriage. However, the wine ran out and the festivities were about to come to an unhappy end. Jesus was called upon to help out with the emergency.

Throughout the Bible, wine is used as a symbol for joy. A title for this story could be "When the Joy Ran Out."

Application to Your Life

1. How much of your life is filled with 'new wine' or joy? Here's a quick check up.
  - What hour in each day brings the most joy? \_\_\_\_\_
  - What day in each week brings the most joy? \_\_\_\_\_
  - What week in each year brings the most joy? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What is your joy quotient each day? In an average day, how much is truly joy-filled? (The three must add up to 100%)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ % doing things that bring me joy
  - \_\_\_\_\_ % doing what I have to . . . but I enjoy
  - \_\_\_\_\_ % doing what I have to . . . and don't enjoy
  
3. How much of the miracle of 'new wine' is affecting your life right now? (Put a dot on each line below -- somewhere in between HO HUM and OH YEAH -- to indicate how you feel.)
  - HO HUM \_\_\_\_\_ OH YEAH

In my feelings about myself

HO HUM

HO HUM

OH YEAH

In my relationships at home

In my school work or job

4. Where you marked yourself closest to HO HUM on a question above, jot down one WISH for the next 7 days. Finish the sentence: "I wish that I could \_\_\_\_\_"

Share: If you feel free enough, share your WISH statement with your group.

**IV. PRAYER** — Bearing one another's burdens, pray for those needs which have become known during your group meeting.

[Resource for III, Bible Study, was Body Building, Serendipity and Lyman Coleman.]

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



P R U D E N T I A L   M E A N S   O F   G R A C E

There is one only Condition previously required, in those who desire Admission into these Societies, a *Desire to flee from the Wrath to come, to be saved from their Sins*: But, wherever this is really fix'd in the Soul, it will be shewn by its Fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation.

First, By doing no Harm, by avoiding Evil in every kind; especially, that which is most generally practis'd.

Such is

The taking the Name of God in Vain;

The profaning the Day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary Work thereon, or by buying or selling;

Drunkennes, Buying or selling Spirituous Liquors; or drinking them (unless in Cases of extreme Necessity);

Fighting, Quarrelling, Brawling; Going to Law, Returning Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing: The using many Words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling uncustomed Goods:

The giving or taking Things on Usury:

Uncharitable or unprofitable Conversation:

Doing to others as w<sup>d</sup> would not they should do unto us: Doing what we know is not for the Glory of God: As

The putting on of Gold or costly Apparel.

The taking such Diversions as cannot be used in the Name of the Lord Jesus:

The Singing those Songs, or reading those Books, which do not tend to the Knowledge or Love of God:

Softness, and needless Self-indulgence:

Laying up Treasures upon Earth.

It is expected of all who continue in these Societies, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation,

Secondly, By doing Good, by being in every kind, merciful after their Power; as they have Opportunity, doing Good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible, to all Men:

To their Bodies, of the Ability which God giveth, by giving Food to the Hungry, by cloathing the Naked, by visiting or helping them that are Sick, or in Prison:

To their Souls, by instructing, reproving or exhorting all we have any Intercourse with: Trampling under Foot that Enthusiastick Doctrine of Devils, that "we are not to do Good, unless our Heart be free to it."

By doing Good especially to them that are of the Houshold of Faith, or groaning so to be: Employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in Business; and that so much the more, because the World will love its own, and them only.

By all possible Diligence and Frugality, that the Gospel be not blamed:

By running with Patience the Race that is set before them; denying themselves, and taking up their Cross daily; submitting to bear the Reproach of Christ, to be as the Filth and Off-scouring of the World; and looking that Men should say *all manner of Evil of them falsely, for their Lord's sake*:

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these Societies, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation,

Thirdly, by attending upon all the Ordinances of God: Such are

The publick Worship of God;

The Ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;

The Supper of the Lord;

Private Prayer;

Searching the Scriptures; and

Fasting, or Abstinence.

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Fifteenth Meeting

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

- I. Bible Study concerning relationships: Jesus and his disciples together for the Last Supper.** [Idea resource - Body Building, Serendipity and Lyman Coleman]
- A. Read John 13: 1 - 17.
- B. Imagine yourself in Jesus' place. Consider that you have been with these disciples for 3 years. You know this is going to be your last meal together. Feelings are deep.  
As you have gathered and are ready to eat, not one disciple has offered to perform the customary courtesy of washing the feet before eating. Not a servant in the group.  
If you were Jesus, how would you be feeling? (check two)
- \_\_\_ anger    \_\_\_ loneliness    \_\_\_ heartache  
\_\_\_ disappointment    \_\_\_ anguish    \_\_\_ compassion  
\_\_\_ sorrow    \_\_\_ failure    \_\_\_ brokenness
- C. The meals were eaten at a low table with the guests reclining, facing inward. Jesus arose from the table and took the wash basin and towel. He began washing their feet.  
If you had been one of these disciples, how would have felt? (check two)
- \_\_\_ humiliated    \_\_\_ close to Jesus    \_\_\_ embarrassed  
\_\_\_ concerned    \_\_\_ put down    \_\_\_ awkward  
\_\_\_ touched    \_\_\_ broken    \_\_\_ regretful
- D. Put into your own words Jesus' answer to "Do you understand what I have just done to you?"

Application to your group

E. What would it take for your group to feel toward each other like Jesus demonstrated in this occasion? (circle one)

1. more time to get acquainted
2. more concern for one another
3. more trust for each other
4. more spiritual depth
5. more knowledge of each other's needs
- 6.

F. If "dirty feet" is not your problem, what is? Assume Jesus knows your problem and visits your group tonight to minister to you. What would he likely do? (circle one)

1. put his arms around me
2. brag on me
3. tell me to cheer up
4. give me a gentle kick in the pants
5. ask me to talk about my problem
- 6.

Reflection

G. Lord, to be honest, I don't have anyone that I can talk to except you. I usually keep my inner struggles to myself. And my friends don't bother me with their troubles. What about that, Lord? Is that OK?

"Share each other's troubles and problems, and so obey our Lord's command." (Galatians 6:2 Good News Bible)

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." (James 5:16 King James Version)

**II. COMMUNION / "THE LORD'S SUPPER" - all groups together.**

Matthew 26: 26 - 30.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Sixteenth Meeting

**I. RULES OF THE BAND-SOCIETIES** — Drawn up by John Wesley  
on December 25, 1738.

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

**A. PURPOSE**

The design of our meeting is, to obey that command of God, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16).

To this end, we intend, --

1. To meet once a week, at the least.
2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
4. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt, since our last meeting.
5. To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.
6. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.

**B. ADMISSION**

Some of the questions proposed to every one before he is admitted among us may be to this effect: --

1. Have you the forgiveness of your sins?
2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God? (Romans 8:16)
4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? (Romans 5:5)
5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?
6. Do you desire to be told of your faults?
7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plainly?
8. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?
10. Do you desire that, in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
11. Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

**C. QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AT EVERY MEETING**

Any of the preceding questions may be asked as often as occasion offers; the four following at every meeting: --

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?

## II. INSIGHT INTO DIVINE/HUMAN NATURE & SPIRITUAL FORMATION.

- What does it mean to be a "new creature in Christ?" Refer to 2 Cor. 5:17.
- What does it mean to "be partakers of the divine nature?" Refer to 2 Peter 1:4.
- Is Christ's righteousness "a covering" placed over us so that God does not see us but only sees Christ? On the other hand, is Christ's righteousness placed in us so that the new believer is "changed in nature?"

Historically, the "covering" viewpoint has been held by followers of Luther and Calvin, such denominations as Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Baptist. The "changed nature" viewpoint has been held by such denominations as Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and other Wesleyan groups. It should be noted that the "covering" viewpoint is relatively new and smaller (500 years) when compared to the "changed nature" viewpoint of the larger church (2,000 years).

The "covering" viewpoint says the Christian is at heart a "rebel," a saint/sinner. But, the "changed nature" viewpoint says he is at heart a "lover," a saint/struggling to overcome sin.

John Wesley believed that not only was the new believer's standing before God changed by virtue of Christ's righteousness but also God caused "real change" in the person's nature so that he could cooperate with God, especially through the means of grace.

- How do these two views figure into the statement: "Everyone sins in word, thought, and deed every day"? Consider: the 'rebel' would sin automatically; the 'lover' will resist sinning, but if he sins he will be quick to seek forgiveness and grace to overcome that sin.
- Read 2 Peter 1:5-11 --forming us spiritually in Jesus Christ.

**III. MATTERS OF THE CHRISTIAN HEART --- Band Process.**

- A. If you have not read and shared your thoughts on the purpose and admission sections, please do at this time.
- B. Experience the "four questions" --  
These are Wesley's "starter" questions. Your group may want to develop some additional ones in your next meetings.  
At this meeting now, it is important for each of you to hear these questions asked of you by someone else. (Do not answer)
  - The group leader should hear the questions first (perhaps have the person nearest the leader's left hand to ask the questions).  
Pause between each of the four questions. After silent reflection, go to the next question.
  - Going to your right, each person is to ask the four questions of the next person, pausing between the questions to allow the question to search the heart. (Do not answer the questions at this meeting)
  - Now, each person is to tell how he/she felt while receiving the questions. What were your emotional responses and your thoughts of receiving these questions in your group.  
Be sure to include both positive and negative feelings.

**IV. PRAYER --- As suited to what has been shared and experienced in your group.**

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y  
IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Seventeenth Meeting

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**I. SING TOGETHER** — "My Desire, to be like Jesus,  
My desire, to be like Him;  
His Spirit fill me, His love o'erwhelm me,  
In deed and word, to be like Him."

**II. READ SCRIPTURE** — Psalm 139:1-6

"Lord, you have examined me and you know me.  
You know everything I do;

from far away you understand all my thoughts.  
You see me, whether I am working or resting;  
you know all my actions.

Even before I speak,  
you already know what I will say,  
You are all around me on every side;  
you protect me with your power.  
Your knowledge of me is too deep  
it is beyond my understanding.

--Good News Bible

**III. FOUR BAND QUESTIONS**

- A. Discuss what you think Wesley was getting at with each question.  
.What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?  
.What temptations have you met with?  
.How were you delivered?  
.What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
- B. For next meeting, bring a new question you think would be helpful to ask at each meeting.



**IV. REFLECTION ON LIFE GOALS**

- A. Have you ever heard: "Cars . . . sex . . . sports . . . and making money. What else is there to life than this?"
- B. Estimate what percentage of society in general would say this.
- C. Do you sometimes feel the pull toward this way of thinking?
- D. The Apostle Paul evidently knew something about this 'pull' because he wrote these words almost 2,000 years ago:  
[Turn to Romans 12:1-2 and read]
- E. Answer this to yourself and then share it with your group if you feel you can:  
.If I am going to take this scripture seriously, I will need to . . .

**V. SPIRITUAL CHECK-UP**

[Circle a number that most nearly describes you; 1 is very low; 5 is very high]

- On desire for spiritual things           1   2   3   4   5
- On time with God every day           1   2   3   4   5
- On sorting out my priorities           1   2   3   4   5
- On keeping my thoughts clean       1   2   3   4   5
- On doing everything to God's glory   1   2   3   4   5

Do you want to discuss or wrestle with any of these? You take the initiative if you want to share or engage the others.

**VI. OPENNESS IN RELATIONSHIPS**

A. How much of yourself do you disclose to each of these groups?  
[On the line beside each group, put a dot to indicate how much you share with others]

- .Your family unit
  - .Job/School group
  - .Sunday School class
  - .Walking with Wesley group
  - .You & God alone
- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| <u>Nothing</u> | <u>Anything</u> |
| _____          | _____           |
| _____          | _____           |
| _____          | _____           |

DISCUSS why a person would select how much to disclose, depending upon the group.  
Do you have a relationship in which you can be 'the real you' and share your hopes, struggles, doubts, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses, thrills, and successes? If not, would such a relationship be welcomed by you?

B. If you had to describe the Wesley group you are in right now with one of the levels below, which would it be? [Check one]

Three levels of communication within groups:

- \_\_\_ Mouth-to Mouth (places, weather, sports, clothes -- Things Outside)
- \_\_\_ Head-to-Head (articles in newspaper or magazines, theology -- Ideas Outside)
- \_\_\_ Heart-to-Heart (depth sharing, pain, hopes -- Feelings Inside)

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

C. If you could make a wish for your Wesley group, what would it be?

Finish this sentence: "I wish we could . . ."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**VII. PRAYER TOGETHER**

How can we pray for you now?

Based on the thoughts and feelings you have experienced in this meeting, what do you want your group to help you pray about?

At this time share prayer needs that are at heart-level; not for Aunt Suzie or Little Billy, but your needs in your Christian walk.

If someone needs real concentrated prayer, stand around that person and all other group members place a hand on that person's shoulder. Lift this person up in prayer to God; help bear the burden; expect God to answer your prayers.

Depart in the peace and joy of the Lord!

[Note: some ideas in Sections IV, V, VI were taken from Body Building, Serendipity and Lyman Coleman.]

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y  
I N   S P I R I T U A L   F O R M A T I O N**

Eighteenth Meeting

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

**I. SING TOGETHER -- "What A Friend We Have In Jesus"**

After singing, look back over the verses and report to your group phrases which mean something to you: something you've experienced, something you feel, a description of Jesus that really appeals to you, and so forth.

**II. PRAYER -- Present yourselves and this meeting to God. Ask for his blessing.**

**III. ALL ABOUT YOU -- Sharing.**

Each person is to be interviewed by someone else, one at a time so that the whole group hears the interview.

Select the first interviewer and interviewee. These two are to sit side-by-side, not looking straight at each other.

The leader will announce the question to be asked. Take three minutes per person being asked this same question. After each time of answering, the person is told, "Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_ (name)" and then the same question is repeated. The answers are to express a different side or view of the person each time the same question is asked.

Have a timekeeper to alert you when the three minutes are up. Everyone should have a turn asking the question and also receiving the question.

**IV. WESLEY'S "Four Band Questions"**

Read over the four questions. Have someone read them aloud.

In keeping with the instruction from last meeting, share with your group a question which you have designed that you think could be asked each meeting.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe why your question would be helpful. Perhaps give an example or two.

Someone volunteer to be asked the four questions and the person on his/her left should ask the questions. Continue the questioning and responding process until everyone in the group has participated. REMEMBER, share your success as well as your failures; both will be an encouragement to the others in your group! Share how Christ has helped you as well as how you have failed him.

The Four Questions

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?

**IV. PRAYER TOGETHER**

How can the members of your group pray for you now?

Share your prayer needs. Lean on each other for prayer support.

Pray for one another based on the needs which have been expressed in your meeting.

**GO AND GLOW FOR THE LORD!**

**Instructions for the Group Leaders:  
Eighteenth Meeting, Item III.**

- .Read instructions given in the lesson.
- .Listen to the example tape.
- .Select the interviewer and interviewee.
- .Announce the question to be asked (listed below).
- .Call time at three minutes.
- .Announce another question to the next interviewer.

**Possible questions to be asked:** (only one question  
per person during this activity.)

- .Who are you?
- .What do you want?
- .What do you fear?
- .What do you feel good about?
- .What do you feel bad about?

**W A L K I N G   W I T H   W E S L E Y**  
**IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Nineteenth Meeting

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**I. SING TOGETHER -- "Deeper, Deeper In The Love Of Jesus"**

At some point, perhaps between verses or after singing all the verses, share with your group members phrases or thoughts from the song which strike a responsive chord in your heart and life. In other words, what about this song warms your heart and encourages you in your Christian life?

**II. PRAYER -- Thank God for your group and ask His blessing upon your time together.**

**III. JOHN WESLEY'S DEFINITION OF SIN IN THE BELIEVER:**

"By sin, I here understand inward sin; any sinful temper, passion, or affection; such as pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind or degree; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ."

-- Wesley sermon: "On Sin in Believers"

Wesley here is focusing on the importance of the heart, its attitudes and feelings. The purpose of the "band" meeting was to provide a supportive circle of Christian love in which each person could express openly his/her struggles and successes with these matters of the heart.

**IV. KEY INGREDIENT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: INTENTION**

Wesley was impressed with the writings of William Law on the subject of "intention." From Law's spiritual classic, A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, let's note these words which met agreement in Wesley's heart.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

"You may say that all people fall short of the perfection of the gospel and, therefore, you are content with your failings. But this is not the point. The question is not, Can gospel perfection be fully attained? but, Have you come as near it as a sincere intention and careful diligence can carry you? If you have made as much progress in the Christian life as you can, then you may justly hope that your imperfections will not be laid to your charge. But if your defects are the result of your negligence and lack of sincere intention, then you leave yourself without excuse. . . . Weak and imperfect men shall -- notwithstanding their frailties and defects -- be received as having pleased God if they have done their utmost to please him. We cannot offer to God the service of angels. We cannot obey him as if we were in a state of perfection. But fallen men can do their best, and this is the perfection that is required of us. If we stop short of this we stop short of the mercy of God under the terms of the gospel."

--Chapter 3, "The Danger of Not Intending Our Best"

In your group, discuss this subject of intention.

**V. LETTER FROM GOD TO YOU -- Using the format of the Letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3.**

Turn to Revelation 2 and 3. Looking at how God writes to these seven churches, look for the following format:

- Greeting from Jesus, using a "special name" in each case.
- Good News -- "I know your good works; I like this."
- Blame -- "This I don't like."
- Call for Change -- "I counsel you to"
- Blessing -- "If you follow my guidance . . . Blessing"
- Punishment -- "If you will not follow me . . . Punishment."



- Encouragement to action -- "He that has ears, let him hear."

After this Bible study concerning the format, each of you write a letter from God to you. You will write your own letter, saying to you what God would say, using the format given above.

If you would rather not write it down, you may put it together in your head. After time has been given to write your letter, tell what your letter says to your group.

This can be a powerful experience! Ask God to help you write your letter.

## VI. PRAYER TOGETHER

"You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity."

Colossians 3:12-14, Good News Bible

Pray for one another in light of the needs expressed in your meeting.

-- Go in the Love, Joy, and Peace of the Lord --

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**WALKING WITH WESLEY  
IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Twentieth Meeting

**Theme: "Love Feast"**

**I. REVIEW THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF A LOVE FEAST**

Meeting # 7 presents this information. Briefly review it.

**II. SHARING**

- Together, thumb past each meeting's material. Note the title and theme. The leader will ask if anyone is missing any material and supply needed copies.
- What did you expect you were in for when you were asked to participate?
- What has been most meaningful to you:
  - learning about Wesley's life
  - studying the means of grace
  - times of prayer
  - sharing from my heart with others
  - dealing with my problems openly
  - fun together
- My experience of opening up and sharing from my heart in this group has been:
  - scary
  - O. K., but
  - just what I needed
  - a real breakthrough
  - a good start but I want more
- Are there some things you have started doing as a result of what you have discovered in Walking With Wesley?

**III. PRAYER TOGETHER -- Thanking God for this enriching experience and His equipping grace!**

**IV. REFRESHMENTS AND FELLOWSHIPING**

\* \* \* \* \*

"It is most true, that the root of religion lies in the heart, in the inmost soul; that this is the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man. But if this root be really in the heart, it cannot but put forth branches [through] instances of outward obedience."

--Wesley's Works

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