

*What it means
to be Wesleyan*

FOUNDATIONS

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EPHESIANS 2:19-22

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**A Primer in Wesleyan Theology
and the Beliefs of Timberlake**

Rev. Brad McMullen and Cord Doss

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Timberlake confesses the historic Christian faith of the Bible and the Church, which we share with all Christians. Our particular theological orientation is known as Wesleyan, meaning our faith and doctrine are inspired by the teachings of our spiritual founder, John Wesley, and the believers and churches which share this tradition.

This document is designed to introduce you to the basics of Wesleyan theology, whether you are a long time believer or new to faith or even just curious, and whether you have a basic understanding of Wesleyan theology or no previous exposure to these ideas.

This short book has 12 chapters:

1. Introduction to Theology
2. Talking About Wesleyanism
3. The Centrality of Grace
4. How We Encounter God, part 1
5. How We Encounter God, part 2
6. The Holiness of God
7. Personal Holiness
8. Social Holiness & Lifegroups
9. Mission
10. Ministry with the Poor
11. Evangelism
12. Next Steps

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction to Theology

We know that as the followers of Jesus, we are being built into a spiritual house. God is building the church of Christ through us. The church is not a building made of bricks, but a community of people – the body of Christ, and the household of God.

Ephesians 2:19-20 says...

You are members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

Jesus is the cornerstone of this church. And our foundation is made up of the things of God: the Scriptures, the saints, the mission, and the teaching of the apostles and the prophets who have gone before us.



At Timberlake, our particular theological foundation is known as Wesleyanism. We are Wesleyan. When we say Wesleyan, we mean the theological tradition inspired by John Wesley, a priest in the Church of England in the 1700's. And as Timberlake moves into God's future, we will be guided by our Wesleyan theology. We will build on our Wesleyan heritage, which is our theological foundation.

This book has three purposes:

1. To teach us and remind us what it is we believe.
Many of us have been part of this church or some other church for a long time, yet we may

not be able to articulate a particular theological viewpoint. This book is for you.

2. To orient those who are new to Timberlake to our church's beliefs.

Those who are new to our church deserve to know what we believe, and why. Before you make a commitment to this congregation or any church, you should have a basic understanding of the church's beliefs.

3. To confirm that our faith and our theology is unchanging.

Timberlake has recently undergone a process of disaffiliation from the United Methodist denomination. And while some things have changed, such as our church name and the way we get our pastors, we want to be clear that our faith in Christ is not changing. Our theology is not changing. Our foundations remain. And as we write the next chapter of the Timberlake story, it is crucial for us to be clear on who we are and what we believe.

Here is how the Bible puts it:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ... may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better, ...that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. - Ephesians 1:17-18

Do you see what's at stake? We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, the revealing of God, so that we may know our Lord better. That we may love him with our minds! And in this,

experience the hope to which he has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance, and his incomparably great power.

This is what's at stake. This is why theology matters. It is the Spirit of wisdom and the power of God for our lives.

Before we get into teaching the particulars of our Wesleyan tradition, let's talk about theology in general, and come to an understanding about where Wesleyanism fits within the larger picture of the Christian church.

What is Theology?

The word *theology* comes from two Greek words, *Theos* and *Logos*. *Theos* means God; *Logos* means word.

Therefore, theology is the study of God, and the study of the things of God. Theology literally means a God-word.

We can have a word FROM God... which we would call revelation – the idea that God reveals Godself to us.

We can have a word TO God... which we would call worship and prayer, the crying out of God's people for help and gratitude.

We can have a word ABOUT God... which we would call proclamation. The Church's job is to tell the good news of God to others.



Theology refers to the work of the people to think about, pray about, talk about the things of God. It refers to how we understand God, how we understand sin and



salvation, and how we live out our faith, and how we understand the Bible.

Theological Lenses

Some people wonder, Why do we need a

theological orientation? Why do we have to have “a theology”? Can’t we just read the Bible, plain and simple?

This is a really important question. And the answer is, Nobody reads the Bible, plain and simple. We all read it with biases and assumptions. We all read it colored by our life experiences. We can only ever read it as men or women, old or young, rich or poor, because that’s who we are. We can try to – and we should – look at the Bible through the eyes of others. But we cannot finally and fully take off our interpretive lenses that are shaped by our identity.

The Bible requires interpretation, and understanding. The way you read it influences the meaning you take from it. You will understand it differently if you read it by yourself versus reading it in a group, or if you read with the assumption that God is judging, versus the assumption that God is loving. You will see different things depending on whether you focus on the form of the text, or the author, or the original languages.

Having a theological approach is sort of like wearing eyeglasses. Theology is like a lens that we look through. For the sake of this metaphor, assume that EVERYONE needs glasses. Because of our sin, we cannot see things purely. Our sin has damaged our spiritual vision. As the apostle Paul says, we see things a dimly, a little out of focus. So we put on glasses to see better.

And the question is, Which set of glasses will you wear?

You can put on Catholic glasses, or Amish glasses, or Lutheran glasses. You can put on glasses of the prosperity gospel or evangelicalism or liberal Protestantism. But the catch is, everybody wears some kind of glasses. Everybody uses some kind of lenses through which we see the gospel.

Wesleyanism is one lens. It's not the only one, but it's a very good one, which we hope you will see through this book.

What We Have in Common

As we begin to discuss the particulars of Wesleyan theology, let's be sure that we understand that MOST of what we believe is held in common with all Christians around the world.

Something like 95% of our faith is what share with Baptists and Lutherans and Catholics and nondenominational folks and Christians of all kinds.

Timberlake confesses the historic Christian faith of the Bible and the Church. This faith includes some big ideas that all Christians have in common. These ideas include:

- The Trinity
 - We believe that God exists eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Creation
 - We believe that God created the world out of nothing
- Incarnation
 - We believe that the Son, Jesus Christ, is God in the flesh, making the high points of our year his birth on Christmas, his death on Good Friday, and his resurrection on Easter
- Resurrection

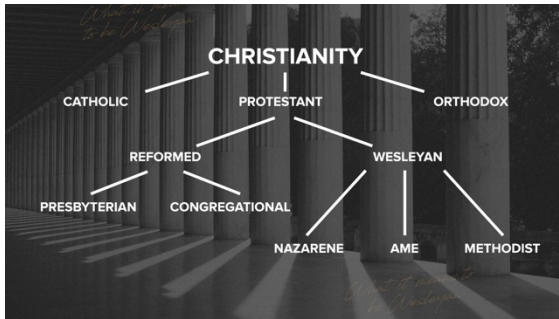
- We believe that having died on the cross, Jesus rose again on the third day, overcoming sin and death, and making the way for our salvation by his grace
- Pentecost
 - We believe the Holy Spirit is the power and presence of God with us, who came as wind and fire on the day of Pentecost to give birth to the Church, and that in the Spirit we have become God's instrument for the salvation of the world

These are ideas that all Christians believe. It's important for us to understand, that as we get into the particulars of Wesleyan theology, what we're talking about in this book represents a relatively small proportion of our faith. Not that it's unimportant. It is quite important. But we should remember that MOST of what we believe we share in common with all Christians. In fact, churches and Christians can find themselves in trouble when the over-emphasize their differences from others, and it is very easy for us to delude ourselves into thinking our way is the only right way, when there are in fact many right ways to follow Jesus.

CHAPTER TWO: Talking about Wesleyanism

Having laid some theological groundwork in terms of where Timberlake fits into the broader Church, let's take a look now at how we came to our particular theological orientation, known as Wesleyanism.

The Wesleyan tradition is part of the larger Christian family of churches.



For better or worse, the history of the Church is the history of division and reformation.

Start by looking at the top of this chart. The Christian church can be subdivided into Protestant / Catholic / Eastern Orthodox. (There's more to it, but let's try to keep this simple.)

Timberlake is part of the Protestant tradition.

Two of the theological threads within Protestantism are Reformed theology, and Wesleyan theology. Reformed theology – sometimes called Calvinism – is the belief system of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and some Baptists. Wesleyanism, sometimes called Arminianism, is the theological framework for Nazarenes, AME, AME Zion, some Pentecostals, and Anglicans.

One of the ways churches and preachers go astray it is by emphasizing their differences over against what they have in common with the historic Christian faith and with other Christians. We want to take care not to fall into that trap.

So let's remember that we are part of the Christian tradition. We share the prayer of Jesus in John 17 in which he prays for the unity of all God's children, and we pursue unity with all Christian believers all around the world.

Timberlake is part of the Christian tradition. We are part of the Protestant tradition. And we are part of the Wesleyan tradition.

Wesleyanism is a particular way of thinking about God and the Scriptures, popularized by an Anglican priest named John Wesley from the 1700's. Since then, it has been adopted and used by millions of Christians around the world. Notice, even though we think of John Wesley as the spiritual founder, Wesleyanism is much bigger than the United Methodist Church, and it's even bigger than what John Wesley taught. We have received this theology, added to it, expanded it, and deepened it.

Timberlake remains Wesleyan in our theology, and now seeks to build on this foundation that has been laid for us.

Guardrails

Some of us have asked a very important question:
How can we be sure that we will stay Wesleyan?

When it comes to maintaining our Wesleyan tradition, there are four guardrails which will keep our congregation theologically aligned:

- The Bible
- Our church bylaws
- The preaching
- Our practice of ministry

These are the four things that will make sure Timberlake stays a Wesleyan church.

Number one is the Bible. Wesleyan theology is a Biblically based theology. What we believe is informed and guided by the Bible. All of our human ideas, even those brilliant ideas

taught by John Wesley himself, are submitted to and accountable to the Scriptures.

Secondly, we will remain Wesleyan through the establishment of our bylaws. Since Timberlake has disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church, we have established our own set of bylaws which will articulate our basic beliefs and will clarify our process for church governance and polity. We have taken inspiration from the Articles of Religion, given to us by the Church of England, which was the church out of which Wesleyanism grew. And they are in keeping with the historic teaching of Timberlake Church since our founding in 1953.



The third guardrail is the preaching. The doctrine and theology of every church is established and shaped by the pulpit ministry. Part the preacher’s job is to say, “Thus says the Lord.” To say, “This is

who we are, and this is what we believe.” But preaching is not a monologue. You are listening, and you are responding. You let the pastors know whether what they say is in keeping with what we believe. You let the pastors know whether what they say is in keeping with the Scriptures! And what we preach is shaped by our relationships in this church, and the common faith we share. It is the job of the preacher to make all of us accountable to God and to God’s word, and it is the job of the congregation to make the preacher accountable to the people, not to our opinions, but to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ.

The fourth guardrail is our practice of ministry. The most significant influence that each of us has over the theology and doctrine of Timberlake is the way in which we live out the

Christian life. In other words, we will be Wesleyan if we act like it.

One of the things we love about Wesleyanism is that it is intensely practical. John Wesley conceived of a faith that is lived out in the real world. The best way for us to remain Wesleyan is to pray, to read our Bibles, to proclaim the good news of Jesus, to baptize new believers, to come to the communion table as often as we can, to feed the hungry, and to live holy lives.

Wesleyan Distinctives

Having said all of this, let's identify some distinctive Wesleyan theological ideas. These are not totally unique to Wesleyanism; other churches believe in and practice these things, but these are our areas of emphasis. These are the most important theological ideas which guide us.

Wesleyan distinctives include:

- Grace
- Biblical authority
- Justification & sanctification
- New birth
- Worship, sacraments
- The holiness of God
- Personal holiness
- Social holiness and Lifegroups
- Mission
- Faith & works
- Ministry w/the poor
- Evangelism

Through the rest of this book we will endeavor to unpack these ideas so that we can make sense of them for our faith and for the Christian life.

CHAPTER THREE: The Centrality of Grace

Let's begin with the first and arguably most important



Wesleyan theological ideas from our list: grace.

Grace

If there is one single theological idea that Wesleyans emphasize more than any other, if there is one attribute of God that best captures our faith in Christ, it is the idea of GRACE. Grace is the theological idea that God loves every person. It is the idea that we are saved by the cross and resurrection of Jesus. It is the idea that the Spirit of God helps us to become more like Jesus. This is grace.

Here is how Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians...

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. - Ephesians 2:4-7, NRSV

Grace is the good news that God loved us even when we were dead in our sin (trespasses). It is the power of God for our salvation, which raises us from the dead and secures for us a



place in God's heaven. Grace is the immeasurable riches in kindness through Jesus.

Simply put, grace is *the unmerited favor of God*. The unearned love of God.

And as Wesleyans, we are people of Grace. Grace is the first core value on Timberlake's list of core values. And it is the culture and spirit of this church. We believe that God loves us, so that we can love others.

In our Wesleyan understanding of grace, there are three big ideas:

First, we believe that God loves and welcomes all people, including us. He loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses, in our sin. Therefore, WE as a church will love and welcome all people.

Second, we believe that God desires the salvation of every person, and has made this salvation available through the cross and resurrection of Jesus. It is by grace we are saved.

Third, we believe that even now God is renewing us in his own image, we are being raised up to new life with Christ, so that by his grace we are actually becoming more like Jesus each day.

One of the most helpful ways to frame this three-fold understanding of grace is with a house.

We want you to use your theological imagination.

This is the House of Grace. In this illustration, there are three important parts of the house: the PORCH, the DOORWAY, and the ROOMS of the house. You with us?

In our Wesleyan understanding of grace, the PORCH is Prevenient Grace. Prevenient means before. This is the grace that comes before... before you loved God, God loved you. Even before you knew that God existed, God cared for you. And the great thing about the PORCH of prevenient grace is that it includes everyone. Everyone starts on the PORCH. No one is off the porch. Everyone is on the porch.

Because God loves and welcomes all people, we as a church love and welcome all people. Regardless of how much money they have, or the color of their skin, whether they are gay or straight. We have grace for all people.

What does prevenient grace sound like in the Bible? "For God so loved... THE WORLD! that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Prevenient grace means God loves every person.

Prevenient grace is like spending time with your Grandma. She welcomes you with love and warmth and she lets you stay up late and drink Pepsi and eat chocolate cake and she doesn't tell your parents if you accidentally say a cuss word. This is the unconditional love of God.

In the house of grace, the PORCH is Prevenient Grace.

In the house of grace, the DOORWAY is Justifying Grace.

To justify means to make things right. When we repent of our sin and trust in Jesus, by his justifying grace he puts us into right relationship with God.

This is salvation. Justifying grace is the grace that saves us. And this is how we explain why some people seem to be in a saving relationship with God, while other people do not: Some have chosen to walk through the DOORWAY of justifying grace by repenting of their sin and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for themselves, while other people have not. Those who have not remain on the porch, nevertheless loved by God, but not yet in a saving relationship with God through Christ.

But those who accept the sacrifice of Jesus for themselves, who claim the good news of his cross and resurrection, they receive Justifying Grace.

What does Justifying Grace sound like in the Bible? Again, consider the words of Ephesians 2: “God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved.”

Justifying grace is the doorway to relationship with God. You are saved by the grace of Jesus.

The PORCH is Prevenient Grace. The DOORWAY is Justifying Grace.

And the ROOMS of the house are Sanctifying Grace. Sanctifying grace is the perfecting grace of God that makes us more like Jesus. We call this journey sanctification. It means decreasing in sin and increasing in love. Sanctifying grace is the work of God to make us more like Jesus.

The Christian life is like exploring the ROOMS of the house. There are untold mysteries of God to discover. There are many wonderful things to learn and experience. Sanctifying grace is the work of God to accompany us on this journey.

What does Sanctifying Grace sound like in the Bible?

Philippians 1:6 puts it like this, “[The God] who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” God, by his grace, works through the power of the Holy Spirit to bring his good work in you to completion, so that you will be ready to stand before Jesus Christ on the day he returns for the resurrection of the body.

This is the House of Grace: Preventive Grace, Justifying Grace, Sanctifying Grace.

Preventive Grace is the love of God for all people. God welcomes all people, therefore we welcome all people.

Justifying Grace is the work of the cross and resurrection of Jesus which will save those who believe. Therefore, we preach Christ, and him crucified.

Sanctifying Grace is the work of God to renew in us the divine image, so that by his grace we are actually becoming more like Jesus each day. Therefore, we live the life of faith and grow in holiness, day by day.

Here’s how this looks in your life: When you were conceived in your mother’s womb, you were on the PORCH of Preventive Grace. And you were beloved by God.

At some point, in Sunday School, or listening to the radio, or talking with a friend, you heard the good news of Jesus. You heard the message of his crucifixion and resurrection. And if

you have repented of your sin, and believe in him, then you have walked through the DOORWAY of justifying grace. It was a moment, or perhaps a series of moments, when you came to faith in Jesus.

And if you have committed to follow Jesus, then you can spend your life exploring the ROOMS of the house, empowered by the Sanctifying Grace of God. The Christian life means living with an awareness that God is moving in your life, that God has always been moving in your life. Which makes you hunger for the things of God, and growing to become the hands and feet of Jesus.

Now remember... this is all good. We claim our Wesleyan tradition by speaking it. We can articulate a theology of grace, and the people can say, "Amen! Preach it!"

But we can talk about it all day long, and it will not make ANY difference in the world, unless we LIVE it. We are sent out into the world to SHOW people the grace of God, so they can have their lives transformed, just like ours have been.

CHAPTER FOUR: How We Encounter God, part 1

Recall our key verse for this book...

You are members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. -

Ephesians 2:19-20 NRSV

Jesus is the cornerstone of this church. And our foundation is made up of the things of God: the Scriptures, the mission, and the theology of the apostles and the prophets.

In the last chapter we introduced the theological attribute of God we as Wesleyans emphasize more than any other: GRACE. Our God is a God of grace, therefore we are called to be a people of grace.

In this chapter and the next, we are turning from how we talk about God to how we encounter God. Here are a few Wesleyan theological distinctives when it comes to how we encounter God:

- Biblical authority
- Free will / Free grace
- New birth
- Assurance
- Worship

Let's take these one at a time. We will cover three in this chapter and then two in the next.

Biblical authority.

Let's talk about the Bible. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God. We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are the highest authority for Christian teaching. They are holy, true, good, and without error.

Our spiritual founder John Wesley taught the sufficiency of the Scriptures. He said,

“The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation.” -John Wesley

In other words, the Bible contains everything you need to be saved. It contains the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Wesley used to call himself *a man of one book*, meaning that the Bible was a singular guide to his life. He read more books than almost anyone, yet the Bible was his authority.

The Bible is the canon, which means rule or measuring rod. God's word is the measure by which our lives are evaluated.

Notice, we do not worship the Bible, we worship the God to whom the Bible points, the God whom the Bible reveals.

Look at what the Bible says about its own authority:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. -II Timothy 3:16-17

The word inspired means "in-Spirited." The Bible came into being through the power and work of the Holy Spirit. It is God-breathed. It was written by humans and guided by God, who gave the authors the words to record the story of our salvation.

All Scripture is from God, and therefore it is useful for teaching us how to live the Christian life, and for training us for every good work in Christ.

This is a crucial concept. These days, the authority of the Scripture is being called into question by many pastors and churches. But that is an incredibly slippery slope. Without the foundation of Biblical authority, the whole faith begins crumble. So rather than testing the Scripture to see whether it matches our lives, we need to test our lives to see if they match the witness of Scripture.

Free Will and Free Grace.

Another important Wesleyan idea is that of free will and free grace.

God has given us agency. We can think rationally. We can make decisions which affect our lives. We have power as co-creators with God. We can create – with God – babies and flowers in the garden and beautiful music and art and architecture and all sorts of wonderful things.

Hebrews says God made us a “little lower than the angels,” in other words, we are more sophisticated creatures than chihuahuas and elephants, though not as high in the pecking order as angels.

We have agency, we have the ability to think. And we can use this power for good or for evil, to build up or to tear down. We are not robots, pre-programmed to automatically behave in some particular way. God made us for a loving relationship with himself and with each other, and of course robots cannot love.

But here’s the catch – as John Wesley taught – we are not totally or naturally free. We are born with a spiritual illness called sin, which keeps us captive. Therefore, any free will we have is the fruit of the free grace of God which has been given to us. Free will is the result of free grace.

In other words, even though we have agency as thinking beings, we are not independent of our Creator. Just the opposite. We are totally and completely dependent upon our Heavenly Father.

Therefore, true freedom is the gift of God through Jesus Christ. Here’s how Paul explains it in the letter to the Galatians...

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. -Galatians 5:1

Any freedom we have – including freedom of the will – is by the liberating grace of Jesus Christ who sets us free from the yoke of slavery.



Related to this notion of freedom in Christ is another Wesleyan idea, the new birth.

The New Birth

Wesleyans believe in the new birth. We affirm the vital importance of being born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

The new birth – sometimes called regeneration – is a spiritual reality. It is the fruit of faith in Christ, and God’s grace for us, to forgive our sin and give us new life through the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

John Wesley preached a sermon called *The New Birth*, in which he argues that we need to be born again, because of our sin, because of our separation from God. He reminds us that the good news of the gospel is that this new birth is possible by the grace of Jesus Christ, and that its purpose is holiness. The goal of the Christian life is for us to become like Jesus.

Wesley also preached a sermon on this subject called *The Marks of the New Birth*, in which he argues that if you are born again, your life will show it, particularly in the form of LOVE, HOPE, and... FAITH. These are the outward expressions of the inward change.

It's fascinating how John Wesley's personal spiritual experiences have shaped his theology and his preaching. Just a couple of years before he preached this sermon on faith as the outward mark of the new birth, he had a near death experience.



In the 1730's Wesley sailed from his home in England to America. He was coming as a missionary to share the gospel with Native Americans. On the boat were two groups, some English people, and some Germans.

The Germans were part of a Christian group called Moravians.

One day on this boat ride, a huge storm came against their ship. Wesley wrote in his journal, "The sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, and covered the ship as water poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English."

Wesley and his countrymen were scared out of their minds. They were just sure they were going to die. But not the Moravians. They began singing hymns. And praying. Just like you would in church on Sunday morning. They were singing the praises of God all while the saltwater sprayed over the bow of the ship.

Wesley couldn't believe it. After the storm was over he took one of the Moravian leaders aside and asked him, "Weren't you afraid?" And the man said, "No." And Wesley said, "But what about your women and children? Weren't they afraid?" And the man said, "No. Our women and children are not afraid to die."

These Moravians trusted God so deeply, their new birth in Christ was so real and so profound that even in the scariest moment you could imagine, they had faith.

Meanwhile, here's John: he had grown up in the church. His Dad was a pastor. He believed in God. And yet he began to question himself, to ask whether his faith was real. In the midst of this, he had a converting experience. He had believed in God before that, but now it became real. He was born again, and his faith began to grow.

CHAPTER FIVE: How We Encounter God, part 2

As we are seeing, Wesleyan theology is not only to be understood, but also lived, just like our faith. John Wesley gives us a powerful example in his own life, and his experiences with God shaped how he taught others about God.

In this chapter we will discuss two more Wesleyan ideas about how we encounter God, assurance and worship.

Assurance

Assurance is the theological idea that we can have confidence in the grace of God for us. It is the idea that not only are we saved by Jesus, but also that we can claim this promise, and that our salvation is not in question. As a disciple you can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus died and rose again for you.

We sing this idea in one of our favorite hymns...

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God
Born of his Spirit, washed in His blood

Assurance is the comforting reality that Jesus belongs to us, and we belong to him. It is the confidence that we can have in this life that is a foretaste of the glory that waits for us in heaven. We understand that part of the effect of grace, the work of God's Spirit, is to comfort us and reassure us in our souls that yes, we are children of God, and that no one can take that away from you.

This is what assurance sounds like in the Bible:

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

-Romans 8:16

Assurance is the work of the Spirit of God to fill you with confidence, not of self-assurance, but confidence in Christ because you are a child of God.

John Wesley famously had a heart-warming experience that we would call assurance. It took him a long time to accept that he didn't have to be sanctified for God to accept him, that it was actually the other way around. The only way for him to be sanctified was to first be accepted by God.

The story goes that one evening in 1738 he went to Aldersgate Church. He was listening to the leader read from Martin Luther's preface to the book of Romans. And this is what Wesley wrote in his journal:

"While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." -John Wesley

This is assurance. It is the realization that Jesus loves me... even me! And if I have salvation in him, nothing and no one can take it away.

Assurance is also part of what has been called the FOUR ALL's of Wesleyan theology.

- All need saving (sin)
- All can be saved (grace)
- All can know they are saved (assurance)
- All can be saved perfectly (sanctification)

If you are looking for a shorthand way to capture the essence of Wesleyan theology, start with the FOUR ALL's.

All people need saving, that is, all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

All people can be saved. Jesus died for everyone, with the hopes that all will come and receive the gift of grace.

All people can know that they are saved, that is, all of us can have that blessed assurance.

Finally, all people can be saved perfectly. God's sanctifying grace means that not only are we forgiven for past sin, but we are also empowered to become more like Jesus, and eventually, in the end of time, we can be made perfect the way Jesus is perfect.

Finally, Wesleyans encounter God through worship.



Worship

There are a couple of things that are particularly Wesleyan about our worship. One is our music. We have what we call a "Sung Theology." A sung theology means that our music

informs and reflects our faith. Our Wesleyan hymns and songs not only lift our souls in praise to God, they also function to teach us what we believe. Our music is theological.

Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Singing praise to God is a way of letting God’s word dwell in us, to teach us the story of our salvation.

The Wesleys were great hymn writers, especially John’s younger brother Charles, who wrote over 6000 hymns, 65 of which are in our hymnals.

The second part of our worship that is particularly Wesleyan is our practice of Holy Communion. Some of us grew up in churches where we took communion once a month or maybe only once a quarter. Do you know why we did it so infrequently? Because we’ve always done it that way. 😊



On the American frontier, when new churches were being established in new towns, there were not enough pastors to serve every congregation. So the few pastors that were available rode the circuit. They traveled on horseback, from

town to town. They would make it to your church about once a month, and on that Sunday you’d have any baptisms and you’d have Communion, because only the pastors have the authority to celebrate the sacraments.

Since then, some amazing things have happened: we no longer ride horses, we have this great invention called The Horseless

Carriage! You've heard of these things? You may call them cars. Not only that, we have a pastor leading our worship most every Sunday. So now we have the opportunity to have Holy Communion much more frequently.

Don't let anyone tell you Communion is MORE special if you do it LESS often. That's silliness. We would never suggest that with other spiritual practices, like prayer or Bible reading. Read your Bible LESS often to make it MORE meaningful? That doesn't make any sense, does it?

The power of the Supper is not that it is special, but that it is ordinary. Think about it. In establishing the Lord's Supper, Jesus has taken an ordinary human need, for nourishment, and earthly elements, like grapes and grain, and made them for us a means of grace, so that when we eat bread and drink wine together we are participating in the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord. We do not need to be able to understand the mysteries of God or grasp deep theological truths in order to experience the presence of God with us. All we have to do is come to the table with faith.

“It is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can. If we wish for strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity of receiving the Supper.” -John Wesley

John Wesley used to have communion at least two or three times a week.

So as Wesleyans, we come to the table, not just because brother John did so, but even more because Jesus commanded us to, and because he promised to meet us here. Our Lord

himself is with us in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup.

CHAPTER SIX: The Holiness of God

In this chapter and the two that follow, we will consider a fundamental Wesleyan idea known as holiness. Holiness means set apart and distinct. God is holy in the sense that God is other, different, distinct from the rest of creation. God participates in creation, but exists outside of it. Holy also means morally pure. God is totally pure, righteous, uncontaminated, and whole. In Christ, we have access to God's holiness.

Take a look at this idea in the Bible, in the 10th chapter of the book of Hebrews.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

-Hebrews 10:19-25, NIV

This passage starts with the word “Therefore,” which means, “take note of what I just said so we can draw some conclusions.”

The tenth chapter of Hebrews opens with describing the old covenant that God had with Jewish people in the Old Testament. The covenant, signified by circumcision, was given to the children of Israel. So you literally had to be born into the old covenant.

Now that the new covenant has been established through the blood of Jesus, no longer are animal sacrifices needed. Jesus has established a new way of reaching the people of this world, not by Israel, but by his own life, death, and resurrection.

Therefore! The author of Hebrews says, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus. Our boldness and confidence come from the good news that Jesus died for our sin – even ours! – and in him we have forgiveness and new life.

The Most Holy Place is referring to the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. This was where the presence of God was located, and only the High Priest could only enter that room, and even at that only once a year, after certain sacrifices were made. That was Israel’s only access to the presence of God.

The high priest went in with fear and trembling because the Israelites understood that we cannot behold the brightness of the glory of God. It’s like looking at the sun. If you look directly at the sun, it will damage your eyes. Imagine how much brighter is the glory of God.

BUT... because of the new covenant through the blood of Jesus, we as believers have complete confidence to enter into

the presence of God. We have access like never before, because Jesus is our Great High Priest. No longer do we need a human priest to help us encounter God. Jesus has done this for us.

By this “new and living way,” with Christ coming down to earth, sacrificing himself on the cross for our sins, he has made a new way into the presence of God for all believers.

This new and living way is via the new life we have in Christ. We are born again by his blood. It is a living way because it is an access to God through life, not through the death of animals, but through the resurrection of our Lord.

All of this again points to the grace of God, who knows all our faults and shortcomings, yet grants us access to his throne through our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Personal Holiness

So we know that God is holy. God is both separate from us, and morally superior to us. For centuries this was represented in the Tabernacle by the Holy of Holies, a dwelling space set apart from the rest of the worship space, where God resided.

Now that Christ has come and established the new covenant, we have access to God like never before. And because we have access to God in God’s holiness, we can actually hope to become holy like God is holy. As we said in chapter three, our Wesleyan term for this process is sanctification. By the grace of God, we decrease in sin and increase in love as we become more like Jesus. This is the journey of personal holiness. You and I can be personally transformed.

Look again at verse 22 from Hebrews 10...

...Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. -Hebrews 10:22

Draw near to God with a sincere heart. In some translations it says a *true* heart. True means genuine, without superficiality, hypocrisy, or ulterior motive. A true heart is one connected to the truth of God's grace, which means that our hearts can be right, without error, and reconciled to the heart of God.

We can have the full assurance that faith brings – that is, confidence in the mercy of God to wash away our past sin, to give us freedom in the present moment, and to empower us for a future of promise and hope. This is the journey of sanctification. And all of it is possible by the cleansing of the Spirit to sprinkle our hearts with the blood of Christ, and to wash our lives with the waters of baptism.

Our guilty conscience can be cleansed because our sin has been paid for. Therefore, a sincere heart is one that is free of guilt, free of worry, free of concern for the sins of the past or the outcomes of the future.

Because we have this good news through Jesus Christ who washes us of sin, the author of Hebrews encourages us:

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

–Hebrews 10:23

We love this word, Unswervingly!



Imagine being so dedicated to something that you are unwilling to move away from it.

Consider Charlie.

Charlie is a little Yorkie Poo. Every night while dinner is being prepared, Charlie is right next to the chef. He knows what's coming. It could be 45 minutes before the meal is ready, but he is right there. Focused. Attentive. Ready for a morsel of food to fall to him.

Charlie holds unswervingly to the hope of something delicious to eat.

In the same way, the pursuit of personal holiness, of our likeness to Christ, consists in holding unswervingly to the hope we profess. We can have this hope because the one promised it to us is faithful. Our lives are held secure in the promises of God.

Our role, then, is to attend to the practices and habits that put us in the place where we can expect God's Spirit to work in and through us for this blessed work of holiness. Holding unswervingly to our faith means being dedicated to prayer and Bible reading, to worship of God and the service of others, and it requires us to meet together regularly, because holiness is also social.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Social Holiness

The author of Hebrews encourages us not only to hold on to our hope and faith, but to do it with the help of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

—Hebrews 10:24-25

We are called to do the work of love, and to spur one another to do the same. And let's be honest: We need each other's help. There is no such thing as a solitary Christian. Therefore we should not give up meeting together, as some have done, but instead meet to encourage one another.

John Wesley called this Social Holiness and it was crucial in the Wesleyan movement. This is what John wrote about it:

Solitary religion is not to be found there. "Holy Solitaries" is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than Holy Adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness. Faith working by love, is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection. —John Wesley



Imagine the Church as a farm. What Wesley is stressing here is that faith does not consist of independent silos, but of fields and farmhands working together for the strengthening of the whole operation. The ground and the seed working together. The fertilizer and the machinery working together. Because together they bear much fruit.

Notice how personal holiness and social holiness go together. The more deeply we love God, the more deeply we will love people. As Wesleyans, we affirm that there is no holiness but social holiness.

Consider John Wesley's context for a moment. As a pastor in the Church of England in the 1700's, he witnessed all sorts of social ills that affected his flock: marital problems, drunkenness, violence, and gossip. Yet he knew that as one pastor he could not address every problem or care for every person.

So John set up structures to help people address these spiritual challenges. He formed groups called classes and bands.

Classes were usually based around a geographical location, containing people of different ages, demographics, and backgrounds. Each class had a leader that would check on the members once a week or so, doing the majority of the pastoring of that particular group of people.

Wesley would meet with the leaders of the classes and check in to see how things were going. He encouraged and helped the leaders of the classes to in turn help the members of the classes that they led.

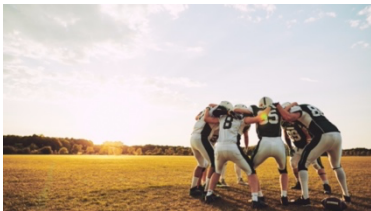
Wesley also organized smaller groups called bands, which usually consisted of six to eight members. People were put into bands to match the other members by age, gender, and marital status. Which means there were married bands and single bands, women's bands, men's bands, girl bands, and even boy bands. (Who would've thought the Backstreet Boys and N'SYNC got their start in 18th century England. Haha.)

Members of the bands gathered regularly for intense spiritual nurture, support, and accountability. Their primary activities were prayer and confession with the goal of spiritual growth. By maintaining small-sized groups of people in similar life situations, they cultivated an environment of openness and intimacy and spiritual depth.

At Timberlake we don't call them classes and bands, but instead Lifegroups. Just like the original Wesleyan bands, our Lifegroups are focused on intimacy, growth, service, and multiplication. At Timberlake this is our foundational system for discipleship. We learn how to follow Jesus in these groups. We gather with fellow believers who have the same struggles, the same worries, the same challenges, to walk alongside each other. And when we do, something amazing happens: social holiness.

We grow in our likeness to Christ with the help and support we have from others.

Therefore, if we are going to take our faith seriously, we cannot do this life of following Jesus alone. Our expectation is that every Timberlake person will participate in a Lifegroup.



Think about it in terms of football, and the huddle.

Before most every play of the game, the offense circles up to discuss the next play, make necessary adjustments, and ensure everyone is on the same page. In the huddle, the players challenge and encourage each other to keep going, to win the game.

As kids playing football in the backyard, we would huddle. We would wrap our arms around each other, making a tight circle. It was our own secret private gathering. Someone called the play. There was conversation and collaboration. And at the end, we would say 'READY, BREAK!'. Then we would set up our play, ready to make progress down the field.

These days there is a trend in football toward the hurry-up offense, which makes less use of the huddle. Teams want to speed up the game, and score more points. But there is no substitute for the kind of communication that happens when teammates gather. Former Dallas Cowboys quarterback, Roger Staubach, said this about it, "As players in the huddle, you're all alone in the middle of the field, but together at the same time. You see who is hurt, who's tired or who's spitting mad. You can take that all in, which can be powerful."



This is just what our LifeGroups are for: A place of solitude from the rest of the world where we can at the same time be together, where we can talk about our failures, but be supported, where we can talk about our concerns, and be encouraged, where we can listen to one another and not be alone.

Many of our Timberlake people have been positively impacted by their LifeGroup experiences. Take a look at these testimonies:

Our LifeGroup has fed us. Spiritually and literally.... Currently, we are renovating our kitchen and at one point the only thing in there was a fridge. Dinners and food have been an interesting part of our life in this

season. Our LifeGroup has responded...and we have been over to one couple's house for dinner for group... We've had a short notice dinner party before group one night at another house where everyone brought something. We've had LifeGroup members bring us dinner various times. They aren't just feeding us spiritually, but physically as well. -Timberlake LifeGroup member

The thing I have noticed... is my ability to talk out loud about my faith. For most of my life, my faith life consisted of singing hymns and listening/learning. I had never said out loud what I believed and how it affected me, or even prayed out loud much. -Timberlake LifeGroup member

When we joined our first LifeGroup we were Timberlake newbies. These were some of the first people we got to know well. Also... this season as I've transitioned to Treehouse Kids LifeGroup on Wednesdays, I feel like I learn as much or more digging in with the kids. Just the sheer joy of teaching them to navigate the Bible, pray, and talk fills my heart to bursting. And the key is the regular time together as a group. Time together weekly to bond over Jesus. -Timberlake LifeGroup member

In setting up classes and bands, Wesley's goal was not to form a new denomination, but to RE-form his beloved church. He understood that one of the most vital ingredients for new life, in each person as well as in the church community, was gathering together for prayer, study, and encouragement. When we gather in our LifeGroups, we cannot help but grow in love for one another as we become more like Jesus.

CHAPTER NINE: Mission

So far we've covered a lot. We've covered how Wesleyans talk about God, how we encounter God, and how we meet with each other. These final three chapters will now turn to how we serve our neighbors. Three distinct Wesleyan ideas that shape how we serve our neighbors are mission, ministry with the poor, and evangelism.

Notice with us the Biblical nature of these three theological ideas. They can all be drawn out from a single passage in the gospel of Luke. These are the words of our Lord, Jesus. He went to the desert to fast and pray and be tempted by the devil. Now he is preaching his first sermon. He's come back to Galilee, the Bible says, "in the power of the Spirit." And the news about him began to spread. He was gaining a reputation. People were talking about him. He was teaching in the synagogues, and ministering to God's people. One Saturday he went to Nazareth, his hometown, and he gave his first sermon, based on the words of the prophet Isaiah.

When you preach your first sermon, you set the tone, you set the stage for what comes next. This is his inaugural address. His first public message to say, "This is who I am, this is what I'm about."

Jesus said,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

-Luke 4:18-19

Jesus named his mission. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to bring the good news.” He is anointed, that is, called and chosen, set apart, empowered, and blessed for a particular purpose.

Here is a focus on ministry with the poor. The good news of Jesus is good news for everyone, but especially the poor: those who live in financial poverty, and also the spiritually poor, those who are captive to sin, those who are oppressed.

Here is a focus on evangelism. Jesus says, “I am proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favor.” Evangelism is the proclamation of the good news of the gospel.

So right here in one brief passage we have these Wesleyan theological emphases, mission, ministry with the poor, and evangelism. Now let’s take a deeper look at these ideas – historically and theologically – and consider how they inform our ministry at Timberlake.



In the year 1709, when John Wesley was five years old, his house caught on fire. Everyone made it out safely except for him. He was trapped inside, blocked by the raging fire just outside

his bedroom. The neighbors gathered to witness the scene. Someone spotted young John, looking out the second story window, crying for help.

John’s father, Samuel, figured John was done for. He fell to his knees and cried out for God’s mercy. He prayed with all his might.

Meanwhile, some of the neighbors moved to action. They rushed over to the burning house, stood on one another's shoulders, and reached up to grab John from the blaze.

John's life was saved that day.

As an adult, John would look back on that moment as a sign of God's deliverance. It would become an experience that in some ways would define the rest of his life. He said, "I was a brand plucked from the burning..." – an Old Testament reference to the way God described Joshua.

Of course, a brand is a metal rod heated up in the fire so that it can be used to leave a mark, such as on wood or on cowhide. Wesley understood that if we are forged in the fire of God's mercy, we can also leave a mark on our generation.

God has a purpose for our lives.



Churches within the Wesleyan tradition have a strong sense of Mission. Mission has been central to our movement since the beginning.

Think with us about John Wesley's context. He was a priest, a pastor in the Church of England in the 1700's. At that time, the Church had grown into a very large institution, with wealth and political power, and yet it seemed to have very little power to actually change people's lives.

Wesley looked around and he saw dying churches, ineffective pastors, and apathetic Christians. Many people said they believed in God, yet they didn't really live like followers of

Jesus. People came to church to be baptized, but never came back again.

Wesley thought, “This isn’t good! We have to do something about it.”

So he started something new. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he initiated a movement of the people of God. He began to reform the church.

One of the things we want you to understand about our Wesleyan heritage is that we come from a long line of Reformers. Our history is the history of reformation.

What does it mean to reform? It means to Form, Again. Right? To improve, reorganize, restructure, to transform... into the image of Christ.

Remember, last week we talked about the new birth. About what it means to be born again. Think of Reformation as the new birth for the church. What being born again means for your soul is the same thing that reformation means for your church.

And in our history there are two Reformations that I want you to think about. The Protestant Reformation and the Wesleyan Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation began when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg, Germany, to protest the excesses and theological error of the Church. This was the 1500’s, and the Church was going way off course, neglecting its mission and doing unconscionable things like selling salvation for money. So Luther and many others pushed back.

Notice: What is the root word of the word Protestant?
PROTEST! They protested. This is in our blood, friends. We are protesters. We are those who reject a false faith and claim Jesus as the Way.

Some of our most important and dearly held theological beliefs were those advanced by the Protestant Reformation:

- The idea of salvation by faith alone (not by works, but by the grace of God)
- The primacy of Scripture, that while tradition is important, our highest authority is the Bible
- The centrality of preaching
- An idea we call “the priesthood of all believers.” The priesthood of all believers means that every disciple of Jesus is a priest. By virtue of your baptism, you are a minister of the gospel.

Now, 200 years later, along comes John Wesley who starts a Reformation movement of his own.

Wesley responded to the excesses and the institutionalism of the Church of England by calling people to deeper discipleship. He gathered people in small groups. He called on them to read the Bible, pray, visit prisoners, feed the hungry, and share at the Lord’s Supper. And when he got little or no support from his denominational authorities, he went out and did the work of the church anyway.

When Wesley was criticized by his boss, the Bishop, for focusing too much on reaching new people, he said, “The world is our parish.”

He insisted that faith and works go together. That if we are going to worship God on Sunday, we have got to be willing to care for our neighbor on Monday.

When Wesley was asked about the mission of this new movement, he said,

“To reform the nation, especially the Church, and to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land.” -John Wesley

Wesley wanted to reform the church, and spread Scriptural holiness, so that people could become more like Jesus.

Get this: Wesley never intended to start a new church. He wanted to reform the church. Yet all of his reforms ended up in the birth of something new.



We are reminded here of our own Timberlake experience. None of us got together said, “Hey, you know what would be great? Let’s leave the United Methodist Church.”

Not at all. That was never our vision. Instead, the more we have reformed this congregation, the more we have committed to the mission, the more it has led us away from the institution called United Methodism and into a new movement of the Spirit of God. Therefore, in a very real way, our disaffiliation from the United Methodist denomination is one of the most Wesleyan things we could do. We are protesting. We are reforming.

To be Wesleyan is to be focused on the mission.

CHAPTER TEN: Ministry with the Poor

A second way we serve our neighbors is by our commitment to ministry with the poor.

It is also to be in ministry with the poor.

Remember, Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18). Our Lord Jesus was ruthlessly committed to caring for the least of God’s children.

In the same way, to be Wesleyan is to concern ourselves with bringing release to the captives, sight to the blind, comfort for widows and orphans, clothing for the naked, and food for the hungry.

One of the things John Wesley used to do was to walk house to house in the neighborhoods of rich people, ask them for money, and then turn around and use those funds to care for the poor. At a time when the institutional Church had all but forgotten about the least persons, Wesley reminded Christians that this is our call, to care for our neighbors.

See, what made the Wesleyan movement extraordinary was not just that they cared about poor people – they did. It was that they actually included people in poverty in their community. So their poor neighbors came to worship, and joined their small groups, and became leaders in their churches.



We see the same thing happening in our Timberlake ministry. It's a shift from CHARITY to COMMUNITY. Think about this. Charity means someone is hungry, I give them food.

Charity is good! It meets the real needs of our neighbors. But notice what is beginning to happen... some of the people we feed have actually begun to be part of the larger ministry of our church. Our neighbors are not only receiving groceries, they are also coming to worship with us, joining our LifeGroups, and being baptized. So what started as CHARITY has become COMMUNITY. What started as us helping someone is blossoming into actual friendships. We are realizing also that we not only need to give, but receive.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: Evangelism

The last Wesleyan idea we will discuss here is evangelism.

John Wesley was passionate about sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when people didn't come to church, he went to them. He began to preach in the city streets and farmers' fields, anywhere that people would listen. Most of his peers thought this was beneath them. No proper priest would be caught dead out there in the world with such common people. Preaching outdoors was considered rude, crude, and socially unacceptable.

But Wesley famously said, "I submitted to be more vile." He was willing to do any revolting or contemptible thing if he could share the gospel message of Jesus Christ with others. In his life, Wesley traveled an average of 4000 miles a year – on a

horse – and by the time he died at age 87, he had preached 40,000 sermons.

As Wesleyan Christians, we care about the salvation of our neighbors. So like Wesley, Jesus is sending us out into the world to share the good news of his gospel and reach new people. Wesley had a great saying about the power of just a few people who had big faith:

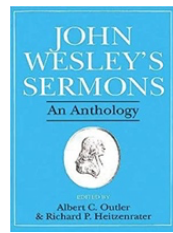
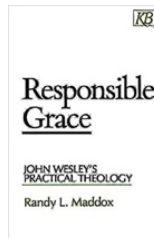
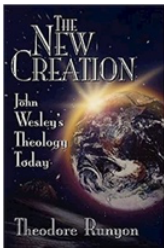
Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not whether they be pastors or laypersons, they alone will shake the gates of Hell and set up the kingdom of Heaven on Earth. -John Wesley

Do you see this? The impact that Timberlake can make for the salvation of people in this community is not the EXCELLENCE of the preacher, it is the WILLINGNESS of the preachers! We are all ministers. We are all messengers of the good news of Jesus, and the primary way we will share it and reach new people is not the Sunday sermon, but the way we live our lives and the opportunities we have to tell others about Jesus. So may the same be said of us: That we may fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and we will shake the gates of hell and change this world with the love of Christ.

God has big plans for Timberlake.

CHAPTER TWELVE: Next Steps

Thank you for reading this Wesleyan theological primer. We pray that it is encouraging you as you grow in your faith in Jesus. If you'd like to learn more, consider checking out one of these books: *New Creation* by Ted Runyon, *Responsible Grace* by Randy L. Maddox, or *John Wesley's Sermons*, edited by Albert Outler and Richard Heitzenrater. You are also welcome to contact one of our pastors or leaders to talk about spiritual things. We would be honored to walk with you on your spiritual journey.



Let us recommend to you these next steps:

1. Make a commitment to worship. Weekly worship of the living God is the basic building block of Christian faith.
2. Join a LifeGroup. Wesleyans have such a great tradition of meeting together to encourage one another in faith. Check out our groups here: <https://timberlakechurch.org/life-groups/>
3. Serve your neighbor. Find some way to care for and love the people around you.
4. Give financially. God is blessed when we offer our resources to the church for the work of God in the world.

“To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”
-Philippians 4:20