

ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A DISCIPLESHIP SERIES ON SOCIAL RELIGION FOR THE RIZAL PHILIPPINES
ANNUAL CONFERENCE EAST OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH BASED
ON SELECTED SERMONS OF JOHN WESLEY

A Project Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS)

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religious Education
Curriculum and Instruction

By

JONATHAN LEO BELEN LOSCOS

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ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

WE HEREBY APPROVE THE THESIS
SUBMITTED BY

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ENTITLED
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FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The Methodist heritage has a rich history of social participation as a form of witnessing its faith to the world. John Wesley's sermons about Christianity being a social religion contain discussions that can reinforce the vision of social holiness and express the social nature of religion. A discipleship course regarding the social nature of Christianity in light of Wesleyan tradition was created through a selection of John Wesley's sermons by translating them into contemporary language supplemented with discussion questions. The Taytay United Methodist Church in Rizal, Philippines was the pilot class for studying the material via a combination of online and face-to-face discussions. Expected outputs including a final evaluation were required for participants to receive a Certificate of Completion.

Moreover, the thesis writer referred to Hilda Taba's (1962) work *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice* and Bonous-Hammarth et al. (1996), *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development* for the development of the project thesis. The thesis writer utilized a subject-centered approach in designing a curriculum which relies on teacher-planned instruction. The written material was a combined translation and direct quotation drawn directly from John Wesley's sermon manuscripts. An initial evaluation of the material was given by Wesleyan experts. Participants were selected through convenience sampling. Data was collected online through Google Forms, comprising a diagnostic instrument and the evaluation form for the overall pilot implementation.

There are 20 participants, ages 37 to 84 years, enlisted for pilot implementation and 13 were able to answer the diagnostic instrument. Due to irregular schedules, only 10 participants met all requirements for completion, and 14 were able to respond to the Feedback and Evaluation Form. Regarding the Evaluation and Feedback, participants gauge their experience according to four criteria namely, Content, Impact, Interaction, and Integration using a 10-point rating scale, with 1 as the lowest and 10 as the highest. In order of highest to lowest, Impact ranked highest (9.54), followed by Integration (9.36), Content (9.07), and Interaction (9.05). Furthermore, the comments and suggestion that were obtained were grouped according to the emerging classifications identified from the participants' answers a) The Experience of The Participants, b) The Insights/Learning Gained Through the Lesson Content c) The Instructional Process with an Emphasis on Reflection, and d) The Language of the Material and Further Suggestions. Suggested improvements include lessened use of footnotes for direct quotations, and enhanced transitions in the discussions. Tagalog and Youth-oriented versions were recommended as possible future projects.

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No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.


Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos
(Researcher)

March 27, 2023
(Date)

DEDICATION

I am dedicating this work to my mother, Rosalina Fe Belen Loscos who was a church deaconess of the United Methodist Church, who raised me by bringing up me in the local church and instructing me about the practical teachings of the faith. I extend my dedication to my grandmother, Antonia Rivera Belen, a meek but strong woman, who as a single mother, braved the challenges of the world to show her love to her two daughters, family, and grandchildren.

I also express my appreciation in a form of dedication to my home church and the whole of the United Methodist Church for being instrumental in honing my faith and my personal upbringing, and allowing me to find my vocation.

May those who are walking in their faith find insights from this endeavor.

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I have much appreciation for the Taytay UMC and its council leaders, namely Sis. Ela Cruz, Sis. Lilian Carreon and their proactive workers Rev. Nepomuceno Amable and Rev. Prudencio Peralta, and their Discipleship Coordinator Bro. Jay Bhee Crisostomo, all whom were supportive during the time of the implementation of this project.

I acknowledge the ideas and contributions of my professors, advisers, and the composition of the panel, namely, Dr. Dick Eugenio, Dr. Dave Pascua, Dr. Erlic Sagud, Dr. Natz Petallar, Dr. Floyd Cunningham, and Dr. Luther Oconer. The assistance and support of librarians and staff, specifically Mrs. Ruth Caparas Salangsang-Almario, Mrs. Michelle Cainglet, and Mrs. Dorys P. Arbes, are significant for allowing me to access materials that are necessary for this project thesis and for updating me with my requests.

Lastly, I want to thank my wife Agnes for supporting and reminding me to finish this project.

All glory and praise belong to God.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOD – Board of Discipleship

RPACE – Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East

UMC – United Methodist Church

UMC BOD – The United Methodist Church Book of Disciplines

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Background of the Study

The United Methodist Church (UMC) mandates its Annual Conference to be involved and creative in discipleship-making activities. The UMC BOD ¶630.2 states that the Annual Conference of the UMC through its Board of Discipleship (BOD) ought to “develop and promote a conference program of Christian Education for the whole life span, to lead, assist, and support congregations and districts in developing systems for educational small-group ministries...in the Christian faith and the spiritual disciplines as motivation for Christian service in the Church, the community, and the world” (Reist et al. 2016, 448). This task is only one of the other responsibilities that UMC BOD assigns to the Board of Discipleship of Annual Conferences to provide mechanisms for membership formation. The Board of Discipleship of the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East (RPACE)— one of the eleven Annual Conferences of the Manila Episcopal Area (MEA)— tries to be proactive with this particular responsibility by envisioning the creation of discipleship materials that reinforce the understanding of the Wesleyan Heritage in local churches.

The RPACE, through its Board of Discipleship, proposed an experimental framework to help local churches transition for the possible configuration of their ministries in case they decide to run their discipleship system. Along with this decision,

the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East approved an action to select churches to implement a possible program for discipleship materials (see Appendix A).

The writer of this project thesis, being a minister, was involved in the Board of discipleship of RPACE. The creation of discipleship materials coincides with the aim of this thesis. Envisioning a structured mode of discipleship for the church involves two considerations that are intertwined and yet can be tackled separately. First is the operational design of a discipleship system. The local church must follow a prescribed structure when it comes to leadership roles and ministerial responsibilities, as well as discipleship training. In order to be sustainable, this system needs to be integrated into the ministry and life of the local churches via the existing leadership, church programs, and itinerant nature of the clergy. Secondly, a discipleship system includes the instructional materials or materials that will serve as the foundation for a streamlined theological and doctrinal foundation. In this thesis, we focus on the second portion of discipleship.

To enhance their membership formation, the local churches of the RPACE need a discipleship process. As a lifelong United Methodist member, the thesis writer has always assumed this assumption based on his experiences growing up in a local church, and the recent approval of the RPACE to adopt a discipleship framework confirms it.

The discipleship framework that RPACE is implementing covers the initial materials that can be offered to the conference. These materials are based on John Wesley's sermons. The materials, containing twelve lessons each, are thematically categorized under these volumes: a) *Faith and Progressing Salvation*; b) *Christian Life and the Stewardship of Faith*; c) *God-Centered Mission and the Duty to Witness*; and d) *Spiritual Examination, Inner Healing, and Breakthroughs* (see Appendix B).

These materials, specifically the first three were sent to one of the directors of the Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church, Rev. Bener Agtarap, Ph.D. Rev. Agtarap has given his endorsement only for the first three volumes of the materials since the fourth one was not yet written when his response was secured (see Appendix C). Additionally, Rev. John Manalo of the Board of Christian Education and Discipleship of the Philippine Central Conference has given his endorsement (see Appendix D). Although recommendations are helpful for conference or local church adoption, the materials are subject to ongoing evaluation based on actual use and perceived need for enhancement.

In light of the available materials, the thesis writer's previous adviser, Dr. Dick Eugenio, made clear that Asia Pacific Nazarene Seminary (APNTS) does not allow using materials that have already been written as an output of a project thesis. However, to expand the set of discipleship materials that are already initially available, a new volume focusing on a particular theme or topic can be created. The idea of making a material that explores John Wesley's sermons was conceived, using Dr. Eugenio's insights and the thematic guidance of the social dimension of faith. The material is intended to tackle themes and topics that have not yet been discussed in the previous material and its instructional features was set by the thesis writer. With these points, the project was steered in this direction.

Furthermore, due to the preparation and discussion for this project in consultation with Dr. Eugenio, the original and unrevised write-up of the already existing materials of the RPACE Board of Discipleship were retroactively improved in terms of format and instructional components. The improvements on previous materials were based on the

planned features of the output of this specific project both in terms of format and length. The envisioned output of this project was necessary to adjust the quality of the existing materials that were being adopted by the RPACE BOD in order to secure a degree of uniformity and continuity. As such, the existing materials of the RPACE BOD and the completion of the first draft of this project were simultaneously written. In effect, the creation of this project thesis affected the quality of the materials that the RPACE BOD was initially offering.

The goal of this undertaking is to create a discipleship resource that deals with social holiness to empower people in making their faith more socially relevant to their society. The thesis writer asserts that understanding Christianity as a social religion that contributes to social transformation is an important component of the Christian faith that would make a more holistic view of discipleship. The term holistic relays the idea that Christian formation must be guided by a thematic progress that parallels the growth that happens in the Christian life— from experiencing justification, continuing the walk of sanctification, and being socially involved to the expanding the mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world.

To strengthen the reason for the production of a discipleship material regarding the social relevance of faith based on the Wesleyan heritage, the social nature of religion can be connected to the history of social involvement of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines. Validating the significant social activities of Methodism in the Philippines, we can refer to specific cases of how the denomination related to its community in the past. The former CHED Commissioner and the current Philippine Central Conference Lay Leader of the United Methodist Church, Dr. Carlito S. Puno,

cited the institutions that were established by or related to Methodism that made a positive impact to society. Dr. Puno mentions Harris Memorial College as a pioneer in kindergarten education; the Mary Johnston Hospital as the third hospital to be founded in the Philippines; the Philippine Christian University that was brought into existence to help Manila in recovering after World War 2 in terms of education; and lastly, the student center of the Kapatiran-Kaulanran Foundation, Inc. (KKFI) in Sampaloc, Manila which was the first student center in the Philippines (Puno 2016, n.p.).

The KKFI itself is one of the social arms of the UMC which exists as “a social development institution that provides holistic, innovative and sustainable programs for children, youth, women, their families and communities towards a better quality of life” (KKFI 2015, n.p.). These institutions continue to exist to do their tasks.

In the Philippine judiciary system, Methodism is of influence to the life of Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno who currently attends Puno United Methodist Church. In 2009, responding to the political climate of the nation launched the Moral Force Movement which is “neither pro- nor anti-administration, but it is not apolitical and neutral since it will stand up for political righteousness” (Romero 2009, n.p.).

Social engagement is encouraged to be observed by United Methodist local churches. This character means that the local churches of the UMC are set up to have a continuous engagement in the social life of the community. The UMC BOD ¶202 states:

The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society...Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God’s creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church (Reist et al. 2016, 147-148).

From the thesis writer's point of view, the general reason behind these institutions is: to save faith is to spread God's love and serve people by making them socially integrated and relevant to social needs. This general view resonates with what Wesley asserts, that is, whatever he says, knows, believes, does, or suffers about, if not done by faith that works through love and neither produces love toward God and all people, then he is on the way toward destruction instead of being in the narrow way to life (Wesley 1986, 306). Concerning the local church, Bishop Emerito P. Nacpil of the UMC presented a report *Vitalizing the Local Church for Growth* which states that the vision for *growth* and *growing-up (maturity)* involving three directions, namely: a) Growth in numbers, b) Growth in quality, and c) Growth in social impact can be realized by focusing in the local church (Nacpil 1989, 1-3). By *vitalizing the local church* three main thrusts in the document were presented: a) mission and evangelism, b) social impact, and c) leadership formation (Nacpil 1989, 6-18).

Another significant motivation for this project involves a personal relevance for the thesis writer's ministry in the UMC. The thesis writer, being invested in the life and ministry of the denomination, envisions UMC churches having accessible materials that put John Wesley's thoughts—about social transformation—in active discussions at the grassroots level. Stanley Hauerwas states that the church is “not some ideal community but a particular people who, like Israel, must find the way to sustain its existence generation after generation” (Hauerwas 1986, 107). Additionally, Hauerwas (1986) notes that the social ethic of the church cannot be set based on the world's agenda but because the church sets its own. It is the church that assists the world in what “it means to be the

world” because the church points to the Kingdom of God as a reality that the world on its own has no way of knowing (Hauerwas 1986, 100).

The thesis writer envisions that by providing a reliable foundation about the Wesleyan view of social religion toward social transformation, members can become more empowered in their social witness. With that conviction, the main intent of the project is the creation of material that caters to the spiritual formation of members in the local church by reinforcing the social orientation of their faith.

The Framework of the Study

A United Methodist Foundation for a Social-Oriented Spirituality

The UMC BOD talks about the disciplines of Wesleyan spirituality as formed through the “coherence of faith with ministries of love” (Reist et al. 2016, 54).

Evangelical living, according to the UMC BOD, is a manifestation of evangelical faith. This principle is behind the three general rules summarized through this “do good, do no harm, and stay in love with God” (Reist et al. 2016, 54).

The Social Principles advanced by the UMC are a testimony of the church’s devotion to seeing a world where God’s reign is evident. As such, the UMC pursues active participation in social conversations and expresses its faith through being involved in issues relevant to society. The UMC Social Principles are the outcome of the efforts of the church to “speak to the human issues in the contemporary world.” These principles are “a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit” (Reist et al. 2016, 105). The Social Principles represent the “historic

opposition” to social evils by applying the “Christian vision of righteousness to social, economic, and political issues” (Reist et al. 2016, 55).

A Subject-Centered Curriculum in a Religious Context

According to James Estep, Roger White, and Karen Estep, the church can act as the context for developing a curriculum. There are four modes that they expressed as the curricular focus of Christian education, namely: a) the program resembling formal schooling that is Eurocentric and fixed on repetitive activities that are centered on Scripture, b) the process of learning that is directed for socialization which is a formalized process by the faith community that makes its congregation participative, c) the Spiritual development of individuals through a process that directs people to Christlikeness that employs discipleship and mentoring, and d) the theme of liberation that advocates for social change that is a common motivation in third world countries in order to attain a better social condition (Estep, White, and Estep 2012, 141-143).

For Estep, White, and Estep, in the context of a faith community, designers of a curriculum ultimately cater to the needs by making desired outcomes for the church through developing a model curriculum (Estep, White, and Estep 2012, 144). Additionally, by referring to Ralph Tyler, Estep, White, and Estep listed that the three sources of data that are key for curriculum development are the subject matter, society, and students (Estep, White, and Estep 2012, 144-145).

Conceptualizing a curriculum, according to Estep, White, and Estep, can either be *linear* or *nonlinear* (Estep, White, and Estep 2012, 141-143). In the *linear* conceptualization of curriculum, Estep, White, and Estep cited Tyler’s approach which is guided by four questions that deals with these key points: a) the “educational purpose;” b)

the “required experiences;” c) the organization of the curriculum;” and d) the evaluation to determine the achievement of intended purpose (Estep, White, and Estep 2012, 143). On the other hand, the *nonlinear* models of curriculum conceptualization involve starting to develop a curriculum at any point. The *nonlinear* way of developing curriculum provides an allowance for reversing the basic process, skipping components of curriculum design, or simultaneously working on the given components (Estep, White, and Estep 2012, 143).

Curriculum development, according to Kenneth D. Moore, includes “all of the learning experiences that are intended and unintended” which take place in a learning environment, particularly in school (Moore 2015, 172). Relating to curriculum design, Moore cited three ways of designing.

The first way of curriculum design is curriculum mapping, which is identifying gaps between a curriculum guideline from a higher educational body, to how the curriculum itself is taught in the classroom. The gaps are the possible representation of the possible enhancements that can be placed on the curriculum (Moore 2015, 172-173).

The second design noted by Moore is the *Backward Curriculum Design* based on Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) work which provides three steps in making a curriculum, specifically: a) identifying the “desired outcomes and results;” b) determining the constitution of “acceptable evidence of competency;” and c) planning the activities for learning to the intended competency levels (Moore 2015, 173-174).

The third design that Moore cited is the Marzano framework by Robert Marzano (2007) based on his work *The Art and Science of Teaching* which balances research data with the individual student’s strengths and weaknesses. According to Marzano, the

framework consists of ten questions that correspond to helping students in terms of: a) establishing and communicating learning goals, tracking “student progress,” and celebrating success; b) interacting with “new knowledge;” c) practicing and deepening “new knowledge;” d) generating and testing hypothesis regarding “new knowledge;” e) engaging students; f) establishing or maintaining classroom procedures or rule; g) recognizing and adhering to the “classroom rules and procedures;” h) maintaining “effective relationships;” i) communicating “high expectations;” and j) developing “effective lessons” and organizing them as a “cohesive unit” (Moore 2015, 174).

Estep, White, and Estep enumerated the key elements in plotting a curriculum. These are: a) the purpose that is being directed by the point of view of the community; b) the goals that are complying with the given educational purpose through general terms; c) the objectives that are associated with the domain of learning and the behaviors that are meant to be learned; and d) the outcomes which state the final aims that ought to be attained by the educational process (Estep, White, and Estep 2012, 147-149).

As for the structure of the curriculum, Moore wrote that it can be either student-centered or subject-centered. The subject-centered curriculum relies on extensive discussions pertaining to specific facts and data with the assumption that certain content must be planned and taught by the teacher (Moore 2015, 176). On the other hand, the student-centered curriculum is focused on activities, interests, and needs wherein the curriculum itself “operates with students as center of the learning process” (Moore 2015, 177).

For Moore, the subject-centered curriculum can be further divided into two: the first is the separate-subject curriculum which discretely divides the focus of studies into

different subjects such as literature, math, and chemistry to name a few (Moore 2015, 176-177). The second form of the subject-centered curriculum is the spiral curriculum which is centered on a material that is intended to be taught. There are two differences in the spiral curriculum from the separate-subject curriculum. The first difference is that it “puts more emphasis on concepts and generalizations” and the second is that it is planned to correspond to the sequential stages of development of the learners (Moore 2015, 176-177).

Classifying the Intended Categories of Lessons

The work of Bonous-Hammarth and his fellow writers, *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development* is helpful for this project. This model focuses on collaboration among participants to achieve two main tasks: a) to enhance learning by developing participants into having greater self-knowledge and leadership competence; and b) to facilitate positive social change in a community and institution (Bonous-Hammarth et al. 1996, 19).

According to Bonous-Hammarth et al., this model is based on the corresponding premises: a) that it must be inclusive to all who engage in the process; b) that leadership is considered a process; c) that the model promotes equity, social justice, self-knowledge, personal empowerment, collaboration, citizenship, and service; d) that one of the powerful leadership capabilities includes service and meaning-making of life experiences is a tool for learning; e) that the model is helpful for students or faculty or academic administrators or anyone interested in leadership development; and lastly, f) that this model is subject to refinements based on the experience of its users (Bonous-Hammarth et al. 1996, 18).

The model that Bonous-Hmmarth et al. created has three major levels of leadership (Bonous-Hmmarth et al. 1996, 19):

1. The Individual: What personal qualities are we attempting to foster and develop in those who participate in a leadership development program? What personal qualities are most supportive of group functioning and positive social change?
2. The Group: How can the collaborative leadership development process be designed not only to facilitate the development of the desired individual qualities (above) but also to effect positive social change?
3. The Community or Society: Toward what social ends is the leadership development activity directed? What kinds of service activities are most effective in energizing the group and in developing desired personal qualities in the individual? (Bonous-Hmmarth et al. 1996, 19).

Furthermore, the three levels contain seven C's which are grouped according to their levels. These are the following: a) The Individual is related to Consciousness of Self, Congruence, and Commitment; b) The Group contains Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility; and c) The Society or Community consists of Citizenship.

Having all these levels, together with the seven C's, will interact and engage toward an increased awareness of personal and interpersonal dimensions of leadership (Bonous-Hammarth et al. 1996, 27).

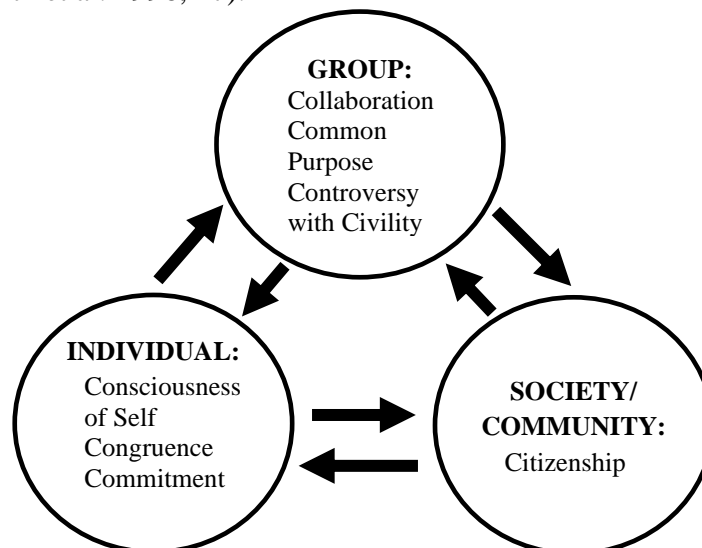


Figure 1. The Social Change Model: Three components of leadership development and their engagement together with their 7 C's

Based on these inputs and models, the discipleship series will feature a sequential and progressing discussion about the theme “Social Religion toward Social Transformation” through the Wesleyan point of view using Wesley’s selected sermons.

Instructionally, the components of this model provide a pattern for subdividing the contents of the proposed discipleship series. Based on the components, the outline to cater to a balanced combination of Wesley’s views pertaining to a faith that is socially active is given to these three divisions: a) Understanding Christianity as a social religion as a shared foundation the group; b) The key insights about a person’s engagement in society with a distinct personality and agency; and c) The process that characterizes a socially active faith.

These headings can be further stated as: a) Properties of a Social Religion, b) The Person in Social Engagement, and c) The Process of a Social Faith. These instructional modes will consist of the following figure:

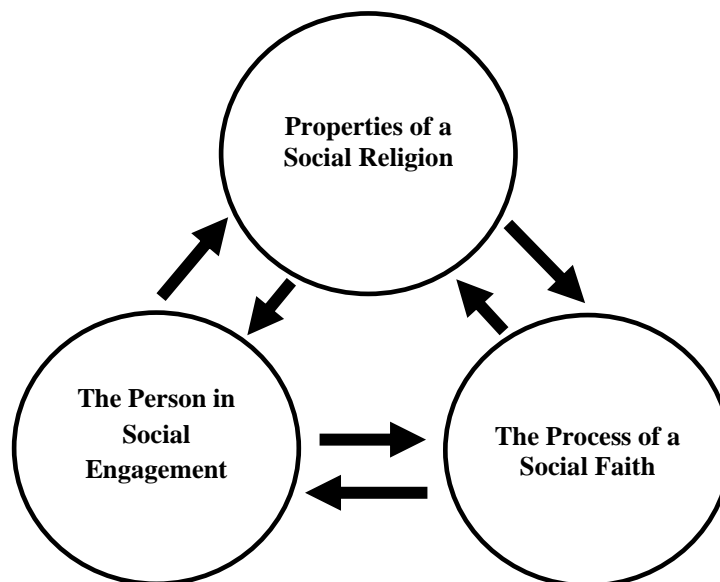


Figure 2. The scheme for the components of the discipleship series on the theme Social Religion toward Social Transformation.

The Procedural Steps to Guide the Development of the Discipleship Series

The creation of the curriculum for this project and other pertinent elements for it can be guided by Hilda Taba's work "*Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice*." Taba lays out the steps in designing a curriculum as follows (Taba 1962, 12):

Step 1: Diagnosis of Needs.

Step 2: Formulation of Objectives.

Step 3: Selection of Content.

Step 4: Organization of Content.

Step 5: Selection of Learning Experiences.

Step 6: Organization of Learning Experiences.

Step 7: Determination of what to evaluate and ways and means of doing it.

Thesis Statement

This thesis addressed this concern: what discipleship series will be written based on the selected sermons of John Wesley with the theme of *Social Religion toward Transformation* as a resource for local churches in RPACE?

The following are the sub-problems of the study:

1. What are the sermons of John Wesley that can be meaningfully used concerning the theme of socially oriented faith?
 - a) The criterion or criteria by which sermons are selected?
 - b) What thematic categorization can be made?
2. How will the lessons apply the cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects of learning?

- a) What is the format of the lessons?
 - b) What are the contents of the discipleship series?
3. What will be the final form of the material for implementation?
- a) What would be the final appearance of the book?
 - b) How will the lessons of discipleship be instructionally relayed?

Significance of the Study

The study intends to produce a discipleship series as its main output. As such, it will be significant through the following points:

First, the study will create a systematic sequence of lessons that are rooted in the Wesleyan heritage, namely through John Wesley's sermons. This will directly utilize a significant content of Wesley's selected sermons for membership formation.

Second, it will set the path to allow a unified material for membership formation of local churches within the Annual Conference concerning the topic of social transformation. In effect, it will standardize a portion of the discipleship process that will be taught in local churches.

Third, the material about the selected sermons of John Wesley will be available for discussion in local churches. This local-based approach will make Wesley more relevant by actually talking about his teachings intentionally as part of nurturing members.

Fourth, the study will help pave a way for a sustainable leadership cycle and training for the local church. The participating churches whose members finished the entire course of all the lessons can be certified and tapped by their local churches to be appointed as speakers to relay the lessons to the succeeding batch of learners.

Fifth, the existing materials can be expanded by including other sets of Wesley's sermons through additional thematic compilation.

Sixth, this approach of producing materials can be replicated so that writings of other prominent Christian figures can have their thoughts (re)introduced in local churches.

Lastly, the academic contribution of the study will unearth the social context in which Wesley's sermons were written.

Assumptions

The thesis writer assumed that there is a deep need for doctrinal reinforcement and alignment in the church based on his experience of being a life-long United Methodist member. From the thesis writer's point of view, there are manifestations of polarity between socially-oriented groups and the more private-oriented yet spiritually preoccupied viewpoint among some members, churches, and even institutions. From time to time, John Wesley's sermons as well as official church documents such as The Social Principles and The UMC BOD were quoted or referred to in order to justify or reconcile diverging theological and ideological arguments to which these factions adhere. The thesis writer assumed that this situation can be helped if Wesley can be read in a more focused and systematic manner.

It is also the thesis writer's assumption that both ministers and members of the church are concerned about the formation of membership and members are looking for strong doctrinal foundations. There have been various attempts to use non-Methodist materials in the church, which raised concerns for members and clergy. In the light of that situation, the material being proposed is envisioned to be doctrinally reliable and can

be perennially used by being integrated into the local church as a membership requirement for those who would want to be a full member of the UMC in RPACE. Through this thesis, the thesis writer assumed that the approach to faith as a social religion that actively participates in transforming society will strengthen the RPACE UMC members while affirming their spiritual zeal.

Definition of Terms

Discipleship involves the profession and confirmation of faith through the empowerment of Holy Spirit toward the renewal of life and society by being engaged in mission through restorative relationships. The followers of Jesus are called to live a life of discipleship by embodying His teachings and examples in this world. In local churches, it could be associated with programs that are assessed and evaluated such as discipleship ministries.

Discipleship Materials or Series is a material that contains a sequence of lessons that are thematically arranged by the thesis writer of this thesis.

Doctrine provides the grounds for what Christians can profess together. They contain essential teachings that are agreed upon or are in the consensus among believers which can be distinguished from opinions. They are statements that either contain “constitutional force” or “disciplinary force.” The Methodist denominations generally share nine doctrinal bases, namely: a) The Twenty-Five Articles of Religion, b) The General Rules, c) Catechism of Faith, d) Statement on “Apostolic Succession” and “Religious Formalism,” e) Confession of Faith (from United Brethren), f) John Wesley’s Standard Sermons, g) John Wesley’s Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, h)

The Methodist Social Creed, and i) Statement of “Our Theological Task” (Campbell 1999, 17-24).

John Wesley’s Sermons are the writings of John Wesley. His sermons are part of the Doctrinal Standards and General Rules of the UMC (Reist et al. 2016, 77). A selection of his sermons will be used in this project, relating to social transformation.

Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East (RPACE) is one of the annual conferences of the Manila Episcopal Area. An annual conference is comprised of local churches, clergies, lay organizations, annual boards, committees, and agencies in a particular geographic location that meets annually with a presiding Bishop. In the Philippines, Annual Conferences are grouped to constitute an Episcopal Area. There are three Episcopal Areas in the Philippine Central Conference, namely: the Baguio Episcopal Area, Manila Episcopal Area, and Mindanao Episcopal Area.

Rev. Ben Aspa, the RPACE Statistician, provided the summary of membership population, Church workers, and local churches for the Conference Year 2019 (Aspa 2020, 161). The data about the summary are given in the table 1.

Table 1. The RPACE statistics summary of local churches, members, and church workers for the Conference Year 2019

Local Churches		51
Members (Professing and Baptized)		11, 306
Clergy	Elder Pastor	56
	Associate Pastor	4
	Provisionary Pastor	2
	Local Pastor	9
	Retired Pastor	4
	Diaconal Minister	3
Deaconess		26

Social Holiness according to John Wesley, in his Preface to the *Hymn and Sacred Poems*, 4th edition, stems from what was laid by Christ and His Gospel. Any other foundation apart from faith alone will be adversarial to Christ. Christ's commands His disciples to build up each other, and they were "strengthened through being with one not by Solitude but by abiding with Him and one another." By being assembled together the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eventually thousands were added to them by being committed to learn doctrine, fellowship and celebrating the Lord's Supper (Wesley 1734, iv). For Wesley, the Gospel of Christ is contrary to solitary religion. He wrote "The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion but Social, no holiness but Social Holiness" (Wesley 1734, v). This social description of Wesley is echoed in the phrase "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it" (Wesley 1984, 533-534) which appears in his sermon "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Fourth." He expounded that such a description of Christianity is based on what Jesus revealed as a way of worshipping God (Wesley 1984, 533). This kind of religion cannot "subsist at all without society" which necessarily implies interaction with other people (Wesley 1984, 533-534). In this thesis, the concept of *social holiness* will be affirmed as an essential element in the community of believers, but in addition, the concept will be expanded to include the greater communal life of believers. Believers are seen as members of society who carry the message of the Gospel and by their faith, entail the seed for being part of transforming their society.

Social Transformation is the concept brought about by God's instrumentation of the Church that is rooted in the teaching of Jesus Christ through the enablement of the Holy Spirit. Aiming for the transformation of societies is inseparable from UMC's

mission of making “disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (Reist et al. 2016, 93). This mission is rooted both in Matthew 28:19-20 (Reist et al. 2016, 93), “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20, CEB) and in Matthew 22:37, 39: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind . . . You must love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39, CEB). According to the UMC *Book of Discipline* ¶121, attaining this transformation is “by proclaiming the good news of God’s grace and by exemplifying Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God’s reign and realm in the world” (Reist et al. 2016, 93).

The UMC BOD ¶122 provides the general process of how the church carries its mission through making disciples with these activities:

- proclaim the gospel, seek, welcome and gather persons into the body of Christ;
- lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ;
- nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley’s Christian conferencing;
- send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel; and
- continue the mission of seeking, welcoming and gathering persons into the community of the body of Christ (Reist et al. 2016, 94).

These make discipleship in the UMC operate with a transformative mission toward communities based on John Wesley’s aim for social holiness. This aim of discipleship is inherent in the nature of Methodism as its heritage existed to “reform the nation, by spreading scriptural holiness over the land” (Reist et al. 2016, 12). The spread of holiness

implies that God works in persons who are social beings. Theodore Runyon in his book *The New Creation* explains that the orthopathic experience—the experience by the Holy Spirit—is “inevitably transforming.” It modifies persons “in the context of God’s renewal of the cosmos.” This experience is social in nature which, therefore, “demands orthopraxy.” Orthopathy puts together into “one indissoluble whole the inward and the outward, the individual and the social.” The expression of “orthopathic experience” is “faith at work in service” (Runyon 1998, 162-165).

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The project thesis is primarily intended to make a discipleship series that is focused on the social character of the Christian faith based on selected sermons of John Wesley. The material is a series of lessons that have relevance to social transformation. The lessons themselves were based on John Wesley’s sermons that are related to the subject which were selected by the writer of this project based on his readings.

There have been materials that similarly used John Wesley’s sermons but in a different thematic categorization in RPACE. Due to this consideration, the sermons previously used the aforementioned materials were not selected to be used in this project.

Only twelve sermons were selected and a final evaluation was be given to the participants. This intent of narrowing down the number of lessons was based on making the material suitable for three months, which is a quarter of the year. This number of lessons was preferred since other discipleship materials exist in conjunction with the particular output of this project, which is designed for a quarterly implementation.

The project spanned from conceptualization to the creation of the specific discipleship material and initial implementation. The initial implementation will be the first actual usage of the material to a pilot audience.

After the initial implementation, feedback were solicited from those who participated in the sessions contained in the material.

CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE, STUDIES AND WORKS

This portion of the thesis refers to materials that guide the project by referring to books that showcase the perspective of John Wesley and Methodism in relation to social transformation. This segment is subdivided into four portions. The first involves the significance of discipleship toward social transformation. The second tackles discipleship in the social and contextual environment. The third refers to books that systematize Wesley's theology, and Methodism's general views and historical accounts that include the topic of social transformation. The fourth contains a review of Wesleyan materials that are formatted for discipleship in the church. Lastly, the fifth presents the specifications that are suitable for a discipleship series that can be utilized for this project.

Discipleship as a Way of Embodying a Social Religion

Jesus called His disciples and sent them to make disciples according to Matthew 28:20. The text in Matthew 28:19-20, using the New International Version reads:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV).

As demonstrated in the text, discipleship involves both baptism, which is a sacrament that signifies the admission of a person into the community of faith, and teaching others, along with instruction on how to teach and what to teach. According to the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church, particularly Article XIII, a person who belongs to the

church is joined with the “congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached” (Reist et al. 2016, 68).

The UMC shares basic Christian affirmations with other denominations. In concise statements, the UMC states its affirmation through these wordings: a) “We hold in common with all Christians a faith in the mystery of salvation in and through Jesus Christ;” b) “We share the Christian belief that God’s redemptive love is realized in human life by the activity of the Holy Spirit both in personal experience in the community of believers;” c) We understand ourselves to be part of Christ’s universal church when by adoration, proclamation, and service, we become conformed to Christ;” d) “With other Christians, we recognize that the reign of God is both a present and future reality;” and e) We share with many Christian communions a recognition of the authority of Scripture in matters of faith, the confessions that our justification as sinners is by grace through faith, and the sober realization that the church is in need of continual reformation and renewal” (Reist et al. 2016, 50).

These doctrinal confessions of the UMC reflect what its founders have held about the Christian faith. John Wesley and his brother Charles had transmitted their view of Christian beliefs and the Methodist distinctiveness in their ministries (Campbell 2010, 17-62) and according to Campbell (2010, 36-62), the top ten Christian beliefs according to John Wesley include: a) “Belief in and Worship of the Divine Trinity,” b) “Belief in the Full Divinity of Jesus Christ,” c) “Belief in Atonement and the Work of Jesus Christ,” d) “Belief in Biblical Authority,” e) “Belief in Original Sin,” f) “Belief in Justification by Faith Alone,” g) “Beliefs about Regeneration and Holiness,” h) Belief about the Christian Church,” i) “Belief about the Sacrament of Baptism,” and j) “Belief about the Sacrament

of the Lord's Supper." After writing these points, Campbell relays that the "teaching about holiness would come to characterize the Wesleyan movement and Wesleyan Church in a very distinct way" (Campbell 2010, 62).

Apart from the pietistic and theological contribution of Wesley to Methodism, his sermons are vital to the social nature of the UMC. Wesley's written sermons are a resource for understanding the Christian faith as a social religion. In his sermon "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount Discourse 4," John Wesley asserts that "Christianity is a social religion" (Wesley 2013, 515). In relation to making disciples and transmitting its teaching, believers who are in the process of discipleship need to encounter people to spread their faith. Referring to the same sermon, Wesley (2013, 515) points out that Christianity is a social religion and it cannot survive without society and no conversation with other individuals (Wesley 2013, 515).

In another sermon, "Scriptural Christianity," Wesley associates Christianity with the hearts and lives of believers and not with simply "opinions" and "a system of doctrines" (Wesley 2013, 236). Christianity that is Scriptural spreads by first existing in an individual, then, from person to person, and lastly to cover the earth (Wesley 2013, 236-245). The UMC BOD states that for Wesley:

There is no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness. The communal forms of faith in the Wesleyan Tradition not only promote personal growth; they also equip and mobilize us for mission and service to the world (Reist et al. 2016, 54).

Bishop Emerito Nacpil (1998), a Filipino Bishop of the United Methodist Church, in his book *Jesus' Strategy for Social Transformation*, expounds the social nature of the mission of the church by relaying that "in light of the Gospel of salvation" the elements

of social reality need to be transformed since the Gospel of salvation itself is social salvation (Nacpil 1998, 5).

Being a social religion, Christianity ought to look at the strategy of Jesus toward social transformation. For Nacpil, the strategy that Jesus employed concerning the transformation of society involves the “formation of a new community” (Nacpil 1998 123). According to Nacpil, the community that is in discipleship “has a covenant structure,” and being in a relationship with God and with its members belonging with each other, the “sense of community is thoroughly social.” In such a community there exists an interaction between a “real ‘thou’” that is being with a “genuine ‘other,’” that makes a genuine community characterized by discipleship (Nacpil 1998, 147).

A dimension in implementing the strategy of Jesus, in order to see God’s reign, involves the reform of social structure for the sake of the human community (Nacpil 1998, 337). The social structure is the “form in which the elemental and the behavioral are brought together in varying degrees of integration across society” (Nacpil 1998, 338). Having said these, Nacpil provided a set of criteria in the form of questions that can “evaluate forms of social structure and for resourcing their possible reform,” (Nacpil 1998, 338):

1. Do they acknowledge the presence of God and celebrate it as the basis of human continuity?
2. Do they make possible the development of human community?
3. Do they deal with the environment in such a way that it makes human community possible and celebrate God’s presence in it? (Nacpil 1998, 339).

The Contextual Setting of Discipleship

The “Critical Asian Principle” was formulated in 1972 as a response to a gathering of Asian theologians. In the essay “Critical Asian Principle,” Nacpil wrote that the principle aims to “identify what is distinctively Asian and uses this distinctiveness as a critical principle of judgment on matters dealing with the life and mission of the Christian community, theology and the theological education in Asia” (Nacpil 1976, 3).

Nacpil identifies seven characteristics in the region: a) The “plurality and diversity in races, peoples, cultures, social institutions, religions, ideologies, etc., that characterize the region;” b) The colonial experience of most of the countries in that region; c) The development, modernization and goals for social building that was happening; d) The drive for “self-identity and cultural integrity;” e) Being the home of “living and nascent religions” that offer alternative views of life and reality; f) The search of a social order that would let them live with dignity together; and lastly g) The minority status of the Christian community in Asia (Nacpil 1976, 4).

In relation to these characteristics, Nacpil frames the Critical Asian Principle with these critical areas: a) The situational principle which is concerned with the “varieties and dynamics of Asian realities;” b) The hermeneutical principle by understanding the Gospel in light of the Asian situation; c) The missiological principle which is about equipping people for “missionary commitment;” and lastly d) the educational principle to give “shape, content, direction and criteria” for Christian institutions, especially pertaining to the members of the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (Nacpil 1976, 5-6).

Considering the application of the Gospel into contextual settings, Bong Rin Ro wrote four types of methodology: a) Syncretism is intermixing the meaning of the Gospel

with the culture; b) Accommodation utilizes the customs and elements of a religion to aid in the interpretation of the Gospel; c) Situational theology tries to preserve the doctrines of the church as the doctrines themselves is linked with the experience of the community; and d) Biblical oriented Asian Theology which is distinctly Asian and is relevant in facing its territorial circumstance without reliance on borrowing western theological lenses (Ro 1976, 51-57).

To make the issue of discipleship more relevant, the more immediate setting should be understood. The Filipinos, as a collective group, represent “Four Philippines” according to Kosuke Koyama (1976, 24). For Koyama, the first Philippines was in the pre-Hispanic era. Koyama noted that the Filipinos have Spanish names and that the nation’s name came from a Spanish king, representing the second Philippines. After Spain, the nation was then under the United States’ rule as the third Philippines. It continued to seek its independence from colonial powers as the embodiment of the fourth Philippines (Koyama 1976, 24).

Aside from these colonial experiences, theologizing from the contextual Filipino standpoint suffered low self-image both through its cultural malnourishment and governmental structures despite claiming to be dominantly Christian, due to a lack of internalizing the Gospel. Rev. Mariano Apilado, who once served as the president of the Union Theological Seminary in Cavite, Philippines perceived that there is a “poverty of theologizing” that is “characterized by the tendency to be fashionable and showy but out of touch and out of reach by the majority of the people” (Apilado 2000, 35). A revolutionary spirituality invites Filipinos to help the nation in its social concerns and struggle (Apilado 2000, 36). Revolutionary spirituality is defined as “a participation,

articulation of, and reflection upon the struggle of the Filipino toward the sublime, the divine, the noble, and the humane of a people in the community” (Apilado 2000, 1).

Furthermore, Apilado claimed that:

doing revolutionary spirituality in the Philippines is leading Filipino Christians today to consider an identity and destiny which consist of a spirituality that challenges them neither to remain poor and destitute not to be corrupt and immoral, but to grow up, be free, independent and fully developed as God’s people so that they may struggle towards abundant life that Jesus has promised (Apilado 2000, 37).

To relay the demonstration of discipleship and the proclamation of God’s word toward the transformation of lives and communities, it is fitting to refer to the experience of the Center for Community Transformation (CCT) which was established through the pioneering work of Ruth Callanta. Callanta, the founder of CCT, asked herself a question when she was younger: “In a country with so much wealth, why is there a majority of poor people? If our nation boasts of having so much, why are there many with so little?” (Callanta 2017, 18). The question persisted but after a personal encounter with the Lord, the answer came to her and which she shared around her by saying: “Poverty is a question of the heart and Jesus is the only One Who can change your hearts” (Callanta 2017, 22, 28).

In 1992, the CCT was officially registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The original name was supposed to be “Center for Christ-Oriented Transformation” but for purpose of practicality in spreading the Gospel to other nations that are unfriendly to its message, the name was finalized as “Center for Community Transformation, with Center meaning Christ” (Callanta 2017, 36). The vision of CCT reads: “We hope to see Christ-centered faith communities where Jesus is honored and

worshipped, and where people live with dignity and sufficiency in accordance with God's plan for a just, humane and caring society" (Callanta 2017, 52).

Based on the CCT vision, they developed a "Transformational Development Framework and Implementation Flow" as a "holistic and integral approach to human development that addresses the mind, the soul and the body" (Callanta 2017, 53). As part of the framework, their program includes evangelism and discipleship which directly influence their process of developing faith, new perspective or worldview, values, priorities, and decision making that are associated with changed lives (Callanta 2017, 53). The organization fulfills its mission by having at least 168 branches nationwide and serves "homeless families, poor children, factory workers, youths, orphans, tribespeople, factory workers, fisherfolk, farmers, sugarcane workers, pastoral and ministry workers, widows, persons with disability, prisoners, disaster survivors, Overseas Filipino Workers and the communities-at-large" (Callanta 2017, n.p.).

The UMC Book of Discipline states: "Whenever United Methodism has had a clear sense of mission, God has used our Church to save persons, heal relationships, transform social structures, and spread scriptural holiness, thereby changing the world. (Reist et al. 2016, 93).

Methodism's Views and Accounts that Exhibit its Social Orientation

John Wesley has a wide array of discussions in his works. His writings are being systematized to outline his theological view on various themes. In addition, a number of Wesleyan writers focus on the historical significance of Methodism in light of its impact and role in society within its context and subsequent influence. This section provides the

books that systematically present his general views that also touch on the social activities that characterized Methodism.

The book *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* written by George Croft Cell constructed the view of Wesleyan through an experiential religion in comparison to the cultural backdrop of Enlightenment: religious understanding such as mysticism, Calvinism, and the humanistic religions. Additionally, the theological underpinnings of the Wesleyan faith make it interesting in having economic analysis, as religion and economy are both factors that influence historical progress (Cell 1935, 392-393).

The social endeavor of Wesley that affirms the lower class and less privileged is recognized in Francis J. McConnell's *John Wesley* McConnell writes in the chapter "Spreading Social Holiness:"

You can take away from a social class all political and financial control and leave it the power of decreeing social standing and you have left in its hand a surpassing resource, human nature being what it is. The genuine remedy is the development of high ideals of human worth within the so-called less-privileged classes. Methodism did not arise even among the so-called middle classes of England. It began farther down than that (McConnell 1940, 241).

The social contribution of Methodism toward reform is the emphasis of Walter G. Muelder's chapter in the book *Methodism* edited by William K. Anderson. Muelder points out that:

The power of the Wesleyan spirit projected itself into a purification of morals, a revision of penal laws, the abolition of slavery, popular education, a new spirit of philanthropy, and eventually into the great labor movement (Muelder 1947, 192).

According to Muelder, the Christian Faith has a prophetic role in bringing good news to those in need, and the Gospel that the Wesleyan movement represents led it to: a) oppose liquor traffic; b) combat slavery; c) promote a classless gospel; d) be stewards of riches; e) dispute clichés that justify the "plight of the poor;" f) entrusted leadership that arise

from the poor; g) tackled the Christian's responsibility in politics; and h) advance reforms for prisons (Muelder 1947, 194-196). These endeavors produced notable effects in the nineteenth century (Muelder 1947, 197-200).

The social ethics of Methodism, as presented in *Methodism and Society: Guidelines for Strategy*, according to Herbert E. Stotts and Paul Deats, Jr. is based on the love of God that redemptively ushers as a response that includes "personal regeneration and social transformation" (Stotts and Deats 1962, 47-48). Stotts and Deats write that the salvation of individuals does not happen apart from the faith community and how the church fulfills its social mission, making society an inevitable dimension of our response to God (Stotts and Deats 1962, 48).

Albert C. Outler edited the book *John Wesley* (1964) which is part of a larger project under the heading *A Library of Christian Thought*. The book, reflecting the aim of the project that it represents, aims to mirror the Protestant expression of the Christian faith through a collection of writings. Specifically, the work of Outler has a segment entitled "Theological Foundations" which is part two of the book. This part of the book contained summaries of doctrines and a number of sermons that produce a sweeping characterization of Wesley's point of view. Outler cited Wesley's *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity* that claims love produces all the right actions:

It leads him into an earnest and steady discharge of all social offices, of whatever is due to relations of every kind: to his friends, to his country and to any particular community whereof he is a member. It prevents his willingly hurting or grieving any man. It guides him into an uniform practice of justice and mercy, equally extensive with the principle whence it flows. It constrains him to do all possible good, of every possible kind, to all men; and makes him invariably resolved in every circumstance of life to do that, and that only, to others, which supposing he were himself in the same situation, he would desire they should do to him (Outler 1964, 185).

Stanley Ayling's *John Wesley* (1979) notes some of Wesley's messages that are directed to the improvement of social virtues by philanthropy, battling against social injustices and vices, and pushing for electoral integrity (Ayling 1979, 261-265).

The area of ethics is essential in living out the faith in a social setting. An ethical nature of *Scriptural Christianity* through a Wesleyan perspective is brought forward by Paul A. Mickey's *Essentials of Wesleyan Theology*. The analysis of Christian life is that its ethical system takes root in "an abiding faith" (Mickey 1980, 154). The book claims that Christians are made and created for good works and good works themselves are inseparable from faith. Through good works, personal dignity can be enhanced, and both social service and reform are dimensions where the church can make its good works concrete (Mickey 1980, 153-166).

In *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal*, Howard A. Snyder maintains that Wesley had deep compassion for laboring victims as a response to England's industrialization. Wesley contributed to the humanization of such social development during his time. Though Snyder believes that Wesley contributed more to the themes of Christian experience and the church than that of the social and political realm, Wesley, as argued by some, considered politics and religions as "inextricably and necessarily connected" (Snyder 1980, 158).

In the book *Sanctification and Liberation*, Theodore Runyon's essay "Introduction: Wesley and the theology of Liberation" posits that Wesley was unlike other eighteenth century personalities who viewed God's kingdom as an exclusive life in heaven after death (Runyon 1981, 10-11). Wesley held that we ought to be actively conforming to God's will. Through such an actively conforming and instead of being

passive, we have the duty to critique the characteristics of the world that are not in accord with the will of God (Runyon 1981, 10-11). In addition, Runyon asserts that sanctification is not to be considered as only the “absence of sin” but the love that actively presents and expresses itself in deeds and not mere words—beginning from God toward humanity and vice versa, and “God through humanity” and then between fellow humankind. With that, the Kingdom exercises its power with a humanizing impact. Wesley, therefore, stood against believers whose position is to “separate themselves from sinners” (Runyon 1981, 34).

Rupert Davies claims in his work “Justification, Sanctification, and the Liberation of the Person” in the book *Sanctification and Liberation* that salvation in its total sense must include both the personal and the corporate life through God’s grace and power. Salvation is incomplete unless everything “enters upon the liberty and splendor of the children of God (Davies 1981, 79). With that the theme of liberationists (concerned with social classes and nations) and Wesley can complement each other. A person who is justified and undergoing sanctification experiences the fulfillment of the inward meaning of the law through abstaining from sinful acts, while a liberated person was brought to the awareness of the chains that had bound him/her and was given freedom from the chains to live what they can be through their innate powers (Davies 1981, 79-80). However, even though Wesleyan theology and liberation theology can be in conjunction with each other, they differ in terms of the “nature of holiness” and “sources of theology” (Davies 1981, 81-82).

The Wesleyan movement is involved in going against slavery. The experience of Wesley together with other Christian leaders is chronicled in the book *John Wesley and*

Slavery by Warren Thomas Smith (1986). Excerpts from letters and correspondences by Charles and John Wesley are found in this work. Also, additional accounts about slavery and the abolitionist movement are referenced. Wesley's letter to William Wilberforce that he sent before his death is cited. A part of his letter reads:

I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God is before you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it (Wesley 1986, 118).

John Wesley produced books that obtained earnings that he used in giving relief to the poor. He was also able to help the needy by finding cheap remedies to their ailments which he tried on himself. His idea of charity and education is that they are means to mold people toward Christ. These accounts are written by John Pollock in *John Wesley: Servant of God*.

The social activities and areas of social praxis of John Wesley are discussed by Manfred Marquadt in *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*. In this book, the early Methodists are described as having religious motivation for social work (Marquadt 1992, 24). They have philanthropic activities (Marquadt 1992, 19-24) and contributed to economic ethics through economic responsibility and their treatment of wealth and property in light of God's commands (Marquadt 1992, 35-48).

Methodism's social context and its contribution to society were concisely communicated by James Richard Joy in *John Wesley's Awakening*. The chapter Medicine for a Sick Century described Wesley's social experience and included the literary figures and philosophical mood during his day. In another chapter, The Flowering of Methodism

also accounts Wesley's ministerial impact by noting that: "The Methodist Societies were centers of benevolence; they relieved the poor, cared for orphans, set up provident loan funds, and provided dispensaries for the sick poor" (Joy 1993, 92).

According to the essay "Wesley and the Poor: An Agenda for Wesleyans" written by Theodore Jennings Jr. compiled in the book *The Portion of the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition* edited by M. Douglass Meeks. By referring to Wesley's sermon "The Signs of the Times," Jennings notes Wesley attempted to assess the Methodist movement, and evaluated Methodism within a personal historical appreciation by viewing history as the "arena of God's saving work" (Jennings 1995, 19). Two things are taken to account by Jennings: first, Wesley viewed the mission of Methodism as "preaching good news to the poor;" and secondly, Wesley considered it as "the fulfillment of the gospel," and by attributing that to Methodism, Methodism is then made a sign that exhibits in this world God's purpose and work (Jennings 1995, 19-20). Wesley tried to "make every aspect of the Methodist" include "welfare of the poor" as a measure in all aspects. With that measure, it follows that Methodism, in all its aspects, pursues things that will benefit the poor and the "test of every dimension of activity" is solidarity with those who live in poverty (Jennings 1995, 22).

John B. Cobb, Jr. in his work *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* makes a point about God's presence in the world as viewed through a Wesleyan lens. He quotes Wesley's "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse 4" by saying that God "is the only agent in the material world... And He is the spring of action in every creature" (Cobb 1995, 50-51). Consequently, Cobb concludes his particular

point that Wesleyans are taking the lead in affirming creation's integrity in the world council of the church (Cobb 1995, 55).

Richard P. Heitzenrater wrote *Wesley and the People Called Methodist* in which he describes Methodism's religious societies' focus for upright living on individualistic and personal approach. Though the societies themselves did not provide a grand program to reform society, their influence was spread in the English society (Heitzenrater 1995, 21-23). The movement designed programs for nurturing, welfare, and education to promote "private and public morality (Heitzenrater 1995, 24). They promoted education and work in order for "the next generation of persons in lower life [would] be made better" (Heitzenrater 1995, 24). The Society for the Reformation of Manners formed in 1691 was institutionalized for the purpose of addressing public morality (Heitzenrater 1995, 24).

Wesley made his key ideas to be instructed through an "educational philosophy," according to D. Michael Henderson's work *Wesley's Class Meeting*. He outlines the key concepts that Wesley espoused as his "religious quest" in his "educational philosophy" (Henderson 1997, 135). His outline, having various points about the Christian life, involves two points that are relevant to social transformation: a) "The gospel must be presented to the poor;" and b) "Social evil is not to be resisted but to be overcome with good" (Henderson 1997, 135-136). In terms of social reform, Wesley adhered to the principle that changing the system means changing the individuals within it. John Wesley intended to reach as many people as possible. It is through reaching the bottom demographic of society that launched a spiritual awakening in his time. The reason for

this is that Wesley was simply following the “biblical precedent” and hit upon a “key principle of mass movements” (Henderson 1997, 135-136).

Theodore Runyon’s work *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* begins his chapter regarding the renewal of creation. His material deals with grace and its inseparability in the process of transformation for the Christian life and community. His last chapter, before the conclusion, lists the following topics that are significant to issues related to social transformation. The chapter deals with the following: “Human Rights,” “Poverty and the Rights of the Poor,” “The Rights of Women,” “Environmental Stewardship,” “Wesley’s Ecumenism,” and “Combining Tolerance and Conviction” (Runyon 1998, 168-221). The point of God’s love is making believers turn to the world “not to impose ideas” but to share to others the love we received (Runyon 1998, 221).

The work *Embodied Holiness* edited by Samuel Powell and Michael Lodahl includes an essay from Theodore Runyon entitled “Holiness as the Renewal of the Image of God in the individual and Society” claims that, in light of Wesley’s view of Christianity as a social religion, the Christian faith emerges from a societal context through interactions among believers. It requires the social setting for the accomplishment of God’s intent. The community is the place where faith is nurtured and allowed to grow. The Wesleyan societies provided the communal avenue that sustained and enriched the faith (Runyon 1999, 81)

Theodore Weber provides a discussion of “Recovering the Political Image of God” in his work *Politics in the Order of Salvation*. For Weber, the political image of God is characterized by two things through a particular order, namely the “responsibility and stewardship” by which God is represented through humankind, that show how God

governs the things in this world (Weber 2001, 393). This political image is considered to be a foundation of politics which authorizes and calls people to participate since no one is excluded from the “political imaging of God” (Weber 2001, 399). The *political image* possesses no meaning if it is isolated from *imaging God* as humanity’s vocation. With the premise, the *imitation of God* arises from the *political ethic*. Institutions exist in reference to God’s work that involves caring, preserving, and enabling creatures for their existence and development (Weber 2001, 405). The aim of the *political image* is to keep God’s political work as the focus of institutions and not on themselves (Weber 2001, 475). Political vocation can be shaped by the order of salvation. The prevenient grace can “give hope for the opening of closed systems,” justifying grace that renews life includes in it the “renewal of political vocation,” and sanctifying grace sanctifies the political image and at the same time sanctification itself has a political image that demands a sanctification to thought in terms of institutional development for supporting and conserving goods that are dispensed a political vocation (Weber 2001, 411-415). In his conclusion, Weber states that the intention of seeing God involved in politics is neither to “Christianize society” through “church-state integration” nor democratize it with the Social Gospel. The order of salvation is the divine work that recalls and restores humankind to imaging God as their vocation to care and nurture creation (Weber 2001, 417).

A book by Henry D. Rack entitled *Reasonable Enthusiasts: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* chronicles Methodism’s development and its context. Relating to social transformation, it discusses Wesley and Methodism’s approach to philanthropy, Wesleyan perspective’s relationship to politics, and its correspondence to their social

world. These facets of early Methodism reflect their criticism and response to their social concern and context (Rack 2002, 1-42; 360-439).

In 2002, Heitzenrater published *The Poor and the People Called Methodist*. In the book, the familiar outline of Methodism's work with the poor such as providing clothing, food, and free medical supplies were recognized. However, Heitzenrater argues that those do not present a fully accurate depiction of Methodism's work (Heitzenrater 2002, 15). Included in the depiction that Heitzenrater deems inaccurate are: early Methodism's state of being composed of destitute and manual laborers who later on became rich and respectable (Heitzenrater 2002, 25). Poverty according to Heitzenrater was based on the upper class particularly the elites, wealthy, those who hold official and the law according to wages and employment that affect the nation. However, poverty is a meter of experience that has an effect on the well-being of both families and individuals (Heitzenrater 2002, 23). In Methodism, the poor are "those who lacked the necessities of life" which is a common definition in the eighteenth century. The meaning of necessities is the "absolute level of sustenance that would prevent destitution" (Heitzenrater 2002, 27-29). The scheme of Methodism to help the poor was through a "personal and institutional approach" wherein Wesley gave out of his personal resources, soliciting from the rich and benefactors, and connectional collections from their groups (Heitzenrater 2002, 31). Additionally, Wesley counteracted the view that the poor are lazy and lack industriousness (Heitzenrater 2002, 33).

Randy Maddox shares in his essay "'Visit the Poor:' John Wesley, the Poor, and the Sanctification of Believers" in the book *The Poor and the People Called Methodist* that Wesley saw that there exists a possibility of evangelistic effect in works of mercy

through the engagement of Christians. On the other hand, for Wesley, the failure to imitate Christ by most Christians in terms of sharing their resources to people who are in need prevents people from considering with seriousness the evangelistic efforts. Wesley did not emphasize bringing uncommitted people to embrace Christianity through helping people in their needs but to resolve the “widespread crisis of credibility” regarding the witnessing characteristics of believers. His aim was to increase the numbers of believers involved in modeling genuine love and care for people (Maddox 2002, 69).

The work of William J. Abraham *Wesley for Armchair Theologian* contains a portion that discusses a view of morality that relates to Wesley’s faith. The book claims that “religion was a vital part of the public square” based on Wesley’s view (Abraham 2005, 141). Religion involves stepping into works that strive for the public good. Also, the community of faith is to look after the “whole creaturely existence” while working toward the common good. For Wesley, differences that are bound to arise are seen through the Christian faith and no place for “intellectual intimidation” and coercion is to be allowed (Abraham 2005, 142-143).

The discussion of doctrinal views in the membership can be helped by using the material *United Methodist Beliefs: A Brief Introduction* written by William H. Willimon (2007). It provides a topical presentation of the essential beliefs of the UMC. Included in his discussions are his insights as a pastor and references to other writings of leaders and issues that members raise of the church pertaining to the given concerns. In the chapter with the title, “We Believe in Faith and Good Works,” Willimon expounds on the Social Principles of the UMC and early Methodist claims about love as linked with holiness and service to others (Willimon 2007, 90).

The spiritual benefits of Protestantism through the early Methodism in the Philippines are written by Luther Jeremiah Oconer in his book *Spirit-Filled Protestantism*. Methodists, during the time of President Manuel Quezon, believed that holiness also reflected the brand of morality that was to be spread through the land through revivalism and evangelism (Oconer 2017, 164). The activities of early Methodism opposed social “evils” such as forms of various vices. Individuals responded to give up their vices to be a follower of Christ (Oconer 2017, 126). Methodist leaders also took up public offices and went against public evils (Oconer 2017, 127-128).

A Survey of Wesleyan Resources that are Intended for Discipleship Activities

Selected portions of Wesley’s writings are arranged to follow a daily schedule through specific quotes in the book *Through the Year with Wesley* edited by Frederick C. Gill. The book has monthly subdivisions which are further divided to their corresponding day.

Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles’ *John Wesley’s Theology: A Collection from His Works* provides a topical approach in dealing with excerpts and quotations from John Wesley’s works.

A study material about John Wesley entitled *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life* written by Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. with guide questions by Ruth A. Daugherty deals with the examination of Methodism’s roots and characteristics in its mission and ministry. The topics are broad but are closely identified with Methodism: a background John Wesley, the Works of Piety, the Works of Mercy, Wesleyan mission in North America, and the Wesleyan tradition pertaining to Renewal. Questions are given after

each discussion. A short glossary of terms and a separate portion of the book is dedicated to the Study Guide.

Reuben P. Job wrote *A Wesleyan Spiritual Reader* that contains various portions of John Wesley's writings to form twenty-six lessons. Each lesson is formatted as a meditational arrangement with a short liturgical presentation. The lessons are arranged with this flow: a) "Scripture Sentence;" b) "Scripture Readings;" c) "Silence for Meditation;" d) "Spiritual Reading;" e) "Recording Insights and Commitments;" f) "Prayers of Thanks, Intercession, Petition and Praise;" g) "Hymn Portion;" h) "Offering All of Life to God;" and i) "Closing Affirmation." The reflections of the writer and his quotations from various writings of Wesley are included in each lesson.

The Covenant Discipleship Groups (CDG) is one of the discipleship mechanisms utilized by United Methodist members. The *Guide for Covenant Discipleship Groups* by Gayle Turner Watson acts as a primer for introducing CDG in local churches. It gives a rationale for discipleship groups as a mode of Christian formation and its relevance to the Wesleyan faith. The formation and sustenance of CDG are relayed in this workbook.

Basic practices and spiritual disciplines that are essential in the life of a United Methodist are enumerated and explored by Henry H. Knight III in his *Eight Enriching Practices of United Methodists*. There are five major divisions which are composed of two topics per division. The discussions span from having New Life toward being sent for Reaching Out. Each lesson is followed by a series of discussion questions.

The discipleship series *ReConnecting: A Wesleyan Guide for the Renewal of Congregation* by Rob Weber (2002) is designed to have small groups in local churches connect deeper to their Wesleyan roots. This discipleship guide has a Leader's Guide and

Participant's Guide. The content of the material encourages participants to have daily journaling based on the lessons that explore Wesleyan themes. The course lasts for seven weeks, with each week containing five lessons for participants to reflect on and write their journals.

Focusing on the power of the Holy Spirit through its influence on the life of a believer is the concern of Clare Weakley's book *The Holy Spirit and Power*. It is a selection of John Wesley's sermons that are translated and converted as discipleship material. Reflection questions are provided in the middle of the lessons. A concise summary in bulleted form is given at the end of each lesson.

The book *Relational Holiness* by Thomas Jay Oord and Michael Lodahl focuses on holiness as the "theme of God's relationship with creation" (Oord and Lodahl 2005, 19). The book contains six lessons with seven questions per lesson.

Henry H. Knight III and F. Douglass Powe, Jr. share the way for evangelism through a Wesleyan foundation in *Transforming Evangelism: The Wesleyan Way of Sharing Faith*. The book intends to provide insights from Wesley about evangelism that "reaches out and welcomes, invites and nurtures, and speaks to both the head and heart" (Knight and Powe 2006, 9).

The three general rules of Methodism: *do good*, *do not harm*, and *stay in love with God*, are expounded by Jeanne Torrence Finley through the book *Three Simple Rules for Christian Living*. Each rule, from the general set of three rules, is treated with two lessons which are dichotomized into: a) *Understanding the Rule*; and b) *Practicing the Rule*. The book itself is based on Reuben Job's treatment of Wesley's three general rules in the book *Three Simple Rules*.

The *Basic United Methodist Beliefs: The Evangelical View*, edited by James Heidenger II, compiles 13 sessions that are key to understanding the elements of Wesleyan Belief about its heritage and ministries. Different contributors represent their ministerial experience and each of them has their corresponding profile presented after each lesson. Also, the write-ups enrich the discussion for the users through the study guides.

A collaboration between William J. Abraham and David F. Watson resulted in the production of the material *Key United Methodist Beliefs*. As the title proposes, this book is about expositions of doctrinal elements that are topically subdivided spanning the three persons of the Trinity, the meaning of being a human, sin, the church, the sacraments, the Bible, and Creeds, how Wesleyans ought to live. Every lesson provides a “Catechism” containing questions and answers that are crucial to the lesson. Also, questions for self-reflection are given at the end of the topic.

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church can be presented with a design of being interactive through the work of Neal Christie, *Justice in Everyday Life*. The material engages participants to have a dialogue with each other and explore the UMC Social Principles through the activities given in the book.

The follow-up to *Transforming Evangelism* is the book *Transforming Community: The Wesleyan Way to Missional Congregations* also by Henry H. Knight III and F. Douglass Powe, Jr. (2016). The book has the same approach as its predecessor but deals with the view of mission and community as its focal points.

The United Methodist Church, through its General Board of Church and Society, produced an online series *Living Our Principles* under the leadership of Neal Christie (2018). This series has six parts that are available on YouTube.

Amanda Meisenheimer, through The United Methodist Women, produced a discipleship series: *Bearing Witness in the Kin-dom: Living into the Church's Moral Witness through Radical Discipleship*. The series consists of six sessions. Each session is formatted with these portions: a) "Perspective;" b) "Past God's Grace and Activity;" c) "Our Moral Activity;" d) "Relational Context;" and e) "Moral Emphasis."

A Synthesis and Reflection of the Reviewed Materials

Social Participation in the Wesleyan Spirit of Discipleship

Weaving these points together, discipleship must remain faithful to the call of Jesus while it embraces the holiness that is meant to be socially lived out. It is the call of Jesus for discipleship that drives the mission toward social transformation. Social Transformation includes a contextual expression of discipleship. In the light of God's word, believers expect that the answer of the Gospel ought to address the questions that emerge from the social context. The proclamation of God's word in the context where it is being relayed must create better communities and social experiences through discipleship.

Social participation, as an expression of experiencing genuine salvation and being spiritually converted, is a hallmark of the Methodists movement. Genuine faith in the Wesleyan heritage does not separate social life from the community of believers' spiritual journey. Personal transformation will be manifested in the believer's social interactions.

The movement of Wesley created an impact in the place where it is planted by its lifestyle and outreach activities that achieved a critical significance in influencing social behaviors and policies. Genuine religion of the heart, which is the experience of God's love, consequently leads a person to love people as a form of holiness. Social issues are not separated from the spiritual walk of believers, instead, they are elements to which believers can testify and apply their faith.

In the ministry of early Methodists, there was a spiritual seed that emerged with a social expression. Christianity being termed by Wesley as a "social religion" (Wesley 1984, 533) finds its religious meaning in the affirmation of a God who loves and calls individuals to holiness. In effect, its social contribution involves the reformation of manners, calling out social evils, philanthropy, educational ministries, and providing cheap cures for physical ailments. These endeavors reflect stewardship of their spiritual life and worldly wealth. Whatever treasure is given to them, those are instruments to be used for God's disposal to both fulfill God's moral law and respond to God's redemptive work as believers.

The Surveyed Discipleship Materials within the United Methodist Church

The surveyed discipleship materials have their distinct formats, approach, and emphasis. The materials also vary in terms of their focus including the degree of their usage of Wesley's writings. There are some that heavily rely on direct quotations while others provide a synthesis of Wesleyan heritage to bring about the objectives of their intended lessons. The range of topics of the discipleship materials fleshes out the characteristics of the Methodist faith as means of formation.

Formation needs to be holistic. A holistic mode of spiritual formation attends to the needs of spiritual growth by providing proper instructional guidance that is suitable to the intended religious aims. We can see that discipleship materials have facets of instructions that correspond to spiritual literacy to be enhanced within the Wesleyan discipleship. To reflect Wesley's mode of ensuring a comprehensive discipleship approach, he employed four levels of an instructional system which are summarized by Henderson as: the first is the foundational level that consists of principles that are foundational and acts as the "logical expression;" the second is the strategies intended for interaction that involves "instructional methodology;" the third level pertains to the leadership principles that stimulate the Methodist movement; and the fourth which is the "supplementary instructional aids" (Henderson 1997, 127).

The reviewed discipleship materials, considering their collective inputs from different writers and their concerns, cater to the personal and social dimension of the Christian journey. These materials are assorted but each has a significance for their specific aims through these subjects: Three General Rules of Methodism, personal or group meditation in relation to personal holiness, communal nature of the church, and the church's relevance to social concerns.

Certain materials that were reviewed contain guide questions that help bring to mind areas of reflection to enrich the learning of the topics that were discussed. Furthermore, guide questions serve as self-evaluation for learners to articulate their understanding regarding a particular discussion. In some of the materials, the formats provide a structured flow, guaranteeing participants to relate separate portions of the discussion together with an underlying process of learning.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Concept

A Discipleship Series on the Theme: Social Religion toward Social Transformation

The project is about a discipleship series that thematically deals with John Wesley's selected sermons as the source material about a socially active faith. It is a collection of lessons of combined of translated outputs and direct quotations to reinforce users and local churches with John Wesley's view as they embody in their ways the broader vision of the United Methodist Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The discipleship series is intended to be a standard part of membership formation to set the doctrinal foundations of participants in RPACE. This aim heavily centers on John Wesley's views to incorporate Wesley's spiritual insights about the social orientation of faith into the educational program of local churches. As such, the series itself exhibits a dependence on the availability of what Wesley had preached concerning the social aspect of religion, the personal participation that exhibits the socialization of faith, and the process that makes faith socially active. With these elements considered, the discipleship series was based on a subject-centered approach in composing its curricular content while bearing in mind a feature that fosters interaction through the instructional content.

General Content of the Discipleship Series

The discipleship series contains an introduction and instruction for participants, followed by the lessons, and final evaluation.

The lessons cover 12 sermons of Wesley that were reconstructed into discipleship discussions. The final session requires an evaluation for participants to complete the discipleship series.

Format of the Lessons

The instructional consideration for the lessons included the domains of learning, such as the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. The format used in the lessons was adopted from the previous discipleship series that are already used in the RPACE to maintain uniformity that is used in its existing discipleship process. The format encouraged interaction among participants and reflection through guide questions. The writer of this project, being the head of the BOD of RPACE, had already used the format implementing it. However, the implementation is open for some adjustments, especially the allocation of time.

1. Warm-Up Question

Encourages a conversation that relates to the topic, to stir some thoughts and anticipate what is to be learned (10-15 mins.).

2. Foundational Principles (cognitive or doctrinal)

Provides the content summary of John Wesley's sermon by extracting Wesley's points into an updated language, which is a combination of translate and direct quotations without losing the comprehension of his

thoughts. This portion intends to expound on what ought to be shared as doctrinal foundations (20-30 mins.).

3. Personal Application (affective)

Drives the relevance of each lesson toward having *personal application* relates the lessons to one's spiritual status through a series of questions and is followed by a prayer response concerning the discussed lessons (10 mins.); and

4. Social Reflection (interpersonal or situational behavior)

Engages participants to form reflection in relation to particular situation that are relevant to each lesson. The ability to formulate personal reflections enhances the connection of the lessons to social situations. This portion can be implemented through questions that can be utilized as reflective assignments.

Objectives

The project aimed to produce a discipleship series to reinforce the Wesleyan view for Social Transformation through John Wesley's selected sermons. By going through the materials, the participants would have achieved the following:

1. Attended discussions about the idea of Christianity as a social religion.
2. Valued the social orientation of faith through the lens of Wesleyan spirituality.
3. Interacted with fellow participants by sharing their thoughts and responses about the lessons.
4. Integrated the lessons to their spiritual reflections that relate to their social groups.

Procedures

Sources of the Lessons

The sources that were used for this project are the sermons of John Wesley that are compiled in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley, Vol. 1-4*, edited by Albert Outler (1984-1987). Other sources that were referenced were the online versions of sermons, namely the Wesleyan Center Online (Northwest Nazarene University 1993-2011), and The Christian Classic Ethereal Library (Wesley 1771). For the background of each sermon, an additional book, *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey* by Kenneth Collins and Jason Vickers which was published in 2013 by Abingdon Press was used.

Selection of the Sermons and their Categorizations

John Wesley's sermons are numerous and have been compiled and published in various forms. Narrowing down the selection of sermons was possible by using a particular filter. The selection of the sermons used in the discipleship material was based on two considerations.

As a first consideration, the sermons used in this project were not previously referenced in discipleship materials that were already part of the RPACE BOD's project.

Secondly, to complete the list of lessons utilized in this project, the writer of this project surveyed Wesley's sermons. The thesis writer's understanding based on his readings which sermons by Wesley most meaningfully fit into the intended categorization as indicated in Figure 2, The Scheme for the Components of the Discipleship Series on

Social Transformation, namely: a) “Properties of a Social Religion;” b) “The Person in Social Engagement;” and c) “The Process of a Social Faith.”

After the sermons were finalized, they were then arranged based on the intended categorization.

The Writing Process: Complying to the Format and the Length of Converted Sermons

The lessons in the material followed the intended format that was shown above. For the creation of the material, the format was compiled by reading selected sermons. These sermons became the main content of the lessons. The selected sermons were then translated into the thesis writer’s wordings by directly quoting selected portions from Wesley’s written sermons.

Archaic words that are hard to translate were maintained but their corresponding synonyms or word meanings in our current language were provided on the footnotes. The word meanings or synonyms were given by referencing available dictionaries. Additionally, the selected passages of Wesley’s original wording that are difficult to translate were either quoted in the footnotes as the counterpart of translated outputs or cited within the body of the main discussion in order maintain the essence of what Wesley is saying.

The “Foundational Discussion” of each lesson of the discipleship series which pertains to the converted sermons of Wesley was shorter compared to the original version of the sermons. Wesley’s sermons vary in length and for that matter, a maximum limit of words cannot be assured. What is guaranteed is that the written output of the “Foundational Discussion” portion of each lesson was approximately half the length of

the original source. The lessons were concise and yet contain substantial discussion that would be understandable for the use of the material.

After the “Foundational Discussion” portion of the format was written, the lessons were relayed to the audience through an interactive and reflective method. To attain the likelihood of interaction and reflection, the other parts of the format were supplied by providing questions that are associated with the content of the “Foundational Discussion.” According to the format, the questions were grouped into three headings according to their intended functions. Specifically, the headings are: “Warm-Up Questions,” “Personal Application,” and “Situational Reflection.”

Lastly, the introductory comments of Albert Outler (1984-1987) for each corresponding sermon were used as the primary source for the introduction of the lessons. This portion is placed on the footnote at the beginning of each lesson.

Once the writing process was finished, the output was validated by two Wesleyan experts, experienced in teaching Wesleyan theology (see Appendix E).

Audience

Intended Audience and Age Groups

The audience of the discipleship series ranged from young adult to adult lay category of membership in the United Methodist Church. The young adult category is comprised of individuals ranging from age twenty-four up to forty years old. The older audience consists of forty-one years old and above. Technically, there is no age limit for the adult category who belong to both the United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women.

The rationale for selecting these target audiences was due to the notion that the theme of Christianity as a Social Religion and Social Transformation is relatively an advanced topic and mature Christians are the choice to be the recipients of its lessons. In addition to that, the language that the thesis writer used for the materials was appropriate for adults, especially with the consideration of using direct quotations from Wesley's material.

Pilot Testing and Selection of the Pilot Class

The thesis writer, by having the approval of the conference for the pilot implementation of a discipleship program, has communicated with three churches in Rizal representing a variety of ministerial sizes, ranging from the small church, medium church, and a large church. Respectively, from the small to the largest, Sapang Pila UMC, Palmera UMC, and Taytay UMC were asked by the thesis writer as the Chairperson of the RPACE BOD. However, only Taytay UMC was able to respond positively to accommodate the experimental program of the RPACE BOD. Through the response of the Taytay UMC they implemented the discipleship program, and from then on has continued to be the pilot class for the output material of this project.

For this project, convenience sampling was employed to comprise the pilot group. Convenience sampling is defined by Ken Black as choosing sample elements for convenience. The main feature of this form is the selection of readily available elements or the willingness to act as participants (Black 2010, 224). Furthermore, Scott W. Vanderstoep and Deirdre D. Johnston described the use of convenience sampling as involving people who are already known or are living nearby the location of the researcher. The participants in this form of sampling are easy to recruit (Vanderstoep and

Johnston 2009, 27). Sarah J. Tracy referred to convenience samples as opportunistic samples that are easily accessible and inexpensive. Tracy added that these samples allow the researcher to prioritize speed and budget (Tracy 2013, 134-135).

By having employed convenience sampling, the pilot class of this project consisted of selected members of Taytay United Methodist Church who were already undergoing the discipleship process of the RPACE BOD. This pilot group was preferred due to three reasons: first, they fit the desired composition of the intended audience of the proposed discipleship series, ranging from young adults and adults; second, they are purposively selected since Taytay UMC itself, through its leaders, have ongoing coordination with the RPACE BOD for experimental application of the existing discipleship program of the Annual Conference; and third, they exhibit the responsiveness that is suitable for discipleship by reflecting the attitude of being available, cooperative, and passionate for the discipleship concerns of the RPACE BOD.

Taytay UMC being the official location for the implementation of the discipleship programs of the conference, required proper coordination with their leaders to implement this project. The pilot class was formalized by the writer of this project through a letter that was sent to the Administrative Pastor of Taytay United Methodist Church (see Appendix F). Participant groups had been gathered under the leadership of the pastor for the purpose of implementing the project.

During the first meeting with the participants, a Focus Group Script was utilized (see Appendix G). Consent forms for the participant were also distributed and secured via an online transmission (see Appendix H).

Additionally, the approval of the Institutional Review Board of the Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary was necessarily complied with for this project. The writer of this project made a clear description of appropriate conduct in implementing the project by proper handling of personal consent, information, and ethical consideration in dealing with the pilot class (see Appendix I).

Diagnostic Instrument for the Participants

Understanding the characteristics and needs of the participants was an important factor in the final form of the discipleship series. Since the discipleship series was focused on making Wesley's sermons more accessible, the diagnostic tool was created.

Diagnosing the participants' aptitude for a certain subject was done through a diagnostic pretest. Moore explained that a diagnostic pretest is the assessment of the participant's knowledge, attitude, and skill that is administered before instruction. It helps the planners of the curriculum to acquire information to develop instructional suitability for students (Moore 2015, 253, 284).

The purpose of the diagnostic instrument was to obtain the profile of the participants, the scope of comprehension, and the instructional interests of the participants that need to be factored in.

The diagnostic pretest was administered by using open-ended questions about the intended theme and categorization of lessons in the discipleship series. In terms of the topical content of the material, the questions were based on the perceived topics according to the surveyed lessons of John Wesley. It also follows the scheme of the subdivision of lessons based on the implemented framework which consists of three components. Synthesizing these inputs yields to the content of table 2.

Table 2. Subdivision of lessons and the selected sermons as the topical reference for crafting diagnostic questions

Subdivision Of Lessons Based on The Implemented Framework.	Selected Sermons based on the Thesis Writer's Considerations	Open-ended Questions that are Constructed Based on the Topical Reference or Sermons
A: The Properties of Social Religion	Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you explain Christianity as a social religion? 2. How does social holiness manifest through the Christian faith?
	Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What is your understanding of the word Mammon? 4. How is it impossible to simultaneously serve God while conforming to the world?
	Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. How did Jesus attain the fulfillment of the moral law? 6. What defines the least or the greatest in God's Kingdom?
	On Charity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. What are the properties of love toward people? 8. What are the characteristics that believers tend to focus on in the absence of love?
B: The Person in Social Engagement	On Visiting the Sick	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What can believers gain if they visit people who are suffering from sickness? 2. What is the reason why rich people have little sympathy for the poor?
	On Conscience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. How can we naturally determine what is morally right or wrong? 4. What do you think are the functions of our conscience?

	Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 10	5. How does judging others become contrary to love? 6. What can be a basis for pure and genuine morality?
	In What Sense Are We to Leave the World	7. What are reasonable considerations that may have Christians to discontinue their conversations with others? 8. What can be a possible consequence when the godly become equally yoked with the ungodly?
C: The Process of a Social Faith	National Sins and Miseries	1. What do you think is/are the common root/s of social miseries that people experience? 2. What can people do to save their nation from perishing?
	Of Former Times	3. What are the things that religion ought to uniformly guarantee? 4. How can believers say that God is speeding up toward the renewal of the whole of humankind?
	The General Spread of the Gospel	5. How can Christians become moral agents while being holy and happy? 6. How does God's kingdom generally spread here on earth?
	The Causes of Inefficacy of Christianity	7. How does Christianity have little effect on people even in places where Christianity itself is accepted? 8. Why is self-denial not entirely practiced by Christians?

The table shows the questions that are constructed from the respective lessons that are intended to be used in the material. The lessons with their corresponding questions

are placed side by side. The Diagnostic Instrument consists of questions from this table and items to obtain the profile of the participants (see Appendix J).

Schedule

The creation of the project began in the second semester of the school year 2021-2022 after the proposal was approved. Once the discipleship was validated, the discipleship sessions for the pilot class were implemented. Ideally, the schedule for the discussion of the lesson was on a weekly basis with one lesson allotted for each session.

Conflicts in schedules with the participants were accommodated by bearing in mind the most appropriate time for the group. With equal importance, the timeframe for the expected completion of the project was considered allowing the participants and the thesis writer to opt for additional setup to discuss multiple lessons. Both the thesis writer and the pilot class, for their mutual benefit, adjusted and agreed to have irregular meetings by allocating more than one lesson per weekly session for certain lessons. The specific dates and number of lessons per gathering are tackled in Chapter 4: Concept.

Table 3 shows that optional timeframes for the discipleship sessions with the pilot class.

Table 3. Optional timeframes for the implementation of the discipleship series to the pilot class depending on the number of lessons per session

One Lesson per Session	Two Lessons per Session	Three Lessons per Session	Others
13 weeks	7 weeks	5 weeks	2-Day Retreat, etc.

Location

The discipleship material was written at Puno United Methodist Church, Quezon City which is the current church assignment of the thesis writer. The lessons themselves

were presented through virtual conferencing through the Zoom application and face-to-face gathering.

Feedback and Evaluation of the Discipleship Series

A Feedback and Evaluation Form for the material was developed concurrently as the material itself was being written. Assessing the strength and possible recommendation of the material was helpful for further improvements of the proposed output of this project. To secure the recommendations of the participants, a post-evaluation was applied. Post-evaluation, according to Ali Ata Alkahldi citing Tomlinson is “the most important and valuable type of evaluation because it can measure the actual effects of the materials on the users and provide reliable information” (Alkahldi 2010, 287).

The items for the Feedback and Evaluation Form used mixed approaches to gather inputs from the participants. Questions were formulated to collect insights and allow participants to share their experiences and suggestions based on the objectives of the project. One of the approaches for collecting responses was by employing an *ordinal scale*. This approach, according to John Creswell is also referred to as a “ranking scale” or “categorical scale” (Creswell 2012, 166). Using such a scale provides ranking options “where participants rank from best or most important to worst or least important some trait, attribute, or characteristic” (Creswell 2012, 166).

The metrics for the Feedback and Evaluation Form were related to the enumerated objectives. The participants used this form as a way to provide their reaction about the quality of the discipleship series through their subjective experience.

By referring to the given objectives of the discipleship series, the Feedback and Evaluation Form will include the following headings: a) the content of the series

regarding Christianity as a social religion; b) the impact on the participants to value the social relevance of their faith; c) the interactivity of participants based on the instructional process and format; and d) the integration of participant's understanding by connecting the lesson to their social groups.

Specific items were added under each of these general metrics based on the thesis writer's interest to accommodate both the concerns that can help improve the quality of the discipleship process and how the participants gauge their overall experience. The forms itself was revised and enhanced as the discipleship series was being implemented (see Appendix K).

CHAPTER IV

CONCEPT

Pre-Production

Guided by the thesis questions, the project thesis had two major considerations during pre-production, namely: a) Coordinating with the Pilot Class and b) Preparation for Writing. These components can be further discussed in detail.

Coordinating with the Pilot Class

Coordination with the pilot class involved communication with the Administrative Pastor of the local church that is willing to be the pilot class of the project. Communication was done through a letter and phone calls. Additionally, the group itself that would constitute the pilot class is also informed through the coordination of their Administrative Pastor through a formal notification and with the thesis writer himself through the existing online chat groups.

Preparation for Writing

The preparation for producing material involved referring to the selected sources on which the content of the lessons will be based. Since the project intended to utilize John Wesley's sermons as the original source of the lesson content, *The Works of Wesley* edited by Albert Outler were referred to, particularly volumes 1-4. The sermons were surveyed and selected according to the criteria and framework for the content that was set for this project. Additionally, since the volume is an installment to the already existing

discipleship material, the preparation of the previous lesson was used in order to avoid duplication of sermons that were utilized for the content (see Appendix L).

Production

The production of the material proceeded after surveying the source material for the lesson content. During production, three things were essentially conducted: a) the writing process of the lessons, b) the layout and visual format of the material, c) initial editorial revision, d) responses to the diagnostic instrument, e) experts' review of the material, and f) implementation.

Writing Process of the Lessons

The main concern of the thesis writer in terms of writing the lessons was to update John Wesley's selected sermon for discipleship. With that view, Wesley's lessons were translated for most of its part in order to enhance linguistic presentation while some portions that the thesis writer felt striking and are deemed too difficult to translate were directly quoted.

In addition to making the language more relatable, the sermons were also shortened for practical reasons.

Layout, Visual and Instructional Format of the Material

This material is considered as a continuity of the already existing discipleship series that is used by the RPACE. Although considered part of the continuity of the existing materials, this material was developed in consultation with Dr. Dick Eugenio to contribute a volume on social relevance. Also, the intended format and other features for this particular project were also applied to the previous materials. In effect, the existing

ones were revised according to the output of this project. The original and unrevised version of existing materials that was previously being evaluated by the RPACE BOD is different from what they are now. The existing materials were redesigned and reformatted in terms of their appearance and instructional components based on the considerations of this project. The redesigned visual format of the previously produced materials of the RPACE BOD was improved. Before this project was completed, the formatting and revision of the previously existing materials were made. The final appearance and format of the revised materials were then treated as the initial template for this project. Sample pages from the first volume of the discipleship materials (*Faith and Progressing Salvation*) that had been revised—including the cover page, table of contents and sample of pages of the first lesson—are extracted from a pdf file as a resized representation of the format that this project, considering the appropriate modifications (see Appendix M). The first volume itself is still subject to further enhancements and revisions since they were subjected to evaluation.

Initial Grammatical Revision

The first draft of the material was partially edited by Mrs. Donna Coles and Mrs. Elen Joy Elata-Bruza. The resulting output was used as the main manuscript and was produced for the discipleship session that was implemented in the pilot class.

The comparison of word counts among the original length of John Wesley's selected sermons, the first translated version of the main body of the sermon, and the first translated version with footnotes without the introductory comments and verses were recorded.

The electronic copy used for counting the word count of John Wesley's selected sermons is based on the file "The Sermons of John Wesley" published online by the Wesleyan Heritage Publication, 1998. The word counter used for the original sermon and the translated version is easily accessible online through this link, wordcounter.net. For the translated version with footnotes, a feature for word count in Microsoft Word was used. The summary of the comparison is given in the table 4.

Table 4. Word count comparison of the main body of the lessons between the original sermon and the initial translated version

Sermon Title	Original Sermon	Translated Version	Draft of the Translated Version with Footnotes
1. Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 4	6746	3364	4006
2. Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 9	6330	3416	3914
3. Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 5	7359	4218	4607
4. On Charity	4941	1910	2583
5. On Visiting the Sick	4496	3865	4413
6. On Conscience	3796	1914	2481
7. Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 10	4772	3083	3283
8. In What Sense We are to Leave the World	4848	3111	3394
9. National Sins and Miseries	3625	2043	3735
10. Of Former Times	3949	2492	3893
11. The General Spread of the Gospel	4789	2076	3148
12. Causes of Inefficacy of Christianity	3855	1823	2081

On the given table above, the initial draft greatly decreases the length of the sermons in order to be more suitable for discussion purposes. Although shortening the

length can be preferred, caution to keep the crucial points raised by Wesley in his sermons was essential to the discussions.

Experts' Review of the Material

The thesis writer corresponded with two Wesleyan Professors to review the first version of the material for any comments, suggestions, and criticisms. Two Wesleyan experts have given them their review, namely Rev. Dick Eugenio, Ph.D. of Wesleyan University-Philippines, and Rev. David Pascua, Ph.D. of Union Theological Seminary. Rev. Pascua's review was sent as a direct message through email, while Dr. Eugenio electronically sent a pdf file (see Appendix N and Appendix O).

Schedule of Implementation

Implementation includes the actual use of the material beginning from the orientation and distribution of the Consent Forms, completion of actual discipleship sessions, certification and consecration, and evaluation. The actual timeline of the implementation is as presented by table 5.

Table 5. Schedule of implementation with the pilot class

Date	Activity
May 6, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation and Online Distribution of the Consent Form • Discussion of the Diagnostic Instrument
May 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipleship Session (Lessons 1-3) via Zoom • Collection of the Consent Forms
May 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipleship Session (Lessons 4-5) via Zoom • Collection of the Consent Forms
May 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipleship Session (Lessons 6-7) via Zoom
May 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipleship Session (Lessons 8-12) via Face to Face
May 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification and Consecration
May 23-June 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation for the Material

The summary of the schedule is shown in Table 5. The schedule has been finalized and selected to accommodate the greatest number of available participants. The thesis writer and the pilot class had agreed to finish the content of the book within one month for two reasons: first is to have an allowance for both the itinerant nature of the ministry of church workers and the yearly church planning and retreat schedules of the church, and second is to meet the intended timeframe of the thesis writer to finish the project itself.

Three meetings were held through Zoom and the last session was through a face-to-face discussion. Those who were able to complete the material and its requirements were certified and consecrated. The Feedback and Evaluation were filled-up by those who attended.

Initial Orientation and Distribution of Consent Form

An initial orientation was held on May 6, 2022, which discussed the project and the expectations and schedules to accomplish the aim of the project. The orientation was attended by fifteen participants via Zoom. Despite that attendance, those who are already part of the Wesleyan Discipleship Equipping class handled by the thesis writer and interested members at Taytay UMC also filled up the consent form. The participants who submitted their consent form are on table 6.

Table 6. List of participants who signed the Consent Form

Lay Participants	Church Workers (Clergy and Deaconess)
1. Aguilar, Bethsaida 2. Alcantara, Rhodora 3. Atanacio, Angelina 4. Carreon, Lilian 5. Castorillo, Victoria 6. Cayetano, Angeline 7. Crisosotomo, Jay Bhee 8. Cruz, Pamela 9. Cruz, Rachel 10. Defensor, Merle 11. De Leon, Maria Florentina 12. Naval, Zenaida 13. Reyes, Adelina 14. Tamayo, Jocelyn 15. Uy, Maria Lolita	16. Rev. Amble, Minerva 17. Rev. Peralta, Prudencio 18. Rev. Tapucar, Anthony 19. Dss. Magsino, Maricel 20. Dss. Dela Pena Roxanne

In all, there were 20 participants (15 lay members and 5 church workers) who signified their interest to be part of the project (see Appendix P).

In the succeeding presentation of the participants' responses, the thesis writer randomly assigned corresponding code name to each participant instead of indicating their names. The assigned codes consistently identify each respondent throughout this study according to the given responses (see Appendix Q).

Participants' Profile and Diagnostic Instrument

Part of the production is the diagnostic instrument in order to prepare the thesis writer regarding the level and scope of understanding of the participants. The diagnostic instrument was prepared using Google Forms and the link was distributed during the initial orientation. Only twelve participants were able to submit their responses. Included in the Diagnostic Instrument are the participant's details and their responses to the questions contained in it.

Profile of the Participants Involved in the Pilot Class

There are 13 participants who responded to give their consent to participate in the pilot implementation out of the 20 individuals who initially signified their interest. The thesis writer compiled the profile of each participant who responded by compiling it on table 7.

Table 7. Profile of the participants involved in the pilot implementation of the project

No.	Participants	Age	Educational Attainment	Years as a UM	Current Church Position/ Involvement
1.	Participant 1	71	College Graduate: AB Sociology	71	Lay Leader
2.	Participant 2	57	College Graduate	57	Outreach Ministry Chair
3.	Participant 3	74	Bachelor of Science in Home Economics, Major in Foods & Nutrition	Since Birth	RPACE Conference Lay Delegate, Chair, TUMC SPRC, President, TUMCSI
4.	Participant 4	62	College Graduate	22	Witness Chairperson
5.	Participant 5	66	Doctor of Medicine	66 yrs.	President Taytay UMW
6.	Participant 6	73	College Graduate	40 years	Associate lay leader and Associate finance secretary
7.	Participant 7	61	College Graduate	Since 1972	CC Chairperson
8.	Participant 8	37	College/ MAED EM (undergrad)	23 years	UMC DOC Coordinator / UMYAF President
9.	Participant 9	84	Doctor of Medicine Pediatrician	since birth	President Blessed Hope Choir
10.	Participant 10	59	College graduate	41	Mission Chair
11.	Participant 11	61	Master of Divinity	55 yrs.	Associate Pastor
12.	Participant 12	70	BS Science in Commerce	Since birth	Church Treasurer

13.	Participant 13	60	A. B. Mass Communication major in Journalism/ Units in Professional Education	60	TUMC Chancel Choir/UMW
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From the data given in Table 7, the age range of the participants is from 37 to 84 years old. In terms of educational attainment, participants comprise of 1 Doctor of Medicine, 3 Masters Level (two are partial fulfillment), and 8 college graduates. The shortest span of membership is 22 while the longest is 84 years. In terms of the church positions, the participants have been given varied responsibilities in their local church and particular ministries: Lay Leader; Outreach Ministry Chair; RPACE Conference Lay Delegate; Chair, TUMC SPRC; President, TUMCSI; Witness Chairperson; President Taytay UMW; Associate lay leader and Associate finance secretary; Church Council Chairperson; UMC DOC Coordinator or UMYAF President; President, Blessed Hope Choir; Mission Chair; Associate Pastor; Church Treasurer; and choir member.

Response to Diagnostic Questions

Through the instrument, the initial insights of the participants pertaining to the topic contained in the materials and their instructional interests were also taken into consideration.

The response of the participants of the pilot class regarding their view about Properties of Social Religion is shown by table 8.

Table 8. Participant's responses to questions pertaining to the Properties of a Social Religion

1. How would you explain Christianity as a social religion?	
Participant 1	A Christian does not live in isolation but lives out his/her life in relationship with others.

Participant 2	Having a relationship with each other. we do not grow by grace without being in frequent community with others who are in the journey of grace.
Participant 3	Christianity as a religion serves several functions to our community or society as a whole. It gives society a sense or standards of morality, it also promotes physical and psychological well-being of the people and gives people a motivation to work for positive social changes and spirituality. It has also influenced the people's culture, tradition and family life. Somehow, Christianity also plays a role in the society's understanding of justice and peace.
Participant 4	Our GOD's love thru His son Jesus is for all of us for our salvation
Participant 5	Christianity is a social religion because it is open to everyone who is willing to accept Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Saviour, confesses that he or she is a sinner and asks for forgiveness.
Participant 6	By believing God serving and loving God
Participant 7	Practice of faith in the community
Participant 8	Christians believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God – fully human and fully divine – and that through believing in him and following his teachings they can inherit eternal life.
Participant 9	Christianity is a social religion because we recognize that the pursuit and embodiment of the Christian life.
Participant 10	As Christians we should interact with others not only with fellow Christians but with the other members of the society as well.
Participant 11	Christianity as a social religion is a common belief in God, expressed in worship, spiritual discipline and by obeying God's instruction and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord.
Participant 12	Dealing with Social Community.
Participant 13	Christianity as a social religion is engaging with the community and with others. To be effective Christians in following Jesus' command to "go and make disciples of men" we have to interact with other people and show others how to be followers of Christ and share with them the good news of salvation. We are also to be our "brothers' keepers" - to care and support each other.
2. How does social holiness manifest through the Christian faith?	
Participant 1	As a Christian is taught to be holy as God is holy, holiness is manifested in the Christian faith.
Participant 2	Social holiness is love; this love is manifested in the pursuit of the good of others.
Participant 3	Social holiness, showing love to others through caring for their physical needs can be manifested through the churches'

	promotion of peace, justice and unity, getting involved in social issues of the community and country, being sensitive to our fellow men's needs especially the marginalized sector of our society. As Methodists who are committed to social holiness, we must walk with the poor or underprivileged and reach out to those people around us who are vulnerable and wanting. Because of God's love for us and Christ's love, we reach out to others. We walk with those who are poor, those who are vulnerable, those who live on the margins of life. It is a gift that God has given us and we claim as Methodists who are committed to social holiness that we would be with one another in this journey as we live our lives here on earth.
Participant 4	Social Holiness manifest through the Christian faith by showing love to other people by sharing blessings to other people with love
Participant 5	Social holiness manifests through the Christian faith when we see lives being transformed for the glory of God
Participant 6	Put God first in our life
Participant 7	Social holiness means practicing means of grace, showing Christ-like character
Participant 8	Through Christian faith, we transform our identity to be more Christ like and exercise our faith.
Participant 9	The gospel of church knows no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness. Relationship with each other.
Participant 10	Social Holiness is all about love. Love for God and Love for others, our heart is filled with this love and Our love For God is where our love for our neighbors come from.
Participant 11	Social holiness is manifested through Christian faith by showing the love of God, pursuing the good of others and having a good relationship with them.
Participant 12	Show love and respect to the people.
Participant 13	Social holiness is manifested through the Christian faith by how we treat others. Christ said that we are to love one another as He has loved us, so we are to emulate how He treated others.
3. What is your understanding of the word Mammon?	
Participant 1	Mammon means earthly treasures.
Participant 2	biblical term for riches
Participant 3	MATERIAL WEALTH OR RICHES – worldly wealth, not necessarily money or gold but anything that we value more than God.
Participant 4	Mammon is material wealth or money
Participant 5	Mammon means false object of worship and devotion.
Participant 6	A god who takes charge over riches
Participant 7	Material things

Participant 8	Influence of material wealth
Participant 9	Biblical term for riches, often used to describe the debasing influence of material wealth.
Participant 10	Everything that pertains to material wealth
Participant 11	The word mammon pertains to materials (gold, money, wealth) other things of this world.
Participant 12	Material things.
Participant 13	For me, Mammon is anything that takes away our devotion, attention, and adoration from God.
4. How is it impossible to simultaneously serve God while conforming to the world?	
Participant 1	It is impossible to serve God while conforming to the world because the ways of the world are opposed to the ways of God.
Participant 2	There is no such thing as serving God and conforming to the world. Its either you serve God or be with the world.
Participant 3	The behavior and values of this world are usually selfish, manipulative and lawless while serving God requires our selflessness, sincere, righteous and best offering which is completely opposite of the world's. One who desires to serve God must "not conform to the pattern of this world."
Participant 4	God must be top priority not to conform to the world
Participant 5	It is impossible to serve God while conforming to the world because you will have a divided attention. No one can serve two masters. It is either God or Mammon.
Participant 6	We cannot serve two masters
Participant 7	It is impossible to serve God and at the same time conform to the standards of this world. Loving God and loving people, we cannot continue to serve God while not forgiving the people who hurt us. It is not pleasing to God if we are, example, singing in the choir but we are living in sin.
Participant 8	Biblically, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.
Participant 9	Sunday Christians. Bible on Sunday and beer on weekdays.
Participant 10	Because we cannot serve two masters. Ang our God is a jealous God and we are supposed to serve only Him
Participant 11	It is impossible to simultaneously serve God while conforming to the world. Our aim is to serve God faithfully and not conformed to the world.
Participant 12	Serving God but we go to the music of the world which influences us.
Participant 13	It is impossible to simultaneously serve God while conforming to the world because they cater to opposite aspects. Very often, worldly wants and desires aim to satisfy the pleasures of the

	flesh. When we succumb to gratifying the pleasures of the flesh, it leads us to actions/behavior that goes against the commandments of God. Our heavenly Father instead desires that we nurture our spirit and not the flesh.
5. How did Jesus attain the fulfillment of the moral law?	
Participant 1	Jesus attained the fulfillment of the moral law by dying for mankind.
Participant 2	Living by example
Participant 3	In His fulfillment of the Law, Jesus obtained our eternal salvation by dying on the cross for our sins. We no longer require priests to offer sacrifices and enter the holy place (Hebrews 10:8–14). Jesus has done that for us, once and for all. By grace through faith, we are made right with God: “He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14).
Participant 4	Jesus attained the fulfillment of the moral law by showing love fair and just to all by salvation thru Him Jesus
Participant 5	Thru His death on the cross to save mankind.
Participant 6	God is omnipresence omnipotent and omniscience
Participant 7	by obeying God in giving Himself for the salvation of mankind. God ultimate Law is love. He gave His only son Jesus out love, and Jesus yield to it.
Participant 8	Jesus Christ was perfect exemplar of the two 'great commandments' Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
Participant 9	By being salt and light. Based on the sermon on the mount Matthew 5:13 to 20
Participant 10	By dying in the cross for the atonement of our sin.
Participant 11	Jesus attained the fulfilment of the moral law, by giving himself, he died to satisfy the requirements of the law.
Participant 12	Loving God and others.
Participant 13	Jesus attained the fulfillment of the moral law by resisting the temptations that came His way. He was obedient to God to the point of sacrificing Himself on the cross to pay for our sins.
6. What defines the least or the greatest in God's Kingdom?	
Participant 1	Service, humility, dying to one's self define the greatest or least in God's Kingdom
Participant 2	There is no least or greater in the kingdom of God. God loves all His children.
Participant 3	Matthew 5:19, NIV: Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Participant 4	Jesus made it clear that obedience to God was to be the highest goal. It is much easier to study God's laws and tell others to obey them than it is to really put them into practice.
Participant 5	The greatest is Jesus in GOD's Kingdom
Participant 6	The greatest in God's kingdom are those who are willing to serve, the least are those who want to be served.
Participant 7	God had made all things and humans happy in him-
Participant 8	The humble and the selfless person becomes great in God's Kingdom.
Participant 9	Jesus says in Matthew 18:4: "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
Participant 10	Whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:19
Participant 11	The least in the kingdom of God are those who are poor in all aspect of the word and those who will attend to them minister to them with all humility and Love for God is the greatest in God's kingdom. The least and greatest in the kingdom of God are those who live with humility and meekness.
Participant 12	The greatest in the kingdom: "Go and make disciples of all nations."
Participant 13	The least in God's kingdom are the downtrodden, the poor, the ones who are taken advantage of, those who are often overlooked and/or cast aside in society. The greatest are those who are able to experience/possess power, wealth, fame, special treatment, etc.
7. What are the properties of love toward people?	
Participant 1	The properties of love toward people are kind, does not wish ill to others, patient with others, gentle. If one has the fruit of the Spirit, these fruits can show our love toward others.
Participant 2	Words of affirmation Acts of service Receiving gifts Quality time Physical touch
Participant 3	Respect, Empathy, Commitment, Compassion, Understanding, Sensitivity, Tenderness, Forgiveness, Generosity, Selflessness
Participant 4	Properties of love toward people is showing care kindness and with genuine love with each other
Participant 5	The properties of love toward people are compassion, giving something good to someone without expecting anything in return, does not discriminate or judge.
Participant 6	Love your enemies as you love yourself
Participant 7	Properties of love: kindness, goodness, does not wait for anything in return, sincere in doing good deeds. and leading people to Christ is showing love to them.

Participant 8	With humility, selflessness, and no bitterness
Participant 9	Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, It is not proud...! Corinthians 13:4-8.
Participant 10	Corinthians 13:4-5
Participant 11	The properties of love toward people is kind, patient, bears all things, forgiving and does not boast.
Participant 12	Jesus first loved us and we have to share this love, and feel and embrace this love to others thru the presence of the Holy Spirit.
Participant 13	Love toward people should be patient, kind, long-suffering, unselfish, caring, and supportive.
8. What are the characteristics that believers tend to focus on in the absence of love?	
Participant 1	In the absence of love, believers tend to focus on good works.
Participant 2	Lack of patience, not kind, proud, rude, and delight in evil.
Participant 3	Frustration, Unforgiveness, Anger, Dissatisfaction, Negativity, Selfishness, Hatred
Participant 4	Must focus to Jesus because Jesus show love in action
Participant 5	Physical appearance, power, benefits they can get from that person.
Participant 6	Always pray and believe in God and God will do the rest
Participant 7	Selfishness, bitterness, hate, vengeance
Participant 8	Greed, immorality, careless
Participant 9	In the absence of love, people are self centered, proud, conceited, aggressive and so on and so forth.
Participant 10	Pride, Self, material wealth
Participant 11	The characteristics that believers tend to focus in the absence of love, to be humble, to be merciful, to act justly.
Participant 12	Too busy with worldly things and activities.
Participant 13	In the absence of love, believers tend to focus on self-gain. The tendency is to look out for oneself; the priority is me, myself, and I. The absence of love translates into not caring for others, not thinking/being mindful of others.

Table 8 shows the responses of the participants about their views concerning Christianity as a Social Religion. This section covers what a social religion is in light of God's kingdom which is covered by the ethic of love since part of the social nature of religion is about God's command to love others. Included in this discussion is how Christ fulfills the moral law in relation to our social context.

The response of the participants of the pilot class regarding their view about The Person in Social Engagement is exhibited by table 9.

Table 9. Participant's responses to questions pertaining to the Person who is Socially Engaged

1. What can believers gain if they visit people who are suffering from sickness?	
Participant 1	The believer gains empathy.
Participant 2	There will be joy in their hearts for whatever we do we do it for the LORD.
Participant 3	Knowing that one has given a sick brother or a sister their time and effort - to be able to hug them, or touch their hand, offer them inspiration and encouragement gives believers joy and peace. It is just like the visitor is the one blessed, that he/she has been an instrument of God's love to others. Visiting the sick can be challenging for those who are healthy, and yet the great gift received by the one visiting is the compassion that is carved out in their hearts when they see the sick person/s' happiness etched in their faces and the thought that they have given them hope. The sick gives us opportunities to do works of mercy and show God's love.
Participant 4	Gain joy and Thanksgiving to God
Participant 5	These believers can fulfill the reason why they were created by God, that is to show God's love, care and compassion thru them.
Participant 6	There is peace and happiness in our heart
Participant 7	Favor of God, Inner peace
Participant 8	Full the God's commandments
Participant 9	Believers will find fulfillment and happiness if they visit people who are sick.
Participant 10	Visiting the sick is one way of interacting with others, A Christian who does these gains spiritual growth.
Participant 11	The believers gain if they visit people who are suffering from sickness, there is joy in their heart, and concerns that was expressed in a continuous prayer.
Participant 12	If sick people were healed after praying and laying hands to them declaring supernatural healing from our Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest Physician and our mighty healer. Amen.
Participant 13	When believers visit people who are sick, they learn to be more loving, caring, empathetic, and understanding of what the sick may be going through.
2. What is the reason why rich people have little sympathy for the poor?	
Participant 1	They never experienced how it is to be poor.
Participant 2	For they think of themselves more highly than others.

Participant 3	It has been shown in some studies that as people climb the social ladder, their compassionate feelings toward other people decline. Maybe it is because wealth and abundance give a sense of freedom and independence from others. There is a feeling that the less they (the rich) have to rely on others, the less they care about other people's feelings. This leads toward being more self-focused. Another reason has to do with the attitude toward greed (the feeling of wanting more than what they have). The more one has, the greedier they become.
Participant 4	because they love their wealth than to help the poor
Participant 5	Rich people have little sympathy for the poor because they think lowly of them and they don't understand their needs.
Participant 6	They think they are incompetent and lazy
Participant 7	They thought poor people are lazy and far away from God.
Participant 8	they have they want and less empathetic than poor
Participant 9	Rich people have not experienced being poor.
Participant 10	Rich people have very little sympathy for the poor because they don't know how it is to be one, they were never in the same situation so they don't have the ability to understand and share the feelings of the poor people
Participant 11	Rich people have little sympathy for the poor, because they stay in their comfort zone, they don't mingle with them to know their struggles, real situations and needs.
Participant 12	Selfishness. Believing these principles: "Mine, me and myself."
Participant 13	The reason the rich often have little sympathy for the poor is because they probably have not experienced what it is like to be poor, in want, or in need. They lack empathy.
3. How can we naturally determine what is morally right or wrong?	
Participant 1	There is our conscience.
Participant 2	Let us go back to our drawing board, the Bible, the word of God.
Participant 3	People are born into a society requiring adherence to a set of rules and values. Having a set of values which guide our behavior is important. We should be answerable to certain standards of behavior, and our actions should be judged as right or wrong, good or bad. For some people, their values or beliefs are held strongly enough to justify certain actions. Human beings impose values on actions or decisions. Because humans are intelligent beings, it is reasonable to expect that we can justify the values we adhere to. People, civilized and religious, have a conscience. Not only do they have a general sense of right and wrong, but they also understand how their actions affect others. And because of their experience, interaction, family life, and culture, people learn and imbibe in their whole being the norms and standards that they learn. The morality we

	end up with as adults is influenced by how we are cared for and how we socialize.
Participant 4	we can determine it by checking what is written in the Bible and according to the guidance of the Holy spirit
Participant 5	We can naturally determine if something is morally wrong or right if we know God's teachings by heart and practice it in our daily lives.
Participant 6	Observe there character and the way they speak
Participant 7	Morally right , if it's not against the law of the land and law of God. Morally wrong, if we continue to be insensitive of other's people feelings.
Participant 8	To know if something complex is moral, we need to know not only the action but the cause, the mind-set of the person taking the action, and the intended effect.
Participant 9	A person is morally right if He/She abides in the rule of the Bible
Participant 10	We can determine what is morally right or wrong according to the dictates of the society, culture, family background that is responsible for shaping one's character.
Participant 11	We can naturally determine what is morally right or wrong because of the scripture, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
Participant 12	The way a person talks and acts.
Participant 13	Calling to mind/being aware of God's teachings and His commandments can help us determine naturally what is morally right or wrong.
4. What do you think are the functions of our conscience?	
Participant 1	The conscience helps us determine what is morally right or wrong
Participant 2	Is to give us convictions for doing what is right and wrong.
Participant 3	<p>The concept of "conscience", as commonly used in its moral sense, "is the inherent ability of every healthy human being to perceive what is right and what is wrong and, on the strength of this perception, to control, monitor, evaluate and execute their actions." According to Hubbard Winslow, there are 3 main functions of conscience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the instinct to do what we believe to be what's right and avoid what we believe to be wrong b) the pleasant feeling of approval when we have acted in accordance with what is right. c) the feeling of remorse or guilt when we fail to do our what we were rightly taught
Participant 4	The conscience tells us what is right from wrong thru the Holy spirit
Participant 5	Our conscience dictates to us what is the right thing to do and not to do when faced with different situations.

Participant 6	To know what is good or right
Participant 7	Conscience serves as guide, conscience 'move the heart' to do what is right or to stop doing sin.
Participant 8	Conscience is a unique eternal faculty enabling us by using reason to feel the difference between right and wrong. Three functions of conscience are (1) feelings of what we ought to do, (2) feelings of self-approval when we do it, and (3) feelings of remorse when we don't.
Participant 9	Conscience is a little voice of God in our heart.
Participant 10	Help us differentiate right from wrong and the ability to know when to do not to do something
Participant 11	The functions of the conscience is to reveal that something is wrong, it guide us from doing right and for us to avoid committing sins.
Participant 12	Conviction and guiltiness.
Participant 13	Our conscience acts as red flags that tell us if what we will do is right or wrong. It helps us to avoid committing mistakes/sins.
5. How does judging others become contrary to love?	
Participant 1	Judging others become contrary to love because one looks at the other without truly knowing the other person.
Participant 2	Judging others will not be contrary to love if you rebuke with kindness and have a basis for rebuking....for us is the word of God,
Participant 3	Judging makes us self-critical. By constantly seeing the bad in others, we train our minds to find the bad. This can lead to increase in stress. Stress can weaken us physically and emotionally. Also, fault-finding can lead to misunderstandings specially when what one judges a person has no basis or proof. Love is showing compassion and care. Being critical and judgmental do not promote love for others.
Participant 4	if you love the person you must not judge the person without basis but instead pray for them
Participant 5	Every person deserves to be given a chance to explain and not to be judged at once most especially if you love that person.
Participant 6	Do not judge by his appearance but what is in their heart
Participant 7	Judging others make the self greater than the person being judge contradicting to Love is kind and is not boastful.
Participant 8	We may judge others because we don't know them well, and so we turn to suspicion in our ignorance. We may judge others that we perceive to be potential threats to our own future opportunities.
Participant 9	If we judge others, it is presumed that we are negative.
Participant 10	Judging others becomes a contrary to love because when you love you always give room for the other persons mistake you

	don't right away give an opinion about their behavior, you look pass the outward and see what is inside the person's heart.
Participant 11	Judging others become contrary to love, it shows pride and self-righteousness. It brings condemnation and putting them down.
Participant 12	Don't look at the outside appearance of a person especially beggars who are in needs of material/financial needs. Let us offer God's love, pray for them and share our financial blessings to them.
Participant 13	Judging others become contrary to love when we do so to destroy, hurt, or put down others. It becomes contrary to love when the manner we do it does not build up or help the person at all.
6. What can be a basis for a pure and genuine morality?	
Participant 1	The Scriptures can be the basis of a pure and genuine morality.
Participant 2	Love for God and love one another.
Participant 3	The basis for a pure and genuine morality is the guidance and inspiration of what is right and what is wrong based on the Holy Scriptures and traditions of Christianity, it is also a total obedience to God's will for us to live righteously.
Participant 4	a basis for a pure and genuine morality is by having connected to God and obey Him
Participant 5	The basis for a pure and genuine morality is if a person follows the law or God's teachings not only in words but also in deed even when no one is looking.
Participant 6	Fear of God and experience the love and goodness of God
Participant 7	the Scripture is our only basis.
Participant 8	Christ is the center of one's life. The most basic principle of the Christian moral life is the awareness that every person bears the dignity of being made in the image of God.
Participant 9	Genuine morality is always God based.
Participant 10	Given the freedom and the ability to choose pure and genuine morality is having an uncorrupt will. to always will what is good according to God.
Participant 11	A basis for a pure and genuine morality is based on our knowledge in the word of God and personal relationship with our Lord Jesus.
Participant 12	If he has a strong faith in our Lord Jesus. Walk the talk and, be prayerful children of God.
Participant 13	A basis for a pure and genuine morality is following Jesus' example - how He thought, spoke, and acted toward others.
7. What are reasonable considerations that Christians may have to discontinue their conversations with others?	
Participant 1	If what is being conversed is already contrary to one's beliefs.
Participant 2	Blasphemy.

Participant 3	Whether you are a Christian or not, a conversation, or perhaps an argument regarding religion, is always awkward and uncomfortable specially if the person you are talking to is an unbeliever. Try changing the topic, and if that doesn't work, you can firmly end the conversation. If you simply can't escape talking to the person about religion, setting a few ground rules can make things easier. Also, if the intention of the conversation is to witness to an unbeliever, you have to be prepared and have sought guidance from the Holy Spirit through prayer.
Participant 4	discontinue it if senseless and un reliable
Participant 5	If after several attempts of proving their point to them and they still don't care to listen, it is better not to converse to them and leave it all to God in prayer.
Participant 6	If i see that they are not interested of what I'm saying but be polite and pray for them
Participant 7	We discontinue convo with others if both party is making themselves greater than the other. We stop the convo if there is misunderstanding, and the convo becomes heated.
Participant 8	nonsense conversations
Participant 9	We can discontinue our conversation with others if they insist that they are always right like the "INC".
Participant 10	If the conversation is leading toward spiritual disputes, if the verbal exchange turns into gossip, when the topic does not make sense at all in all aspects.
Participant 11	The reasonable considerations that may have Christians to discontinue their conversations with others if it leads to debate.
Participant 12	Too busy with their schedule whether house work, office work and with their families. Kaya "no time to have conversations with others."
Participant 13	Christians might discontinue their conversations with others when the language used is offensive and does not build up; when the topic/subject of the conversation goes against Christ's teachings; when it may lead to destructive behavior.
8. What can be a possible consequence when the godly become equally yoked with the ungodly?	
Participant 1	The godly maybe influenced by the ungodly.
Participant 2	they will have difficulty resolving their issues.
Participant 3	Being equally yoked, means sharing the same set of beliefs and values, regardless of whether our parents raised us in church or not. This also means these individuals should be compatible, they're able to agree on most things, and their values are aligned. Your core values should bind you together, not separate you further. If there's such a divide that you cannot empathize with your partner's belief system, a huge part of your

	life can be disconnected from him or her. The consequence of this relationship can be misery, anger, and eventually separation. One partner may even resort to drastic solutions to end his/her mental anguish or depression.
Participant 4	you will commit sins and may experience suffering pain sadness
Participant 5	They could possibly be carried away in sin.
Participant 6	If they experience something bad in their life and they want to forget it.
Participant 7	Compromise.
Participant 8	To be unequally yoked with unbelievers, then, is to be in a situation or relationship that binds you to the decisions and actions of people who have values and purposes incompatible with Jesus' values and purposes.
Participant 9	It depends on who's stronger, the Godly person can influence the ungodly or vice versa.
Participant 10	If the Godly person's spirituality/ Faith is not deeply rooted he/she can be swayed.
Participant 11	The possible consequence when the godly become equally yoked with the ungodly is there's a possibility of conforming to the worldly principles, life styles and easy to engage in a worldly thing.
Participant 12	It will lead to more arguments. Palaging may pinagtatalunan especially when they get married. No peace and happiness during their relationships as husband and wife which resulted to broken relationship and separation.
Participant 13	When the godly become equally yoked with the ungodly, it is possible that the godly person may become too influenced by the ungodly so as to behave more and more like the ungodly.

Table 9 shows the participants' views about the topics associated with the how persons ought to be socially engaged according to Wesley's views. The concerns included in this heading are relating to those who are in need and experiencing sickness, understanding the basis of right and wrong which relates to the meaning of conscience, judgmental behavior in contrast to love, and how believers ought to avoid compromising their faith as they engage their faith in the world.

The response of the participants of the pilot class regarding their view about The Process of a Social Faith are placed on table 10.

Table 10. Participant's responses to questions pertaining to the Process of the Social Faith

1. What do you think is/are the common root/s of social miseries that people experience?	
Participant 1	Usually wrong decisions in life, decisions that are contrary to advice given or decisions contrary to the word of God.
Participant 2	love for money.
Participant 3	Desire or craving, discontentment, hatred, fear, failure, envy
Participant 4	common roots of social miseries that people experience is poverty, broken families broken relationship far away from God
Participant 5	Being involved in drugs, alcohol or any addictive substances, getting along with people who are bad influence most specially unbelievers.
Participant 6	Kahirapan and lack of faith in God
Participant 7	Lack of opportunities. Lack of education.
Participant 8	Unjust government, corruptions
Participant 9	Roots of social misery is not getting what they want.
Participant 10	Insecurities, depression, isolation
Participant 11	The common root/s of social miseries that people experience are sins, poverty, injustices and vices.
Participant 12	Know your neighbors around your place, your church members if they are true Christians and/in great pretenders. Some people go to church with wrong motives - not worshipping but looks for church na pwede hingan ng material support citing that member family is sick but it is not true but rather fake.
Participant 13	The common roots of social miseries that people experience are the social injustices; when laws, the community, the society overlook/neglect some to favor others.
2. What can people do to save their nation from perishing?	
Participant 1	By being a good citizen, by being a man for others, by choosing the right leaders to lead the country. Choosing leaders must be based on what the word of God says.
Participant 2	Pray.
Participant 3	Without vision, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." (Proverbs 29:18 KJV) This was what Solomon said. The word vision could mean, direction or directive, or goal, or revelation. This can only come from God's divine guidance and leading, His wisdom of instruction which is found in the Holy Scriptures. One can say that for people to save a nation from perishing, one should have knowledge of God's commands, what He wants for us to do and what the Bible instructs us to. And while God's law is also written on our hearts, we as human beings are still sinful and need to be reminded of who God is and what is best for us. This is why

	God provides the guidelines outlined in Scripture. Lack of Knowledge of God and His Word can bring us to destruction. We have to obey what the Bible says.
Participant 4	People need the Lord our God, go back to God and ask forgiveness and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior
Participant 5	Know God and make Him known. Bring Jesus to them.
Participant 6	Pray always and have faith in God and hold to the promise of God that He will not leave us or forsake us
Participant 7	evangelize. empathize
Participant 8	We should protect our nation's values and safety by continuing to strive to live up to our ideals.
Participant 9	We can save this Nation by Praying and loving our fellowmen.
Participant 10	Interact with each other, learn about one each other's. needs, pains and sorrows. But we can genuinely do this if first and for most...The love of God is what abodes in our heart
Participant 11	People can do to save their nation from perishing is repentance and acceptance to Jesus as personal savior and Lord.
Participant 12	To evangelize people and accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.
Participant 13	People can save the nation from perishing if we just act and behave in a more loving manner. If we always try to think of others before ourselves, we would always be looking out and caring for each other. In this way, we would all be moving forward without leaving any one behind.
3. What are the things that religion ought to uniformly guarantee?	
Participant 1	The rights of the unborn.
Participant 2	That God is love.
Participant 3	Human rights, peace and conflict resolution, values, sense of right and wrong – ethical and moral standards are shaped by a person's religiosity, it also influences people's attitudes and behavior toward corruption and other evil doings. Religion gives people something to believe in, provides a sense of structure and typically offers a group of people to connect with others who have the same beliefs. These can have a large positive impact on mental health
Participant 4	No religion can save people but only Jesus and they must guarantee that Jesus is the only savior and Lord
Participant 5	Gift of salvation thru Jesus Christ.
Participant 6	Obedience faith and love of God
Participant 7	Salvation through Jesus Christ
Participant 8	Support and pray the society
Participant 9	Love one another.
Participant 10	A relationship with God and our inward transformation
Participant 11	The things that religion ought to uniformly guarantee is moral recovery, renewal and salvation.

Participant 12	Religion makes reference to many values to cherish and promote as a church. These beliefs define as United Methodists and as Christians. They include values such as justice, mutuality, respect, security, freedom, responsibility, and the sacred worth and dignity of all people.
Participant 13	Religion should guarantee the basic needs of people, the inherent rights and freedom of people, and most of all guarantee the freedom to worship God without censure or prejudice.
4. How can believers say that God is speeding up toward the renewal of the whole of humankind?	
Participant 1	The present state of the world is prophesied, it is the beginning of the end times in which God will usher in a new heaven and a new earth.
Participant 2	The signs and wonders in the bible are very visible or happening now.
Participant 3	In these times, restoration of mankind has been seen through the new technologies and advances in medicine - a lifestyle change in preventing disease, feeling and looking better, living longer. It also provides access to a God who heals and saves; who is bigger than the health issues faced today; who creates new health amid suffering; who is working nonstop to completely restore His people in every dimension of life so that they can spend eternity with Him. But our full renewal will not happen here, Paul says in Romans 8: 23b – “We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as His adopted children, including the new bodies He has promised us.”
Participant 4	God is speeding up toward the renewal of the whole of humankind because Jesus is coming nearer and nearer
Participant 5	If we as believers are greatly moved by the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel and result to transformation
Participant 6	We can see all signs and wanders
Participant 7	Through challenges, calamities, disasters and several exposures of God's Word in social media reaching the world.
Participant 8	Once the Christian's goal is to help the society by showing what morality upright is.
Participant 9	With the increasing number of Christian fellowships, I believe we are toward the renewal of the whole mankind.
Participant 10	God never stops he is at work in us for us to perform our duties as Christians and as His disciples
Participant 11	God is speeding up toward the renewal of the whole of humankind thru the social media flat forms, one on one evangelism.
Participant 12	God wants us to speedily share the Good News of Salvation to mankind. He is coming again very soon but we don't know

	when. But get ready. Be sure that the Gospel is shared till the ages of the earth.
Participant 13	God has given us indicators/signs as mentioned in the Bible as to when the whole of mankind will be renewed. When these signs are observable, then it might be safe to say that God is ready to renew the whole of mankind.
5. How can Christians become moral agents while being holy and happy?	
Participant 1	When our influence is manifested, Christians can still be holy and happy. It is a misconception that when one is holy, one is not happy.
Participant 2	Practicing what you preach. Walk the talk.
Participant 3	Moral formation involves growth in knowing, being and doing which together lead to moral relationships, moral living and the flourishing of humans and all creation in harmony with God. There is no moral life separate from a spiritual life. In the actual living of the Christian life, efforts to pray, to avoid sin, to make good moral decisions and to grow in virtue are all necessary. As moral agents, living a righteous life is our response to God's love and gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Following Christ is the essential and primary foundation of Christian morality. Another aspect of Christian morality is the ability to respond to what God wants us to do, in other words, to obey His will, to love God and love others as He has commanded us and to "go and share the Gospel of Salvation to others." Being holy brings joy because being right with God can give us the "peace that passeth all understanding", a peace and a joyful heart that in any and every situation we know God is with us.
Participant 4	If Jesus is the focus and happy serving our God and follow His footsteps in holiness and in truth
Participant 5	We as Christians can become moral agents while being holy and happy by always meditating on His words, obeying His commands and being in the company of believers, joy and happiness follows.
Participant 6	Evangelize share the goodness and words of God
Participant 7	Pakikipag kapwa tao. sincere concern to people's challenges.
Participant 8	Be careful in our words and actions
Participant 9	By being good example,
Participant 10	We can be holy and happy while being moral agents by living a life that can be a testament. of God's love and goodness.
Participant 11	Christians become moral agents while being holy and happy, by living by example, pure and genuine in her/his faith.
Participant 12	Level down your status to reach out these people. Let them join when you are going out with your Christian friends. Welcome them so that they too will become happy.

Participant 13	Christians can become moral agents by acting/behaving as Christ wants us to be - as light and salt to the world. We can be moral compasses also for others when we truly immerse ourselves spiritually in Christ's teachings. Fulfilling Christ's plan for us will fill us with holiness as well as happiness.
6. How does God's kingdom generally spread here on earth?	
Participant 1	God's kingdom generally spread on earth through Christians spreading the good news of salvation, through lives lived out in holiness and righteousness.
Participant 2	Matthew 28:16 to 20
Participant 3	Through Discipleship - being actively engaged in the work of the kingdom, at any level, will bless our lives and provide growth in countless circumstances (learning to be a disciple) and then sharing to others what we have learned, training them to be disciples (be a disciple-maker).
Participant 4	if the Word of God is truly faithfully shared by all believers
Participant 5	Thru witness and evangelism.th
Participant 6	Discipleship and Evangelizing
Participant 7	through evangelism
Participant 8	Because of the faithful Christians who continue to share the love of God.
Participant 9	By spreading good works, visiting the sick and the elderly. "I don't believe in "no solicitation".
Participant 10	By obeying God's command to make Disciples of all nations
Participant 11	God's kingdom generally spread here on earth thru evangelism, life testimonies.
Participant 12	Sharing the Good news of salvation
Participant 13	God's kingdom can spread here on earth if we behave with love and care for others; if we live as Christ lived and treated others as He did.
7. How does Christianity have little effect on people even in places where Christianity itself is accepted?	
Participant 1	Christianity has little effect when Christians are not seen to live out their faith.
Participant 2	Hearts are hardened by their experiences.
Participant 3	We live in the 21st century. It encompasses the Information Age - an era marked by rapid adoption of new technologies. But the 21st century world preoccupies our lives and distracts us so that we are pulled away from God's presence. We increasingly live our lives via screens, streams, apps, phones. Our relationships are digital. Everything is fast-paced and harried. We have short attention spans and get bored easily, and this poses a huge challenge to the church. The values of routine, tradition and stability that define the church are no longer in sync in our restless age. In order to solve this problem, churches

	resort to gimmicks and trends. This sometimes takes away the focus on the core practices and historic sacraments of the church. Today, Christians take an active role in politics, to a point where they embrace and give more importance to issues which will promote themselves and completely disregard what the Bible says. At present, issues on gender and sexuality have created divisiveness and fragmentation among Christians, among churches. The world is changing the values and moral standards of people and sadly, of many Christians. The biggest challenge is for Christians to maintain a consistent biblical ethic on these issues, speak out in truth the witness of the Scripture.
Participant 4	little effect if not make follow up to people and nurturing must be implemented to have good effect
Participant 5	This happens when the true essence of the gospel or the good news is not understood and when Christians do not walk the talk.
Participant 6	Lack of knowledge of who Jesus Christ is
Participant 7	no clear understanding of God's Kingdom. Christians are complacent.
Participant 8	By multicultural nature or culture and other religions
Participant 9	If people don't like us or if we are not kind to them or if we are negative to them.
Participant 10	Christianity has little effect on people even if Christianity is accepted, if it is just accepting it outwardly without the deeper inward transformation and relationship with God.
Participant 11	Christianity has little effect on people even in places where Christianity itself is accepted by being silent, not sharing the gospel, and there's so much destruction both the believers and non-believers.
Participant 12	Spirit of pride. Umiiral ang pagkamataas. Ibinababa ng Diyos ang mapagmataas at itinataas ang mapagpakumbaba. God exalts the humble and opposes the proud.
Participant 13	Christianity has little effect when being a Christian is not observed in people. Only when we behave like Christ can we influence/affect others.
8. Why is self-denial not entirely practiced by Christians?	
Participant 1	The influence of the world rubs on Christians so that self-denial is not entirely practiced by Christians.
Participant 2	It's very hard to be like Jesus.
Participant 3	Self-denial means knowing only Christ, and no longer oneself. It is the willingness to forgo personal pleasures or undergo personal trials in order to follow God. It involves avoidance and holding back of happiness and pleasurable experiences from oneself that will be damaging to other people. This means letting go of worldly pleasures. For us, it would be difficult

	because it entails sacrifice and hard work to fulfill God's calling. Also, our human frailty gives way to the enemy and leads us to the opposite direction, against what God wills for us. This is why only through the leading of the Holy Spirit can we be able to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Jesus.
Participant 4	maybe because of fear and lack of faith
Participant 5	Self-denial is not entirely practiced by Christians because we oftentimes still cling to the things of this world.
Participant 6	We accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior
Participant 7	Christians cannot fully give up the possessions and the lifestyle.
Participant 8	because they are not ready to give up all their possessions
Participant 9	Self-denial is not practiced by other Christians because they think of themselves more highly than others. FAME, POWER and WEALTH syndrome or KKK: KAGANDAHAN, KATALINUHAN at KAYAMANAN.
Participant 10	Maybe because Christians as a Child of God believe They have access to all the goodness of what God has to give His children. Or they are contended with what they have and they don't think that they are denying themselves of anything?
Participant 11	Self-denial not entirely practiced by Christians, it is hard because there's so many things to be considered in the family, work place, and in the church or community.
Participant 12	We cannot learn from Christ if we do not continually deny ourselves, instead we will have others masters to learn from. "If we do not take up our cross daily, we do not come after Him but after the world."
Participant 13	Self-denial is not entirely practiced by Christians because there are still many things that we cannot let go of - usually the lifestyle that we have. Self-denial in its truest sense would be to give up whatever riches, comfort, material possessions we have and live each day totally dependent on God's Day to day provisions alone.

The responses of the participants about how they understand the process involved in social faith are given in Table 10. Table 10 exhibits the participants' ideas regarding the miseries of people and how they are saved from them, the uniform guarantee of faith and how renewal spreads in the world, how Christians are part of spreading the message of the Gospel, and how Christianity is ineffective in certain instances in relation to the practice of self-denial.

Instructional Interest of the Participants

Through the Diagnostic Instrument, the interest of the participants in terms of how the instruction of the content was considered. The responses are presented by table 11.

Table 11. Participant's responses to questions pertaining to the Instructional Interests and Expectations

1. What are your interests in participating in the discipleship project?	
Participant 1	I am interested in participating in this project. Are there different areas of interest?
Participant 2	Learning more of John Wesley's teaching.
Participant 3	Deepen my Methodist roots. Become more equipped as a disciple-disciple – maker.
Participant 4	To study the word of God and teach share this to people and to make disciple for GOD's glory
Participant 5	I want to be involved in my own little way in fulfilling the great commandment of Jesus.
Participant 6	I learned many things in our discipleship class
Participant 7	equipping, evangelism and bible studies
Participant 8	To deepen my faith and learn the practices of John Wesley.
Participant 9	To widen my knowledge about Discipleship.
Participant 10	Everything about John Wesley's sermon. The deeper understanding and knowledge of Christianity
Participant 11	My interests in participating in the discipleship project is to learn more, and share it to others.
Participant 12	To know more of Wesleyan teachings, the Methodist Christian Faith.
Participant 13	I want to know Christ more; to have a deeper understanding and knowledge of my Wesleyan heritage and the Methodist faith.
2. How many minutes are you willing to allow for each lesson?	
Participant 1	30-45 minutes.
Participant 2	60 to 120 minutes.
Participant 3	1 ½ - 2 hours per lesson
Participant 4	60 minutes or 1 hr.
Participant 5	As much as it is needed.
Participant 6	120 minutes
Participant 7	1 hour
Participant 8	60 mins
Participant 9	30 minutes

Participant 10	A little over an hour max
Participant 11	It depends to minutes/hours requires, minimum of one hour.
Participant 12	More than an hour per lesson.
Participant 13	About 40 to 60 minutes
3. What do you think are features or elements of a lesson that will make you more conducive to learning?	
Participant 1	Interactive. Where we have time to participate, where we are given projects or assignments related to the lesson.
Participant 2	The one we are having every Friday.
Participant 3	More time to discuss personal and situational applications
Participant 4	about salvation and means of grace
Participant 5	If the lessons are being explained clearly and by giving life situations to be able to understand it more.
Participant 6	The love and goodness of God
Participant 7	PowerPoint presentation, practical illustrations, applications
Participant 8	Wesleyan beliefs on social holiness
Participant 9	Stewardship, Death, Heaven
Participant 10	What we have right now is working well for me
Participant 11	The features or elements of a lesson that will make me more conducive to learn are to make it simple and concise, easy to read or understand, and creative presentation.
Participant 12	Location that we can feel comfortable. Face to face that we want to clarify more on the given topic(s) and using "taglish words" to understand clearly...
Participant 13	The applicability to daily life; discussions/forums
4. Kindly enumerate the expectations and considerations that you have for this discipleship project	
Participant 1	I expect to be able to relay or teach others.
Participant 2	<p>I learned how patient and diligent John Wesley is. Not wasting his time and never gets tired in doing works for the Lord.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Learn more about Wesleyan doctrines through John Wesley's sermons b) Be equipped to teach these lessons to others c) Be able to make this Discipleship Process available to all UMC Churches
Participant 3	must be implemented in all churches and see to it that all members are true transformed disciples of Christ
Participant 4	I will be more equipped and prepared to share what I have learned with God's help.
Participant 5	Obedience and love of God Humility and understanding
Participant 6	to reach more people to undergo discipleship
Participant 7	The role of the believers in Methodist's doctrines and cultural issues.

Participant 8	to become more and more like Christ. Serve others not just the poor but also the rich.
Participant 9	I can be an effective lecturer as I will have a deeper understanding and knowledge of Discipleship according to the vision and heritage of John Wesley. So that I can also impart it to others.
Participant 10	My expectations and considerations that have for this discipleship project are to complete this course, to be able to teach others and looking forward for Tagalog materials.
Participant 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To know more about Christ and make Him known, b) To learn more about John Wesley's teachings and doctrines, the founder of our Christian Methodist faith, c) Learning is a process that we should never stop, d) We should stand firm for truth, righteousness, and holiness, e) e) More fellowships and gatherings of this discipleship class as one family studying, encouraging each other and praying together.
Participant 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) I expect to be better versed/knowledgeable of and understand Christ's teachings; b) I hope to be more and more a better Christian/be Christ-like; c) I hope that through this program I will be better equipped as a disciple of Christ; d) I hope to better serve my church through whatever knowledge and wisdom I will gain; e) I hope to better honor, praise, and glorify God.

Table 11 shows the interests and expectations of the participants in terms of the instructional approach and consideration. This table reveals their interest in discipleship, their preferred length of instruction, the features and elements in the instruction, and their expectation regarding the project.

Instructional Implementation and Completion

The thesis writer acted as the instructor of the pilot class. As the instructor, the thesis writer was responsible for preparation for each lesson and the discussion of the requirements, schedules, and expected timeframe for the completion of the discipleship

series. PowerPoint presentations for all the lessons are prepared by the thesis writer (see Appendix R).

Based on the agreed required attendance (maximum of two absences), make-up to offset absences, and final exam for the completion of the discipleship material, only 12 participants were able to satisfy the requirements. The performance of the participants is summarized on table 12.

Table 12. The summary of participants' compliance with the requirements

Participants	Absences	Make up Requirements	Final Exam	Final Remarks
1. Participant 1	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
2. Participant 2	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
3. Participant 3	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
4. Participant 4	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
5. Participant 5	1	Submitted	Submitted	Completed
6. Participant 6	0	NA	-	Incomplete
7. Participant 7	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
8. Participant 8	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
9. Participant 9	9	Discontinued	Discontinued	Discontinued
10. Participant 10	0	NA	-	Incomplete
11. Participant 11	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
12. Participant 12	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
13. Participant 13	3	-	Submitted	Incomplete
14. Participant 14	0	NA	Submitted	Completed
15. Participant 15	3	-	Submitted	Incomplete
16. Participant 16	12	Abroad	Abroad	Discontinued
17. Participant 17	10	Conflict with sched	- -	Incomplete
18. Participant 18	10	Conflict with sched	- -	Incomplete
19. Participant 19	7	Conflict with sched	- -	Incomplete
20. Participant 20	7	Conflict with sched	- -	Incomplete

We can see in Table 12 that only 10 participants were able to complete the material according to the intended requirements. This outcome is due to various reasons: a) the schedules on which the sessions were held were irregular and coincided with some schedules most particularly with the clergy and deaconess participants, b) one participant had a scheduled month-long trip, c) one participant cannot cope with the adjustment required by the sessions, d) two participants were not able to provide the make-up assignments to cover for their absences, and e) lastly, two participants have not yet submitted their final exam.

Those who have completed the requirements of material were recognized and consecrated before their congregation, including those who have finished the other discipleship material that the RPACE BOD is implementing (see Appendix S). A certificate was also given to each of those who have completed the discipleship materials implemented by the RPACE BOD (see Appendix T).

Post-Production

Feedback and Evaluation of the Discipleship Material

After the material was implemented in the pilot class, the feedback and evaluation of the participants were taken based on the Feedback and Evaluation Form configured by the thesis writer. Despite the fact that only 10 participants have completed the material and its requirements. There were other participants who did not complete the implementation but chose to provide their feedback. An addition of four responses was received on top of the 10 completers, making a total of 14 respondents for the evaluation. The results of the feedback and evaluation are tallied on table 13.

Table 13. The responses of participants to the Feedback and Evaluation Form

CONTENT					
Name	Appropriateness of the lessons contained in the series	Organization and sequencing of lessons	Comprehensiveness of the lesson discussion	Clarity of language	Average Rating
1. Participant 1	10	10	10	10	10
2. Participant 2	7	6	8	8	7.25
3. Participant 3	10	10	9	9	9.5
4. Participant 4	7	9	9	7	8
5. Participant 5	10	10	10	8	9.5
6. Participant 6	10	10	10	10	10
7. Participant 7	10	10	8	7	8.75
8. Participant 8	9	9	10	8	9
9. Participant 10	10	9	8	7	8.5
10. Participant 11	9	9	9	7	8.5
11. Participant 12	9	9	8	9	8.75
12. Participant 13	10	10	10	8	9.5
13. Participant 14	10	10	10	10	10
14. Participant 15	10	10	9	10	9.75
AVERAGE	9.36	9.36	9.14	8.43	9.07
IMPACT					
Name	Relatability to experience	Enhanced interest about the social of Wesleyan spirituality	Increased appreciation of Christianity as a social religion	Spiritual insights gained from the lessons	Average Rating
1. Participant 1	10	10	10	10	10
2. Participant 2	7	8	8	8	7.75
3. Participant 3	10	10	10	10	10
4. Participant 4	9	8	9	9	8.75
5. Participant 5	10	10	10	10	10
6. Participant 6	10	10	10	10	10
7. Participant 7	10	10	10	10	10
8. Participant 8	9	9	10	9	9.25
9. Participant 10	9	10	10	10	9.75
10. Participant 11	9	9	9	9	9
11. Participant 12	8	10	9	10	9.25

12. Participant 13	10	10	10	10	10
13. Participant 14	10	10	10	9	9.75
14. Participant 15	10	10	10	10	10
AVERAGE	9.36	9.57	9.64	9.57	9.54
INTERACTION					
Name	Enthusiasm as a participant	Conduciveness of the session format for sharing and reflection	Level of attention during discussions	Phrasing of the discussion	Average Rating
1. Participant 1	10	10	9	10	9.75
2. Participant 2	8	8	8	8	8
3. Participant 3	10	9	10	9	9.5
4. Participant 4	8	7	8	9	8
5. Participant 5	10	10	10	10	10
6. Participant 6	10	10	10	9	9.75
7. Participant 7	10	8	8	8	8.5
8. Participant 8	9	9	9	7	8.5
9. Participant 10	9	9	9	9	9
10. Participant 11	9	8	9	9	8.75
11. Participant 12	9	9	8	8	8.5
12. Participant 13	10	9	10	10	9.75
13. Participant 14	9	9	10	10	9.5
14. Participant 15	10	9	9	9	9.25
AVERAGE	9.36	8.86	9.07	8.93	9.05
INTEGRATION					
Name	Applicability of the lessons and reflections to personal faith	Clear resolutions for issues that are raised in the lessons.	Lessons can be related/relay ed to social groups and communities	Confidence gained to express how the Christian faith is socially relevant	Average Rating
1. Participant 1	10	9	10	10	9.75
2. Participant 2	9	8	8	9	8.5
3. Participant 3	10	9	9	9	9.25
4. Participant 4	8	8	8	9	8.25
5. Participant 5	10	10	10	10	10

6. Participant 6	10	10	10	10	10
7. Participant 7	10	10	10	10	10
8. Participant 8	9	9	10	9	9.25
9. Participant 10	10	9	9	8	9
10. Participant 11	9	9	9	9	9
11. Participant 12	10	8	8	9	8.75
12. Participant 13	10	10	10	10	10
13. Participant 14	10	9	9	10	9.5
14. Participant 15	10	9	10	10	9.75
AVERAGE	9.64	9.07	9.29	9.43	9.36
COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS					
1. Participant 1	The materials should be simplified.				
2. Participant 2	John Wesley's life and His sermons are so relevant in what is happening today. Practice what you preach and live a simple life, pray without ceasing and be a good disciple/discipler. Read the word of God and meditate on it day and night. Very simple and yet very fulfilling.				
3. Participant 3	Some terms used are difficult to comprehend to others (specially the youth) so suggestion is to simplify language so that it could easily be understood. Situational Reflection need to be discussed by the class to make it more relevant so time should be allotted to this.				
4. Participant 4	I suggest to have a material for youth and Tagalog version				
5. Participant 5					
6. Participant 6	I understood it and clear to me				
7. Participant 7	The sermons of John Wesley in its original form is quite difficult to comprehend. I appreciate the simplified version although I still need to research and look for simpler translation. The social reflection and practical application should be a requirement to be submitted, in this way we are forced to study again the lessons. Our teacher-pastor is very helpful in giving expanded explanations, and was very clear in giving instructions.				
8. Participant 8	Appreciated the topics and discussions.				
9. Participant 10	Translate it to more simple English words other than that the lessons are excellent.				
10. Participant 11	Simplify the materials				
11. Participant 12	Pwede po ba taglish & more explanations. Salamat po.				
12. Participant 13	I appreciate the thought and preparation made with the materials used. They have given me a better and deeper understanding of the Methodist faith's Wesleyan heritage and foundation.				
13. Participant 14	It was a great experience to be a part of this class				
14. Participant 15	I am grateful to be part of this discipleship class				

Table 13 presents the responses of the participants to the Feedback and Evaluation Form. The form intends to solicit the numerical rating of the participants to four major categories, namely, the: a) Content; b) Impact; c) Interaction; and d) Integration. In addition, the comments and suggestions were also collected.

Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis and Interpretation of the Pilot Class Based on the Participants' Profile

There is a significant value for this project that can be derived from the data collected from the diagnostic responses and the Feedback and Evaluation Form.

From the diagnostic responses, we can see that those who participated in the implementation have been Christians and members of the UMC for a substantial length of time. They vary in terms of how long have they been involved in the UMC. By signifying the length of their association with the UMC, we can break down the length of their involvement according to a range of years: three participants belong to the range of 50-59 years of involvement, two participants belong to the range of 20-29 years of involvement, two participants belong to the range of 40-49 years of involvement, two participants belong to the range of 60-69 years of involvement, three participants belong to the range of 70-79 years of involvement, and one participant belongs the range of 80-89 years of being involved in the church.

With this, we can assume that they are not participating with a blank slate about the Wesleyan teachings. They have a notion about the elements discussed about faith's social responsibility and believers need to be engaged with social concerns.

Also, the participants are well-educated and they are holding offices in the local church. These characteristics of the participants indicate that they are considered leaders and have a certain measure of the ability to articulate what they believe. As such, there is an expectation from the thesis writer that they have seriousness in learning the material.

It can be noticed that the age of the participants spans from 37- 84. In terms of the size according to age groups, the majority are in their 60's (five participants) next are those in their 70's (four participants), then those who are in their 50's (two participants) and there is one participant who belongs to the age group of 30's and 80's. By showcasing this age range, we can see that adults have both the interest and time to attend this kind of training. It is usually deduced that young adults have limited time for getting involved in the ministry due to their work schedules and other commitments. In that case, the older members of the church continue to hold positions, which in turn become involved in specialized activities. This situation also shows that the older generation is available and is willing to learn new things about their faith.

Regarding gender, all the participants are female except one. That male participant is necessarily involved due to his position as the discipleship coordinator of their church. It can be observed that women in the church contribute and participates in many activities in the church. This claim does not mean that other genders in the church are not equally passionate. It only shows that these women are responsive and they can be easily gathered. Part of these characterizations about them can be reasoned that these women participants hold offices in the church and are then invited to join the implementation. However, we may also ask, are the men in the church who are also holding other church positions and have been informed by their Administrative Pastor

about this discipleship implementation? This question seems interesting; however, it is beyond this study to know the composition of the church officers of the local church.

In summary, the participants are active members of the church who can be safely assumed to have a substantial experience in the nurturing activities of the church and have familiarity with various religious concepts. They also possess a certain stature in their local church for holding positions and being actively involved in the ministry. By being well-educated, they have a certain capacity to express and engage themselves with a more advanced discussion about faith.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Diagnostic Responses

The thesis writer obtained responses from the participants. By using the diagnostic instrument their interest and understanding of the subject matter of the discipleship material were taken.

According to the responses, there were 13 participants who filled up the diagnostic form out of the 20 who gave their consent. The responses are in two parts. The first part is the analysis of the respondents' views about the aspects that will be tackled in the material regarding the perceived elements of social religion. This portion is further subdivided into three parts that parallel the groupings of lessons in the material, namely: a) Analysis Concerning the Properties of Social Religion, b) Analysis Concerning the Person in Social Engagement, and c) Analysis Concerning the Process of Social Faith.

The second portion is an analysis of the instructional interest of the pilot class. This portion consists of four parts: a) The Participants' Interest in the Discipleship Project, b) The Participants' Preferred Duration for Each Session, c) The Participants'

Perceived Elements or Features that Will Make them Conducive to Learning, and d) The Participants' Expectation in the Discipleship Process.

After these discussions, an interpretation of the observations of the thesis writer about the participants' responses will be provided.

Analysis and Summary of the Respondents' Perception Regarding the Intended Content of the Material

Responses Pertaining to the Properties of Social Religion

Based on the respondents, they have a common view that Christianity should be lived out with relational characteristics. There exists a community wherein followers of God should interact with and it is in the community where they are to make disciples and to take care of their other persons. Christianity is relational since salvation involves acceptance of Jesus as Lord, and such salvation is open to all. With this, the respondents see social religion as involving personal salvation through the necessity of a relationship with Christ, how this salvation is related to others, and practicing faith in the context of a community. To them, the Christian faith manifests through love which includes the promotion of justice and peace. It also involves caring for others, especially marginalized sectors of society such as the poor and the underprivileged.

In contrast to this, the respondents understand the word mammon as relating to material wealth. The consequence of mammon, as pointed out by two respondents, is that it takes away devotion to God. The respondents also believe that simultaneously serving God and mammon is impossible. There is a clear distinction between serving mammon and God given by the respondents by providing incompatibility of sin and pleasing God. The pleasure of the flesh is viewed to be against nurturing the spirit, and this contrary

dimension of life is based on the character of the jealous God who deserves our sole commitment.

The respondents view Jesus Christ as fulfilling God's law by ethical living. Some respondents view the death of Jesus as the way He fulfills God's law. In addition, another view is that the love of Christ allows Him to attain the fulfillment of the law. In all of this, there is a connection among their views that through Christ obedience, love, and self-sacrifice, he satisfied the requirements of the law and allowed it to be fulfilled.

Relevantly to Christ's fulfillment of the law, the respondents defined who could be either the least or greatest in God's Kingdom. For the majority of respondents, there is common agreement that those who possess humility and follow His instructions are the greatest in God's Kingdom. On the other hand, there are three views from the respondent regarding the idea of the least in God's Kingdom: first is that in God's Kingdom, no one is least or greater because God's love is for all, second is that those who are spiritually impoverished were the least, and third is that the least was defined in a literal sense such as the poor and downtrodden.

Since love is central to the teaching of Christ and in relational activities, the respondents were asked about the properties of love toward people. The answer ranges from attributing various virtues to love, quoting Biblical verses, and pointing to the love of Christ. Oppositely, when asked what is the alternative if love is absent, the respondent's answers focused on three subdivisions: good works as the replacement of love, negative emotions as dominant experience, and relying on physical appearances and activities.

Responses Pertaining to the Person in Social Engagement

Social engagement includes working with those who are in need, specifically those who are experiencing suffering and illness. When asked how Christians benefit from visiting those who are in need, the respondents view such an activity as a way of honing compassion and empathy among believers. It is a way by which God uses them as instruments of His love and care. This activity allows Christians to grow and obtain joy and God's favor. Furthermore, there is a belief that God is a physician and Christians are to declare supernatural healing from God. On the contrary, respondents are asked how the rich have little sympathy from the poor and their answers deal with the rich persons' characteristics such as not having experienced being poor, their tendency to love wealth that extends their help to those in need, thinking lowly of the poor, and selfishness.

Determining what is morally right and wrong, according to the respondent, can be done through having a conscience, having the foundation of God's Word with the Holy Spirit's guidance, and the teachings that God placed in our hearts through His law. There are those who think that morality is complex since the action of a person should not be the only thing that is considered but also the cause of the action. There is a recognition that right and wrong are based on social, cultural, and familial background. To these respondents, conscience functions by giving conviction, helping in the determination of what is morally right from wrong, and it can also be attributed to God's voice in the heart. Through conscience, the heart is moved so that we stop sinning.

Judging others is considered contradictory to love and the reason for this contradiction is based on the tendency to judge because we do not know other persons, and judgment tends to look at the external appearance. By judging, the person becomes

more critical and focuses on the bad aspect of another person which may lead to a condemning attitude, and thinking of oneself to be greater than others. Those who are seen as potential future threats are subjected to hurtful and disparaging criticism and judgement. In contrast, love gives allowance to people in terms of their mistakes and considers what is in the heart not only the appearance. Love offers help to those who are in need. One important aspect of judging others or loving them is its relationship to morality. Identifying the basis of pure and genuine morality was asked of the respondents. To the respondents, the basis of pure and genuine morality revolves around three things: the Scripture, the personal relationship with God, and the example of Jesus Christ according to how he spoke and acted.

Social engagement does not deny individuals of what conversation or association they want to engage with. With regards to interacting with people, the respondents are asked about the acceptable reason for believers to discontinue their conversations with others. By referring to the responses, discontinuing conversation with others is justified when the conversations are contrary to one's belief or the teaching of Christ, yield to senseless discussions such as gossip, and when the language is becoming offensive through destructive behavior. These answers indicate that for the respondents, there are conversations that are not helpful based on the content of what is discussed, the approach and behavior of those who are conversing, and where the conversation is being headed to. Since there is a consideration about upholding one's belief as a reason for discontinuing conversation, it is necessary to include the question about the consequence when godly people become equally yoked with the ungodly company. The dominant view of the respondents is that the godly can be influenced by the ungodly and lead to the comprising

of faith and being carried away in sin. If the being equally yoked is in the context of marriage, the partners will have miserable experiences and eventually will need to separate. On the other hand, it can be considered that the godly can also influence the ungodly.

Responses Pertaining to the Process of Social Faith

The respondents under the heading of the Process of Social Faith were inquired about their view of the common social miseries that people experience. The miseries that people experience, according to the respondents, are caused by two major categories. First, miseries are based on personal choices and actions through their subjective temperaments and desires. The other is that miseries occur due to what happens around people such as the injustices and disadvantages that happen in society. Associated with the miseries that people experience in their society is the idea of nationhood and how it can be saved from perishing. The responses given by the participants to experiencing miseries are generally rooted in a religious point of view and can be divided into three general themes. The first is through interaction with God by means of prayer and revelation, the second is by making Jesus known, and the third is by the practical responsibilities of being a good citizen by living up to the nation's ideals.

To signify the relevance of religion to society, the respondents were asked what they think religion can uniformly guarantee in a social context. As part of the responses, specific social issues and concepts can be affected by the process of having a sociable faith. Such issues and concepts that arise are human rights, moral and ethical norms, different virtues, and the value of persons.

Religion is seen as a positive force for society as such it must guarantee a uniform contribution to society in light of its social influence. In a concise answer, one of the respondents claimed the “things that religion ought to uniformly guarantee is moral recovery, renewal, and salvation.” In other words, by referring to one of the respondents, these general ideas can be also stated that “Religion should guarantee the basic needs of people, the inherent rights and freedom of people, and most of all guarantee the freedom to worship God without censure or prejudice.” Since religion is a social institution that ought to bring positive influence to society, adherents of Christianity must see to it that through God, the renewal of humanity is making progress.

In response to the question of how God speeds up the renewal of humankind, the respondents express that this renewal includes various social and spiritual developments. These developments involve technology and medicine which make up for a better quality of health and life as a way that showcases God’s healing intent, and the social media which hastens the spread and exposure of God’s Word to the world. God also speeds up the renewal of humankind by providing His revelation through signs and wonders.

Faith, being seen as part of the process of social transformation necessarily includes agents who act out their Christian message and discipline. Respondents, in dealing with the question of how can the believer become moral agents while being holy and happy. The discussion of the respondents revolves around these: following the example and teachings of Christ and being an example to others, being focused on God’s word through mediation, obeying in the context of fellowship and living, sharing the Goodness of God and serving Him, and proper relationship with people. Attached to this question is how God’s kingdom spread on earth. This question is responded to by having

two general points: discipleship and evangelism. The Christians' involvement in sharing the good news, by being faithful to God's Word, sharing God's love, and testifying to people and serving them is inseparable from the spread of God's kingdom on earth.

One topic considered for the survey is the negligible effect of Christianity in places that are even populated by Christians. To this issue, the respondents' views can be pointed out through these three focuses: first is the quality of life espoused by Christians that does not reflect the message that they believe and their complacency, the second is that lack of understanding of who Jesus is and His Gospel, and thirdly, the environment itself wherein there are changing norms and trends that challenge believers to have consistency in exemplifying their Biblical ethics.

As part of living out the Christian faith, self-denial is a topic that is expected to be seen in believers. It is through practicing self-denial that Christians may continue to spread God's kingdom and have an impact on the world. However, it may be considered, based on Wesley's view, that it is not entirely practiced by Christians. Attending to this question, there are two headings that can accommodate what the respondents said, namely the influence of the world on the believers and the personal spiritual status due to upbringing and lifestyle.

Interpretation of the Analysis of the Respondents' Perception Regarding the Intended Content of the Material

The respondents exhibit a general grasp of the subject matter or topics that have been required for them to describe or define. These can be explained due to their background of being involved in the Methodist faith community that spans a significant portion of their lives. As churchgoers, they are not new to the faith and have been

exposed to various lessons and discussions concerning the topics at hand. Their responses generally fit the overview of a basic understanding of how faith affects spiritual growth and the believers' way of interacting to influence society.

On the other hand, despite involvement with a certain degree of familiarity, a deeper discussion is needed, especially in terms of articulating their faith based on certain areas of the Wesleyan faith concerning specific terminologies or concepts. A case in point is the function of conscience. For John Wesley, this is a form of witness that is above the human mind yet under God's authority to guide our actions as supernatural enablement. He enumerated that conscience has three functions: it is a witness that testifies about our actions, it passes a sentence about what we did, and it executes its sentence by inducing discomfort in those who do evil (Wesley 1986, 480-483). Another example is regarding the alternatives used by people or tends to focus on in the absence of love. Among these alternatives, the respondents indicated various virtues, negative dispositions, and earthly materials. However, from Wesley's viewpoint, in his sermon *On Charity*, the lack of love is usually supplied by eloquence, knowledge, good works by suffering and giving up possessions, and sincerity of faith. However, for Wesley love is higher than these things (Wesley 1986, 298-300). As such, Wesley was abiding by Apostle Paul's reflection when the Apostle described love, specifically 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

It can be observed that in some topics, the respondents seemed to have a certain degree of a uniform understanding. In their idea about the term *mammon*, they have pinpointed its relationship with earthly wealth or riches. The idea of *mammon* as being associated with riches is clearly signified by the respondents and resembles Wesley's

perception. Wesley makes a clear definition that mammon referred to a deity that presides over earthly treasures but is now understood as wealth. In general, it refers to money and whatever can be purchased by it such as pleasure and honor (Wesley 1984, 634). Two of the respondents noted the implication of mammon, and that is taking away devotion from God and yielding to objects that are falsely worshiped. Such portrayal of the implication of mammon echoes Wesley's view when he said that serving mammon involves trusting mammon and loving the world (Wesley 1984, 636-637). In another instance, wherein a strong connection among the responses, is the reason why there is little sympathy for the poor, especially from the ranks of rich individuals. They raised in their views the lack of understanding of the poor people and their experiences in contrast to the rich people's experience. Also, respondents have the perception that the rich have an attachment to wealth, which in turn shapes their disposition toward the poor. With this input, we can see that there is a clear idea among respondents that explains the behavior of the rich in relation to the poor. This does not mean that all rich people lack empathy for those who are in need but only show their explanation in cases where the rich belittle or lack sympathy for the less privileged.

The participants exhibit a variety of understanding or raise multiple aspects with regard to certain questions posed in the survey. This observation is exhibited in the analysis when the responses are grouped into categories to organize their responses. An example of these categorizations is given by their idea concerning self-denial wherein their answers are grouped into two headings. The responses about self-denial are accommodated either under the influence of the world on the believers or under the personal spiritual status due to upbringing and lifestyle. We can also pertain to another

instance where respondents' views are organized into groups by observing their responses on how the nation can be saved from perishing. Though they have a religious lens in answering the question, the responses are divided into three general themes: interacting with God by means of prayer and revelation, making Jesus known, practicing the responsibilities of being a good citizen by living up to the nation's ideals. In addition to these examples, the respondent's understanding of why Christianity had little effect on places where Christianity is present can also be grouped. The three groupings of their view about that question are placed here in summary: the quality of life espoused by Christians and their complacency, the lack of understanding of who Jesus is and His Gospel, and the environment and trends that challenge believers' consistency in exemplifying their Biblical ethics.

With all these considerations we can see that the participants' responses can be approached by their degree of collective understanding. Based on the responses, we can notice how uniform or varied they understand a particular topic or lesson. By gauging the uniformity or preciseness they expressed their views as compared to each other, the classifications were constructed according to the thesis writer's reading and assessment. The classifications are: a) topics that generally are understood by the respondents with a certain degree of uniformity and easily articulated, b) topics that are generally defined but have a degree of variation of understanding, and c) topics that are mostly varied in how they are understood and expressed. Using the classifications, instead of directly categorizing the responses, the topics or lessons which are addressed by the responses were grouped together. Table 14 provides the classification of topics and questions based on participants responses in relation to the lessons and the lesson categories.

Table 14. Classification of topics or questions based on the diagnostic responses of participants with the corresponding sermons and their categories

Classifications Determining the Degree of Uniformity of Understanding	Topics/Questions that are Arranged According to the Quality the Responses that are directly associated with them.	Attribution to Specific Lessons (John Wesley's Sermon)	Lessons Categories
Topics that generally are understood by the respondents with a certain degree of uniformity and easily articulated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your understanding of the word Mammon? • How is it impossible to simultaneously serve God while conforming to the world? 	Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 9	The Properties of Social Religion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can believers gain if they visit people who are suffering from sickness? • What is the reason why rich people have little sympathy for the poor? 	On Visiting the Sick	The Person in Social Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does judging others become contrary to love? • What can be a basis for pure and genuine morality? 	Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 10	The Person in Social Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is/are the common root/s of social miseries that people experience? • What can people do to save their nation from perishing? 	National Sins and Miseries	The Process of a Social Faith
Topics that are generally defined but have a degree of variation of understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you explain Christianity as a social religion? • How does social holiness manifest through the Christian faith? 	Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 4	The Properties of Social Religion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we naturally determine what is morally right or wrong? • What do you think are the functions of our conscience? 	On Conscience	The Person in Social Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are reasonable considerations that may have Christians to discontinue their conversations with others? • What can be a possible consequence when the godly become equally yoked with the ungodly? 	In What Sense Are we to Live the World	The Person in Social Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can Christians become moral agents while being holy and happy? • How does God's kingdom generally spread here on earth? 	The General Spread of the Gospel	The Process of a Social Faith
The topics that are mostly varied in how they are understood and expressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Jesus attain the fulfillment of the moral law? • What defines the least or the greatest in God's Kingdom? 	Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 4	The Properties of Social Religion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the properties of love toward people? • What are the characteristics that believers tend to focus on in the absence of love? 	On Charity	The Properties of Social Religion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the things that religion ought to uniformly guarantee? • How can believers say that God is speeding up 	Of Former Times	The Process of a Social Faith

	toward the renewal of the whole of humankind?		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does Christianity have little effect on people even in places where Christianity itself is accepted? • Why is self-denial not entirely practiced by Christians? 	The Causes of Inefficiency of Christianity	The Process of a Social Faith

Using these bases for classification and the thesis writer's personal assessment we can have the following groupings of the collective apprehension of the participants based on their inputs. By referring to the table, we can see which topics are easily understood and familiar to the participants and those that are not closely explained by the respondents.

However, the arrangement of topics or lessons under these classifications in relation to the uniformity or priciness of the responses is not based on exhaustive discussions of the total understanding of each respondent. Also, it must be noted that differences in terminologies or phrases used by the respondents do not mean differences in what they may want to imply. With these additional thoughts, allowances must be made to understand how the respondents reflect on the questions given to them.

Analysis and Summary of Respondent's Instructional Interest

Interest in the Discipleship Project

To define the motivation of the participants, they were asked to respond to the survey about their interests. They declared that they are willing to learn more about John

Wesley's teachings, specifically those that are contained in his sermon, and also widen their idea about discipleship and the Wesleyan heritage. The greater end of gaining insight about undergoing these materials is to have a deeper understanding of the Christian faith, be equipped to evangelize, follow Christ's command, and bring glory to God.

Preferred Duration for Each Session

The duration of the sessions affects the interests of the participants. In light of this consideration, they were asked regarding their preferred length for the sessions. Based on their responses, their preferred length ranges from 30 minutes and a maximum of two hours. However, even when referring to the given range of time, the majority have repeatedly mentioned one hour as the common time in a set time range.

Perceived Elements or Features that Will Make them Conducive to Learning

The participants shared what they deemed to make the sessions conducive to learning. To them, the conduciveness to learning is affected by the following: interaction, easy-to-read and concise materials, location, clarity of content, the creativity of presentation and illustrations, adequate discussion for personal applications, and the content about Wesleyan teachings how they can be in their life.

Expectation in the Discipleship Process

By going through the lessons, the participants shared their expectations which can be grouped into three headings. First is that they expected to be equipped with learning the doctrines that were advanced by the Wesleyan heritage. Second, they looked forward

to having sufficient understanding and ability to relay what they have learned and put into practice the role of faith in their community. Third is their desire to gain more insights for their personal growth to be more Christlike.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Participants' Feedback and Evaluation

Respondents' Rating

There were 14 respondents and each of the respondents provided their average rating for each of the four main categories, namely Content, Impact, Interaction, and Integration. Each of these main categories is further divided into four sub-items. All of the averages that correspond to each participant are found in the last column of the table. Aside from the personal average of the respondents, the average of all respondents for each sub-item of every category is computed using Microsoft Excel. The average for each item of every category is found in the last row of each categorical section.

In all the specific items for every category, the average rating rests within the range of 9 to 10. Based on the ratings given by the respondents, the main categories can be ranked from the highest to the lowest. This ranking shows that among the four categories, the highest rating belongs to Impact (9.54), followed by Integration (9.36), then Content (9.07), and lastly Interaction (9.05).

From this ranking, we can see that the implementation, had been most valued for the impact that impressed the participants. Based on the Feedback and Evaluation Form, Impact refers to the: a) Relatability to experience, b) Enhanced interest in the social of Wesleyan spirituality, c) Increased appreciation of Christianity as a social religion, and d) Spiritual insights gained from the lessons. Keeping in mind these sub-items, the material,

and its instruction helped the participants appreciate understanding Wesley's teaching in the formation of their spiritual lives.

The second highest ranking is Integration. By integration we mean to include the following sub-items: a) Applicability of the lessons and reflections to personal faith, b) Clear resolutions for issues that are raised in the lessons, c) Lessons can be related/related to social groups and communities, and d) Confidence gained to express how the Christian faith is socially relevant. In all of these, integration encapsulates the applicability of the lessons in real-world situations. Spirituality needs to be lived out by putting one's learning into their encounter with their community. Based on the responses, integrating one's learning into the environment follows, in terms of significance, after there had been a considerable impact on the participants.

The third in rank is content. Content signifies the following sub-items: a) Appropriateness of the lessons contained in the series, b) Organization and sequencing of lessons, c) Comprehensiveness of the lesson discussion, c) Clarity of language. Summing up the sub-items, the Content is associated with the cognitive part of learning. The content of the teaching is valuable since they provide foundational insight into Methodist heritage and doctrine. However, there is room for improvement in this area in order to make the material significant in attending to their mental needs and interest. The content necessarily must be constructed with to aim to nurture the mind and not simply to acquire a growing list of memorized vocabularies or phrases. This aim can be helped by the packaging of the content, instructional process, and conduciveness of both the learner and environment to learning.

The last in the rank is Interaction. Interaction consists of a) Enthusiasm as a participant, b) Conduciveness of the session format for sharing and reflection, c) the Level of attention during discussions, and d) the Phasing of the discussion. The process of learning is affected by how it is facilitated, how participants cope with the process of the lessons, and the dynamics that happen among themselves. Based on the comments and suggestions, there is a recognition to add more time or emphasis to the process of reflection. The participants can enhance learning if there is an appropriate guide for them to reflect and share their reflections to widen and deepen their appreciation of the session. On the other hand, increasing the reflection and sharing of insights would demand more time for the participants.

Despite most of the items obtaining a rating that numerical value of 9 and above, three specific sub-items incurred less than 9 as their rating. These sub-items are: “Clarity of language” (8.43) under the Content category, and “Conduciveness of the session format for sharing and reflection” (8.86) and “Phasing of the discussion” (8.93) both under the Interaction category.

Through this numerical rating, the language used in the material must be improved. Since the material itself is translated with direct quotes from the original source, rewriting portions of the translation is the mechanism to improve the material. Additionally, the interaction participants can be reinforced by focusing on the phasing of the discussion and allowing people to reflect and share with the downside of compromising the allotted time.

The thesis writer is grateful for the responses of the participants and the pertinent suggestion for the improvement of language and creating Tagalog and Youth Versions as

future enhancements and endeavors. Also, emphasizing both the Reflection and Application Question as requirements for completion with a balanced implementation will be for the revision of the instructional approach.

Respondents' Comments and Suggestions

Out of the remarks of the participants on the Feedback and Evaluation form we delineate the following concern: a) the experience of the participants, b) the insights or learning gained through the lesson content, c) the instructional process with an emphasis on reflection, and d) the language of the material and further suggestions.

The response group according to his classifications can be seen on table 15.

Table 15. Constructed classification of the comments and suggestions based on the responses on the Feedback and Evaluation Form

Classification of Comments and Suggestions from the Feedback and Evaluation Form	Collected Comments and Suggestions from the Feedback and Evaluation Form Arranged According to Their Classification
The Experience of The Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am grateful to be part of this discipleship class • It was a great experience to be a part of this class • Appreciated the topics and discussions.
The Insights or Learning Gained Through the Lesson Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I appreciate the thought and preparation made with the materials used. They have given me a better and deeper understanding of the Methodist faith's Wesleyan heritage and foundation. • John Wesley's life and His sermons are so relevant in what is happening today. Practice what you preach and live a simple life, pray without ceasing and be a good disciple or discipler. Read the word of God and meditate on it day and night. Very simple and yet very fulfilling. • I understood it and clear to me
The Instructional Process with an Emphasis on Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situational Reflection need to be discussed by the class to make it more relevant so time should be allotted to this.

The Language of the Material and Further Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some terms used are difficult to comprehend to others (specially the youth) so suggestion is to simplify language so that it could easily be understood. • I suggest to have a material for youth and Tagalog version • Simplify the materials • The materials should be simplified. • Pwede po ba taglish & more explanations. Salamat po. • The sermons of John Wesley in its original form is quite difficult to comprehend. I appreciate the simplified version although I still need to research and look for simpler translation. The social reflection and practical application should be a requirement to be submitted, in this way we are forced to study again the lessons. Our teacher-pastor is very helpful in giving expanded explanations, and was very clear in giving instructions. • Translate it to more simple English words other than that the lessons are excellent.
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Table 15 shows the four classifications that emerge from analyzing the comments and suggestions given by the participants. The meaning behind these responses is reflected by the thesis writer with his experience in the implementation of the project through the following explanations.

Participants' Experience

Learning has an experiential aspect, and in this context, the feedback of the participants about their experience refers to their overall involvement and quality of participation. The experience they gained is the outcome of all the preparations, discussion, and interaction with the other participants. However, it is up to the participants themselves to process what they gained and its significance to their faith.

We can claim that their experience cannot be detached from their engagement with what happened during the session. Additionally, the composition of the class

affected their individual experience both through their participation and facilitation of learning.

Participants' Insights Gained Through the Lesson Content

The responses affirm the significance of the material in honing their doctrinal foundation regarding the Wesleyan heritage. As members of the United Methodist Church, the sermons of Wesley are essential to the spiritual journey of those who participated. The interest to gain further understanding, especially of one's spiritual heritage is essential to evoke the desire and commitment to learning. For those who participated in the implementation, their commitment led them to finish the course and allowed them to obtain fresh insights about the other aspects of their heritage that they have not yet explored in a collective approach. Also, the content, though some new learning is gained, is not totally alien to them since they can see its relevance to their spiritual formation.

The Instructional Process with an Emphasis on Reflection

Among the classifications of the responses, this section consists of only one comment/suggestion. Based on this response, adding a focus on the Situational Reflection by making it mandatory will help the implementation of the material more relevant. The Situational Reflection is the portion of the lesson that encourages members to reflect on how they can apply the lesson according to a set of social situations that are given in each lesson. Faith is not only cognitive development because its application and how it can be related to social experience make it indispensable for being engaged in our social life.

Faith can speak to various situations around us, and the participants' being believers in the Word of God must bridge God's truth to the realities of social experiences such as politics, poverty, and injustices and how Christian activities are related to them. Building a doctrinal foundation must have a behavioral effect through sound reflection.

The Language of the Material and Further Suggestions

There is a recognition that Wesley's original language is uneasy to comprehend in the contemporary setting. The version presented to them allowed them to understand Wesleyan teachings from Wesley's sermons. In relation to the language used in the material. To some participants, there was clarity or an understandable level of explanation due to the translation. Still, many respondents suggested further simplification of some terminologies and general the material itself. On the other hand, some terminologies should remain as they are since they contain theological bearing in the discussions of the lesson.

To the thesis writer of this project, it directly implies that learning or at least interest and conduciveness to learning are enhanced when the language is relatable. Making the language relatable necessarily includes breaking down complex sentence construction, looking for the best synonym or explanation of archaic wordings, reconstructing explanations by trimming them into digestible length, and lastly having the sensitivity to disregard or employ illustrations appropriately in order to be relevant to the context where the material is taught.

Language is a primary concern and it justifies the creation of different linguistic versions or additional translations of the material. By prospecting the material to be

translated into youth versions and into Tagalog, the truths contained in it can be spread and inform other people whose preference for language should be addressed. Also, local churches and the membership among the UMC are varied and the project to create new versions would help those who belong to Methodism to understand the teachings of its founder John Wesley in a more appealing way.

By comparing the number of comments or suggestions for each category, we can see that there is a hierarchy of priority. The number of responses that can be accommodated for each label shows the weight of interest about what area needs to have the topmost focus. To see this priority, the headings can be ordered from having the highest number of comments to the least: a) The Language of the Material and Further Suggestions, b) The Insights Gained Through the Lesson Content, c) The Experience of the Participants, and d) The Instructional Process with an Emphasis on Reflection.

This prioritization can help as a guide for the thesis writer in constructing possible materials in the future with the assessment of the audience and participants.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION OF THE PRODUCTION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Production Process, Implementation, and Evaluation

This project thesis aimed to produce a discipleship material focusing on “Christianity as a Social Religion” based on selected writings of John Wesley. This project is intended to be an installment to the Wesleyan Discipleship Track that the RPACE BOD is implementing at the RPACE annual conference level as a unified discipleship resource. The focus of the implementation itself is on the local church for it is where the immediate formation of members and faith development happen.

The thesis writer had reviewed literature to have substantial insight about the Wesleyan movement’s contribution to the social contexts. In reviewing resources about the Wesleyan movement’s interaction in society, the thesis writer had learned and appreciated the social heritage of Methodism and the faith that fueled their social presence.

By completing the material, the thesis writer aimed for the participants to have:

1. Attended discussions about the idea of Christianity as a social religion;
2. Valued the social orientation of faith through the lens of Wesleyan spirituality;
3. Interacted with fellow participants by sharing their thoughts and responses about the lessons; and

4. Integrated the lessons into their spiritual reflections that relate to their social groups.

The thesis writer surveyed and selected John Wesley's sermons with the consideration to avoid duplication of using the sermons that are already used in the existing discipleship series that is being used by RPACE BOD. The main references used for the sermons that were selected are the *Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley, Vol 1-4*, edited by Albert Outler (1984-1987).

The initial output, to test its applicability in using at the local church setting, was piloted at Taytay United Methodist Church. The participants had given their consents and responded to the diagnostic instrument to gauge their understanding of the intended content of the material. The implementation, beginning from the orientation and up to the collection responses of responses for the Feedback and Evaluation Form, lasted from May 6 to June 10, 2022.

The implementation of the material was done through a combination of zoom and face-to-face gathering, based on mutual agreement that is convenient to the majority of the participants, considering the timeframe of the thesis writer. Initially, 20 participants signified their interest by signing on the Consent Form but only 13 were able to respond to the diagnostic survey. Only 10 were able to complete the requirements of the material, due to conflict in schedules and failure to comply with the final exam, however, 14 individuals gave their feedback and evaluation. Those who completed the material were certified and consecrated to continue the process in their local church.

The summary of persons involved in the respective phases of the implementation is placed on table 16.

Table 16. The phases of implementation and the corresponding number of participants in each phase

Phases of Implementation	Number of Participants Involved
Signifying their consent	20
Responded to the diagnostic form	13
Participants who completed the pilot implementation	10
Participants who provided their feedback and evaluation.	14

This project aimed to offer a discipleship material that emphasizes the nature of social religion based on Wesley's view. With this intent, the theme of the material is about Social Religion toward Social Transformation. By basing the diagnostic questions on this theme, the participants were surveyed to provide their views about the elements of the social nature of religion. Through the analysis of the responses, the topics or lessons that are directly addressed by them are arranged according to how uniformly or precisely they are understood by the respondents. The given classifications were, namely: a) Topics that generally are understood by the respondents with a certain degree of uniformity and easily articulated, b) Topics that are generally defined but have a degree of variation of understanding, c) The topics that are most varied in how they are understood and expressed. This arrangement shows the level of familiarity of the participants about the intended lesson to be offered, and the lessons or topics that are not articulated with a highly agreed and common expression by the participants.

After the implementation, the participants were asked to give their feedback and evaluation by using a numerical evaluation and written comments and suggestions. All the items have an average numerical rating that does not go below 9, with 10 being the highest and 1 as the lowest. Ordering the main categories for the numerical evaluation,

from highest to the lowest rating, the result is as follows: first is Impact (9.54), second is Integration (9.36), then third is Content (9.07), and the fourth is Interaction (9.05). The ratings given by the respondents are relatively high which shows their appreciation, respectively in terms of how the implementation of the project impacted them, what they gained to integrate what they learned into their spirituality, the cognitive nourishment based on the lessons, and the quality of interaction through the instructional process.

As for the comment and suggestions, the inputs of the respondents were arranged into four headings: a) The Experience of The Participants, b) The Insights or Learning Gained Through the Lesson Content, c) The Instructional Process with an Emphasis on Reflection, d) The Language of the Material and Further Suggestions. The number of responses is varied between these headings. The number of comments per category shows where the weight of common interest is focused. With the intent of knowing the priority of interest, the heading can be ranked from topmost to the least priority: a) The Language of the Material and Further Suggestions, b) The Insights Gained Through the Lesson Content, c) The Experience of the Participants, and d) The Instructional Process with an Emphasis on Reflection.

Comments from the Panel

The panel of the project was composed of Dr. Erlic Sagud (Thesis Adviser), Dr. Nativity Petallar (Faculty Reader), Dr. Luther Jeremiah Oconer (External Reader), and Dr. Floyd Cunningham (Academic Dean). They gave substantial input and raised crucial questions to enrich the outcome of this project thesis.

The thesis writer noted to check on the seeming inconsistencies in relation to the varying number of initial participants, those who completed the pilot implementation of

the material, and those who have answered the Feedback and Evaluation Form. To address this concern, an additional explanation was incorporated in Chapter III. Not all of the participants provided their profile information and diagnostic responses. Also, not every respondent was able to finish the course due to conflicts in schedules and other commitments. When it comes to answering the Feedback and Evaluation Form, an additional 4 participants who did not complete the implementation gave their responses.

Any degree of familiarity or attachment of the thesis writer with the pilot class may affect the outcomes of the implementation and may have biased feedback and evaluation. In response to this concern, the thesis writer had no prior working relationship with the pilot class before the implementation of the RPACE BOD discipleship program. The timeline proposal of the discipleship program of the RPACE BOD and its initial implementation coincided with the writing of this project. So far, after the project was completed, the thesis writer has no official ministerial relationship with Taytay UMC.

The project, being an output based on the original sermons of Wesley, was considered by the thesis writer as mainly a paraphrased version of the original, with some direct quotations. Due to the nature of the output material considering its perceived users—lay members of the church—Dr. Luther Oconer, a Wesleyan scholar and one of the panelists for this project, remarked that the appropriate description for the project is translation instead of a paraphrase. The reason for this is that the updating of the original language that was used by Wesley is beyond the process of paraphrasing. Translating is the process of converting the original language into a content that can be used in a different context. The context wherein this material was first implemented was of great consideration in terms of determining how the language was updated.

It was pointed out that the material itself contained various footnotes referring to the original wordings of Wesley's sermons. The reason for the footnoted quotes from the original work of Wesley is for readers to compare the written output with the original words used by Wesley himself, especially for portions that are hard to translate. Despite this reason, it was noted by the panel that putting many footnotes to refer to the original quotes shows the thesis writer's over-consciousness not to deviate from the original thought. For the panel, the thesis writer must exhibit a sense of authority in the project by showing confidence in the written output. With this consideration, the material was revised according to the extent of what the thesis writer can translate to lessen the original quotes in the footnote section. Since some of Wesley's original words are deemed crucial by the thesis writer and may expand the reading experience of those who would use the material by seeing the character of Wesley's writing style, some of the footnoted quotes and direct quotations are maintained.

The thesis writer relayed that the output will be part of an existing discipleship material that was offered in RPACE through its Board of Discipleship. It was fitting to ask how this project was chosen and what makes this material different from those that are already existing. The response to this crucial inquiry entailed describing the thesis writer's previous consultation with Dr. Dick Eugenio, who acted as the thesis writer's previous thesis adviser. Through Dr. Eugenio, it was made clear to the thesis writer that APNTS does not accept projects that are already completely written, so a new material must be produced. Due to the thesis writer's intent to expand the set of materials being offered by the RPACE BOD while exploring a new theme that can be used for this project, the focus on the social nature of religion considering both the Wesleyan notion of

social holiness as predominantly used in the social media and the emphasis on social transformation were combined to form a unique prospect that tapped the interest of the thesis writer to pursue this undertaking.

To the thesis writer, the theme about the social nature of religion based on Wesley's teaching would offer a dimension of spirituality that will reinforce United Methodist circles in RPACE to understand the Wesleyan message about living out the faith with a social orientation. Although there are existing materials tackling the Social Principles of the UMC, the thesis writer was inclined to refer to the original teachings of Wesley that can be related to the social nature of the Christian faith and the elements that are associated with it. The emphasis on this theme was not the focus of the other existing materials of RPACE BOD.

Additionally, the features that were intended to be implemented in this project have been adopted to revise the older materials in order to improve their quality, in terms of the visual and instructional format. The older materials were revised earlier before the completion of the first draft of this material. The enhancement of the previous materials can be owed to this project. These explanations were incorporated in Chapter I and also in Chapter III.

Regarding the idea of social religion, the thesis writer was advised to look up the meaning of social holiness based on one of Wesley's descriptions by referring to the book *Sacred Hymns and Poems* and place that definition in the thesis' section for the Definition of Terms. Doing so will signify to the readers the original meaning of the social nature of religion as penned by John Wesley. This advice was carried out by the

thesis writer. The thesis writer meant to relate the term social holiness with the discussion concerning social transformation for this project.

Through the discussion of the panel, the selection of the pilot class needed further exposition. The RPACE BOD tasked the thesis writer to select churches on which the conference discipleship program can be implemented. The thesis writer, being the previous Chairperson of the RPACE BOD, coordinated with component churches of varying sizes. Out of the three local churches, only the Taytay UMC responded positively. With that, Taytay UMC was considered to be the pilot church for the implementation of discipleship material.

One of the things that the panel was also interested in is the availability of the Leader's Guide. A Leader's Guide will upgrade the implementation of the project. However, such a guide is not yet written and can be part of the future addition to this endeavor.

Lastly, the analysis and interpretation of pertinent aspects of the project were advised to be presented in Chapter IV: Concept. The summaries of their discussions are advised to be placed in this chapter.

Recommendations

Based on the Feedback and Evaluation Form, the thesis writer enhanced the material by improving the language by translating the content into a simpler construction. Additionally, the observation of Dr. Dick Eugenio about the quality of transition in the written discussions in portions where there were abrupt and seemingly disjointed explanations was addressed in the revision by expanding the thoughts contained in the

lesson and strengthening the connection of adjacent explanations contained in each write-up.

Dr. Luther Oconer recommended that the numerous footnotes containing direct quotes as a measure to verify the translation in the volume, reveal a self-conscious attitude of the thesis writer. He suggested removing those footnotes and increasing the thesis writer's sense of authority over his written output. This recommendation was applied to the final output, however, the thesis writer maintained a number of Wesley's wordings in the footnotes that are descriptive of Wesley's setting and notions that the thesis writer deemed beneficial for the readers. As such, some of Wesley's comments and illustrations relating to available ideas and conventions during his time were retained.

Additionally, Tagalog and Youth Versions of the material are requested by the respondents. The thesis writer is interested to continue the creation of these suggested versions. The thesis writer envisions recruiting interested individuals, who have a passion for both discipleship and producing materials for the church, to craft these suggested materials.

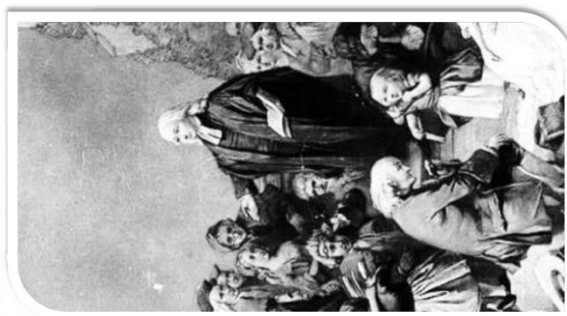
This manuscript was proofread by Mrs. Elen Joy Elata-Bruza prior to the proposal defense and finally by Miss. Adah Abigail G. Mentuda (see Appendix U).

The revised material begins on the next page. The pages of the material are extracted from its PDF version and are placed in the last portion of this chapter. The extracted pages are attached using a landscape format and are arranged side by side according to sequence to minimize the number of pages of this manuscript. The overall quality of the material can be enhanced with future use. Modifications can be made for instructional adjustments and improvements in translation.

**The Discipleship Material: *Social Religion*
Toward *Social Transformation***

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS FROM A
HERITAGE OF REVIVAL VOL. 5

**SOCIAL
RELIGION
TOWARD
SOCIAL
TRANSFOR-
MATION**



Experiencing Grace and Living Out the God-Enabled Faith
through the Lens of Wesleyan Discipleship

Rev. Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SOURCES

The main source utilized for the lessons of this project is based on John Wesley's sermons that were compiled in *The Works of John Wesley Bicentennial Edition*, particularly volumes 1 to 4 published by Abingdon Press from 1984-1987.

The books *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* edited by Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (1991) and *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey* edited by Kenneth J. Collins and Jason E. Vickers (2013), both published by Abingdon Press, were also referred for the introductory comments.

Additionally, the online versions of Wesley's sermons found on the webpages *Wesley Center Online* (wesley.mnu.edu) maintained by Northwest Nazarene University, *Christian Classic Ethereal Library* (ccel.org), *John Wesley's Sermons* (johnwesleysermons.com), and the *140 Sermons of John Wesley* (godonthe.net/wesley) were helpful for this work.

INTRODUCTION

This project is the *fifth volume* of a discipleship series that was put together based on John Wesley's sermons. The Foundational Discussions of the lessons in the discipleship series contain the selected sermons of Wesley that have been translated into a more accessible and contemporary language. In some portions, the translations are combined with direct quotations from Wesley's written preaching material.

In each volume, the lessons are arranged in three parts: a) *The Properties of a Social Religion*; b) *The Person in Social Engagement*; and c) *The Product of Social Faith*. Each part contains four lessons.

The participants are expected to follow the instructions and requirements that are explained in this introduction. The format of the discussion for each lesson is also presented here. Participants who fully satisfy the requirements of all the lessons in this volume are eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion and can be consecrated as facilitators for the next batch of learners.

1. INSTRUCTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. ADMISSION TO THE CLASS. Those who intend to explore spiritual truths through a Wesleyan understanding of faith are welcome. Participants can be recommended by their respective "discipleship groups" (if such groups are in place within the church) or volunteer themselves to join. They are to be admitted with the acknowledgement of the Pastor in charge of overseeing the implementation of this discipleship track.

B. JOURNAL OF LEARNINGS AND REFLECTIONS. Each learner must prepare a journal of notations for each lesson. The journal entries are subdivided into three portions:

- a) Terminologies and Ideas (concepts/vocabulary).
 - b) Personal Application (personal thoughts and questions).
 - c) Social Reflection (assignment or sharing activity).
- The Personal Application and Social Reflection are guided by questions given in each lesson. The Pastor/Facilitator(s) may check the participants' journals at the end of the course as part of completion.

C. ATTENDANCE AND MAKE-UP FOR ABSENCE. Learners must participate in all the lessons. Each participant is only allowed a maximum of two (2) absences. If such absences are unavoidable, participants can make up for missed lessons by doing personal reading and working on respective journals based on the lesson(s) missed before the end of the course. An assigned/elected Registrar of the class or a Facilitator will be in charge of keeping track of attendance.

D. EVALUATION. A final evaluation based on the lessons that were discussed will be given at the end of the course. Questions are provided at the end of this book. This will be checked by the Pastor or Facilitator(s).

E. CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION. A certificate of completion for this particular volume will be given after the requirements are satisfied. The certificate should be signed by the Administrative Pastor and Facilitator(s), together with the Chairperson, Lay Leader of the local church, and other implementors of the discipleship track.

2. FORMAT OF THE LESSONS

A. INTRODUCTORY NOTES (5 mins.). These are notes that give a brief background of the sermons that are to be discussed. These are located in the footnote section on the first page of each lesson.¹

B. WARM-UP QUESTIONS (10-15 mins.). This segment is meant to encourage conversations among participants and help them enrich the substance of the introductory discussion. Participants can be subdivided into smaller groups (4-5 members) to discuss among themselves the given questions. If multiple Pastors are proportionally available to the number of participants, they can be assigned to handle each group. After the group discussion, a representative from each group will summarize the group's perspectives and relay them to the combined groupings.

C. FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION (15-20 mins.). This is the summary content of John Wesley's sermon—extracting Wesley's points and explanations without losing the essence of his thoughts.

D. PERSONAL APPLICATION (5-10 mins.). Application Questions are meant to help participants focus on personal concerns that can be related to the topic discussed. A series of questions asked in this portion

helps the participants assess their spiritual status. Reflections about personal spiritual lives may remain private and are not required for discussion. However, those who have the preference or burden to share personal concerns may do so with mature persons of faith in a confidential setting.

The Pastor/Facilitator(s) will lead the participants in prayer by asking for God's help to address the concerns raised by the questions. If enough Pastors or Facilitators are available, this portion can be handled through small groups.

E. SOCIAL REFLECTION (10-15 mins./writing assignment). Lessons take on a wider relevance when participants connect and apply the insights that they have learned to their social life, which includes relationships and communities. This segment can be done through sharing or writing activities.

¹ Introduction notes were referenced from the introductory comments on their corresponding sermons based on: *The Works of John Wesley Bicentennial Edition*, particularly the volumes 1 to 4 (1984-1986); *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* edited by Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (1991); and *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey* edited by Kenneth J. Collins and Jason E. Vickers (2013).

**PART I:
THE PROPERTIES OF
A SOCIAL RELIGION**

1

2

1. UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT, 4² (1748)

FOCUS: CHRISTIANITY AS A SOCIAL RELIGION

"Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted It is therefore good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
Matthew 5:13-16³

²Outward holiness pertaining to the love of neighbor is the outcome of inward holiness. This concept makes Christianity a religion that has a social nature, and can be termed as a social religion. The sermon is a way for Wesley to articulate a theme that has been long held about the Bible knowing nothing about "solitary religion," and to isolate it from its social dimension is to "destroy it." See Albert Outler and Richard Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 193. Additionally, the mystics' preference for being withdrawn was criticized by Wesley. He balances religion with its inward and outward aspects. See Kenneth Collins and Jason Vickers, *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 512.

³ Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV): Salt and Light. "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever heard the criticism that the church is too focused on being otherworldly to a point that it bears an image of exclusivity from society? What is your reaction to this idea?
2. How can we espouse our religion in a democratic and pluralistic world?
3. What do you think is the more effective means to improve society or affect people's lives: using political influence or being Christ-like to people around us?

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

The "beauty of holiness" as the renewal of the inward life toward God's image will capture the attention of those whose way of seeing was opened by an enlightened understanding. Those whose spirits are adorned with meekness, humility, and love will gain the commendation of those who are capable of discerning spiritual good and evil. The moment individuals emerge out of darkness allows them to perceive how pleasing it is to undergo the transformation that leads to the likeness of their Creator.

God's image is so visibly impressed upon inward religion in a way that inward religion, bearing the image of God, requires the total immersion of the soul in flesh and blood to attend to any possible doubt regarding its origin

longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

from God. In a secondary manner, the Son of God, who represents both the brightness of the glory of God and the explicit image of God as a person, beaming from eternal glory, was incarnated in the flesh to be seen in the world with a delicate form. God's Son being in the flesh is the "living impression" of God, a God from whom love and beauty flow and perfection and excellence originate.

If the scope of religion was only about what is pertained above, there could be no other objection to pursuing it with the entire zeal of people's souls. However, people may raise questions about why religion needs to be loaded with "doing and suffering" that burden the soul, and that following after charity is not enough for their love to soar. Since God is Spirit, people can be bothered by why the spirit of our minds seems insufficient to worship God without venturing into outward things. For them, being focused on "high and heavenly contemplation" is better than being busy with externals, since intimacy with God is attained through our hearts.

Prominent personalities have spoken about ceasing from "all outward action" by being withdrawn away from the world. To such personalities, having no concern about outward religion and concentrating on working out our virtues is an excellent way to perfect the soul.

Such thoughts show the wisdom of the world. Worldly wisdom perverts the ways of God and hell goes against God's important truths. If possible, even the elect can be deceived.

Our Lord defended a form of religion that joins "doing and suffering" to His followers as they are salt of the earth and need to let their light shine. Explaining these words, we are to endeavor the following:

- a) First: "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it."
- b) Second: "to conceal this religion is impossible, as well as utterly contrary to the design of its Author."
- c) Third: "answer some objections; and conclude the whole with a practical application."

A. CHRISTIANITY IS ESSENTIALLY A SOCIAL RELIGION AND TO TURN IT INTO A SOLITARY RELIGION IS TO DESTROY IT

Christianity is referred to here as the "method of worshipping God" as revealed by Jesus Christ to the world. To say that Christianity is a social religion means that it cannot survive without a society where conversations with other individuals happen. Discouraging this character of Christianity will doubtlessly affirm that turning it into a solitary religion will destroy it.

Being in solitude and retiring from society, considering religion's social nature, is expedient⁴ and confirmed by experience for those who are striving to live out their Christian faith. We cannot have continued conversations with a person for an entire day without both "suffering loss in the soul" and to some degree, grieving God's Spirit. We are to converse with God in a daily manner by secretly communing with Him. With that, prolonged religious retirement from the world cannot be condemned when it doesn't imply neglect of the worldly necessities that God has purposed for us.

Meekness is essential to Christianity. It implies being mild, gentle, and patient endurance. These traits cannot be exercised without encountering other people. Peacemaking

⁴ Word meaning: achieving an end through suitable or appropriate means

or doing what is good is a character of genuine Christianity. It is equally essential with other parts of the religion that stem from Christ according to the original plan of what He placed as essential foundations of religion. To neglect peacemaking is to forego mercy, the pureness of the heart, or any other aspect of what Christ has instituted. However, those who set aside peacemaking and recommend entire solitude lead us into the wilderness. Can anyone claim that a solitary Christian can be merciful as if there is an opportunity to do good to all by being solitary? What could be plainer than saying that this aspect of the religion of Christ cannot possibly exist without society, without interaction—to live and converse—with people?

However, others may claim that it is only suitable to limit the scope of interacting with people by conversing only with those whom they consider as “meek and merciful”—those who are holy in both the heart and life. To them, it is appropriate that conversing with those who are of opposite characters, such as those who do not believe and obey the Gospel, should be refrained.⁵ They claim that engaging with those who are actively marked with iniquities will lead believers to dangers and snares.

On the other hand, the Apostle Paul does not hinder believers from conversing with those who don't know God. The Apostle says we must go out into the world. What the Apostle added is that Christians should not maintain their company with a believer who deliberately lives in sin, such a believer ought to be admonished as a brother/sister in the Lord.⁶

⁵ CONTINUATION: Apostles Paul seemed to favor this point: “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators.” (1 Cor. 5:9, NIV).

⁶ 1 Corinthians 5:11 (NIV): “But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not

The words of our Lord do not direct us to break our interactions with the world. Without engaging with the world, we cannot be Christians. Having conversations with “ungodly and unholy” persons is necessary to fully exert the tempers that express the way of living in God's Kingdom as described by our Lord.⁷

If God's people are to separate themselves from those who deliberately live in sin, how then can they live as salt and light of the world? The nature of Christians is to season—give spiritual flavor—those who are around them. The “divine savour” is to be spread by God's children to whatever they touch by diffusing it on all the sides they are in contact with and to all those who are among them. This way of spreading the spiritual savor is the reason for God's providence of making His children intermingled with others so that when grace is received, it will also be relayed to people around them.

Believers are to labor deliberately to season (give spiritual flavor) all they can with “every holy and heavenly temper.” They cannot fail as long as that religion of such nature remains in their hearts. However, those who neglect to impart what they received from God, according to the Lord, proceed to a desperate state. If those who believe in God no longer have the spiritual savor; have stopped seasoning people around them by having grown “flat, insipid, dead;” and become careless and useless for the

even eat with such people.” 2 Thessalonians 3:15(NIV): “Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.”

⁷ Wesley: “it is necessary to the very being of several of them; of that meekness, for example, which, instead of demanding ‘an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth,’ doth ‘not resist evil,’ but causes us rather, when smitten ‘on the right cheek, to turn the other also;’ of that mercifulness, whereby ‘we love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us;”

benefit of other people's souls, how can they be salted again? How can they recover? What help or hope would they have? Tasteless salt can no longer be restored and is good for nothing. The parallel of this situation is depicted when branches that no longer bear fruit are cut, thrown, and cast into the fire, while those that abide in God remain and bear much fruit (John 15:2,6).

To those who have not yet heard God's word, they must know that God is merciful. On the other hand, those who have experienced God's graciousness but turned their backs on God's holy commandment that was delivered to them will face God's justice.

Pertaining to the caution of God's justice, it must be carefully observed that it deals with: a) those who were enlightened, tasted the heavenly, and were made partakers of God's Spirit; b) the falling away that denotes total apostasy—a follower of Christ believer may fall but doesn't necessarily fall away, for a believer who falls can rise again. A heart can be hardened by being deceived by sin and then fall lower and lower until he/she wholly falls away and loses his/her spiritual savor.

B. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CONCEALING THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Since believers cannot separate themselves from the rest of the world, can the Christian faith be conveyed to others secretly or imperceptibly? If this form of conveying faith can happen, how can it be observed? It can be argued that, in the same manner, the salt seasons food without producing any noise and liability to external observation. With that, believers can hide in the world and their religion can be kept to themselves without offending those they cannot help.

However, the Lord is aware of such reasoning. Genuine religion, when it resides in the heart, makes it impossible to be concealed in a way that is contrary to how its Author has designed it.

It is impossible for those who possess the religion of Jesus Christ to hide it. The Lord declares a comparison in a two-fold manner: that those who believe in Him are the light of the world, and that a city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Christians are to be the light of the world with regard to their "tempers and actions." Their holiness makes them conspicuous⁸ just like the sun in the sky. They cannot go out into the world without appearing to all people, nor can they flee from others. Love, just like light, cannot be hidden especially when it is translated into action for the benefit of every person. As much as a city on a hill cannot be concealed so is a person who is a lover of both God and people cannot be hidden.

Humankind loves darkness more than light and this inclination is reflected by their evil deeds. Evil will take pains to prove that the light in those who are Christ is actually darkness by falsely saying evil of the good that is in them or characterizing that good as evil. Responding to evil with godly tempers, continuing in "doing-well," and joy in humility while being persecuted, and laboring for what is good to overcome evil will make believers more visible and conspicuous than they were before.

The religion that is rooted in Christ is impossible to hide unless those who believe in it cast it away. Light cannot be hidden unless it is put off. A religion that can be concealed is not Christianity. A person whose heart God has renewed can never hide the light to keep such light to himself/herself

⁸ Word meaning: to be clearly and visibly seen, noticeable, obvious

since Christianity cannot be concealed as designed by its Author.

As people do no light a candle to hide the light that it would produce, God does not bring His light to a soul with —“with His glorious knowledge and love”—just too to have that light hidden through false prudence or shame; hiding it in a desert or the world; or by avoiding other people in having a conversation with them. God designed that every follower of Christ should be openly seen so that each believer may share God's light with those around him/her, as a visible expression of the religion that stems from Jesus Christ.

God has spoken in all ages not simply through His wisdom but by raising examples. God did not leave Himself without His witnesses. In any place where the Gospel is heard, it moves forward with representatives who live out and testify its truth. They are the light that shines in the darkness, and in some moments, they enlighten others and preserve a remnant for God. They lead the sheep out of darkness and act as guides toward peace.

Both Scripture and reason tell us that solitary religion is pretentious. Through God's power, Christians are to identify and escape the trap of isolating the Christian faith from people since there are plenty and strong objections against “being social, open, active Christians.”

C. OBJECTIONS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY AS A SOCIAL RELIGION AND RESPONSES

a) FIRST OBJECTION: There is an objection that states: religion is not about outward things but what is in the heart, the innermost of the soul as it pertains to the “union of the soul with God.” This claim implies that external religion is of no worth since God does not delight in burnt offerings or

outward services but in “a pure and holy heart” that is acceptable to Him.

Indeed, the root of religion is in the heart. The heart, as the root, will produce external branches through outward obedience as a consequence that is substantial to religion.

Also, outside religion that does not stem from the heart has no worth, for God is pleased in outward service only when such untowardness stems from the heart.

b) SECOND OBJECTION: Related to the inward condition of the heart is the claim that “love is all in all” as the fulfillment of the law and aim of the commandment. Without love, all our actions and suffering will not yield any profit. Love is the direction given by the Apostle Paul through which we follow the “more excellent way.”

The love toward God and people that arises from faith is the “all in all” that fulfills the law. Without such love, whatever is done would provide no profit. However, love itself does not replace “faith and good works,” instead it compels us to obey. Love is the “end of the commandment” and every command is centered on and leads to it. Whatever is done in love, suffering, or simple things, in the name of Christ will never lose its reward.

c) THIRD OBJECTION: The Apostle instructed us to pursue charity which he termed “a more excellent way.” In addition to going the way of charity, he directed them to long for spiritual gifts.⁹ The Apostle's words state that we are to “follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts.”¹⁰

In the same text, the Corinthians were directed to “desire other gifts” besides the “way of love.” They are

⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:1

¹⁰ Wesley continues: “Yea, ‘follow after charity,’ and desire to spend and to be spent for your brethren. ‘Follow after charity,’ and as you have opportunity do good to all men.”

encouraged to aspire for the best gifts,¹¹ and yet obtaining such gifts does not mean being more excellent in obedience. The Apostle Paul was neither referring to the manner of obedience nor pertaining to outward religion. Supposing that he was speaking about both the outward and inward forms of religion by comparing them, he may have given much preference to the latter, which is about having a loving heart before outward works. However, focusing on one aspect does not follow that believers are to reject either one of the two: inward or outward. Both are joined together by God.

d) FOURTH OBJECTION: God is Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Is this form of spirituality not enough? The whole mind must be employed to follow Christ and "outward things will clog the soul." Outward things dampen the "vigour of our thought" due to the mind's natural tendency to be both encumbered and distracted.

To answer, God, being a Spirit is to be worshipped in spirit and truth, deserves to have our whole strength employed for Him. But we must clarify, what does worshipping God in spirit and truth mean? To worship Him in spirit is to worship in a manner that only our spirits are capable of. Worshipping Him in spirit is to believe Him with His holy yet merciful nature that forgives our transgressions, as He accepts us. Our heart, mind, soul, and strength ought to have God as the object of love, delight, and desire. We are to imitate the God whom we love through both having ourselves purified as "He is pure" and obeying Him whom we believe through our thoughts, words, and what we do. A branch of worshipping God in spirit and truth is to obey His commandments. We are to glorify Him with our bodies and

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 12:31.

spirits and have outward works while our hearts are lifted to Him.

If it is necessary to have outward works, then contemplation is only one of the ways to worship God in both spirit and truth. Giving ourselves up entirely to contemplation with nothing else is to "destroy many branches of spiritual worship" that are equally both profitable to the soul and acceptable to God. It is a mistake to suppose that attending to outward things will clog and hinder the Christian in seeing the indivisible God. Giving attention to outward things neither dampens a believer's thoughts nor encumbers or distracts his/her mind. There is "no uneasy or hurtful care" to those who learned to have both their word or deed done in the name of the Lord Jesus. They have one eye of their soul move "round on outward things" and the other eye is "fixed on God."

e) FIFTH OBJECTION: People may appeal to experience and say that they have employed external things for many years and had their light shine. Yet, they have not gained any profit. They have attended every ordinance but have not become better out of using them, including anyone else. Oppositely, they have become worse for they imagined themselves as Christians by doing those things when they actually did not know what Christianity is supposed to mean.

As a response, this fact can be allowed: that the ordinances of God have been abused by mistaking the ends as the means; that the doing of outside works was equated as the religion of Jesus Christ or accepted to take its place. We must use outward things with steadfastness to our renewal in true holiness and righteousness.

f) SIXTH OBJECTION: Experience shows that doing good is a waste of people's labor. What is the benefit of

feeding or clothing people, if they will eventually be cast into eternal flames? What lasting good can a person do to people's souls? If people are changed, it is God himself who changes them. Let them ask for help from God. Also, the Lord forbids casting pearls to swine.

To answer:

- i. Whether persons are saved or lost, believers are commanded to feed those who hunger and provide clothing to those who are naked,
- ii. God changes the heart but He uses persons to do it. Believers are to do what lies in their ability as diligently as they can as if they could change others through themselves and leave the situation ultimately to God;
- iii. God nourishes His children in every gift through each other to nurture and strengthen the body of Christ. Every part of the body needs each other;
- iv. We cannot be assured of the kind of persons who are before us. We cannot put judgment unless we have tried engaging with them, and their souls are up to God.

g) SEVENTH OBJECTION: Others have attempted and labored to lead sinners toward a reformed life but they could not make any lasting impact on them. Others were changed but only for a while. Both those who were being changed and trying to change others were only hurt, filling others with anger instead of love. Therefore, religion should be better kept only to believers.

We may indeed try to be good and not succeed. Some, having the appearance of being reformed, returned to sin, and their current state is worse compared to their initial status. However, we must imitate how Christ strived to save sinners. They would not listen to Him, and some of those who

initially followed Him turned their backs and went again to their old lives. Christ did not stop striving in doing good, and therefore, those who believe in Him should follow His example. Followers of Christ are to do what was commanded to them and leave everything to God who puts all things in their proper order.

If believers think that they are accountable for an event that only God can do to a person, such a notion will disturb their souls. It is possible that they may not be watchful over their souls and are caught off guard. However, such a situation is not a reason to disobey God and they must try doing what is good again and again, with increasing caution than before.

D. THE LORD INSTRUCTS US TO LET OUR LIGHT SHINE

The Lord's instruction to let the light that we have shine in a way that people may observe our good works and glorify God has practical considerations. Applying this instruction of letting our light shine consists of God-glorifying character such as humility of the heart, gentleness, forbearance in wisdom, concern for eternal things, having sorrow for people's miseries and sins, and the desire for universal holiness and happiness in God. The enlightened soul is to endeavor not to hide the light but to let it shine before people through who he/she is his/her actions and the tone of the conversation with others. To let one's light shine by doing all the possible good and suffering for righteousness.

A Christian's desire and design should be far from concealing their religion. Good works should be done to all in order for those who see may glorify God.

With this ultimate end, those who follow Christ should have no disguise, open and plain. God's followers have an

unsuppressed love and speak words that reflect the genuine picture of their hearts. They are to converse without darkness and having no pretenses, so that people may see the grace that is at work in them.

With this design, people will glorify God as His people go in His name and power. They are not to be ashamed to stand alone in God's ways. They are to reflect their light through works of piety and mercy. Renouncing superfluities¹² enlarges their ability to do good. Unnecessary expenses are to be cut off in food, furniture, and apparel, as well as the useless employment of time and other things. God's people are to live as good stewards of God with love and faith and are ready to suffer as they work for the Lord who knows the labors of His children.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. Do people around me identify me as a follower of Christ?
2. Am I ashamed to be identified as a believer when I am with people who don't share the same faith that I have?
3. Does my action speak about my faith and is consistent with what I preach?

¹² Word meaning: inauthentic

SOCIAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. How do I meaningfully relate my faith with the expression of my political views?
2. How do I understand Christianity's responsibility in changing our society and communities?
3. Is the church silent or active in influencing cultural change? Why?

2.

UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT, 9¹³

(1748)

FOCUS: COMMITMENT TO THE REAL MASTER: GOD OVER MAMMON

"No man can serve two masters; For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: For they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;

¹³ The term *mammon* refers to riches or to things that are love and sought after "without reference to God." Wealth provides a significant temptation and the heart, that is characterized by different tempers and dispositions, must be directed toward the end of the "completion by its being" through being directed to God. A person who is double minded attempts to simultaneously "hold on to God and mammon." (Collins and Vickers, *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey*, 289);

they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat or, What shall we drink or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. "

*Matt. 6:24-34.*¹⁴

¹⁴ Matthew 6:24-34 (NIV): "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." **Do Not Be Anxious:** "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.³² But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

WARM-UP

1. *In your experience or observation, what is the most evident distraction that removes a believer's focus on God?*
2. *Can a person consistently live a dual life by appearing differently before others while being another person in other groups? If so, what could be the reason? If not, why is it not possible?*
3. *What do you think is the hardest thing to surrender to God?*

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

The nations under the King of Assyria, after Israel was sent into captivity, were relocated to Samaria. These nations served their own gods while they “feared the Lord.” They performed outward service to God as evidence of their fear of God but not in accordance with their knowledge.¹⁵ Their children did the same.

¹⁵ 2 Kings 17:27-33 (NIV): “Then the king of Assyria gave this order: ‘Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires.’ So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the Lord. Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns where they settled, and set them up in the shrines the people of Samaria had made at the high places. 30 The people from Babylon made Sakkoth Benoth, those from Kuthah made Nergal, and those from Hamath made Ashima; the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire as sacrifices to Adrammelek and Anammelek, the gods of Sepharvaim. They worshiped the Lord, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. They worshiped the Lord, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.”

Most modern Christians nearly have a resemblance to the ancient Heathens. They serve God with outward performance and resemblance of having the fearing God, but at the same time are serving their idols. Their fear of God is not enough to serve only Him and no other idols. The nations that feared the Lord worshiped Him with outward forms while serving graven images, gold and silver, and other works of their hands, which include riches, praise from others, pleasures, and what this world holds as its gods. Their children and the generation who went after them also committed themselves to what their parents did.

However, the Holy Spirit reveals the real nature of things according to the truth. They feared the Lord with a loose description. The truth is that they did not genuinely fear the Lord and did follow both the law and the commandments that God gave to Jacob's children, with whom God himself shared a covenant, and charged them that they shall neither fear nor serve other gods, for they shall fear only the Lord their God and God shall deliver them from their enemies.¹⁶

God's unerring Spirit, and those whose understanding and discerning eyes were opened to see God's work, pass the same judgment on so-called Christians. Speaking about the truth and the real nature of things, the so-called Christians neither fear God nor serve Him. They are neither after God's covenant nor His law and commandments that compel them to worship and serve God alone. Instead, they

¹⁶ 2 Kings 17:34,35,39 (NIV) “To this day they persist in their former practices. They neither worship the Lord nor adhere to the decrees and regulations, the laws and commands that the Lord gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel. When the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: ‘Do not worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them... Rather, worship the Lord your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.’”

gave their service to other gods. However, no person can truly serve two masters.

Aiming to serve two masters is a vain undertaking. Consequently, the person who attempts to serve two masters will hate one of them while loving the other. Or, such a person will hold the first with high regard and at the same time despise the second. The difference between the two objects of service is understood according to how they are connected, for "the latter is a consequence of the former." A person will be faithful and commit to diligently serving the one he/she truly loves while paying little respect and carelessly serving the one he/she despises. We cannot simultaneously commit our service to God and mammon.

Mammon pertains to a heathen god who is considered to be in charge of riches. The term *riches* is a general figure of speech that represents money (gold or silver) and anything that can be purchased by it including convenience, reputation, and sensual enjoyment. We are to understand what serving God means in comparison to serving mammon.

A. THE MEANING OF BELIEVING AND SERVING GOD

FIRST: Believing in God is the true foundation of serving Him. Without belief, we cannot serve Him. By believing in a loving and pardoning God, we serve God by being involved in His work to reconcile the world with Him through Christ.

Believing in God involves trusting Him because we cannot do anything without Him who strengthens us. He strengthens us in every moment with a power that comes from Him. Without such enablement, we cannot please Him.

Believing in God implies trusting in Him as He is our happiness. He is the spiritual center in whom our souls can

rest, and the only all-sufficient good that both matches the extent of our capacities and satisfies our God-given desires.

This belief that is nearly joined with our happiness in God implies trusting in Him God as our ultimate aim which involves looking to Him in all things and using all things to enjoy Him. Our aim in whatever we do or whoever we are is to see Him being well-pleased with us.

SECOND: Believing in God means loving Him. Loving God according to the requirements of Scripture means being engaged with what God requires of us—being with who God working in us. God requires loving Him as the only God by desiring Him for His sake alone. Delighting in God is not only about seeking Him but finding happiness in Him. God is our possession in whom we can rest and gives us lasting happiness.

THIRD: The most excellent manner of serving or worshipping God is by imitating Him.¹⁷ The best service and worship rendered to God is to imitate Him. A true Christian imitates God in the spirit of his/her mind as the beginning of authentic imitation of God. Since God is spirit, those who resemble or imitate Him do so both in spirit and truth.

God is love, therefore, resembling God in the spirit of our minds allows the transformation into the same image of who God is. They resemble God's character of mercy and their soul is filled with love. They manifest mercy, kindness, benevolence, compassion, tenderheartedness, goodness, and gentleness. They are loving to all and merciful to all of God's creation.

LASTLY: Serving God involves obeying Him by using our bodies for His glory as well as with our spirits. We are

¹⁷ Wesley's wordings: "So the ancient Father: *Optimus Dei cultus, imitativumque colas*: 'It is the best worship or service of God, to imitate him you worship.'"

to keep God's outward commands and do whatever is enjoined with them by both avoiding what He has forbidden and doing all the common activities of life with purity of heart and focused aim in holy offering and love to God through Jesus Christ.

B. THE MEANING OF SERVING MAMMON

FIRST: Serving mammon involves trusting in riches or the things that can be purchased by our strength. By trusting whatever we have in hand, and looking forward to them as our source of comfort and deliverance when we experience trouble.

This kind of attitude implies putting our trust in the world to attain happiness by having our lives and our comfort constituted by the abundance of what we possess. This trust bases its satisfaction on the world by resting on what can be seen and by being outwardly abundant with that which is not found in God.

By putting our happiness in the world, the world itself or the things of this world become our ultimate end. To such an end, we design and undertake many of our actions to increase wealth, and obtain praise and pleasure in order to gain a significant measure of the temporal while excluding any consideration of eternal things.

SECONDLY: Serving mammon includes the love that is directed to the world. To love the world is to desire it for its own sake, on which we both place our joy and set our hearts. Resting the weight of our souls on this broken world shows us through experience that the world itself cannot give enough support and that we will only be pierced by it.

THIRDLY: Being "conformed to the world" is an aspect of serving mammon. To be fashioned after the world's likeness means having our desires and design ruled by the

affections of the world. These worldly affections include being: sensual in mind, chained down with earthly things, self-willed, lovers of self, thinking highly of personal attainments, and hungry for the praise of people. Such a disposition rejects corrections and returns evil for evil.

LASTLY: Serving mammon is obedience to the world. It is aligning with the world's maxims and customs that are characterized by the will of the flesh, and gratification of appetites for our ease and pleasures.

C. WE CAN NOT SERVE BOTH GOD AND MAMMON

We cannot comfortably serve God and mammon. Doing so would lead to disappointment by having no rest either in the first or the second. How uncomfortable it is to have fear of God and no love for Him, to serve Him but not with all our hearts. With that state, dealing with God and the world is in a form of a toilsome religion without joy. It is a religion that is not enough to make someone miserable but not to keep him/her happy. Such a religion will not make a person enjoy both the world and God. By being caught in between the two, the person loses both, and would not attain peace either in the world or in God.

There is a glaring consistency in the behavior of a person who serves both opposite masters. That person is a sinner in two ways, by stepping forward and backwards; building up with one hand and pulling down with the other. The person loves sin and hates it at the same time; being in constant search but always going away from God; and a "mixture of contrarities";¹⁸ a heap of jumbled contradictions in one." He/she must choose which one to serve, and must not serve either of the two unless he/she intends to serve with a full heart.

¹⁸ Word meaning: inconsistent between two things

A reasonable person sees that it is impossible to serve God and mammon because there is an unquestionable inconsistency that exhibits an irreconcilable enmity between the two—the most opposite of all things on earth. Whichever between the two is served, the other is renounced. If we put Christ as our primary source of strength and happiness and as our end, then we cannot trust in riches. If we put our trust in riches, then we have denied the faith and do not trust in the living God.¹⁹ Loving God and finding happiness in Him cannot happen while we love the world.²⁰

If we are transformed through the renewal of our mind into the image of our Creator, then we cannot be conformed according to the present world. We should have renounced all worldly lusts and affections. If we are conformed to this world and bear the worldly image, then the spirit of our mind is not renewed. Obedience to God does not allow us to obey mammon. If we obey God, then we set ourselves in open defiance to the world by trampling its “customs and maxims under foot” that we should neither abide by them nor follow their leading.

D. WE WORSHIP AND SERVE GOD BY LAYING ASIDE THE THOUGHT OF SERVING TWO MASTERS

We should worship the Lord our God and obey Him only, and put away any thought of following two masters. Seeking nothing on earth except God should be our only

¹⁹ **PERSONAL NOTE:** God allows the resources of this world to accomplish His tasks and purposes. He may employ things without making those things necessarily the object of our trust.

²⁰ **PERSONAL NOTE:** We can have affection to the world that God has created according to the love that we have toward God, but love of the world that is against the love of God cannot coexist while we love God.

aim. This aim ought to be a design that we must have in pursuing all things.²¹

Our Lord does not require us to neglect our thoughts about this life's concerns, nor to be slow in earthly endeavors. Such a view of following God contradicts the entire spirit and wisdom of the religion of God. Having our thoughts inclined to please God is absolutely necessary for performing the outward duties related to them that believers are called to do through God's providence.

God wills every person to labor for his/her bread. The leader of the household should take care of his/her family. Caring for the family is possible by carrying relevant cares in our minds. God does not condemn us when we render what is due for such cares. Additionally, giving proper attention to them is acceptable in God's sight.

We ought to give proper thought to whatever we possess in order to clearly comprehend what we are determined to accomplish. We should plan before entering our business, and it is right to have careful consideration of what steps should be taken from time to time. Beforehand, we should prepare to carry out all things in an effective manner that we have in our minds that the Lord does not condemn. This care is termed by others as the “care of the head.”

On the other hand, the object of condemnation is the “care of the heart” characterized by anxiety, uneasiness, tormenting care, and all the care that hurts either the body or soul. God forbids the kind of care that wastes today's blessings due to the fear of what tomorrow may be. Being

²¹ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Practically, we can aim at earthly things but not as the ends of themselves only as the means which advances our primary pursuit of God. The design in our earthly goals is to use everything according to God's purposes in us. Our faith and love toward God ought not to be supplanted by earthly things.

apprehensive of future needs can rob the enjoyment of what the present can abundantly offer. This kind of care is forbidden by God and is an offense to Him. It affronts the “gracious Governor and wise Disposer of all things.” The negative features of this forbidden form of care imply that the great Judge is not capable of doing what is right and does not arrange all things in their proper order. It also implies that God is wanting in either wisdom or goodness by not providing for those who trust in Him. Beware not to have anxious cares, and we should give them a better hand, which is by leaving them to God.

God is the giver of life, and He gives the food that sustains it and the covering that it needs especially if we submit to Him all of who we are and serve him wholeheartedly. God provides for the fowls who do not sow or reap. Are you not greater than those creatures by having a superior rank in terms of the “scale of being” before the eyes of God? What could we gain from being anxious when we cannot add anything to our stature through our thoughts?²²

E. SEEKING GOD'S KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

To seek first God's kingdom means that God is the foremost concern with the end of letting Him reign in our

²² CONTINUATION: God allows the lilies in the field grow though they do not toil. Yet even Solomon was not able to have an array like those lilies. God clothes the grass of the fields which are cut down and burned. How much more God will clothe us who are made to “endure fore ever and ever, to be pictures of His own eternity!” Therefore, we should not be anxious about what to eat, drink, or clothing if we have no treasure laid on earth, but serve God with all our strength and with our eyes fixed on Him. The gentiles—heathens who know not God—seek after those things. God has pointed the infallible way to have constant supply of our needs, and that is to seek Him first and His righteousness and everything will be added unto us.

hearts before we give place to any other care or thought. Believing in God through His Son Jesus Christ is to have Him manifest in our soul and dwell in it, and let every thought, especially those that exalt themselves above God, captive to be obedient to Christ. The sole dominion over us belongs to God.

To seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness is to understand that His righteousness is the fruit of God's reign in the heart. Righteousness is love—the love of God to all through Jesus, which makes “every disposition of the heart” inclined toward God and all people. It is by the disposition of the heart that holy actions are produced.

All this righteousness is of God and is given as a free gift through Jesus Christ through whom we are purchased. Righteousness is God's work, and He alone works in us through the Holy Spirit.

This observation about righteousness will give light to other portions of Scripture. In the Book of Romans, St. Paul said about the unbelieving Jews: They have no knowledge of the righteousness of God and intend to establish the righteousness of their own, they did not submit themselves to God's righteousness.²³ Ignorance about God's righteousness may mean the lack of knowledge about Christ's righteousness that is given to be imputed to everyone who follows Him. Christ's righteousness blots out our sins and reconciles us to God's favor. However, the more immediate understanding of this point is the ignorance of the “inward righteousness” which is the “holiness of heart” that is termed God's righteousness as a free gift through His Son and the work of the Holy Spirit. Because of their ignorance, they

²³ Romans 10:3 (NIV): “Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.”

tried to have their righteousness established. They labored to attain outside righteousness that is properly termed as their own as it was based on their own strength and not on God's work through His Spirit and therefore unacceptable to Him. They trusted in their work and did not submit to the righteousness of God, having themselves hardened the faith through which such righteousness can be attained. The end of the law is Christ, and through the oblation that he once offered, a better righteousness than what external rites are able to provide can be brought into the innermost portion of the soul of anyone who believes.

F. COMMITTING AND LIVING FOR GOD IN THE PRESENT

Therefore, we "take no thought for the morrow"²⁴ when it comes to laying up treasures on earth for the sake of increasing worldly substance.²⁵ We should neither trouble ourselves about procuring things that are not reasonable for life's purpose and plain day-to-day requirements, nor what we will do in a season that is far off and has no guarantee to come. All the distant views do not belong to us. We are given what is necessary to daily sustain us. We are to give ourselves to God as we live day to day according to His provisions.

Above all, present duties should not be neglected at the pretense of caring for future things. This is common among people. They continue in willful sin, thinking that if they served God in the present, they would lose the source of their sustenance. They want to prepare for eternity but are afraid about not having enough for the necessities of

²⁴ Word meaning: the future that is near; taking thought is defined by how the concern causes anxiety and ungodly disposition in the heart.

²⁵ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Do not lay-up treasures that are solely used for earthly gratification because we are exhorted to gain and save all we can in order to use them for the purpose of God's kingdom.

life. So, they offer their service to the devil for a chunk of bread.²⁶

Those who take matters into their own hands, out from the hand of God, are usually frustrated by the very things they are searching for. They reject heaven to guarantee for themselves earthly things. Those who don't cast their care on God and care only for temporal things "have little regard for eternity and will lose the things that they have chosen to secure. They have fallen short of God's kingdom and righteousness of God and yet they have gained.

The anxiety caused by "taking thought for the morrow" is also forbidden in another way. The thoughts pertaining to such concern could be taken in the wrong manner, even in relation to spiritual things. We may neglect what is at hand and be easily carried away "in a kind of waking dream, projecting distant schemes, and drawing fine scenes in our own imagination!" We may think of doing good when we are in better situations or easier circumstances, or have the thought of earnestly serving God once there are no longer hindrances.

On the other hand, perhaps a person may experience a heaviness of soul as if God's face was hidden and His redeeming love cannot be tasted. In such an instance, it is natural for believers to say that when the light of His countenance shines and lifts everything up, and the love is again felt, they will then share the Gospel of Christ and redeem the time by using all the talents that he/she received. They will praise God when everything is restored to their spiritual expectation. Such an outlook should not be assumed. What can be done at the moment ought to be

²⁶ **PERSONAL NOTE:** But what about the poor in terms of securing their daily bread? It is therefore a necessity for those who have plenty to share their resources to those who lack the basic needs of life by following God and not mammon.

accomplished. Whoever is faithful with little will be faithful with much more—whether it is of worldly material, or fearing or loving God. Those who possess the provision of life—such as a talent or the grace working in them—should use them for the present instead of hiding and neglecting their use.

Also, the temptations of tomorrow should not make us anxious. We should not be disturbed by the thought that we have no power to resist a temptation that is yet to come. If we claim that we cannot overcome the enemy in relation to a temptation that is not yet present, then it is true that we have no power in the present to stand against it. We do not have the power that we do not need. We cannot withstand an attack from the enemy that is not yet present with the measure of grace that we have right now. However, grace becomes available at the time when the enemy attacks us. Grace comes when temptation comes, and in greater trials, God provides greater strength. Also, in every temptation, God provides a way to escape. Within the will of God, the measure of our suffering is met by an equal proportion of His consolation, so that His grace is sufficient for us.

Tomorrow should be liable to think about the things that it has for itself. Only when tomorrow itself comes, we can then think of it. We must live for today to improve ourselves in the present hour. The present is what belongs to us and is our all. The past is nothing to us, in the same way as the future does not belong to us. We cannot depend on what is yet to come for we do not know what this day will bring forth. We must live for today and never lose an hour. We must utilize this moment, for it is our portion. We must enjoy now by enjoying God. Now, we must give our hearts and have a single eye fixed on Him to be holy as he is holy. We

are to lay hold of the blessed opportunity to do His will at the given time.

We must gladly undertake whatsoever God permits at the present to be upon us for His name's sake without focusing on our suffering tomorrow. God gives what is sufficient for this day. Snatching the things that belong to tomorrow to be added to this day is not the way to healing but to destroying the soul. Take up as much as God can give for today and to do and suffer for his will. Today, we should give up our bodies, souls, and spirits to God through Jesus without other desires or things to seek except that God is glorified in all we do. We are to know who God is and His Son through the work of His eternal Spirit, and pursue nothing except to love, serve, and enjoy God at this moment and for all eternity.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

- 1. Have you committed yourself to things or served different masters in a way that wounds your faith and spirit?*
- 2. Are there anxious thoughts about the future that rob you of your faith and peace today?*
- 3. Do you have an unsettled attachment to something, in the past, in the present, or other future plans that are in conflict with God's rule over your life?*

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. A lot of people may choose earthly riches and comfort (mammon) since they are more tangible over a God whom they do not see. What approach can the faith community employ in bringing healing and reconciliation for those who are inclined toward materialism?

2. What reflection can we provide when outside onlookers criticize the super-rich preachers and televangelists as if they are hoarding wealth by using the gospel, while some members remain in poverty? What are your personal views about it?

3. How can you reconcile the notion that God is a God of abundance when missionaries and preachers can barely sustain their needs?

3.

UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT, 527 (1748)

FOCUS:

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW TO ATTAIN GOD'S KINGDOM

"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you: Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from

²⁷ Wesley held that the Gospel is the means to fulfill the law and Wesley was concerned with the balance between the law and the Gospel. For Wesley, grace is pivotal to both the law and Gospel. It is through grace that makes every command be considered as a promise. In Wesley's words: every command in Holy Writ is only a covered promise." The point of Jesus is that disciples should exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes. The scribes and Pharisees are described as "singularly good" with some detail and its specifics match the threefold structure of the General Rules: "do no harm (avoid evil), do good, and attend the ordinances of God (use the means of grace)." The external deeds (external righteousness of the law) need to be both met and exceeded by believers. The religion of the heart is comprised of internal dispositions that are manifestations of righteousness. (Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, 207). This sermon is an approach regarding Wesley's orientation to holiness and grace by expressing it through the relationship of the law and the gospel. Such a relationship was already explored by Martin Luther but in a different method. Balancing grace and the gospel allowed Wesley to touch on Christ as a Lawgiver while highlighting the continuity of the Old and New covenants. (Collins and Vickers, *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey*, 525).

the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For verily I say unto you: That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:17-20²⁸

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. What do you think are the differences between the Law and the Gospel?
2. From your point of view, what does fulfilling the Law imply or mean?
3. What are the things that you consider timeless and unchanging? Kindly explain.

²⁸ Matthew 5:17-20 (NIV): "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

Jesus had been rejected and despised by many people. Since many of His claims were not common among Jews, He was perceived as a teacher of novelties²⁹ who introduced a new religion. He taught about worshipping God in both spirit and truth which was unfamiliar to those who know nothing outside the kind of worship that rests solely on external godliness.

It is probable that Jesus was seen to abolish the old religion as some have hoped in order to bring in another one that offers an easier way to go to heaven. However, Jesus refuted such an expectation.

A. JESUS CAME NOT TO DESTROY THE LAW BUT TO FULFILL IT.

Moses delivered the ritual or ceremonial law to the community of Israel. It contains the ordinances that are related to the old sacrifices and ways of services to the temple which resembled a yoke on the disciples' necks. The Apostles withstood those who asserted to keep the law of Moses. The keeping of the law means having their souls subverted and to the Holy Spirit, it is good not to lay a burden on them than what is needed. Our Lord came to utterly dissolve and abolish this ritual law.³⁰

However, the moral law that was "contained in the Old Testament, and enforced by the prophets" remained. The coming Jesus did not intend to revoke any part of it. It is a law that stands as a faithful witness in heaven that cannot be broken. The moral law is based on a foundation that is

²⁹ Word meaning: innovations or new things

³⁰ Acts 15:28 (NIV): "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things."

entirely different from whatever the ceremonial law is founded upon. The ceremonial law or ritual law was intended to temporarily restrain disobedient and stubborn people, but the moral law was written from the beginning of the world and was placed on the heart of everyone who existed through the Creator's hand. These letters that were written by God's finger were defaced by sin but cannot be totally blotted out as long as consciousness about good and evil endures. All the parts of the law must be enforced to all humankind, at all ages. The law does rely on time, place, or circumstances that are subject to change, but both on God and humankind's nature and their relationship that is unchangeable with each other.

The Lord asserted to have come not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. This claim has been understood by some as the fulfillment of the law by having perfectly and entirely obeyed it. This kind of fulfillment cannot be doubted; however, such kind of fulfillment is not what was meant by Christ. Christ has come to establish the law in its full measure by placing a clear and complete view of any obscurities contained in it. His aim was to exhibit the truth and full significance of its every portion, to present the span and dimension, the entire scope of each command within the law, and its lofty aims and profound nature, the unthinkable "purity and spirituality" of the law in "all its branches."

Christ performed what He came to do and did not introduce a new religion. Instead, He brought with Him the same substance of religion that was from the beginning. This substance is as old as creation and has proceeded from God at the moment when humankind had become a living soul. This religion has been witnessed in all generations by both the Law and the Prophets. Even so, it was never fully explained and thoroughly understood, except through its

Author Himself. He provided His authentic explanation regarding the essential branches of religion and declared it to be never changed but to have it enforced until the end of the world.

B. NOT ONE PORTION OF THE LAW WILL PASS AWAY UNTIL EVERYTHING IS ACCOMPLISHED

"For verily I say unto you" is a phrase that acts as a solemn introduction that relays both the significance and guarantee of what was being said, that until "heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

"One jot" is a proverbial expression that signifies that neither a single command in the moral law nor any part would be canceled.

"Shall in no wise pass from the law" is a statement that shows an imperative³¹ order of what shall be, and not merely a declaration of what the future will be. The phrase depicts the authority that presents the power and sovereign will of God whose pronouncement is the law that governs both earth and heaven that stands for eternity.

"One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass till heaven and earth pass." Immediately, after the statement: "till all be fulfilled," pertaining to all things or the qualification when all things meet their consummation. There is no room to avoid the fulfillment of the law since no portion of the law will pass away until the entirety of the law attains its fulfillment. The truth is, Christ has fulfilled the law, and in effect, it must pass to establish the Gospel. However, it is not simply about the fulfillment of the law since the word *all* does not pertain to "all the law" but all the things in the

³¹ Word meaning: crucial, vital

created order (universe). The word "fulfilled" refers to all the things on earth and heaven and not the law.

From the points above, we can see that there is no contradiction between the law and the Gospel. Both perfectly go together. The same words, when taken in different respects, belong to both the Gospel and the law. They are referred to as commandments when speaking about the parts of the law. They are considered promises when they present themselves as portions of the Gospel. When the statement to love our God with all our heart is seen as a command, it is in the law; but when taken as a promise, it is essentially a portion of the Gospel. The Gospel is nothing else but the commandments of the law conveyed through promises.

The closest connection between the law and the Gospel is that the law points to the Gospel while the Gospel leads us to fulfill the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God and our neighbor and to be meek, humble, and holy though it is impossible for us to achieve them. However, through God's promise, we are given love; and to make us humble, meek, and holy, we can lay hold of the Gospel. Through faith, the glad tidings of the Gospel are done to us, and also, the righteous intent of the law is accomplished in us through faith in Christ.

Also, the command in the Scriptures is only a concealed promise. God gives whatever He commands: He makes a covenant with His people to put His laws in their minds and write them in their hearts. He will work in us the very things that He commanded us to do, by working in us that we may pray without ceasing, rejoice evermore, and be holy.

Christ gave us an infallible rule to judge pretensions that have been committed throughout the history of the Church that attempted to tamper or change or overrule the

commands of God. Christianity, by including God's entire moral law, both through the manner of injunction³² or given by a promise is aimed to be the final among His dispensations.

After this dispensation, nothing else would come. It will endure until all things reach their consummation. In effect, any other revelations that come after the fulfillment are from the enemy and do not originate from God. All pretensions will collapse to the ground when cast against the perfect dispensation. God's word will never pass away even when both the earth and heaven cease to exist.

C. THOSE WHO BREAK THE LEAST OF THE COMMANDS WILL BE CALLED LEAST IN THE KINGDOM AND THOSE WHO TEACH THEM WILL BE CALLED GREAT IN THE KINGDOM

What makes the proclamation of the law an object of reproach, and who are those who have reproach against those who preach it? Those who despise those who preach the law despise the One who sent them. Has anyone preached the law like Christ, or more expressly and rigorously than His words, even when His aim was to bring salvation to the world instead of condemning it—since His purpose was to “bring life and immortality to light through the gospel?” Who can amend the words of Christ or instruct Him to deliver a message that He Himself received from God?

The explanation of the statement: “Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments:”

- The commandments, as Christ used them, are equivalent to the “law, or law and the Prophets.” To the law, the prophets added nothing. Instead, they declared, explained, and enforced it through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

³² Word meaning: order, restriction or command

- Breaking “one” of the commandments, even with just one, indicates the importance of keeping the whole law. A person who commits an “offense in one point, is guilty of all” and God’s wrath is on him/her as if he/she had broken every command. There is no allowance for a hint of lust, reservation for a single idol, and excuse from avoiding all transgressions but failing not to refrain from sin. God demands absolute obedience.

- The term “one of these least” or “the least of these commandments” implies that in obeying God’s commandments, we cannot deceive Him even when we miserably deceive our souls. A sinner may try to excuse his/her sin by trivializing it, with the assumption of being spared from it. From that standpoint, the one who commits a sin sees that God is not offended by a little sin. However, every sin is a violation of the holy and perfect law.

“And shall teach men so.” It can be said that those who break any command teach the same to others. A person who commits sin openly is a teacher of that sin to others.³³ A habitual lawbreaker rarely casts restraint on oneself but teaches others to also break the law. That person provides an excuse for the sins that he/she won’t leave, and thus directly instructs others of every sin that he/she commits.

“He shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”

The phrase means that the person being pertained to has no part in heaven. Such a person will be considered the “least in the kingdom of heaven.” He/she has no inheritance nor share of the peace, joy, and righteousness that are found in the Holy Spirit, and also of the glory that will be revealed.

³³ Wesley: “...it is apparent, every open drunkard is a teacher of drunkenness; every sabbath-breaker is constantly teaching his neighbour to profane the day of the Lord.”

If those who break the law and teach others to sin have no part in the kingdom, how about those who were sent by God as Teachers when they break the commandments and openly impart this disobedience to others by having both their doctrine and life corrupted?

There are several kinds of ministers who can be characterized as being corrupt in doctrine and life.

- The first is living in habitual and willful sin. If an ordinary person teaches others to sin by example, how much worse would it be for a sinful Minister, even if such a minister does not justify his/her transgression? If a minister murders, then he is the murder-general of the congregation that he/she leads.
- Next are the good-natured individuals who are harmless and live an easy way of life. They do not trouble themselves with "outward sin, nor with inward holiness." They have no regard for religion or irreligion and do not pretend to be any more rigorous in disciplines as compared to their neighbors. A minister of this kind breaks all the branches of the law that relate to the "power of godliness." They teach others through their way of life and preaching by pleasing those who imagine themselves as Christians but are not.
- Among these, the greatest opponents of the gospel of Christ, are those who openly and explicitly pass judgment against the law and speak evil about it. They teach others to break³⁴ not merely the least or the greatest but all the commandments with a single stroke. They teach that the Lord abolished the law and that the only duty is believing since all the commands are no longer fit for our times. This disposition is carrying

the matter in one's hand and withstands God face to face.

Those who have this delusion have a strong belief that they are honoring Christ by overthrowing His law. They seemingly magnify the office of Christ, but are actually subverting His doctrine! They honor the master in the same way that Judas did. This kind of giving honor is a form of betrayal that expresses with a kiss, speaks of the blood of Christ, and yet removes His crown. They appear to shed light through the portions of God's law but with the pretension of advancing the Gospel of Christ.

It is therefore impossible to regard the faith of even those of God's elect in very high esteem. We must declare that it is by grace, through faith, that we are saved. Also, we must speak loudly to every penitent sinner for them to believe in Jesus Christ so that they may be saved. However, we ought to be careful to regard only the kind of faith that works by love. If such faith is not in us, then, we have no deliverance from both the power and guilt of sin. The meaning of believing in Christ to gain salvation does not mean stepping "from sin to heaven" without holiness in between, with faith as the replacement for holiness. Instead, believing to attain salvation means to be holy. Placing our belief in Christ allows us to obtain peace and power to trample sin under our feet, love the Lord with our heart, and serve Him with all our strength.³⁵ We are to have power by

³⁵ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Wesley affirms his idea of salvation that it not merely relocating oneself from earthly existence to a heavenly place. Instead transfiguration through sanctification as essential character of what it means to be saved. Wesley's words: "And when we say, 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved;' we do not mean, 'Believe, and thou shalt step from sin to heaven, without any holiness coming between; faith supplying the place of holiness;' but, believe, and thou shalt be holy; believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt have peace and power together."

³⁴ Wesley: "to dissolve, to loose, to untie the obligation of"

being patient in continuing in doing well, seeking both glory and honor and immortality. We are to teach the commandments from the least to the greatest by our way of life and be called great in God's kingdom.

D. WHATEVER IS CONTRARY TO THE TEACHING OF THE LAW, DESPITE BEING TAUGHT OF AS THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, LEADS TO DESTRUCTION

Any contrary way to teach God's Kingdom will not bring lasting peace even when it is to be referred to as faith. God himself says that unless His hearers exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they won't enter God's kingdom.

In the New Testament, the Scribes were the most zealous group that steadily opposes our Lord. They are conversant with God's law by being skilled in expounding both the law and the Prophets, especially in the synagogues. They can be referred to as the Divines for divinity has been their profession, the ranks as experts in literature who had the greatest account for learning in the nation of the Jews.

The Pharisees belong to an ancient sect that is labeled based on a Hebrew word that means separate or divide. They do not have any formal division or separation from their national church but are distinguished by their strict lifestyle and exactness in conversing. They are passionate about the smallest portion of the law and are esteemed as the holiest among people as well as they are honored.

Many Scribes belong to the Pharisees as their sect. St. Paul was educated as a Scribe at the university of Tarsus, then in Jerusalem under Gamaliel who was known in their nation as one of the greatest experts among the Doctors of the Law or Scribes.

Apostle Paul (in Acts 23:6) declared that he was a Pharisee and before Agrippa, claimed to have lived as a Pharisee in the strictest form. The Savior frequently coupled both the Scribes and Pharisees together as the most remarkable instructors of religion, with the former being regarded as the wisest and the latter being the holiest kind of people.

The Lord gave an account regarding the kind of righteousness that Scribes and Pharisees have. They describe their own righteousness. They went to the temple to pray but were so focused on their own virtues that they forgot the reason why they came to the temple—they did not pray but instead told God how good and wise they were. Their form of righteousness consisted of three things: they did not consider themselves to live for others but not commit the sins that others commit;³⁶ they fasted twice a week; and they gave tithes of all their possessions.

Their declaration that they were not like others was not a small thing to say. It was to imply that they lived by the way of reason and were not carried away by customs. They followed God and not people's words.

They fasted twice a week. The strict Pharisees observed weekly fasts every Monday and Thursday. On the first day, they remembered Moses as he had received the two tablets on which God had written with His finger. On the second day, they dedicated in memory of Moses casting the two tablets from his hand when he witnessed how the people danced as they encircled the golden calf. They did not have intake for sustenance on those days until three in the afternoon. At four in the afternoon, they offered sacrifices in the temple. Until reaching that hour, it was their custom to use their time to join in public prayers, private addresses to

³⁶ Wesley used the phrase: "I am not as other men are."

God, and partly to search the Scriptures by reading the Law and the Prophets.

They gave a tithe of all that they possess. Pharisees did this with the utmost exactness. They did not hold back what they thought properly belonged to God, yearly and all their increase.

The stricter Pharisees were not satisfied with giving only the tenth portion that they have to God. They also continually gave a tenth of their substance to the poor. They rendered to God what fully belongs to God and adjusted them in order not to withhold anything according to their accounting. In effect, they yearly gave away the total portion of a fifth that belonged to them.

These depictions portray the righteousness of the Pharisees and Scribes, which were far beyond the conception of what many have been accustomed to entertain. However, it was all false since they were in the company of hypocrites. Some of them had no true religion. They do not fear God and have no delight to please him. Without regard for the honor that comes from God, they only attained praise from people. These are those whom the Lord severely condemned, and on many occasions had sharply reproved.

However, we should not attribute hypocrisy to all Pharisees because many of them were. Being a hypocrite is not an essential characteristic of a Pharisee, for it is not their distinguishing mark. Rather, their primary character, based on the account given by our Lord, is that they put their trust in themselves. They ascribe righteousness to themselves and undervalue others. A person who commends himself/herself before God thinks of himself/herself as righteous. Such a person thinks sincerely about himself/herself without

hypocrisy and speaks to God as if they are so much better than others.

The best example of such a form of righteousness was that of the Apostle Paul. It was not only being a Christian that Apostle Paul was able to say "So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man,"³⁷ but also when he was a Pharisee: "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."³⁸ He was sincere as a Pharisee in the same way as when he was a Christian. He was not a hypocrite when he persecuted the church, as much as he preached the faith that he once persecuted. In addition to the righteousness that Pharisees and the Scribes have is the sincerity in believing that they are indeed righteous and that they are doing service to God in all things.

However, the Lord asserts that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Before understanding how to exceed their righteousness, we must examine the following:

FIRST: The Pharisees are not like others. Externally, they appear singularly good. Do we dare to be exceptional in standing on what is good, or do we swim against the stream? Do we forego religion and reason to avoid looking in a particular way? Are we not usually more concerned about being unfashionable, than being outside the way of salvation? Do we have the courage to counter the way of the world in order to obey God rather than people? If not, then, we are behind the Pharisee who leaves us at the first instance we take our step.

To get closer to Pharisee's characterization of doing no harm, having no outward sin without anything condemning their hearts, do we have the guarantee that such

³⁷ Acts 24:16 (NIV)

³⁸ Acts 23:1 (NIV)

characterizations could also apply to us? Do we walk by the measure of justice, mercy, and doing unto others what we want them to do unto us? Are we fair in our trades and dealings? If not, then we are not yet close to the righteousness of the Pharisees.

SECOND: All the means of grace are used by the Pharisees. Fasting twice a week, attending all the sacrifices, and being constant with both prayers (public and private) and meditating on the Scriptures (hearing and reading). Many are those who regard themselves as Christians but are utterly delinquent of the sacraments. Do we observe constant mediation of the Scripture and diligent prayer and join the congregation in prayer as much as we can whenever there are opportunities? If not, then a Pharisee can rise to judge and condemn us with a righteousness that is far above us.

THIRD: Pharisees give their tithes and alms according to what they possess in an abundant manner. They abound in doing good work. Can our righteousness equally measure up with the righteousness of the Pharisees and Scribes by using every means of grace, attending to all God's ordinances, refraining from evil, and committing acts of goodness?

The Gospel says that we can't enter the Kingdom of heaven unless our righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. How then can Christians exceed their righteousness? The righteousness of believers can exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees:

- a) In terms of its extent. A number of Pharisees were rigorously strict in countless things, however, the Elders' traditions emboldened them and they ventured into propagating those traditions and dispensed them with equal importance. With that, they were keen on keeping the Fourth Commandment about the observance of the

Sabbath but failed to be consistent in upholding the Third Commandment³⁹ by treating false and light swearing as having little account. In effect, the righteousness of the Pharisees was partial; while the genuine Christian has universal righteousness for a believer does not only observe a portion of the law and disregard the rest but keeps and loves all of God's commandments.

- b) Indeed, some Scribes and Pharisees may endeavor to uphold all the commandments blamelessly. Still, the righteousness of the Christian must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees by fulfilling both the spirit and the letter of the law. Christians can fulfill the spirit and letter of the law through inward obedience with consistent manifestation on their outward. The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees is external but Christian righteousness is in the inner being. The Pharisee works to show a good life before God but the Christian aims for a heart that is being made holy. For believers, godliness based on external appearances is not enough, unless the Spirit and power of God that leads to salvation are experienced in the innermost portion of the soul. Doing no harm and attending to all the ordinances of God are all external which characterize the righteousness of the Pharisees. On the contrary, the righteousness of the Christian is internal. This internal righteousness consists of the spirit that trusts and seeks the riches of God,⁴⁰ "mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, the love of our neighbour, and purity of heart." Also, doing good in the form of peacemaking and suffering for

³⁹ pertaining to using God's name in vain.

⁴⁰ Wesley's words: "poverty of spirit;" **PERSONAL NOTE:** the updated language in the paraphrase is based on short readings that are available online.

righteousness implies the inward disposition from which they spring.⁴¹

Those who therefore bear the upright and dignified label of a Christian must see to it that:

FIRST: They don't fall short of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. They are not to stand like the common people who follow the multitude. They must have the boldness to stand even if they are alone against the ungodly ways of the world and be exemplarily focused on the good. Customs and fashions should not be their guide but reason and religion. What others do has no value in one's relationship with God for every person is to give an account to God.⁴² If a person cannot save the soul of another person, at least he/she can save his/her own soul.

SECOND: They are not going to fall short with regard to the ordinances of God. They are to faithfully deal with their souls by fasting as much as they can if their strength permits them. They should neither omit both public and private opportunities to pour their souls through prayer nor neglect attending to the sacraments. Searching the Scriptures should be diligently observed and every opportunity to hear it should be embraced.

THIRD: They are not to fall short of doing good. They must attend to those in need and show mercy to the utmost of their power. They are to make friends even with the

⁴¹ **PERSONAL NOTE:** The manifestations of inward righteousness reflect the inner disposition. On the other hand, the external righteousness that does not spring from inward righteousness is subject to a sincere but moralistic motivation.

⁴² Wesley's words: "Be not thou 'as other men are!' Dare to stand alone, to be 'against example, singularly good.' If thou 'follow a multitude at all, it must be 'to do evil.' Let not custom or fashion be thy guide, but reason and religion. The practice of others is nothing to thee: 'Every man must give an account of himself to God.'"

"mammon of unrighteousness" so that they may have everlasting habitations after the "earthly tabernacle is dissolved."

Christians are to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, not content only with keeping the whole law but abhor all untruthful ways.⁴³ All the commandments of Christ should be upheld with all their might through Christ Himself whom we can do all things.

Above all, believers are to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees in their purity and spirituality of their righteousness. They are to go higher and deeper than the exact form of religion and its perfect outside righteousness. Their religion should be the religion of the heart. They are to be serious, so much so that the whole stream of their thoughts, words, and works come from "the deepest conviction" that all those who stand on the edge, when they drop in, would enter either into eternal glory, or eternal burnings.

The hearts of those who believe should let mildness, gentleness, patience, and long-suffering to all persons fill their hearts while they thirst for God. They are lovers of both God and all of humankind.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. Is my faith focused on external righteousness while neglecting internal righteousness?

⁴³ Wesley's words: "But rest not here. Let thy 'righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.' Be not thou content to 'keep the whole law, and offend in one point.' Hold thou fast all His commandments, and all 'false ways do thou utterly abhor.'"

2. *Is the condition of my inner righteousness growing toward the leading of the Spirit?*
3. *Is the form of righteousness that I have life-giving or life-draining to the people around me?*

SOCIAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. *How can we shift the perspective of people from being focused on external righteousness to internal righteousness?*
2. *If the world rejects the message of the church, is it because of their aversion to the church's external forms or due to their avoidance of having their lives transformed?*
3. *How can the world say that the community of believers is righteous due to a transformed inward life or simply and not simply living out external compliance to religious requirements?*



ON CHARITY⁴⁴ (1784)

FOCUS: NEIGHBORLY LOVE AS THE MAIN EXPRESSION OF A SOCIALLY ORIENTED FAITH

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."
1 Corinthians 13:1-3⁴⁵

⁴⁴ This sermon was written in 1784 which was also the year when this sermon was preached a dozen times. The text 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 was used by Wesley on eight occasions in 1785 and on three more in 1787. A written record of the oral sermon that we made in 1787 using the same text is available and closely resembles the written version. The record of the oral sermon may have been written by a non-Methodist but can be admired by Wesley. See Albert Outler, *The Works of John Wesley Bicentennial Edition*, Vol. 3: Sermons (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 290.

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NIV): "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. *What do you consider to be the most important expression of your faith?*
2. *What would be your main expectations from a person who claims to be a Christian?*
3. *What are the usual motivations that appear in an organization or community when there is an absence of love?*

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

Scripture is revealed through God's inspiration; therefore, we know that it is "true and right concerning all things." However, there are portions of the Scripture that immediately express the approval of those portions themselves to every person's conscience. The passage at hand can be classified to belong to that characteristic, and there could be a few who may object while the people, in general, will accommodate its appeal.

It is common to find people who would deny the authority of the Scripture and yet, they affirm that their religion can be described according to what 1 Corinthians 13 portrays. Paul of Tarsus posed his evaluation of this chapter as containing the entirety of the "true religion." This passage reflects what is just, pure, and lovely: things that are of virtue and praise.

To make this point clear, we are to consider:

- a) The meaning of charity that is referred to here;
- b) The things that are usually put in place of charity and;

- c) The notion that nothing can replace charity, neither in any nor in all replacements put together.

A. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF CHARITY

Saint Paul uses the word that exactly means love in English, as rendered in old Bible translations. However, it was probably altered when the Latin word charity was used in place of the word love. This alteration had ill effects and can be observed among the illiterate and also among those who are educated. Thousands are misled to think that the meaning of charity in this chapter is about outward actions particularly pertaining to little more than giving to the needy. The proper term love will remove any representation if it is retained.

Many learned and pious persons apprehend that the love being spoken here is the love of God. However, this love being referred to by Apostle Paul is the love toward our neighbor. This understanding of what the Apostle meant with the word love can be evident to those who carefully consider the tenor of the Apostle's discourse. This love of neighbor can only spring from God's love. This love of God flows only through faith which is God's operation. Those who experience this operation by God have direct evidence of God being in Christ and the world being reconciled to Himself. When applied to one's heart, a person can boldly and humbly say that: "The life which I now live, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." It is only then that the love of God is shed abroad in one's heart. This love working in the heart constrains a person to love every person with the love that is being referred to in the text. It is not a form of love concerning "esteem or complacency" for these characteristics have no place with regard to enemies of God, but a love of benevolence, which

is goodwill toward all the souls that have been created by God.

It can be asked: If true love only springs from God's love and the love toward neighbor is absent, considering that God's love only flows by having faith in His Son, does it follow that the entire heathen world is not included from the possibility of being saved? If they are "cut off from faith," how can they have faith without someone speaking to them about it since faith comes by hearing?

St. Paul has spoken of something that can be applied to these questions. For him, the law speaks to those who are under the law. Accordingly, to those whom the Gospel is preached, those who believe shall not be damned. God is the judge of all and will deal with all of them. He is not only the God of Christians but also of Heathens. He is rich in mercy to those who would call upon Him, based on the light that they have. Every nation that fears God and does what is righteous is accepted by Him. Such is the nature of love that is referred to in this.

The properties of love have fruits that are inseparable from it. The principal properties are:

FIRST: "Love is not puffed up." This property is a measure of love as it is also a measure of humility. There is nothing like love that deeply humbles the soul. Love removes the high self-regard that produces arrogance. It lowers our personal estimation both before God and people. It makes "us willing to be the least of all, and the servants of all... infinitely less in the presence of God."

SECONDLY: "Love is not provoked." The person who is filled with love is gentle to all. They instruct those who oppose them and even God's truth and holiness with meekness. Both doubt and God can bring people to God's truth. When provoked, the person does not return evil for

evil and still blesses those who curse him/her. Such a person is not overcome by evil but overcomes evil with good.

THIRD: "Love is longsuffering." It endures affronts, reproaches, and injuries, and also all the things that God permits to inflict through human or evil agents. Love arms the soul with patience that receives no harm without any resistance to any strike. It is not a harsh patience that is stoic⁴⁶ in nature. A person who loves others remembers the One who suffered for us and gave the example to follow His steps. He/she feeds his/her enemies when they are hungry and gives them drink when they are thirsty. This love cannot be quenched nor drowned by floods of ingratitude.

B. THINGS THAT ARE COMMONLY SUPPOSED TO SUPPLY THE PLACE OF LOVE

FIRST: Eloquence, which is a faculty of speaking well, particularly about religious things. Generally, people are inclined to think well of those who speak well. If a person speaks fluently and properly about God, it is assumed that God's favor is upon such a person. Also, it is natural for such persons to think well of themselves with a favorable opinion.

SECOND: However, those who give proper reflection are not satisfied with the flood of words. For them, thinking is preferred before talking. A person who knows much is preferred over one who talks much. Knowledge is God's gift; a person who has great knowledge and deep wisdom of the Scripture is seen to be both in favor of God and enjoys a high degree of such favor.

THIRD: On the other hand, others would not stress on any other knowledge but the knowledge that is by faith regarding God. Faith, in the sight of God, is a highly

valuable form of knowledge. We are saved by faith alone, which is the one thing necessary for believers to be saved.

FOURTH: But some would say, as with Apostle James, that others could show their faith without works (if that is possible) but they will show their faith by their works.⁴⁷ Many are thinking that good works, including works of piety and mercy, are more consequential than faith itself. It cannot be denied that even the Lord Himself attests that we can know people by their fruits. Through our works, we can know those who believe and those who don't. However, there is better proof than good works.

FIFTH: The more guaranteed proof of sincerity in our faith than doing good works is our willingness to suffer for righteousness. This proof is emphasized when a person is willing to suffer pain, reproach, and the loss of relationships and possessions, and give up one's life and body to be burned, then give up his/her faith and good conscience that neglect his/her duty.

It is proper to observe:

FIRST: In supplying an alternative for the absence of love, there is a beautiful progression in enumerating the things that are supposed to be accounted for in those who are called Christians. Each step in the progression rises above the other ones. *Talking-well* or *eloquence* advances step by step to reach the highest point. A step that goes higher than eloquence is *knowledge*. Above having knowledge is *faith*. A step above faith is *good works*, and above good works is *suffering for righteousness*. There is nothing higher than these except *Christian love* which is the love toward neighbor that flows from God's love.

⁴⁷ James 2:18 (NIV): "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds."

⁴⁶ Word meaning: indifferent, tolerant, passive

SECONDLY: Whatever may be considered religion (either as a part or not part at all such as superstition or folly or even wickedness), with little difficulty can be reduced into those headings. Whatever can be considered a religion but is actually not can be contained under these particulars.

LOVE AND NOTHING ELSE WILL AVAIL ANYTHING BEFORE GOD

To demonstrate that no qualification either individually or taken together (pertaining to the five headings stated above) can replace love, we may consider them one by one:

FIRST: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels." The highest eloquence without any humility, meekness, and patience can sink into hell without going a step nearer to heaven. Any form of persuasion without patient love, lowliness, and meekness would not qualify for manifesting godly fruits but only secure a hotter spot in everlasting flames.

SECONDLY: "Though I have the gifts of prophecy"—implies seeing future events that no creature can see. "Though I understand all"—including the mysteries of nature. To "have all knowledge"—knowledge pertaining to human or divine things that any mortal has ever attained: I am nothing in the sight of God if there is no humility.

THIRD: "And though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains." This faith is not a system of opinion or vain imagination but reflects the real work of God. But if this faith does not work by love, it will not produce universal holiness. If we indulge in ungodly tempers despite proclaiming the salvation that comes from being justified by faith and not the law, we will not be able to maintain what we preach without giving up the Scripture and betraying our souls.

FOURTH: "Although I give all my goods to the poor." Even when we subdivide our possessions into small portions to give them to those who are the most appropriate recipients of those objects but give way to pride, we have done no good to our souls. It is true that many people want to attain their reward in this world, either before or after death. They have pompous⁴⁸ funerals, marble monuments, and elegant epitaphs that extol their "virtues to the skies." They have orators that yearly transmit their remembrance to future generations. However, these are poor rewards and can give no comfort to spiritual misery.

FIFTH: "Although I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Rather than deny one's faith or either commit a sin or neglect a duty, one may choose to surrender to a cruel death. However, if one is under the power of pride, anger, or fretfulness,⁴⁹ sacrificing our bodies does not profit us anything.⁵⁰

The sum of all these observations is this: Whatever we say, know, believe, do, and suffer, if there is no faith that

⁴⁸ Word meaning: exaggerated, self-important

⁴⁹ Word meaning: anxiety, worry, irritation

⁵⁰ Wesley provides an illustration: "We have a remarkable account in the tracts of Dr. Geddes -- a Civilian, who was Envoy from Queen Anne to the Court of Portugal, in the latter end of her reign. He was present at one of those Autos de Fes, 'Acts of Faith,' wherein the Roman Inquisitors burned heretics alive. One of the persons who was then brought out for execution, having been confined in the dungeons of the Inquisition, had not seen the sun for many years. It proved a bright sunny day. Looking up, he cried out in surprise, 'O how can anyone who sees that glorious luminary, worship any but the God that made it!' A friar standing by, ordered them to run an iron gag through his lips, that he might speak no more. Now, what did that poor man feel within when this order was executed? If he said in his heart, though he could not utter it with his lips, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' undoubtedly the angels of God were ready to carry his soul into Abraham's bosom. But if, instead of this, he cherished the resentment in his heart which he could not express with his tongue, although his body was consumed by the flames, I will not say his soul went to paradise."

works in love and produces love for God and all people, we are outside the way that leads to life. Instead, we are walking into destruction.

To express this point in another way, whatever we possess or do such as eloquence, natural or supernatural knowledge, the faith that we received from God, performing works of either mercy or piety, and suffering for the sake of conscience to the point of shedding blood, even when put together and we obtained for ourselves people's praises, have no avail before God unless we are lowly in our hearts and say that in all things God's will and not our will be done.

The very essence of true religion does not have a deficit of *holy tempers*. Without these, any religion has lesser insignificance compared to vanity.

Therefore, let every person that has a soul which needs salvation secure this particular point. With all one's eloquence, knowledge, faith, works, and suffering hold on to the *one thing needful*. The one who has the power of faith endures to the end with humble, patient, and gentle love.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. How is God shaping the character of my heart right now in order to be more Christlike?
2. I am having a hard time perceiving God's love and consider God's commands only as a means to dogmatically restrict people?
3. Am I growing more aware of people's need for compassion rather than rigid and external religiosity?

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. Have you encountered people who are critical of God's law? What do you think are their arguments against it?
2. Is it helpful to lead people to God by declaring what God's law stands for, or does it push people away from Him?
3. Does God provide a moral law that is true at all times? Why?

**PART 2:
THE PERSON IN
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT**

5.

ON VISITING THE SICK⁵¹
(1786)

3. Why do you think some people have their paradigms in life changed as they go through sickness?

FOCUS: THE CONCRETE ACT OF CARING AND IRREPLACEABLE MODE OF ENGAGING

"I was sick, and ye visited me."
Matthew 25:36⁵²

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. What do you think enhances people's sympathy with the poor?
2. What do you think are possible reasons why some people lack compassion?

⁵¹ For Wesley, both the works of mercy and works of piety are genuine means of grace. He was likely developing the point that charity and beneficence are somehow necessary for salvation based on Matthew Henry's work. (Collins and Vickers, The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey, 346). This sermon is a comment that love bears its natural fruit in the form of works of mercy (Outler, The Works of John Wesley Bicentennial ed. Vol. 3: Sermons, 384).

⁵² Matthew 25:36 (NIV): "I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

Generally, the means of grace and the ordinances of God are equated with each other. Those terms are usually referred to as works of piety, namely the "hearing and reading the Scripture, receiving the Lord's Supper, public and private prayer, and fasting." These are the channels through which God's grace is conveyed to the souls of people. We may ask, are means of grace only limited to these channels and no other means exist to convey God's grace to those who fear and love Him? Indeed, the works of mercy, as much as the works of piety, are genuine means of grace, especially to those who perform them. Those who neglect such means do not obtain the grace that they could have received. They lose the grace that they once received if they continue to neglect those means. Those who neglected the ordinance were once strong but are now weak in faith and have become feeble-minded. The account of St. Paul of all true believers should be seriously considered: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).⁵³

The attainment of everlasting salvation requires doing what is of us to continue in that faith by which we are already saved by grace. The word of the Judge Himself:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the

⁵³ NIV

world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Matt. 25: 34-26).⁵⁴

The important truth about God's instruction in relation to His judgment can be misunderstood or at least have little influence on those who fear God. Suppose that the text

⁵⁴ NIV

concerning God's directives is true and that the Judge of the earth speaks correctly, then only those who provided food to those who hunger, gave those who thirst something to drink, granted the naked clothing, applied relief to the stranger, visited the imprisoned, according to the opportunity and power that they have will be the ones who will receive the *everlasting kingdom*. In contrast, those who do nothing will depart and be cast into everlasting fire.

In the meantime, this discourse is focused on one of the aspects that need to be attended to, which is visiting the sick. Visiting the sick is a plain duty that all of those who are in proper health, to a higher or lower degree, should practice. However, this duty is almost universally not given proper attention, even by individuals who declare to love God. Considering such concern, the following would be inquired:

- a) What is meant by visiting the sick?
- b) How is visiting the sick performed?
- c) Who are those who need to visit the sick?

A. THE MEANING OF VISITING THE SICK

The *sick* refers not only to those who are physically unwell in the strictest sense but all who are undergoing affliction, regardless of whether their sickness is in the body or mind, are bad or good persons, or if they have the healthy fear of God or not. People may fail to attend to the sick due to their situation. Hence, where there is a real case of affliction and sufficient reason to help, they help by sending what is conveniently possible for them to share. However, this kind of help is not properly the same as visiting the sick. The word *visit*, as literally accepted, means "to look upon," which cannot be done without one's needed presence. Sending assistance is different from the act of visiting the

sick. "The former, then, ought to be done, but the latter not left undone."

A person may assert that they send physicians who can do more than him/her to look after the sick. The physicians can do more than the person who sent them in terms of physical health, but not in relation to their souls, which is infinitely more important. Even when a physician looks after the bodily needs, the presence of that physician would not fulfill the person's duty to look after the sick. Also, failing to visit the sick would be missing out on the good that seeing those in need with one's eyes could have brought to the person who needed to visit. By not attending to that duty, we could lose a means of grace which is the excellent means to increase our gratitude to God who saves us "from pain and sickness," maintains our health and strength, and develops our sympathy for the afflicted, benevolence, and social affections.

In general, a remarkable reason why the rich treat the poor with "little sympathy" is because they visit them only in rare instances. Based on common observation, a portion of the world has no idea what the other part suffers from. Many of those who "do not know, do not care to know." They choose to go outside of the way of knowing and assert their intentional ignorance to excuse the hardness of their hearts. A privileged and economically advantaged individual may claim to be compassionate, but in truth, doesn't know anyone who is in need. How can that be possible? That person keeps himself/herself out of the way and goes across the other side whenever he/she encounters someone in need.

This characterization is contrary to the spirit and behavior of some of those who occupy the highest rank of the nation as compared to other national figures.⁵⁵

If we cannot permit ourselves to imitate the service of the honorable ones, escaping to abase⁵⁶ ourselves to perform the lowest task, we can be humble by supplying what they want. We can excellently express our help by supplying for their spiritual needs in the form of instructing them about the primary principles of faith,⁵⁷ carefully striving to relay the dangerous state they are in under God's wrath, and pointing to them the Savior who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Aside from this instruction, we have plenty of chances to comfort those who are in bodily pain and have mental distress. We have the opportunity to fortify the feeble-minded, encourage those who are weary and faint, build up those who believe, and support them to continue toward perfection. These can only be done through our personal involvement and not by a substitute representative. If the same kind of relief could be given through another person as our substitute, we would not

⁵⁵ Wesley illustrates: "How contrary to this is both the spirit and behaviour of even people of the highest rank in a neighbouring nation! In Paris, ladies of the first quality, yea, Princesses of the blood, of the Royal Family, constantly visit the sick, particularly the patients in the Grand Hospital. And they not only take care to relieve their wants, (if they need anything more than is provided for them,) but attend on their sick beds, dress their sores, and perform the meanest offices for them. Here is a pattern for the English, poor or rich, mean or honourable! For many years we have abundantly copied after the follies of the French; let us for once copy after their wisdom and virtue, worthy the imitation of the whole Christian world. Let not the gentlewomen, or even the countesses in England, be ashamed to imitate those Princesses of the blood! Here is a fashion that does honour to human nature. It began in France; but God forbid it should end there!"

⁵⁶ Word meaning: lower, demean

⁵⁷ Wesley's words: "first principles of religion"

reap the same advantage as compared to doing it by ourselves. Without personally doing our duty, we would not increase in lowliness, patience, tenderness of spirit, and compassion to those who are undergoing affliction, and things that we could gain as compared to assisting others personally. Also, we would not obtain recompense⁵⁸ in the resurrection when every person would receive the reward of their labor.

B. THE MANNER IN HOW VISITING THE SICK IS PERFORMED

How can this labor of love be performed in the most effective manner, to give the most glory to God and benefit those in need? Before engaging with our duty, we must be certain that we are NOT sufficient for the task: that we do not possess grace by ourselves, and that our understanding is insufficient to perform our duty in the most excellent way. With that, we can be convinced of the necessity to seek help by earnestly praying whenever we begin our endeavor. We must cry for humility or pride that will come into our hearts and ascribe to ourselves anything that would lead to the destruction of our souls while we save others. Let our hearts be continually filled with spiritual tempers so that we may refrain from anger or discouragement when we are treated either unfavorably or in our favor. We should not be moved by the lack of improvement despite all our labor and that some would turn their backs and become worse than before. Our record is only with God and so is our reward.

We do not need to limit ourselves to any manner of treating the sick. Our way of treating them may vary according to the requirements of a variety of circumstances. However, we start by usually asking about the outward

⁵⁸ Word meaning: reward, return, payment

condition. We may probe the availability of the basic necessities of life such as food and clothing, and other things that may be needed. We can also provide suitable advice for fatal disorders and provide them assistance. Those who are more able than us can be moved to supply what we fail to provide in our service. If we say to ourselves that we are ashamed to beg, we must, on the contrary, have no shame in begging for the sake of the poor. We must be an "importunate beggar" who does not accept denial. All the address, understanding, and influence that we have ought to be used while we trust God who has all the people's hearts in His hands.

By then, you can discern if you can do anything with your own hands to help. Many of the things that need to be performed are to be carried out by those who are better than us. Yet, if some of us are more skilled and have greater experiences than others, then we ought to set aside anything that stands in the way of helping. We must remember the words: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). There is nothing too demeaning to do for God, and we must rejoice as we are belittled for His sake.

These labors of love, though they are little, will yield to things that are of greater importance. After showing our concern for the needs of their body, we must inquire about their souls. Before us is a large field, where we must exercise all the talents that God has provided us. We may initiate by impressing on them God's concern: "Have you ever considered, that God governs the world?"⁵⁹ That God knows

⁵⁹ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Wesley's original statement is presented in this form: "And here you have a large field before you; you have scope for exercising all the talents which God has given you. May you not begin with asking, 'Have you ever considered, that God governs the world...'" This way of relaying his point does not necessarily imply what the readers should not

what we experience and designs whatever befalls us for our good. God knows all those who suffer and their pains. He sees our wants, our afflictions, and every situation that is particular to it. We can assure them: God is observing from heaven, looking down, and dispensing these resources for your sake. Then, we may ask, if they are informed about the “general principles of religion.” Afterward, we can examine the person’s life with love and gentleness to see if it has been agreeable to those principles. With that approach, we also discern whether the person is living in blatant sinning or possesses a “form of religion.” The next step is to evaluate if he/she is aware of the power of worshipping God in both spirit and truth. The lack of that awareness compels us to explain that without holiness, no person shall see the Lord; except a person is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God. If the person is responding to grasp more knowledge about the “nature of holiness, and the necessity of the new birth,” we may press on and expound to that person regarding: “repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When they begin to fear God, it is proper to give tracts to plainly instruct and inform them about the faith. The next time we visit, we may ask what they read, remember, and understand. At this moment, it is proper to reinforce what they understand and impress it on their hearts. Prayer should always conclude the visit. We can ask for God’s help if we cannot open up in prayer.

There are two important lessons that we should endeavor to teach the poor, which would be considered a

do. Instead, Wesley may be appealing to common sense of what the reader may ask in a given situation. This way of presenting his point was also exhibited in his sermon *The Means of Grace* when he wrote: “May you not advise him also, to meditate on what he reads, that it may have its full force upon his heart?”

form of charity: industry and cleanliness. A pious man once said: “Cleanliness is next to godliness.”⁶⁰ The lack of observing this principle is a scandal of religion, which causes the way of truth to be spoken of as evil. Also, without industry, we are not fit for the present world and the world that is to come. Concerning those two points, whatever our hands find something to do, we must do it with our might.

C. WHO ARE THOSE WHO NEED TO VISIT THE SICK?

Who are those who need to perform this duty? The answer is those who desire to inherit God’s kingdom that was prepared before the foundation of the world. God said: “Come, ye blessed... inherit the kingdom... For I was sick, and ye visited me.”⁶¹ Does not this instruction of God imply that those who do their duty are blessed and will receive His kingdom, and those who neglect that duty are cursed and will be sent to everlasting fire?

Those who both wish to escape the everlasting fire and take part in the everlasting kingdom should be equally concerned to practice this duty according to their capacity. This duty is also equally incumbent on people regardless of their age (young and old), social status (rich and poor), and gender (men and women). They must perform this task according to what they can. No one is too young to desire salvation or be excused from helping his/her neighbors. No one is too poor to not be able to do something, for they are also called to soothe and ease the affliction of their fellow sufferers as they can in whatever spare time they are able.

On the other hand, the rich possess more than what is enough to secure a convent life and are not constrained

⁶⁰ According to Outler, this statement can be referenced in *Rabbi Phinehas ben Yair* work, “On Dress.”

⁶¹ Matthew 25:41-43

to labor for their basic sustenance. They called to allot their time, which was at their disposal, and to labor in love. For practical purposes, it is best to set a fixed time without consuming it for any other business as long as there is no urgency to use it. Being superior in rank over others, the rich have a peculiar advantage over others, and that is having more influence. Those who are inferior may look up to them with reverence. The condescension⁶² that the rich show to the poor creates prejudice in favor of the rich, which makes the lowly listen to them and receive what the rich have to say. This opportunity must be used to the uttermost benefit of the souls of those who would listen. They can minister by being the sight to those who can't see, feet to those who are unable to walk, partners to those who lost a spouse, and parents to the parentless while keeping the higher end, even to save souls from death, so that all their labors and words would serve that great end.

But do the poor have any part in this matter? Are they concerned about visiting the sick? What can those who hardly have the conveniences and even the necessities of life give to others? They may have a lack in other respects, but they don't need to be excluded from the blessing that comes from practicing this duty. The excellent rule: "Let our conveniences give way to our neighbour's necessities; and our necessities give way to our neighbour's extremities," can be remembered by them. Few are so poor that they are unable to give "two mites." Even if they have no monetary possession, they can share what is of more value than silver and gold. By speaking the name of Jesus, do they not speak health to the soul and substance to their bones? Can they give nothing? Indeed, they can, and in administering to people God's grace, they give something that is worth more

⁶² Word meaning: an attitude that shows superiority

than this world. Poor disciples should go as Jesus did while he was in this world. Doing good and healing those who are oppressed must be done whenever there is an opportunity, by encouraging people to shake off the devilish chains and fly to God who sets people free from bondage.

Above all, prayers must be extended to include the people and be uttered with the people themselves who need relief. Who knows, it may be possible to save their souls.

Those who are advanced in age and are no longer as strong as they used to be,⁶³ may still carry out more good deeds before they reach their final days. Remember:

"Tis time to live, if you grow old

Of little life the best to make,

And manage wisely the last stake!"

As old persons have lived many years, there is hope that they have gained knowledge that can benefit others. Certainly, they have more knowledge of people, and this knowledge was gained through experience. With the strength that is left in them, they may use the limited moments to minister to those who are weaker than them. Their grey hair will be an authority that can add to what they say, especially to youth.

Also, those who are advanced in age are frequent sufferers who may continue to experience discomfort. With that condition, the more they are to assist those that they can with regard to their souls and bodies before going to the place of no return.

Speaking about the youth, they have several advantages about themselves. They are lively and have a

⁶³ Wesley's words: "You that are old, whose feet are ready to stumble upon the dark mountains, may not you do a little more good before you go hence and are no more seen."

"flow of spirit." By God's grace, the youth can be compelled to undertake plenty of good works, things that they are capable to perform but others are discouraged to do. The youth have the physical strength and health to assist the sick and those who by themselves have no strength. As they are able, they are to take up their crosses and carry them which are usually found lying on the way. Let the whole vigor both of the mind and body be employed in ministering to the afflicted. Blessed be the Lord that the youth can participate in such an honorable service, as the servants of God who work for His pleasure by ministering to those who inherit salvation.

Women as well as men have a part in this honorable service by the same duty that is bound to them. In serving, there is no difference between females and males in Christ. The maxim that "women are only to be seen, not heard" has long passed. Also, many women are brought up as if they "were only designed for agreeable playthings!" This manner of treating women does not give honor to the sex, nor is it a form of kindness, but is actually "the deepest unkindness" and "horrid⁶⁴ cruelty." No woman of sense and spirit would submit to that. Men, who ought to be rational creatures, are like women, for they are both made in the image of God and have equal prospects to attain immortality. Men are also called to do good to all if they have time to use for service, particularly by doing good to their poor and sick neighbors at every opportunity. They are not to disobey their heavenly calling, and they will receive the rewards according to their labor.

In the primitive Church, it is well-known that women were appointed for this service. In every congregation, at least, there was one or two and they were termed

Deaconesses. They give their services to the great Master and His church.

Illustration:

An example was Phoebe, who was mentioned in Romans 16:1, "Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae."⁶⁵ These women are well experienced in God's work as well as in their years. But also, the young ones were not excluded from service. Provided that they know whom they believe, they can show their heart through holiness in their conversation. Those who are to follow the steps in serving ought to have a pleasing form and agreeable speech according to their devotion to God. In turn, God will use them to make their words more effective in ministering to others. Blessings will rebound to them. In effect, interest in shallow things will be destroyed, there will be a correction to inappropriate tempers, evil habits would be rooted out, and they will be prepared to handle the "doctrine of God our Saviour in every future scene of life." In visiting, they must be cautious in conversing with the other sex and entangle their emotions, and instead of a blessing, they find a curse instead.

Having a clear view that we are called to this duty—the "rich and poor, young and old, male and female" to visit the sick—is enough past our time when we have neglected it as a general consent. We need to come to God and confess: "Lord, forgive me my sins of omission!" Let us now, in God's name, beginning this day, set ourselves to that duty as our common aim. May this service never go out of our minds. This service is a duty that cannot be performed through a proxy, except when we are in pain or weakness. If we are in that situation, others would need to send relief

⁶⁵ NIV

⁶⁴ Word meaning: nasty, vile, mean

that we ourselves would give if the situation is reversed.⁶⁶ Let us begin now or else this impression of being will wear off and may never reappear. What would be the consequences if we fail to carry out this duty? The consequence is that instead of hearing "Come, you who are blessed... For I was sick and you visited me," we would hear the awful pronouncement, "Depart, you who are cursed... for I was sick and you did not visit me!"

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. *Have I been actively involving myself in looking after those who are literally and figuratively experiencing sickness?*
2. *Do I have an adamant feeling when people ask for help from me?*
3. *Do I help people out of genuine compassion, or simply to make myself feel good or create a respectable impression on others (to those who are being helped, or observers if there is any)?*

⁶⁶ Wesley's words: "And I pray, let it never go out of your mind that this is a duty which you cannot perform by proxy; unless in one only case—unless you are disabled by your own pain or weakness. In that only case, it suffices to send the relief which you would otherwise give."

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. *Does my community feel the presence of my church being engaged in crucial social locations where people are in need (such as hospitals, prisons, public spaces, and governance)?*
2. *How can a church express its generosity without emboldening those whose motives are simply to take advantage of others?*
3. *Can our presence to those who are in need and experiencing suffering lead to unproductive outcomes? If so, how?*

6. ON CONSCIENCE⁶⁷ (1788)

FOCUS: THE NECESSITY OF CONSCIENCE IN DETERMINING THE GOOD FROM EVIL

*"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our
conscience."
2 Corinthians 1:12⁶⁸*

⁶⁷ In this sermon, Wesley tried to sum up his reflection about the theme that had fascinated his puritan forerunners including Wesley himself. The critical standpoint is that our "moral sense" which has a universal character is not natural but the consequence of prevenient grace. This grace is already at work, which is a point in the sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation." Wesley had an extensive quote of his grandfather's sermon, on his mother's side, so, both grandfather and the grandson "were able to speak with one voice on one of the basic presuppositions of Christian ethics." (Outler, *The Works of John Wesley Bicentennial ed.* Vol. 3: *Sermons*, 479).

⁶⁸ 2 Corinthians 1:12 (NIV): *Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace.*

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. How would you define the word conscience based on your experience and observations?
2. Can you defend the idea that two people can have extremely different points of view about what is right and wrong and still be saying the truth? How?
3. Should our conscience be all the same, why or why not?

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

The word Conscience is a common word that everyone can easily speak about. Yet, this word is generally misunderstood. Many writers, instead of clearing its concept, have made it more puzzling.

A word about the matter, containing hundreds of pages, will be a challenging task that will test the patience of those who read such a thick volume. Therefore, this topic deserves to have clear and concise discourse. Such an aim, through God's help, will be the concern of the following points:

- a) The nature of conscience
- b) The several forms of conscience
- c) Conclusions and other important discussions

A. THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE

A pious man once described conscience as a form of "knowing with another", which excellently sets up its Scriptural account.⁶⁹ In Job 16:19, it is written: "My witness

⁶⁹ In Wesley's sermon manuscript, he mentioned the work of that pious man as entitled "Universal Conscientiousness." The pious man whom

is in heaven," and in Rom. 9:1, we can read: "I say the truth; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." Both texts imply or could be said to be as if God is the witness of their conscience. Conscience is in the middle, between God and a person, both under God and above a person. It is the mind's way of silent reasoning through which the "things which are judged to be right are approved of with pleasure; but those which are judged evil are disapproved of with uneasiness."

Through a different view, conscience considering both its Latin and Greek origins imply "the knowledge of two or more things together." This meaning supposes our knowledge of both our words and actions in relation to their degree of being good or bad. Therefore, conscience is the faculty that relates to what we think, say, and do that consequently affirms or censures us according to their measure of goodness or badness.

Can it be denied that conscience is found in every person who is born into the world? And that as soon as the ability to understand is unlocked, reasoning also begins? Then, is not everyone enabled to know that a distinction between good and evil exists even when the circumstances that affect how we sense what is good and evil are imperfect? Are not all people, regardless of being educated or barbarous, considering that it is right "to do to others as we would have them do to us?" And that those who do anything contrary to what they know is right are "condemned in their own mind?"

This faculty is usually referred to as natural conscience, but such a term does not do justice to its meaning. Conscience is natural since it is found in all persons, but in its proper

Wesley was referring to was Samuel Annesley, the father of Susanna Wesley. Vol (p. 479);

sense, it is given supernaturally by God and not merely natural. The Son of God, not nature, is the *true light* that enlightens everyone in the world. To every being, *He* shows us what is good, and His Spirit checks our inward condition when we walk contrary to the light.

Conscience appears to consist of a threefold office:

FIRST: "It is a witness." It testifies to what we have done.

SECOND: "It is a judge." It passes a sentence on what we have done.

THIRD: "It executes the sentence" by causing uneasiness in the person who does evil.

Conscience in the Christian sense is the faculty of the soul that is assisted by the grace of God to simultaneously see:

FIRST: "Our own tempers and lives, the real nature and quality of thoughts, words, and actions."

SECOND: "The rule whereby we are to be directed."

THIRD: "The agreement or disagreement therewith."

To express further, conscience is a) the faculty for knowing oneself, which is impossible without the Spirit of God that assists. Otherwise, the true self will be concealed from oneself through irregular passions and self-love. This point implies that b) there should be knowledge about that rule that directs a person in very particular, and that is through the Word of God. Lastly, c) there needs to be knowledge that all thoughts, words, and actions ought to be conformed to that rule. The "unction" of the Holy One is indispensable to the three offices of conscience, in order to discern our temper and judge our walk to be either in conformity or conformity to the rule that is given to direct us.

⁷⁰ Word meaning: the act of anointing or consecration, usually pertaining to healing; or an expression of religious fervor

A good conscience is a divine awareness of living out the things that God's written word indicates.⁷¹ No good conscience disregards God, especially in the Christian conscience. The notion of what is right and wrong within the Christian system has its very idea in either agreement or disagreement with the will of God and His word. No Christian conscience can exist if God is left out of the question.

The existence and continuance of a good conscience are absolutely dependent on the Spirit of God. The Apostle John addresses the believers through the ages by declaring that they have received an anointing from God to have spiritual discernment about the things that are needed to have a conscience that has no offense against God and people. In addition, the Apostle John adds to his hearers that they no longer need anyone to teach them other than the One who is already teaching them.⁷² The particular anointing that is spoken teaches FIRST: "the true meaning of God's Word, SECOND: "our actions, to remembrance," and THIRD: "the agreement of all with the commandments of God."

B. THE SEVERAL FORMS OF CONSCIENCE

A good conscience is described by St. Paul in various ways. He states that "a good conscience is toward God."⁷³ In another instance, he claims a good conscience is

⁷¹ Wesley's word: "divine consciousness of walking in all things according to the written word of God."

⁷² Acts 24:16 (NIV): "So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man;" 1 John 2:27 (NIV): "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him."

⁷³ Acts 23:1

characterized by the absence of offense against God or anyone.⁷⁴ In the text used in this sermon, speaking about conscience, we rejoice according to what our conscience testifies. With our conscience, we engage with the world by having simplicity, a focused aim, and godly sincerity. Such a manner of engagement cannot happen through the wisdom of the flesh, which is usually referred to as *prudence* (that is incapable to produce the effect of what our testimony testifies), but through God's grace which alone sufficiently works in any person.⁷⁵

Allied to this kind of conscience mentioned above is a tender conscience, which is "exact in observing any deviation from the word of God, whether in thought, or word, or work; and immediately feels remorse and self-condemnation for it."

However, there are times when the excellent quality of this tender conscience is misapplied to an extreme. Some feel fear where there ought to be no reason to fear by condemning themselves either due to an imagined sin that the Scripture does not condemn or supposing a duty that the written Word of God does not instruct. This conscience is properly called a scrupulous conscience. It seems practical to yield to it but it is a sore evil from which we can be delivered through earnest prayer in order to regain a healthy mind.

⁷⁴ Acts 24:16

⁷⁵ Refer to 2 Corinthians 1:12 (NIV): "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace." The KJV version states: "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."

The opposite of this scrupulous conscience is a hardened conscience, which is more perilous multiplied a thousand times. It can violate God's plain command without remorse and also glorifies the hardness of the heart. A person with a hardened conscience does what Scripture forbids. The person who dares to violate God's commands has no concern and feels no condemnation in his/her heart. It is dreadful to be condemned by God's word and still feel uncondemned by one's heart. If we can violate the least of God's commands without experiencing a hint of self-condemnation, then it is evident that our hearts have been hardened by the *god of this world*. If there is no recovery from such a state, a person can reach a point that is "past feeling" and have his/her conscience seared.⁷⁶

If we have a tender conscience, we must preserve it by obeying it. Every disobedient act has a tendency to deaden or inflict blindness on that tender conscience which would result in losing sight of God's acceptable and goodwill. The dead heart no longer feels condemnation even when it acts against God's will. On the other hand, every obedient act enhances conscience with a "sharper and stronger sight, and a quicker feeling of whatever offends the glorious majesty of God."

Maintaining a healthy conscience involves both the quickness to discern and continuously comply with its ways. We ought to see to it that we do whatever our conscience tells us to do and at the same time, we are to refrain from doing the things that our conscience forbids us. We must follow the directives of our conscience and prohibit ourselves from what it hinders us to do regardless of how grievous or pleasurable those things are to our flesh and blood since the case usually falls on either one or the other. God forbids the

⁷⁶ Meaning: a conscience that is no longer responding or dead.

things that our evil nature may find pleasurable, and at this point, we are called to deny ourselves, otherwise, we deny our Master. What God commands us may yield pain to our nature, yet we are to take up our cross. The word of God is true: A person cannot be a disciple except he/she walks in self-denial and daily takes up his/her cross.

C. CONCLUSION⁷⁷

To have a right conscience, one must be persuaded to follow these directions:

1. "Take heed of every sin." Obey every command and avoid any evil and temptation.
2. "Consider yourself as living under God's eye: Live as in the sensible presence of the jealous God." We cannot deceive God for His wisdom is infinite. His presence is with us at all times and in all places.
3. "Be serious and frequent in the examination of your heart and life." We must review our character if we are responsive to our religion and indifferent to the world. We are to have a portion of our time in the morning to think about what we need to do and, in the evening, to examine ourselves to see if we have done what we ought.
4. "Let every action have reference to your whole life, and not to a part only." Use your life as a preparation for being in God's presence.
5. "Do not venture on sin because Christ hath purchased a pardon." We should not abuse the sacrifice of Christ because willful sins have no sacrifice under the law.

⁷⁷ Wesley: "I cannot conclude this discourse better, than with an extract from Dr. Annesley's sermon on "Universal Conscientiousness;" Wesley added a footnote: "Dr. Annesley (my mother's father) was rector of the parish of Cripplegate."

6. "Be nothing in your own eyes." We should not be proud. Our conception is marred with sin, our birth is painful, our lives are burdensome, and we know nothing about our death. All these have nothing to do with the state of our souls. We have no excuse for pride.
7. "Consult duty, not events. We have nothing to do but to mind our duty." We are to comply with our duties and leave their consequences to God. We cannot prescribe anything to God who has infinite wisdom.
8. "What advice you would give another, take yourself." The worst individuals lay burdens on others and only rare Christians are willing to take those burdens on themselves.
9. "Do nothing on which you cannot pray for a blessing. Every action of a Christian that is good, is sanctified by the word and prayer." There is no trivial thing for a Christian not to pray about, otherwise, being concerned with a thing that one cannot pray for is being un-Christian. Prayer "would cut off all things sinful, and encourage all things lawful."
10. "Think, and speak, and do what you are persuaded Christ himself would do in your case, were he on earth." We are to have these principles:
 - a) let us mind our duty; b) the duty that others would do for us, is the same duty that we have for people; c) we are not to meddle with anything to which we cannot ask to be blessed by God, and; d) that we are to never lose our focus on Christ and continue to follow His steps whatever treatment we receive from the world.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. *Is my conscience healthy?*
2. *Do I find myself being uneasy with my thoughts, actions, and generally how I have treated things and people around me?*
3. *Am I moved by society's suggestions more than the word of God, even if those suggestions are contrary to the principles that I know to be true?*

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. *What do you think are the things around us that are contrary to the Christian conscience but are readily acceptable to the world?*
2. *Is it necessary for a believer to maintain good relationships with people whose principles are disapproved by the Scriptures? Why or why not?*
3. *How can a Christian be vocal with moral standpoints without having his/her faith misinterpreted by other observers only as a political bias?*

7. UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT, 10⁷⁸ (1750)

FOCUS: WISDOM AGAINST THE TEMPTATION TO JUDGE

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what

⁷⁸ Wesley was aware about the observation of Mathew Henry that the warning of Jesus against judging others "does not preclude a proper place for Judging the wayward." Wesley considered both improper judgments can be a result of ignorance and misunderstanding, particularly with respect to difference in Christian traditions. (Collins and Vickers, The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey, 371).

man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone Or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good gifts to them that ask him Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."
Matt. 7:1-12.⁷⁹

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is/are the difference/s between a judgmental attitude and a critical attitude?
2. What do you think makes the idea of judging others unacceptable to many people? How can you address a

⁷⁹ Matthew 7:1-12 (NIV): Judging Others. "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. 'Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. Ask, Seek, Knock. 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 'Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

person's judgmental attitude without appearing judgmental to that particular person?

3. Is it possible to live without having to evaluate people based on external appearances?

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

By having delivered the total meaning of what true religion means, the Lord has carefully provided a guard against those who would characterize God's Word as if it is without effect. After laying down the rules for the right intention that must be preserved in all outward action, He proceeded to point out the hindrances that come with that religion and concluded by relaying the suitable application.

The Great Teacher, in the fifth chapter, described the inward religion by noting its various branches. He has laid the dispositions of the soul that consist of genuine Christianity, the tempers found in holiness, and the intrinsically and essentially good affections that flow from the living in God. He showed in the sixth chapter how all holy and pure intentions can make our actions, even when they are indifferent to their nature, can be made good, acceptable, and holy before God. Whatever external work is consecrated to God, it has a great price before Him. However, whatever lacks holy and pure intention has no value before God.

In this seventeenth chapter, the former part points out the fatal hindrances against holiness. In the latter part, He exhorted about the different motives to advance by both breaking through and having the assurance of the prize of our calling.

THE FIRST HINDRANCE:

The Master cautions us against judging. We are given a plain and equitable rule: We are not to judge others so that we would not be judged by God. The way we cast judgment will be the same way judgment will be cast upon us, and the measure that we use will be the same measure applied to us. Through such rule, God allows us to set for ourselves the manner through which He shall deal with us on the day of judgment.

There is no period or location in our lives, from the time we first repent until we become fully perfected in love, wherein the caution of not judging should be ignored by any of God's children. There are numerous occasions to judge as well as there are countless temptations to do it. We can fall into sin based on disguising our judgment before realizing any danger of committing it. Unspeakable troubles are produced by those who judge others. The person who judges others wounds his/her very own soul and exposes himself/herself before God's righteous judgment. On the other hand, those who were judged are weakened and slowed down if not wholly turned away from their course and sent back toward perdition. The root of bitterness can often spring up and defile many. Truth itself can be spoken in an evil way and blaspheme the One who calls us.

It does not appear that the caution itself is mainly intended only for God's children but for those who don't know God. They are those who cannot spare themselves from hearing those who are not of the world and are earnestly desiring holy tempers that they are yet to attain—those who cannot be hidden in the same way a city on a hill cannot be unseen. But why do those who observe the good works of God's children not glorify God? What excuse do they have for not following the steps of God's children and

imitating their examples as being of Christ? As an excuse, they condemn the people whom they ought to follow. They find faults in their neighbors instead of reforming their own way. They spent so much time going out of the way that they never found themselves walking on it. They never go forward and remain in the dead form of godliness, which has no power.

In this case of finding fault, the Lord corrects his hearers not to look at the speck in someone's eyes (which represents mistakes and mistakes of God's children) but to consider the plank in one's own eyes. Despite the abominable things that can be found in our lives—"the damnable impenitence, the satanic pride, the accursed self-will, the idolatrous love of the world"—there are those who do not give proper consideration regarding such abominations before God. They are indifferent to hell while they are dancing at the opening of its mouth. How can then some say with grace and modesty to pull the speck in someone's eyes (the speck that represents excessive zeal for God, extreme self-denial, and great disengagement from worldly cares) while there is a bigger object that ought to be addressed in his/her life? It is hypocrisy to pretend to care for others and not care for one's soul. A person who does such pretension makes a show by appearing to be zealous for God's cause, but in reality, he/she has neither love nor fear of God. The first thing that one should do is to take out the plank from his/her eyes by knowing oneself, which involves seeing and feeling one's sinfulness—to know oneself as a sinner. This way of understanding oneself includes seeing the wickedness found in the inward parts wherein corruption and abomination exist, to which the wrath of God is directed. Such a person ought to cast away that plank from his/her eye and learn to deny oneself and daily take up his/her cross. The plank

must be taken out by dissolving one's love for the world and being crucified both to the world and to oneself. Though the world can be used for our purpose, it is God whom we ought to enjoy. We are to seek happiness in God. The plank of carelessness and indifference must be taken out by considering the *one thing needful*. If this is the intent of a person, then he/she can pluck out the speck from his/her brother's/sister's eye.

However, what is the proper meaning of the words "judge not"? What is the form of judging that is forbidden? This kind of judging is not evil-speaking but can be joined to it. Evil-speaking is attributing to an absent person anything that is evil. Meanwhile, the act of judging others is indifferent to whether the person is present or absent. It also does not imply speaking but the thinking of evil about another. Not all thinking of evil is considered the form of judging that the Lord condemns. Someone who sees a person committing robbery, murder, or blasphemy may think ill of the person who commits them. This is not judging in an evil way, and no sin is committed in such thinking.

The form of judging that is condemned is the mode of thinking that is contrary to love, which can be done in various ways. FIRST: Thinking of someone to blame when he/she should not. In our thoughts, we may accuse someone who is not guilty of either the words a person has not said or actions that were never done. We may think of a person acting in a wrong way even when such a person has not. Even when a person cannot be blamed, we may suppose that a person's intention is contrary to what is good so we condemn him/her on that basis. However, the One who searches the heart sees the person's godly sincerity and simplicity.

SECONDLY: We may not only fail to judge and condemn the innocent, but we condemn the guilty more than

what he/she deserves. This form of judging is an offense to mercy and justice. Through sinfully judging others, the value of whatever good is found in the person is undervalued, and we may not believe a person in whom we find anything that is evil that something good can remain in him/her.

All of this shows that love is lacking because love thinks no evil and never draws unkind and unjust conclusions. When a person falls once, love does not infer that such a person is acting openly in sin and is habitually guilty. If a person is guilty of habitual sin once, love refuses to conclude that such a person is guilty of other sins. The evil reasoning used in sinful judging is what the Lord warned us against.

However, if we suppose that we neither condemn the innocent nor the guilty further than what he/she deserves, we may not be still clear from the temptation to judge. THIRD: sinful judging is condemning a person where there is not sufficient evidence. And even if what we are supposed to know about a person is true, we are guilty of committing sinful judging. We are not to suppose anything; instead, they are to be proved, and we ought not to form any judgment prior to proof. Proof must be available before we pass a sentence. No one can be excused from passing a sentence before the accused has spoken for himself.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Wesley followed the paragraph with examples: "Even a Jew might teach us this, as a mere lesson of justice abstracted from mercy and brotherly love. 'Dath our law,' says Nicodemus, 'judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth' (John 7:51.) Yea, a Heathen could reply, when the chief of the Jewish nation desired to have judgment against his prisoner, 'It is not the manner of the Romans' to judge 'any man, before he that is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.' Indeed we could not easily fall into sinful judging were we only to observe that rule which another [Seneca] of those heathen Romans affirms to have been the measure of his own practice. 'I am so far,' says he, 'from lightly believing every man's or any man's evidence against another, that I do not easily or immediately believe a man's evidence against himself. I always allow him

Walking according to the rule of our Lord that He Himself taught would remedy the evil of sinful judging and would lessen our tendency to judge one another. The first step to take someone's trespasses against us is to go to that person and tell him/her fault alone. If the person doesn't listen, we are to take two or three witnesses to establish our word. The second step is to tell the church if that person refuses to acknowledge the point. After these steps, we have done our part and never think of it anymore but to lift the situation to God.

SECOND HINDRANCE:

If by God's grace, we have cast the plank out of our eyes and clearly see the speck in our brother/sister's eye, we ought to be careful from injuring ourselves in our attempt to help him/her. We must have caution not to let our zeal proceed without knowledge. What we may perceive as our duty, even when it is without justification, is another great hindrance for those who want to be as perfect as their heavenly Father. Some have the desire for everyone to have a common blessing. However, they wonder why the world can't see what they can plainly observe. In effect, without any delay, they are quick to attack all they meet and constrain them. Their "success" is an ill achievement of their "intemperate zeal" which makes the beholder of such a zeal suffer his/her soul. To prevent us from draining our strength uselessly, the Lord cautions us neither to offer sacred things to dogs nor cast pearls to pigs.

Do not give holy things to the dogs. However, we must beware not to attribute to anyone that they are undeserving of anything holy based on caution about not giving any

second I thoughts, and many times counsel too.' Go, thou who art called a Christian, and do likewise, lest the heathen rise and condemn thee in that day!"

sacred thing to a dog. There must be incontestable and total proof regarding such an application to anyone. On the contrary, it is proved that there are wicked and unholy individuals who truly oppose God and holiness, then the holy thing should not be given to them. What is that holy thing? The holy thing consists of the "peculiar doctrines of the gospel" that were hidden from generations and ages but were made known only through the revelation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's inspiration. It should not be prostituted to persons who are indifferent to the Holy Spirit. The ambassadors should not refrain from declaring the doctrines of the Gospel, and they must speak about them whether people would hear them or not. However, regarding believers who are more private, they are not under the obligation to force the "great and glorious truths" upon those who blaspheme the truths themselves. Instead, they are to converse with such persons through the manner that those persons themselves employ upon their principles. Higher subjects should be reserved for those who appropriately match them.

Do not cast pearls to the pigs. We must be unwilling to pass judgment on anyone. However, if there is beyond dispute that some reveal themselves to glory shameful things, and without disguise, show the absence of purity in their hearts of life, and work in "all uncleanness with greediness," the pearls should not be cast to them. We should refrain from speaking to them about the mysteries of God's kingdom that no eye has seen nor ear has heard, for they have no "inlets of knowledge." They have no spiritual senses and those mysteries cannot enter into their hearts to be conceived. We are not to speak to them of God's promises. What could those persons conceive about the meaning of having to partake in divine nature when they

themselves lack the desire to flee from corruption? Just as swine treat pearls to have no value, so are the things of God treated by those who are "immersed in the mire of this world." The pearls should not be given to them or they would only "trample them under their feet." They might return "evil for good, cursing for blessing, and hatred for your goodwill." Such is the "enmity of the carnal mind against God and all the things of God." Such is the treatment that we may expect if we attempt to share with them the knowledge of salvation.

THIRD HINDRANCE:

Believers should not despair when people cause them pain. If all the believers' reasoning and persuasion fail, there is still a remedy left. That remedy is prayer. Whatever we desire either for our own souls or others, we ought to ask, seek and knock. Neglecting prayer is a hindrance to holiness. We "have not, because we ask not." We are to ask in order to practice and experience the religion the Lord has described. Holiness is given to us to be in the heart and to reflect in the way we converse. We are to seek in the way that God has ordained, which includes searching, listening, and meditating on the Scripture, fasting, and participating in the Holy Communion. In seeking, we will find the great price of the pearl: the faith that overcomes the world, the peace that the world is incapable of giving, and the love resulting from our inheritance. We are to knock and accept no rejection. We must not let Him go until He blesses us, in order for the door of mercy, holiness, and heaven to be opened for us.

Through God's compassion despite the hardness of our hearts, the Lord expounded his Word by repeating and confirming what He has spoken. Those who ask will receive so that no one will lack His blessing, those who seek will find

“the love and the image of God,” and those who knock will have the “gate of righteousness” opened to them. There is no reason to be discouraged as if those who ask, seek, or know will do such things in vain. They need only to always pray, seek, and knock, without fainting and the promise stands sure. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words stand forever.

To have our prayer possess its “full weight with God,” we ought to be in charity with others. Otherwise, it will bring a curse instead of a blessing on ourselves. We cannot receive any blessing unless we are charitable to our neighbors. Therefore, this hindrance should be, without delay, removed. We must confirm our love to all people not only in words but both in action and truth.

Expressing our love to others can be done in either a negative or positive sense. In a negative sense, we should not do unto others what we don’t want them to do to us. This is a rule that can be easily applied. In relating to people, we make the situation of others our own. If the circumstances change, we place ourselves on what disposition others are in. We must be cautious to not indulge in our temper and thoughts, nor let any word pass our lips, and nor make any step that would condemn others. Translating that point into a directly positive sense, the meaning is that supposing we are in their place, we ought to do whatever we could reasonably desire for them to the uttermost of our power.

Applying these two principles, it is clear to each person’s conscience that we would not want others to judge us and to think evil of us without any cause. Much less than that would we want others to speak evil of us and broadcast our infirmities and faults. We should apply the principle to ourselves, not to do to anyone what we don’t want others to do to us. The principle would never allow us to judge our

neighbors or think evil of anyone without justified reason, much less to speak evil about them. Also, we will ever speak about even the “real fault of an absent person,” unless there is an absolute need to reveal the fault for “the good of other souls.”

We prefer that all persons ought to have positive affection and respect for us and treat us with truthfulness, compassion, and fairness.⁸¹ We may desire that people “should do us all the good they can do without injuring themselves.” We opt for people to walk according to that rule in outward things: have their excess allowed for our conveniences, their conveniences to provide for our necessities, and their necessities for the benefit of our extremities. In the same way, we must abide by the same rule that we are to do to others what we want them to do to us. This rule prompts us to love and honor all persons and allow justice, mercy, and truth to govern both our minds and all our actions. We are to let our superfluities⁸² give convenience to our neighbors—“and who then will have any superfluities left?”—our conveniences to the advantage of our neighbor’s necessities, and our necessities our neighbor’s extremities.

This rule is “pure and genuine morality”. Peace be upon those as many as who walk by this rule, for they are God’s people—God’s Israel. However, no one can abide by such a rule nor love one’s neighbor as one’s self except a person who loves God. No one can love God unless we believe in Christ, have been redeemed through His blood, and have the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits that we are God’s child. “Faith, therefore, is still the root of all, of present as well as future salvation.” It is our duty to communicate to

⁸¹ Wesley’s words: “justice, mercy and, truth”

⁸² Word meaning: abundance or excess

every sinner that they must believe to be saved. Those who believe now may be saved forever, for us to have salvation while on this earth, and may also have such salvation in heaven. Believing in Christ makes faith work through love. We are to love God because He has loved us first, and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Exerting and increasing our love will be our glory and joy, not only by abstaining from things that are contrary to love, such as “unkind thought, word, and action” but by showing kindness to everyone whom we would want to show kindness unto us.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. *Am I struggling with people's perceptions about me that I know are not true?*
2. *Do I have the tendency to attribute to others certain descriptions and characterizations based on my impression but in the absence of other supporting reasons?*
3. *Have I said something, with good intent but turned out to be hurtful to someone, because it only reflected my point of view?*

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. *In which places, contexts, and social conversations do judging others frequently occur? Why do you think so?*

2. *Can it be possible that speaking the truth is relayed in a judgmental form?*

3. *Though baseless claims and accusations are sometimes persuasive, what are the safeguards to prevent them from becoming the primary content in describing a person or a situation?*

8. IN WHAT SENSE ARE WE TO LEAVE THE WORLD⁸³ (1748)

FOCUS: THE BALANCE TO AVOID COMPROMISE

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

2 Cor. 6:17, 18.⁸⁴

⁸³ In this sermon, Wesley argues that distance from ungodly people, as much as practicable, is to practice the Christian discipline. That is the sense by which believers are to leave the world. However, the time when the sermon was written was in a different context. There was a crisis that was looming over the whole Methodist movement and Wesley provided a new structure for his movement through a Deed of Declaration. This move "decisively mark the point of no return" in Methodism progress as it provoked many to in the movement to consider autonomy to separate from the Church of England. It would have been essential for Wesley to "reject the conventional Nonconformist interpretations of 2 Corinthians 6:17-18" which have been serving as the basis for separation from the English Church. Wesley stressed a different interpretation in the same Scripture to deal with the theme of "asceticism-in-the-world." He would return to this theme through his sermon "On Friendship Wirth the World." Wesley never intended to separate because his idea was for the renewal of the church. (Outler, *The Works of John Wesley Bicentennial Edition*, Vol. 3: Sermons, 141-142).

⁸⁴ 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18. (NIV): 17 "Therefore, 'Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.' And, 'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'"

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WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. How can you say whether a person is anti-social or not?
2. How can you say a person is ungodly without committing any false judgment against that person? What are the red flags that would make you avoid someone?
3. As believers, should we be choosy in selecting the kinds of friends that we will maintain, or should we get close to anyone without any limit in order to bring to them the Gospel?

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

There are only a few religions that consider the meaning of the text given above. We can read it repeatedly without laying it to the heart and observing it is a plain command like others found in Scripture. There are still fewer who understand its genuine meaning. It has been interpreted to have come out of the church (referring to the Church of England). Religious individuals have separated from the church on the grounds of this text, by claiming that it is God Himself who commands people to come out and be separated as the basis for God to accept them as sons and daughters.

But the interpretation above is foreign to the Apostle, who was not referring to any particular church, which is also the same for the Apostle's co-ministers who did not draw the inference of separating from the church. If they meant it that way, then, they would be contradicting the teaching of the Master. Though back then, the Jewish church was full of the unclean and the unholy, both inwardly and outwardly, such

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as any Christian church, the Lord provided service to them and directed His followers to follow His steps. The scribes and Pharisees, require others to do things that they themselves don't do. Yet, the Lord requires His disciples to hear them and "observe and do what they say."⁸⁵ As long as the Apostles were in Jerusalem, they consistently participated in public service.

Those who misinterpret the passage do not refer to the instruction given in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, which states:

"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people."⁸⁶

The passage pertains to the members belonging to the same community of Christians. The Apostle did not give instruction to disassociate from unbelievers or people in general, because doing so would require going out of this world in order to refrain from transacting with them. He referred to those who are part of the same religious community so that we are to separate from those who belong to the faith but blatantly live in sin. This command is little observed even by conscientious believers. This lack of observance may be due to the reason that it is not easily understood, in the sense of

⁸⁵ Wesley referred to Matthew 23:2-3: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach."

⁸⁶ NIV

knowing to whom the character of particular sins (such as an extortioner or covetous person) belongs. It is hard to know one from the other without at least becoming "busy bodies" with regard to other people's matters. Even so, the prohibition on conversing with them is strong. Only through the simplicity of our hearts, "according to the best light we have," can we act to this instruction without trying to be infallible judges.

The text refers to Christian fellowship but has a wider scope. It is relevant to all of humankind, to keep distance as far as possible from ungodly individuals. The term "unclean thing"⁸⁷ seems possible to be rendered as "unclean person" which probably alludes to the ceremonial law that prohibits touching someone who is declared unclean by the law. If we are, we are to take in the strictest sense what was expressed, an absurdity follows, and that is what the Apostle spoke of going out of the world. If going out of the world is the way to follow this instruction, it is impossible to live out the calling that God has assigned to us. Without conversing with others, we cannot have temporal business with others and that would need conscientious Christians to flee to a secluded place.⁸⁸ It is not enough to turn into recluses or shut ourselves in monasteries and nunneries, for we would still need to connect with them to procure what we need in life.

The words used in the text must be treated with appropriate restriction. We are not prohibited from conversing with either bad or good persons to have our earthly business, and there are occasions when we need to converse with them for a considerable length of time. Without it, we cannot fulfill our calling. Conversation with

⁸⁷ Wesley pertaining to the Greek of that term

⁸⁸ Wesley: to flee into the desert

holy or unholy persons is not contrary to what Apostle Paul said.

What then is forbidden by the Apostle? FIRST: having unnecessary conversations with the ungodly without a providential call or business. SECOND: conversing with them more frequently than is needed for our business with them, THIRD: spending more time than what is necessary to complete our business with them, FOURTH: choosing the ungodly as our ordinary company. If there is an instance that has less excuse than what was forbidden, it is this: being "unequally yoked with an unbeliever" in marriage" with a person who has no love or fear of God. There is no reason that we know can justify it, such as the qualities of a person, for temporal advantage or even the parent's command. If parents contradict God's Word in their command to their children, children ought to submit to God's Word rather than people's words.

The preceding verses laid down those prohibitions given above:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.' Therefore, 'Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.'"⁸⁹

⁸⁹ 2 Corinthians 6: 14-17 (NIV).

The sum of the prohibition is limiting conversation with the ungodly than what is needed. There is no profit for the righteous and unrighteous having fellowship together as much as the union between light and darkness cannot exist (either natural or spiritual). Christ has no concord⁹⁰ with Belial, so a believer and the unbeliever have concord between them. A true union or concord between a person who is in darkness and one who walks in the light is absurd for they belong to separate kingdoms. They act on different principles and have different ends, and as such, it usually follows that they have different paths. How can they mutually walk side-by-side, unless they both choose either Christ or Belial.

The consequence of disobeying the instruction of not coming out nor separating from ungodly people but continuing contact with them than what is needed may not be immediately apparent. It will not quickly lead us to outward sin but will "sap"⁹¹ the foundation of our religion." Little by little, it will "damp our zeal for God," and diminish the fervency of our spirit with regard to our first love. The ungodly may not oppose our actions or words, but their spirit will affect our spirits and impart the "same lukewarmness and indifference to God and the things of God." It will weaken the springs of our souls, destroy our spiritual vigor and cause us to slack⁹² in our pace as we run our race.

Unneeded conversations will weaken our convictions and the divine evidence about the things unseen. The eyes of our soul by which we see the invisible God will be made dim and will bring down our confidence in Him. Gradually, our "taste of the powers of the world to come" will abate⁹³

⁹⁰ Word meaning: agreement or unity

⁹¹ Word meaning: weaken, drain, or undermine

⁹² Word meaning: sloppy, slow or inactive

⁹³ Word meaning: decrease, decline, subside or lessen

and our hope will be dull. Our flame of love will be cooled down. Unnecessary conversation “strikes at the root of all vital religion; of our fellowship with the Father and with the Son.”

In a secret manner that cannot be observed, we will be conditioned to “measure back our steps to earth again.” We will softly relapse to the love of the world from which we escaped and were cleansed, falling into the desire of the flesh (pleasure of the senses), the desire of the eye (pleasure of the imagination), and the pride of life (desire for the praise of people).

We are not only led back again to the love of the world when we converse with ungodly people beyond what duty requires but to “every other evil passion and temper of which the human soul is capable.” These passions and tempers abound in ungodly individuals and they will insinuate⁹⁴ them to the people with whom they frequently converse, most deeply to those who don’t see any danger.

It can be supposed that we only converse with good people who have commendable character and are clear from profanities habits. In this way, we can be free from every kind of open vice. Otherwise, those who fear God must wisely keep a distance from them. However, this supposition is hard to assert. Vices are naturally infectious for no one can touch them and remain undefiled. We need to flee from vices, like fleeing a serpent, since “evil communications corrupt good manners!”

It can be supposed that unholy persons do not intend to impart their spirit to others or cause people to imitate them. However, this is also a supposition that cannot be easily admitted. In innumerable instances, we may be part of advancing their interests by partaking in their sins. If their

⁹⁴ Word meaning: imply, suggest

interest is out of the question, is it not true that naturally, people desire to bring others to his/her opinion? Good people intend to make others good, and in the same manner, bad people intend and endeavor who they are with to be as bad as themselves.

If we allow the supposition that bad people—pertaining to vicious people including those who do not love God, at least have a fear of God and do not seek both His kingdom and righteousness—do not intend to impart their spirit into others, speaking with them than what is needed is dangerous. Though a bad person does not desire or endeavor to impart his/her distemper on others, his/her reasoning and persuasions can infect the soul of another. We should care not to go near them in a way that puts us in the same condition as them.

If there is no other ill effect on believers when they converse with worldly-minded individuals, it is certain that by imperceptible measures believers would be less heavenly-minded. There would be a bias created in the mind that would pull the soul to earth. Without being conscious, a believer, instead of being transformed through the renewal of the mind, would be conformed to the spirit and maxims of this world through vain interaction. A believer could fall back to what he/she once was cleaned and escaped from, which was then considered an abomination to the soul during the time when the believer’s spirit was made alive.

If a believer allows that kind of interaction to progress that far, he/she won’t stop there. In a short while, the believer will slide down to commit outward sins that are being committed by his/her companions in front of him/her. If conversing with the Spirit won’t lead to outward sin, it will infect the Spirit with inward sins (pride, anger, and love of

the world). This spiritual infection is sufficient to bring the soul to everlasting perdition if the believer fails to repent.

It is dangerous to have conversations with men who do not know God; it is more dangerous to engage with women of the same character. They have greater persuading power, are agreeable in their personality, and are pleasant to have conversations with. It is possible to feel, more or less, improper softness to them that can make a person less able to deny oneself, take up the cross, and possess the character that is appropriate for the follower of Christ.

These are the consequences that will surely but slowly result from having God's children mix with those who are of this world. Through this process, more than any other put together, those who are called Methodists are "likely to lose their strength." Many believers admit that promoting God's glory is their intention in engaging in conversation with those who do not know God. We hope to awaken those who are spiritually asleep, which can happen by persuading them to pursue things that can give them peace. However, when a suitable time is over and no positive impression is achieved, wisdom allows us to lift them to God. Otherwise, we will more likely incur hurt instead of bringing them good. "For if you do not raise their hearts up to heaven, they will draw yours down to earth." With this consideration, we are to retreat after an appropriate time to separate and get out from among them.

What is the most effective and easy way to separate ourselves from the ungodly?

FIRST: Invite no ungodly person to your home except for particular reasons. We may argue that civility requires us to be open to them and that civility itself is not opposed by religion. Additionally, the Apostle instructs us to be courteous and compassionate. Indeed, we must be civil, and

being sufficiently civil involves keeping the proper distance. We can also be courteous while being aloof to a certain degree. The Apostle never recommended courtesy as a must in a manner that proves to be a trap to the soul.

SECOND: On no account are we to accept an ungodly person's invitation. Never pay a visit unless we want such visitation to be repeated. A person who longs for our acquaintances with him/her will more likely revisit us twice or thrice. Refraining from returning to the act of visiting the person will make the visitant⁹⁵ tired. It is probable that the person will be disobliged⁹⁶ and have resentment. We must consider this account and when such a circumstance occurs, we will not be surprised and discouraged. It is better to do what pleases God and displease people than to aim for what is pleasing to people but displease God.

THIRD: It is likely that we have met ungodly persons before we have come to know God. With regard to this concern, what is the best thing that can be done to easily drop our acquaintance?

a) We must do our best with sufficient time so that we induce others to choose the better part. We exert all our love and faith and wrestle with God for their sake. If we cannot make an impression on them, it is our duty to withdraw with gentleness and to entangle ourselves from among them. We may refuse to pay them a visit, but we must expect that they will upbraid⁹⁷ our unkindness either to our faces or behind our backs. Suffering for a good conscience is properly the reproach of Christ.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Word meaning: visitor, one who visits, paying a visit

⁹⁶ Word meaning: inconvenienced, bothered

⁹⁷ Word meaning: revile, berate, find fault, scold

⁹⁸ Word meaning (reproach of Christ): treasuring or valuing the things of God than the things of the world.

b) Based on experience, the so-called harmless conversation dampens good resolutions. It may sometimes require us to be moved out to a new location from among people who negatively affect our spirits. By being in a new place, we are resolved to set a new plan to deliberately refrain from having any acquaintances, not by chance but only by choice. By experience, declining to visit both those who are visiting us and those who are asking us to visit them eventually leads to the loss of being in contact with them.⁹⁹

c) We should be determined to be not almost but altogether Christian in adopting a plan regardless of how contrary it is to flesh and blood. We can observe those who follow such a rule in their lives, and we can reason who are those who fear God and do righteous works. They are the ones worthy of acquaintance, to whom we can freely and gladly converse at all opportunities. We can quietly and gently drop from conversing with those who do not possess such character irrespective of how good their manners are. If they don't lead us to outward sin, they would clog our souls and hinder us from running our race. If we have friends who were once running the race and turned their backs away from the commands that were given to them, we must have prudence in restoring them to God's way. However, if we cannot prevail, we can let them go but still commend them to God in our

⁹⁹ **PERSONAL NOTE:** This portion is relayed from a first-person point of view since Wesley is sharing his previous experience and what he did to lessen his acquaintance with people whom he did not want to interact with. He set a deliberate plan not to meet them and he rejected the invitation to be with them.

prayers. We can drop our conversations with them and save our souls.

FOURTH: Circumspectly,¹⁰⁰ we must consider our relations. Whatever their religious status, we must have conversations with our parents if they desire, and also with our brothers and sisters. We must interact with them especially when they desire our service. On the other hand, there is no such obligation to distant relatives.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, we must visit them from time to time as courtesy and affection require, but as seldom as possible if they have no intention of seeking and knowing God. Also, decency prevents us from staying longer than what it requires with them. Whoever we are at a given time, we should observe the instruction of the Apostle: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."¹⁰² We must keep watch so that religion won't be absent from our company.

Those who love God and fear Him should come out among those who don't treat God in the same way that they do. In the plain sense of Scripture, we should separate from them in terms of having unnecessary conversations with them. God commands us to touch no unclean thing or person farther than what necessity requires and He will receive us and bring us into the household of God. This is God's promise, and He blesses those who renounce the company of ungodly people provided that their spirits and conversation are fit for their duty. Let those who have regard for God's blessing and favor:

¹⁰⁰ Word meaning: cautiously, vigilantly, carefully, or thoughtfully

¹⁰¹ Wesley: "do not know that you are under any such obligation with respect to your more distant relations."

¹⁰² Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

FIRST: be cautious of having an acquaintance or forming a connection with ungodly people, not to interact with them more than what is necessary; and
 SECOND: immediately break off the interaction with them—from all acquaintances with the ungodly, including previous connections. Let no pleasure or gain those results in being acquainted with them be considered when placed on the balance of God's commands. We are to "pluck out the right eye" which means tearing from ourselves our "most pleasing acquaintance." We need to let go of all attempts and any second thoughts to seek it again. Also, we ought to have our right hand cut off which means renouncing our most profitable connection. We ought to cast these things away from us. It is far better for us to enter into life with only one eye or one hand than to have both and be sent "into hell-fire."

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. *Am I allowing questionable principles to interfere with my faith? Am I in the company of people who approve of things that my faith does not?*

2. *Is it hard for me to break off from discussions that appeal to our curiosity and earthly interest and pleasure but are ultimately unedifying?*

3. *Do I have healthy ongoing conversations with fellow believers that sharpen my spiritual insights?*

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. *Is the faith community inclusive or exclusive? How can we balance the thought of grace being inclusive in light of the instruction to separate ourselves from ungodly people?*

2. *What is the best way for a believer to enter into a healthy relationship with the ungodly without totally belonging to and being influenced by them?*

3. *In what ways can a believer impress a positive impact on the lives of ungodly and wicked persons?*

**PART 3:
THE PROCESS
OF A SOCIAL FAITH**

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9. NATIONAL SINS AND MISERIES¹⁰³ (1775)

FOCUS: PROBING THE ROOT OF SOCIAL DYSFUNCTION

"Lo, I have sinned, and I have one wickedly: But these sheep, what have they done"
2 Samuel 24:17¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Wesley was raised and lived as a Tory all his life. This term can be defined by Wesley even in the year 1785, as "one who believes in God, not the people, to be the origin of all civil power." Wesley disapproved of the appeal of what he termed false "liberty" that was gaining among American colonists. Wesley delivered upon the American Revolution a series of judgments. The pamphlets that he produced (including the paraphrase of Samuel Johnson's *Tyranny*) created controversy, however, Wesley maintained his position. The revolution had come in April of 1775 and the opening battles at Lexington, Concord, Bunker Hill, had cost the English a large number of casualties. This scenario rekindled in Wesley "his dread and horror of yet another 'civil war.'" When an invitation arrived for him to preach a "charity sermon" he gladly responded. He wrote his "political sentiments around his providential view of history." The sermon was delivered for the benefit of those who were early victims of war which include the widows and orphans, on St. Matthew's Church. (Outler and Heitzenrater, John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology, 564-565).

¹⁰⁴ 2 Samuel 24:17 (NIV): "When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, 'I have sinned; I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall on me and my family.'"

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WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. What do you think causes social divisions? What are features that make it critical for your community to do a good thing?
2. What negative and ugly traits/characteristics is our nation known for by other nations?
3. Are there existing social norms and conventions, without sound spiritual/moral basis, that inflict damage to people?

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

The text followed the event in the same chapter when the anger of God burned against Israel and moved David against them to take a census of Israel and Judah. Previously, God's anger resulted in three years of famine.¹⁰⁵ until David was given the instruction to appease the situation. In this text, we are not given the information on how and

¹⁰⁵ 2 Samuel 21:1-6 (NIV): "During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the Lord. The Lord said, 'It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death.' The king summoned the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not a part of Israel but were survivors of the Amorites; the Israelites had sworn to spare them, but Saul in his zeal for Israel and Judah had tried to annihilate them.) David asked the Gibeonites, 'What shall I do for you? How shall I make atonement so that you will bless the Lord's inheritance?' The Gibeonites answered him, 'We have no right to demand silver or gold from Saul or his family, nor do we have the right to put anyone in Israel to death.' 'What do you want me to do for you?' David asked. They answered the king, 'As for the man who destroyed us and plotted against us so that we have been decimated and have no place anywhere in Israel, let seven of his male descendants be given to us to be killed and their bodies exposed before the Lord at Gibeah of Saul—the Lord's chosen one.' So the king said, 'I will give them to you.'"

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what caused Israel to offend God by taking a census. What is stated is that David was moved to take a census of Israel and Judah. It was not God but Satan who moved David in that instance. We cannot impute such a directive to God as God is the “fountain of love and holiness.” It was Satan who moved David by enticing David to take a census.¹⁰⁶ Satan, with the intent to accuse David and Israel, stood before God and begged for permission to cast a temptation on David.¹⁰⁷ The accuser’s proposition is what stood before the human tribunal, therefore, the Scripture presents the things of God in a manner that can be understood, and represents the accuser appearing before God’s tribunal.¹⁰⁸ David executes his order to his people: “So David said to Joab and the

¹⁰⁶ Wesley: “He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.” He, “—not God! Beware how you impute this to the fountain of love and holiness! It was not God, but Satan, who thus moved David. So the parallel Scripture expressly declares: ‘And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.’” 1 Chron. 21:1 (NIV): “Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.”

¹⁰⁷ **PERSONAL NOTE:** This resembles the narrative in the book of Job when the accuser asked permission from God to test Job 1:6-12 (NIV): “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan [also] came among them. The Lord said to Satan, ‘From where have you come?’ Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.’ And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?’ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.’ And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.’ So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.”

¹⁰⁸ Wesley’s words: “Satan stood before God, to accuse David and Israel, and to beg God’s permission to tempt David. Standing is properly the accuser’s posture before the tribunals of men; and therefore the Scripture, which uses to speak of the things of God after the manner of men, represents Satan as appearing in this posture before the tribunal of God.”

commanders of the army, ‘Go, number Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me a report, that I may know their number.’”¹⁰⁹

The text does not provide what consists of this sin of taking the census. There is no prohibition in Scripture regarding it during the time it was implemented. However, we can read that the King’s order was abominable¹¹⁰ according to Joab.¹¹¹ People are punished by God because they share the sins of those who rule over them, generally participating in their rulers’ sins. The Righteous Judge then takes the occasion to impose His punishment for their sins. Joab was right when he said that God was displeased.¹¹² In response, David’s heart convicted him and beseeched God to take away his sin.¹¹³ Was not the sin committed based on a motive that was in David’s heart? Has not David committed the sin with pride in his heart, and probably out of vanity and ostentation¹¹⁴ to obtain glory for himself instead of God?

In this case, Joab was prophetic, and David caused the punishment of Israel. David’s sin was added to the people’s sin and “filled up the measure of their iniquities.” In effect

¹⁰⁹ 1 Chronicles 21:2 (NIV)

¹¹⁰ Word meaning: repulsive, detestable, causes hatred

¹¹¹ 2 Chronicles 23:6 (NIV): “But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king’s command was repulsive to him.”

¹¹² 2 Chronicles 23:7 (NIV): “This command was also evil in the sight of God: so he punished Israel.”

¹¹³ 2 Samuel 24:10 (NIV): “David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the Lord, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.’” 1 Chronicles 21:8 (NIV) “Then David said to God, ‘I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.’”

¹¹⁴ Word meaning: excessive or pretentious display to attract attention.

the Lord sent pestilence upon their nation: "So the Lord sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died" (2 Samuel 24:15).¹¹⁵ David was convinced that the plague was from God when he saw the angel that smote the people, as the angel appeared with a drawn sword.¹¹⁶ David had understood that he had acted wickedly and sinned, acknowledging that the people who did nothing wrong were affected by his fault.¹¹⁷

In the case of Israel, there are resemblances with our general wickedness. General wickedness is correlated with God's general visitation to deal with His people so that the same cause can produce a similar effect. When we sin, we are punished.¹¹⁸

Misery is rooted in vice, but we seldom point this out to ourselves. When we talk about "sin as the cause of misery," we usually refer to the "sin of other people" and we suffer because of their sin. However, we must account for our own vices and how they contribute to our suffering. We can do this by fairly examining our hearts and lives. The reality is

¹¹⁵ NIV

¹¹⁶ 1 Chronicles 21:16 (NIV): "David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown."

¹¹⁷ 1 Chronicles 21:17 (NIV): "David said to God, 'Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Lord my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people'"

¹¹⁸ Wesley is referring to reflecting on the particular situation of his country during his time. He continued: "We likewise have sinned, and we are punished; and perhaps these are only the beginning of sorrows. Perhaps the angel is now stretching out his hand over England to destroy it. O that the Lord would at length say to him that destroyeth, 'It is enough; stay now thine hand!'"

that "We all suffer: and we have all sinned." However, it is not profitable for everyone to consider all of his/her sins and associate those sins with bringing suffering both to oneself and everyone else.

We will inquire:

- a) What do people suffer from?
- b) What are the causes of their suffering?

A. WHAT DO PEOPLE SUFFER FROM?

No one can deny that people suffer and are afflicted beyond the ordinary way. Many people are *afflicted* due to a lack of financial opportunities (business). In opulent and large towns, the lack of businesses is not a dominant issue. However, many people are unemployed in other places.¹¹⁹

Many people have no access to the abundance of resources that they previously enjoyed and they live in "deplorable distress." They experience the deprivation of both the conveniences and necessities of life.¹²⁰

Every day, multitudes suffer through this grievous calamity. Being deprived of basic sustenance such as bread is a great affliction, but greater still it is to be deprived of

¹¹⁹ Wesley's words: "But it is also true, that this is far, very far, from being the general case of the kingdom. Nothing is more sure than that thousands of people in the west of England, throughout Cornwall in particular, in the north, and even in the midland counties, are totally unemployed."

¹²⁰ Wesley continues: "I have seen not a few of these wretched creatures, within little more than an hundred miles of London, standing in the streets with pale looks, hollow eyes, and meager limbs; or creeping up and down like walking shadows. I have known families, who a few years ago lived in an easy, genteel manner, reduced to just as much raiment as they had on, and as much food as they could gather in the field. To this one or other of them repaired once a day, to pick up the turnips which the cattle had left; which they boiled, if they could get a few sticks, or otherwise ate them raw. Such is the want of food to which many of our countrymen are at this day reduced by want of business!"

proper senses.¹²¹ Thousands upon thousands have experienced this situation. There is widespread poverty and widespread lunacy.¹²² Plain and honest people, by the thousands, throughout the land are utterly driven out of their senses by seeking *liberty* that is actually “in their hands” and enjoy it to a great extent. They can enjoy their legal property and religious liberty according to their conscience. They cry out against bondage and slavery which are forms of danger that are far from what they are experiencing.¹²³

There are people who used to have friendly, calm, and gentle dispositions, but because of their zeal for their party, are “foaming with rage against their quiet neighbors.” They are ready to cut each other’s throats and pierce one another with their sword.¹²⁴ If you had seen this situation with your eyes, would you not judge this not as little evil, but something that deserves the heaviest judgment that God can allow upon a guilty land?

¹²¹ Wesley’s words: “It is a great affliction to be deprived of bread; but it is a still greater to be deprived of our senses.”

¹²² Wesley pertaining to his experience: “Wide-spread poverty (though not in so high a degree) I have seen several years ago. But so widespread a lunacy I never saw, nor, I believe the oldest man alive.”

¹²³ Wesley’s words: “Therefore all those who are either passionately or dolefully crying out, ‘Bondage! Slavery!’ while there is no more danger of any such thing, than there is of the sky falling upon their head, are utterly distracted; their reason is gone; their intellects are quite confounded. Indeed, many of these have lately recovered their senses; yet are there multitudes still remaining, who are in this respect as perfectly mad as any of the inhabitants of Bedlam.”

¹²⁴ Wesley continues: “If you saw, as I have seen, in every county, city, town, men who were once of a calm, mild, friendly temper, mad with party-zeal, foaming with rage against their quiet neighbours, ready to tear out one another’s throats, and to plunge their swords into each other’s bowels; if you had heard men who once feared God and honoured the king, now breathing out the bitterest invectives against him, and just ripe, should any occasion offer, for treason and rebellion...”

This description depicts England at home and it is not any better abroad, particularly in the colonies.¹²⁵ Rage has overcome reason, and by popular clamor, reason’s small voice is drowned. Wisdom dies on the streets and understanding is nowhere to be found. There is slavery, as it is properly called because a “regular, legal, constitutional form of government” is absent. There is real bondage, not an imaginary one. There is neither “liberty of the press” nor “liberty of speech” allowed.¹²⁶ There is no liberty for exercising religion or conscience to those who “honour the King.” There is no civil liberty to enjoy the products of one’s labor. There is no security for life as a neighbor intends to cut the other neighbor’s throat. There are no laws since no legal magistrate exists to recognize offenses. A gulf of tyranny is present: an “arbitrary power on one hand, and of anarchy on the other.” If these were not enough, the monster fell: war! There is a complicated misery contained in this situation:

“Hark! the cannons roar! A pitchy cloud covers the face of the sky. Noise, confusion, terror, reign over all! Dying groans are on every side. The bodies of men are pierced, torn, hewed in pieces; their blood is poured on

¹²⁵ Wesley continues: “From those who are now upon the spot, I learn that in our colonies also many are causing the people to drink largely of the same deadly wine; thousands of whom are thereby inflamed more and more, till their heads are utterly turned, and they are mad to all intents and purposes.” Wesley refers to the colonies in America. According to Outler, Wesley was in favor of Americans’ demand for civil liberties. However, Wesley resisted when the colonies cried for independence.

¹²⁶ Wesley’s words: “Not only no liberty of the press is allowed,—none dare print a page, or a line, unless it be exactly conformable to the sentiments of our lords, the people,—but no liberty of speech. Their tongue is not their own. None must dare to utter one word, either in favour of King George, or in disfavour of the idol they have set up,—the new, illegal, unconstitutional government, utterly unknown to us and to our forefathers.”

the earth like water! Their souls take their flight into the eternal world; perhaps into everlasting misery. The ministers of grace turn away from the horrid scene; the ministers of vengeance triumph."

What drags people into the field of blood? It is the great phantom that they call liberty:

"Which breathes into their hearts stern love of war,
And thirst of vengeance, and contempt of death"

However, real liberty is "trampled underfoot, and is lost in anarchy and confusion."

The warriors left their widows with none to care for them, with neither comfort nor support, and no place to lay their heads, together with the warriors' children who turned into desolate orphans.

B. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF THEIR SUFFERING?

What have the sheep done that suffering came upon them? Are those suffering at a greater degree guilty of committing sins that are greater than others? That cannot be the case because unless we repent, we will also perish. This concern compels us to consider our sins and relate them to the cause of our suffering. That is to say that we have sinned and have been wicked.

Time would not allow us to enumerate all the ways we have sinned. Win general, what is certain is that:

"The rich, the poor, the high, the low,
Have wander'd from his mild command;
The floods of wickedness o'erflow,
And deluge all the guilty land:
People and Priest lie drown'd in sin,

And Tophet¹²⁷ yawns to take them in."

The violations of justice are innumerable among us. Mercy would not be found if it was in opposition to someone's interest. How few would restrain themselves from oppressing the widow and the fatherless? How can truth be found, when deceit and fraud are always on the streets? Where are those who will speak truth from their heart, those who put the picture of their thoughts through their words? Where are those who put away lying—never speaking what is not truly meant? A particular statesman that: "All other vices have had their patrons; but lying is so base, so abominable a vice, that never was anyone found yet who dared openly to plead for it."¹²⁸

To where did the truth, that only a few had an acquaintance with, flee? Do we not continually tell lies "for the nonce"¹²⁹ to get pleasure or profit? Isn't our common language filled with falsehoods?

Perhaps, there is evidence of what our condition is that we do not usually attend to. If we blame a person in other aspects, that person would not be much affronted¹³⁰ as compared to calling that same person a liar. When someone is called a liar, that person won't bear it because a person can only tolerate being blamed for something that he/she is consciously innocent of. If a person is called a liar and by doing so hits a "sore spot," the person who is guilty cannot bear being called as such and proves that he/she is indeed guilty.

¹²⁷ Word meaning: area that functions for sacrifices and burials especially for young children

¹²⁸ Outlier notes that Wesley referred to Addison, based on the sermon "On Pleasing Men"

¹²⁹ Word meaning: for the moment

¹³⁰ Word meaning: insulted, disrespected

Is there a kind of character that is worse than a liar and even an *epicure*.¹³¹ Isn't it true that we are a generation of epicures whose god is our belly? Is not our chief delight found in eating and drinking, as our highest happiness?¹³²

Sloth consistently emerges from luxury. In due time, a glutton will become a drone.¹³³ The more meat and drink such a person consumes, the less he/she desires to have labor.¹³⁴

Profanity, which is an "utter contempt of God,"¹³⁵ is also rampant.

Let us put our hands on our hearts and say to God that we have contributed to the "flood of unrighteousness and ungodliness," which adds misery to our people. Am I not guilty of those things? Have I not contributed to the suffering

¹³¹ Word meaning: epicure means someone whose pleasures are in food and drink.

¹³² Wesley adds an illustration: "Is it not the main study (I fear, the only study) of many honourable men to enlarge the pleasure of tasting? When was luxury (not in food only, but in dress, furniture, equipage) carried to such an height in Great Britain ever since it was a nation We have lately extended the British empire almost over the globe. We have carried our laurels into Africa, into Asia, into the burning and the frozen climes of America. And what have we brought thence all the elegance of vice which either the eastern or western world could afford?"

¹³³ Word meaning: an idle person, lives off the works of others

¹³⁴ Wesley relates this description to the people in his context: "This degeneracy of the Britons from their temperate, active forefathers, was taken notice of in the last century. But if Mr. Herbert then said, 'O England, full of sin, but most of sloth!' what would he have said now? Observe the difference between the last and the present century, only in a single instance: In the last, the Parliament used to meet *hora quinta*, ante meridiem, 'at five in the morning!' Could these Britons look out of their graves, what would they think of the present generation?"

¹³⁵ Wesley gives this observation: "Permit me to touch on one article more, wherein, indeed, we excel all the nations upon earth. Not one nation under the canopy of heaven can vie with the English in profaneness. Such a total neglect, such an utter contempt of God, is nowhere else to be found. In no other streets, except in Ireland..."

of others due to my sins? If our hearts have any tenderness, "bowels of mercies," or any sympathy for those who are afflicted, we ought to examine ourselves until we become deeply aware of our sins as a great cause of others' sufferings.

However, the plague has begun and is able to ravage.¹³⁶ What can we do and how should we stand "between the living and the dead? What is a better way to turn God's anger aside than what is prescribed by St. James: "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded?"¹³⁷

FIRST: Wash your hands. Put away evil deeds without delay. "Instantly flee from sin, from every evil word and work, as from the face of a serpent." Do not allow corrupt, uncharitable, and unprofitable words to flow from our mouths, nor guile in our mouths. To everyone, we must speak the truth from our hearts. Renounce every act, regardless of what benefit can be gained from such an act, that is, against justice and mercy. Treat everyone in the manner that you wish a person would do to you in the same situation.¹³⁸ We must strive in every work and word to have our conscience free from any offense toward God.

NEXT: Purify your hearts, through the grace of God who loves us. We ought to remove our double-mindedness, which is being undecided between heaven and earth, serving either God or mammon. Our hearts must be purified from pride by being humble to God; from "party-zeal, anger, resentment, bitterness" that

¹³⁶ Wesley pertains to his context: "But now the plague is begun, and has already made such ravages both in England and America..."

¹³⁷ James 4:8 (NIV)

¹³⁸ Wesley's words: "Do to everyone as, in parallel circumstances, you would wish he should do unto you." "

deficiency and the vices of the world that influence its relationships? How can I make a stand?

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. Is it possible to have a social problem that is solely based on social systems and structures, a condition brought about by impersonal forces/elements, without any association to any personal figure behind them?
2. In your view, does social transformation primarily begin by reforming systems that govern social life in order to change people's lives, or, do people's lives need to be changed first to affect the social condition toward the revision of unjust systems? Is it possible that change in both the lives of people and the systems that control social order can simultaneously happen?
3. Can social situations and culture be improved through the transformation of values alone while maintaining existing social systems that embody the hierarchy of power and govern people's lives?

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beset us; from "all prejudice, bigotry, the narrowness of spirit; from impetuosity,¹³⁹ and impatience of contradiction; from the love of dispute, and from every degree of an unmerciful or implacable¹⁴⁰ temper." Let us have the wisdom of God sink deeply into our hearts instead of the earthly and devilish wisdom. The wisdom of God is first pure, then peaceable, abounds in mercy and good fruits; showing no partiality that embraces all, without hypocrisy that means genuine and unfeigned.¹⁴¹ We are to be kind to all our fellow people as we put away malice and evil speaking. We must be tender-hearted to those who experience distress, forgiving one another just as we are forgiven by God through Christ.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. Have I committed a sin, misgiving, or error that gravely affected another person without being compelled to rectify?¹⁴² If?
2. Do I have the courage to gently and humbly confront a person whose actions and words harm the well-being of others due to his/her lack of awareness?
3. Am I involved in a community of faith that is also beset with problems that both reflect spiritual

¹³⁹ Word meaning: impulsive

¹⁴⁰ Word meaning: cruel, inflexible, relentless, unstoppable

¹⁴¹ Word meaning: sincere, honest, authentic

¹⁴² Word meaning: making it right

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10. OF FORMER TIMES¹⁴³ (1787)

FOCUS: DISCERNING THE SOCIAL MANIFESTATION OF CHANGE

¹⁴³ Wesley was concerned with the relationships between emergent issues and the Christian worldview and this sermon shows Wesley as an interesting sample of a "theologian of culture." In the 1780s, the idea of "progress" was one of the issues that had become popular. The "golden age of mankind" based on traditional philosophies of history has "long since decayed." Alternatively, there has been the corruption of the "authentic Christian faith and praxis" that was embodied in the "pristine 'apostolic age.'" Robert South, who was a theologian, argued that the term "former times" mentioned in the text are not better than what we have right now, because there are certain defects in every age. In a much earlier time, 1566, John Bodin expounded in his work *Methodus* that there is a "law of oscillations" and rejects both the extremes of optimism and pessimism. This point was followed by other writers. George Hawkwill's *Apologie or Declaration of the Power of and Providence of God in the Government in the World...* in 1627, 1630 and 1635, present its case that Christian in pagan time have decisively contributed to human progress. Nearer to Wesley's time was Bishop Thomas Sprat envisioned an "absolute perfection of the true philosophy [of nature]" in his *History of Royal Society* in 1667. Joseph Glanvill's essay *Plus Ultra* in 1668 a.k.a *Progress and Advancement of Knowledge since the Days of Aristotle* was known by Wesley. The work by Glanvill is a celebration of the "unprecedented progress in useful knowledge generated by the new sciences." The extension of such an idea to the new Transatlantic World" was what interested Wesley the most in Glanvill, since it was also one of his recurring visions. The general conversation about the main theme was popularized by Bernard Le Bovier Fontenelle in France and England through his works: *Dialogues of the Dead* and *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*. The people, in 1787, were needing a sermon that connects two points that were not usually held together by those who advocated progress: a) the actual progress and scope of God's providence." This sermon is an evangelical theologian's output of transforming a secular idea. (Outler, *The Works of John Wesley Bicentennial Edition Vol. 3: Sermons*, 440-441).

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"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."
Ecclesiastes 7:10¹⁴⁴

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. *Is the world getting better or worse?*
2. *What is more productive, comparing the present (what you are undergoing right now) with the past, or comparing the present to a measure of a future goal?*
3. *Is it possible to reach a point in time when the optimum human condition can be met, wherein further development is no longer possible? Could it be that the Gospel being preached is the end of that optimum human attainment?*

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

It is difficult to see the textual relation of this text to the words that are both prior to it and those that follow it that constitute its context. It appears like an independent sentence that is detached like many of the verses found in Proverbs. Just like the Proverbs, this text contains a weighty truth. It is not wise to ponder about the cause behind a supposition¹⁴⁵ unless the supposition itself is proven to be true. Therefore, it is not wise to ask the supposition that "the

¹⁴⁴ Ecclesiastes 7:10 (NIV): "Do not say, 'Why were the old days better than these?' For it is not wise to ask such questions"

¹⁴⁵ Word meaning: the hypothesis, assumption

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former days were better” because it is never yet proven or can never be.

Generally, it is supposed that we live in the “dregs”¹⁴⁶ of time” as the world has grown older in a declining state, including everything that is it. It is supposed that: people were larger in former times;¹⁴⁷ particular abilities and understanding, as supposed, were greater in the past, which consequently produced writing that is more preferable than recent ones; and above all, it is supposed that the virtues of the previous generations excelled as compared to those of the present. Humankind has degenerated more and more.

Before considering these points, we ought to inquire how they came about. Regarding the general supposition, that “the world was once in a far more excellent state than it is.” We cannot easily imagine that this supposition came from “some confused traditions concerning our first parents and their paradisiacal state.” Regarding this view, learned individuals had gleaned from the many fragments of ancient writings. We may allow that in this certain supposition, there are some truths by certainly seeing that Adam and Eve were in a Paradise that is far better than either where their descendants are or “ever will be till Christ returns to reign upon earth.”

***Wesley addressed three suppositions regarding the former days, namely: a) People are larger; b) People are more talented and have greater abilities; c) People are more virtuous. We will skip the discussion of these suppositions regarding people being larger in the former days but it would be in Wesley’s words placed in the succeeding footnote.**

¹⁴⁶ Word meaning: undesirable part

¹⁴⁷ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Other current writings claim that humans are getting taller.

On the other hand, the main question that Wesley addresses is: whether the former days were better than the present.*¹⁴⁸

But how did those suppositions arise?¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Personal in-text comment.

¹⁴⁹ Wesley addressed the possible origin of the supposition why people were larger in former times than during his time. Wesley wrote: “This has been a generally prevailing opinion, almost in all nations and in all ages... Homer tells us of one of his heroes throwing a stone which hardly ten men could lift, —*oioi nun brotoi*, —such as men are now. We allow, indeed, there have been giants in all ages, in various parts of the world. Whether the antediluvians mentioned in Genesis were such or no, (which many have questioned,) we cannot doubt but *Og the King of Bashan* was such, as well as *Goliath of Gath*. Such also were many of the children (or descendants) of *Anak*. But it does not appear that in any age or nation men in general were larger than they are now. We are very sure they were not for many centuries past, by the tombs and coffins that have been discovered, which are exactly of the same size with those that are now in use. And in the catacombs at Rome, the niches for the dead bodies which were hewn in the rock sixteen hundred years ago are none of them six feet in length, and some a little under. Above all, the Pyramids of Egypt (that of King Cheops in particular) have, beyond all reasonable doubt, remained at least three thousand years. Yet none of the mummies (embalmed bodies) brought there from are above five feet ten inches long. But how then came this supposition to prevail so long and so generally in the world I know not but it may be accounted for from hence: Great and little are relative terms; and all men judge of greatness and littleness by comparing things with themselves. Therefore, it is not strange, if we think men are larger now than they were when we were children. I remember a remarkable instance of this in my own case: After having left it for seven years, I had a great desire to see the school where I was brought up. When I was there, I wondered that the boys were so much smaller than they used to be when I was at school. “Many of my school-fellows, ten years ago, were taller by the head than me; and few of them that are at school now reach up to my shoulders.” Very true: But what was the reason for this? Indeed a very plain one: It was not because they were smaller, but because I was bigger than I was ten years before. I verily believe this is the cause, why men in general suppose the human race to decrease in stature. They remember a time when most of those around about them were both taller and bigger than themselves. Yea, and all men have done the same in their successive generations. Is it any wonder, then, that all should have run into the same mistake, when it has been transmitted unawares from father to son, and probably will be to the end of time.”

The supposition that claims understanding and mental abilities were superior in ancient days compared to the present, as the former generation possessed talents that were greater than what we have today. Learned individuals supported such a claim. Indeed, many ancient writers, which include historians, poets, and philosophers—such as the poets “Homer and Virgil” and the historians “Thucydides and Livy”—would not be easily surpassed or have their equals in the latter times. However, we may consider that the previous writers spent the rest of their lives “composing and polishing one book.” An enormous amount of labor was exerted in doing their work. It is doubtful that any person in the world or Europe has painstakingly labored to exquisitely complete his/her work with the same degree of focus that the early writers had. Otherwise, someone could equal, if not surpass, the ancient works that were written before their time.

From authentic records, we may easily gather that those in ancient times were not one jot wiser than those who are in the present. A nation that we can have a certain account of is Egypt. We can have a conception of their learning and understanding as we reflect on “the objects their worship.” They have the vilest animals, including cats and dogs, and also plants that grew in their garden such as leeks and onions as objects of worship. Some believe that there is deep and hidden meaning in the practice of worship of the ancient Egyptians. However, it is believable that there was no deeper meaning in the worship of cats than schoolboys teasing the same animal.¹⁵⁰ It can also be

¹⁵⁰ Wesley's words: “Indeed, I knew a great man (whose manner was to treat with the foulest abuse all that dared to differ from him: I do not mean Dr. Johnson -- he was a mere courtier compared to Mr. Hutchinson) who scurrilously abused all those who are so void of common sense as to believe any such thing concerning them. He peremptorily affirms, (but

believed that the common Egyptians who lived three thousand years ago were equally wise as the common ploughmen in Wales and England who are living to this day.

The point of greatest importance among the claims is that “did not the people of former times greatly excel us in virtue?” Is it not universally accepted that “every age grows worse and worse” as penned by an old heathen, nearly two thousand years ago, that the generation of our parents was more violent compared to that of our grandparents, and our generation at the present is more extreme than what our parents had, so, we are worse than our parent and the generation of our children will be worse compared to ours.¹⁵¹

Such a claim has been a common assertion from one generation to the other. If that supposition is true, how can its rise be accounted for?

Is it not common that older generations praise the past and condemn the present? Such a practice has been operating much more than what can be easily imagined. Those who have more experience are considered by the younger generation to have more wisdom because those who live in the present witness the “degeneracy of the world.” Those who are familiar with hearing from their infancy about how better the world previously was than what it is now would naturally grow the idea that the world is getting worse and worse.

We must endeavor without partiality and take into consideration the whole concern at hand. By doing so, the

without condescending to give us any proof.) that the ancient inhabitants of Egypt had a deep hidden meaning in all this. Let him believe it who can. I cannot believe it on any man bare assertion. I believe they had no deeper meaning in worshipping cats than our schoolboys have in baiting them.”

¹⁵¹ According to Outler, Wesley wrote a loose translation that was written by Horace.

former days will appear not better than the present. Contrary to this supposition, the present is beyond comparison to the previous state in many respects. From the beginning of the world, humankind has been nearly the same, as the capacity of people to understand, given the similar circumstances are much the same. We don't have any reason to believe that the previous state of the uncivilized nations had a better understanding or was less barbarous compared to themselves right now. On the other hand, we cannot prove that the natural understanding of those in civilized locations back then is improved and stronger than those who are living now. There is no reason that by having better instruments we have gained a knowledge of nature that few ancients if they ever did, have attained. Concerning the availability of instruments, we have the advantage and we need to be thankful to the "Giver of every good gift," yet, the former days should not be compared to what we have right now.

Still, the principal question remains: Were the former days, better than the present, regarding virtue, or more specifically, religion?

By religion, it means the love of God that fills the heart and governs life. The guaranteed effect of this love is the "uniform practice of justice, mercy and truth." This description is the very essence of religion, considering its height and depth when filtered from opinions and particular modes of worship. Now we can ask, which of the former times is better than the religious experience and practice of the deeply committed religious figures?¹⁵²

¹⁵² Wesley's words: "And I would calmly inquire, 'Which of the former times were better than these, with regard to this to the religion experienced and practised by Archbishop Fenelon, in France; Bishop Ken, in England; and Bishop Bedell, in Ireland?'" According to Outler: Archbishop Fenelon is known for a significant development of mysticism, whose writings were

We do not need to cover in our question what is beyond the period when the Gospel brought to light both life and immortality. It is conceivable that the days that directly followed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost were superior to any other else that has come before, even with regard to religion.

However, when we set aside these "short golden days," we must return to the question: which of the former days is better compared to the present considering every part of the known habitable world?

Is the former portion of the century better in either any location on this continent (Europe) or islands? There is no reason to affirm that such is the case. Indeed, luxury had increased to a high degree ("in every part of Europe"), but also the "scandal of England." Profanity in every place within the kingdom. Aside from that, there is a swift decrease in the "most infernal of all vices" which is cruelty. Even the barbarity that is practiced everywhere in war has been for many years discontinued.

Was the last century compared to the recent one more religious? In the former part of the last century, there is "much form of religion," which undoubtedly allowed some to experience its power. However, such a state became immediately darkened as soon as it was intermingled with worldly designs, leading to a scandal upon religion that is characterized by total contempt for truth, justice, and mercy. Such a scandal continues to remain in religion. Was the previous century, the Reformation Age, able to exhibit a truer form of religion? There were considerable reforms in

used by Wesley; Bishop Ken is famed for his Christian courage and piety, played a role in the politics of England by refusing directives of some royal figures, he also wrote hymns such "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;" Bishop Bedell a revered figure and Wesley referred to Bedell's biography and abridged it.

religious opinion in many countries. Changes were applied for the enhancement of the modes of their worship, but there was neglect in terms of observance of justice and mercy. Martin Luther himself with his dying breath complained:

"The people that are called by my name (though I wish they were only called by the name of Christ) are reformed as to their opinions and modes of worship; but their tempers and lives are the same they were before."

Both mercy and justice were unashamedly trampled underfoot. A writer computes that there are people not lower than 40 million who were slaughtered during religious contexts, within forty years.¹⁵³

Going back a thousand years we would not find a better time. No one who studies history can provide a hint about that concern except during the Period of Constantine. A number of writers have provided us with accounts of that period. Dr. Newton, an eminent author, with great effort, showed Constantine's conversion to Christianity and the emoluments¹⁵⁴ that Constantine granted to the church which resembles what Revelation signifies as "the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven!"

However, the account that is given above is far from the "whole tenor of ancient history." Constantine, identified as a Christian, and poured wealth and honor upon the church, especially on the Clergy, produced more evil than "all the ten persecutions put together." When all kind of

¹⁵³ Wesley: "Even then both justice and mercy were so shamelessly trodden under foot that an eminent writer computes the number of those that were slaughtered, during those religious contests, to have been no less than forty millions, within the compass of forty years!"

¹⁵⁴ Word meaning: benefits, rewards, fees, payments

power, riches, and honor is heaped¹⁵⁵ upon the church, the Clergy and the lay become flooded with all kinds of vices. When the church and the state—Christ's kingdom and the world—are unnaturally and strangely blended together, fully incorporating both Christianity and Heathenism with each other, they will almost never be divided until the return of Christ to reign on earth. Instead of fancying that the earth was covered by the glory of the New Jerusalem during that age, we have proof that what they had and ever since were a covering of smoke that was coming from the bottomless pit.

But, is not the period prior to that age, that of the third century, incomparably better days than any of what came after it? There is almost a universal belief in this claim. There are only a few who do not subscribe to the view that the Christian church was in its glory, in the worship of God in holiness, before the time of Constantine. According to the account of St. Cyprian, who lived, witnessed with his ears and eyes, and had sealed the truth with his blood, the century had abominations that prevailed over the people who were of different statuses. Persecution followed as God poured His wrath.

Considering what took place before the third century, even in the first century which is the apostolic age, St. John gave an account of the several churches that he himself had planted in Asia.¹⁵⁶ How is it that the quality of their congregations does not have much significance but is only a little better in contrast to those that are in Europe in this

¹⁵⁵ Word meaning: accumulated, gathered, amassed

¹⁵⁶ **PERSONAL NOTE:** This can pertain to the Book of Revelations, which is attributed to St. John's writings to the seven churches in Asia.

day?¹⁵⁷ Forty to fifty years before,¹⁵⁸ were there not abominations that are "not even named among the Heathens"¹⁵⁹ but are in the church of Corinth within thirty years after the descent of the Holy Spirit? The "mystery of iniquity"¹⁶⁰ worked early in the Christian church. The assertion that the "former days" are "better than these" can only be appealed with little reason.

Affirming that the "former days" are indeed better is both untruthful and expresses "ingratitude to God" and an insult to his Spirit. A fair and candid¹⁶¹ pursuit of the question will show that there was no decrease, but an increase in true religions in the present.¹⁶² For instance, pertaining to a "capital branch of religion," which is loving our neighbors, persecution almost vanished, and Christians of different denominations manifested their forbearance¹⁶³ among themselves.¹⁶⁴ Also, the governors treated their respective

¹⁵⁷ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Wesley was referring to the quality of churches in his time as compared to the early Christians.

¹⁵⁸ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Possibly pertaining to the time when the account about the churches in Asia was written by St. John in relation to the period of the church in Corinth that is being described in this particular case. The Book of Revelation have been written approximately in 60-70 AD according to some writers, or the most favored view is that it was penned in the mid-90s AD, while the book of 1 Corinthians was written in approximately 53-55 AD. The Pentecost happened in 30 AD.

¹⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 5:1 (NIV): "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife."

¹⁶⁰ 2 Thessalonians 2:7 (NIV): "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way."

¹⁶¹ Word meaning: sincere, fair, honest, open, frank

¹⁶² Wesley was referring to his century.

¹⁶³ Word meaning: patience, tolerance

¹⁶⁴ Wesley's words: "To instance in one capital branch of religion, the love of our neighbour. Is not persecution well nigh vanished from the face of the earth? In what age did Christians of various denominations show such forbearance toward each other? When before was such lenity shown by

subjects with mildness, which was not seen since the Apostle's time.

If others claim that these improvements were caused by "general infidelity," the Deism¹⁶⁵ that has spread in Europe, the answer is that whatever the cause, there is a reason to rejoice in the result. We should all the more magnify God's power, wisdom, and goodness because He, being all-wise, was able to bring a great and universal good out of that dreadful evil. In this way, nominal Christians can be best prepared: first for tolerating, and next, for receiving genuine Christianity. This is the way how governors who are not acquainted with Christianity are to be introduced to it.¹⁶⁶ God's wisdom and knowledge disregarded all religions to pave the way for the "revival of the only religion that is worthy of God!"

Above all, as luxury and profanity increase, so as benevolence and compassion in a manner that was previously unknown to all human woes, beginning from the world's earliest age. The proof of this is that we see more establishments erected for attending people skills such as

governors toward their respective subjects not only in Great Britain and Ireland, but in France and Germany; yea, every part of Europe? Nothing like this has been seen since the time of Constantine; no, not since the time of the Apostles?;" Outler notes that Wesley seems to have repressed his memories regarding the riots in 1778 referred to as the "Lord Gordon riots" which was anti-Catholic, and that Wesley ignored that the "Test and Corporation Acts against Dissenters" were still enforced by law.

¹⁶⁵ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Deism is a philosophical standpoint and a religious perspective that rejects revelation but affirms empirical reasoning. It claims that God exists and brought creation into being but does not directly interfere with creation.

¹⁶⁶ **PERSONAL NOTE:** God can use the schemes of this world, especially pertaining to the dreadful evils such a Deistic standpoint for this particular matter, in order to work out His plan. The schemes of this world are acceptable to those who belong to it, but it is also the means by which the wisdom of God is introduced into their lives.

"hospital, infirmities, and public charity" in this century in comparison to "five hundred years before" (at least in England). Such establishments to attend to people's ills can be partly due to vanity or the longing for praise. There is a reason to praise God that much good has emerged from even imperfect motives.¹⁶⁷

God's goodness is with us in the present age. The standard of living was enhanced. Approximately fifty years have passed since a small seed was sown in London, and grew to put forth its branches reaching even beyond the seas. There were two or three persons who decided to help others become real Christians by meeting together. They multiplied to "hundreds, thousands, to myriads" while committed to pursuing their single aim: a real religion, which is, having the love of God and people to rule their tempers, words, and actions.

Are we going to say that the "former days were better than these?" May we not be found unwise and unthankful by God? Rather, we ought to praise God all day because he has blessed us abundantly. "No 'former time,' since the Apostles left the earth, has been better than the present." Considering various aspects, there is no time that is comparable to the present. We are born on the day of God's power, of His glorious salvation that is speeding up toward the renewal of the whole of humankind in true holiness and righteousness. The Sun of Righteousness has already brightly shone on the Earth's different locations. He has already poured down His gracious showers upon His inheritance. The precious souls are already ripe to be

¹⁶⁷ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Also, those developments can be associated with social progress through a secular component, nevertheless, God's work advances through those means. In the end, God's plan is achieved toward the betterment of social life despite the possible origin of development not solely credited to religion.

gathered and may we belong to them, by being ready to follow and having our hearts cry out: "Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!"

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

- 1. Do I have the tendency to dwell in the past, to a point that it robs me or makes me neglect present blessings?*
- 2. Do I feel defeated when my present situation does not coincide with what I have previously dreamed of?*
- 3. Are my spiritual eyes open to see that God is moving and using means that are beyond my control in order to assist me in doing the work that He has entrusted me with?*

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

- 1. Can social enhancements be attained without the presence of the church? Why or why not?*
- 2. What are the expected manifestations in society that are uniquely attributed either to the church's presence in the community or Christians living out their faith through their specific expertise? Are those manifestations evidently seen?*
- 3. What are the instances in history that are dreadfully evil, yet God has used them for His glory?*

11. THE GENERAL SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL¹⁶⁸ (1783)

FOCUS: TRANSMISSION OF THE MESSAGE

*"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,
as the waters covers the sea."*
Isaiah 11:9¹⁶⁹

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. *What do you think are the changes that need to happen in the world today to make it more livable?*
2. *What are the common stumbling blocks that Christians can commit that make the unbelieving world people keep refusing to believe their message?*

¹⁶⁸ Wesley painted a bleak picture of the world based on his survey which was drawn from his context and his estimation about other places and people other than what he can find in Europe. He had a high hope for universal redemption despite his characterization of the world. For him the Methodist Revival is both a "sign of hope" and a model of the final design of God for "the general spread of the Gospel." (Albert Outler, *The Works of John Wesley Bicentennial ed. Vol. 2: Sermons*, 485.)

¹⁶⁹ Isaiah 11:9 (NIV): "They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

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3. *What do you think are the keywords that would describe what is happening in the world today?*

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

What is the condition of the world at present? How do "darkness, intellectual darkness, ignorance, with vice and misery" envelope the earth!"¹⁷⁰

Even the Christians, pertaining to the Western church which is knowledgeable and is more scriptural and rational in worship, are not as holy as they should be according to the holiness of the One who has called them to be holy. They are not filled with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, nor have they the mind in Christ or walked as Christ did. They are from having those qualities in the same way that hell is from heaven.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Wesley expounds: "From the accurate inquiry made with indefatigable pains by our ingenious countryman, Mr. Brewster; (who travelled himself over a great part of the known world, in order to form the more exact judgment;) supposing the world to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen of them are professed Heathens, altogether as ignorant of Christ, as if he had never come into the world: Six of the remaining parts are professed Mahometans: So that only five in thirty are so much as nominally Christians! And let it be remembered, that since this computation was made, many new nations have been discovered; numberless islands, particularly in the South Sea, large and well inhabited."

¹⁷¹ Wesley's words: "The Western Churches seem to have the pre-eminence over all these in many respects. They have abundantly more knowledge: They have more scriptural and more rational modes of worship. Yet two thirds of them are still involved in the corruptions of the Church of Rome; and most of these are entirely unacquainted with either the theory or practice of religion. And as to those who are called Protestants, or Reformed, what acquaintance with it have they Put Papists and Protestants, French and English together, the bulk of one and of the other nation; and what manner of Christians are they? Are they 'holy as He that hath called them is holy'? Are they filled with 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'? Is there 'that mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus'? And

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This is the description of the state of humankind in every part of the world. It is astonishing if there is a God who sees in heaven and all over the earth. How can this condition be reconciled with the wisdom or goodness of God? God will rise and maintain His cause by judging the ungodly power that rules this world and spoiling the dominion that such power has usurped for itself. God will commit His Son to the unbelieving world and the earth will know the Lord by covering it with knowledge about Him. God's loving knowledge that produces "uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness" shall cover both the earth and every person's soul.

Some would exclaim that it is impossible, even the greatest of all impossibilities, to have a Christian world, or even either a Christian nation or city. There is one supposition that removes both the impossibility and all difficulty in having those outcomes. That supposition implies that God acts in an irresistible way. Such an act can be done by God with the same ease in the same manner when God said "Let there be light, and there was light." However, a human would no longer be acting like a human and that would change his/her nature. By then, a person would no longer be a moral agent. Liberty, which is the power to choose or express self-determination, would be lost. In effect, a person would consequently be no longer capable of "virtue or vice, of reward or punishment."

How can persons be made holy and happy, and continue to be as they are, as moral agents who enjoy their understanding, affections, and liberty that are essential to them? There is a plain and simple way to address this without

do they 'walk as Christ also walked.' Nay, they are as far from it as hell is from heaven!"

being entangled with metaphysical¹⁷² investigations. God is one, and His work is "uniform in all ages." We can conceive of how He will work in the souls of those who are still to come by considering the way He works in the present and past.

For example, an instance that we cannot be easily deceived of is our knowledge that God has worked in our souls that leads us to say: The life we live, we live by faith in Jesus Christ who loved us and sacrificed himself for us. God did not remove our understanding, but gave light to it and reinforced it. God did not demolish our affections but made them more dynamic than ever. Also, God did not get rid of our freedom which is the power to choose between "good or evil."¹⁷³ These were possible just as how God assisted five persons in a house, or fifty or five hundred in a city, and a thousand in a nation "without depriving any of them of that liberty which is essential to a moral agent."

The power of grace, in certain instances, can work overwhelmingly irresistibly. However, God does not work irresistibly at all times in the human soul. There is no one who, in multiple moments, has not resisted the Holy Spirit and neglected God's counsel. St. Austin's well-known saying is true: "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." As God has converted people to Himself without disregarding their liberty, so can nations or the

¹⁷² Word meaning: an explanation of reality through a philosophical study

¹⁷³ The continuation of the statement is: "...choosing good or evil. He did not force you; but, being assisted by his grace, you, like Mary, chose the better part;" Wesley exhorts that just like Mary we can choose the better part, which refers to Luke 10:42 (NIV) "but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

whole world be easily converted to Him as if He is converting an individual.¹⁷⁴

As an illustration:

At the University of Oxford, between fifty and sixty years ago, God raised a small number of young men to testify about the grand truths that were then little attended:

- Without holiness, no person shall see the Lord.
- Holiness is the work of God by causing us to will and to do.
- This holiness is according to His good pleasure through the merits of Christ.
- This holiness is the mind is in Christ that enables us to walk the way Christ had walked.
- No person can be sanctified until he/she is justified.
- We are justified only by faith.

They declared these truths on all occasions, both in private and in public, with no hidden intention but to

¹⁷⁴ This paragraph is worth noting for it shows an aspect of Wesley's view of grace. In his words: *"The' o'whelming power of saving grace does, for a time, work as irresistibly as lightning falling from heaven. But I speak of God's general manner of working, of which I have known innumerable instances; perhaps more within fifty years last past, than any one in England or in Europe. And with regard even to these exempt cases, although God does work irresistibly for the time, yet I do not believe there is any human soul in which God works irresistibly at all times. Nay, I am fully persuaded there is not. I am persuaded, there are no men living that have not many times 'resisted the Holy Ghost,' and made void 'the counsel of God against themselves.' Yea, I am persuaded every child of God has had, at some time, 'life and death set before him,' eternal life and eternal death; and has in himself the casting voice. So true is that well-known saying of St. Austin, (one of the noblest he ever uttered.) Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabitur sine nobis: 'He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves.' Now in the same manner as God has converted so many to himself without destroying their liberty, he can undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world; and it is as easy to him to convert a world, as one individual soul."*

promote God's glory, and their sole desire was to rescue souls from death.

Their movement spread wider and wider beginning from Oxford, where it originated as more and more saw the truth in Jesus and received it in the love of Christ. An increasing number of people found redemption and the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus. They were born again in the Spirit and were filled with righteousness, peace, and joy. Afterward, the message continues to spread to every place, and with such a spread, the little becomes a thousand. It spread to "North Britain and Ireland; and, a few years after into New-York, Pennsylvania, and many other provinces in America, even as high as Newfoundland and Nova-Scotia." The small grain became a large tree and produced branches.

When the truths, specifically the justification by faith, were preached, a great congregation formed after a few days and weeks. This growth continued with either shorter or longer intervals but subsided. Then, it was carried on with the Spirit by watering the seeds that were sown to confirm and strengthen those who believed. This manner of God's work was observable in Great Britain, Ireland, and every part of America, as God's word powerfully came.

It is not improbable that God will carry out His work in the same way that it has begun. God's kingdom in general will not be immediately observed but will silently grow wherever it has been set up. It spreads from heart to heart, house to house, town to town, and from one kingdom to another.

In every nation under heaven, we can be reasonable in believing that God will work in the same order that had been put in place at the beginning of Christianity. That God will be known from the least to the greatest since the world's wisdom is foolishness to God. Before the coming to an end,

the prominent and great people, such as kings, the rich, the rulers, the princes, the genius, and the philosophers will be persuaded that they are fools and will be converted as little children to enter God's Kingdom.

By then, the spiritual house of Israel from various nations will accomplish the great promise of God: "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts: And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." God will be merciful to their iniquities, and the universal time of refreshment will come from God's presence. There will be a grand Pentecost, and all persons will be filled in all places by the Holy Spirit; they will continue to abide with the Apostles' doctrine, the breaking of the bread, and being in prayer. With a single heart, grace will be upon them, and their souls and hearts be unified. The consequence of this occurrence will be the same as what happened at the beginning of the early Church. They will share their possessions and no one will lack anything. They will distribute what they possess to every person according to their needs. All will do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. Their conversations will minister to one another; nothing would defile them through any root of bitterness. There would be no love for money, no partiality, and no temptation which ushers unkind words or murmuring thoughts against anyone. Love will be the basis of their communication.

The great stumbling block, pertaining to the way Christians live, will be removed. Non-believers will look upon them and will pay attention to their words. Their words will be a demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power and will be a source of the Holy Spirit's knowledge as believers speak.

When the stumbling blocks among the unbelievers are removed, the Spirit of God will also be upon them. By then, no accusation can be thrown against a Christian. Accusations

such as Devil-Christian or that Christians are guilty of killing others cause people to reject Christianity.¹⁷⁵ By having holy lives, there will be no resistance to Christianity. If Christians live consistently with the laws written on their hearts, their prejudices of their observer vanish, and will gladly receive the "truth as it is in Jesus."

Christian nations interact with the heathen nations that they mingled with and with those nations that are bordering them. Through their interaction, unbelieving nations would learn to worship God in spirit and truth.¹⁷⁶ Then, other distant locations that are trading with Christian nations will be imparted with the message that is infinitely more valuable than wealth. God will prepare His messenger to go to various nations and to the ends of the earth.

However, a difficulty remains. Many portions of the unbelieving world have no interaction of any means to trade with Christians. How will it be possible for them to believe? Where there seems no other means, God can touch them through His Spirit as what happened in Ezekiel and Philip.¹⁷⁷ God can find a thousand ways that are unknown to humans.

¹⁷⁵ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Wesley was referring to uncivilized groups who had negative experiences with Christians in America.

¹⁷⁶ As an illustration, Wesley noted that this way of spreading the Gospel is demonstrated by the "inhabitants of the East Indies that adjoin to any of the Christian settlements." In addition, the "numerous tribes of Tartars, the heathen parts of the Russias, and the inhabitants of Norway, Finland, and Lapland" can be referred.

¹⁷⁷ Ezek. 3:12 (NIV) "Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound as the glory of the Lord rose from the place where it was standing." Acts 8:36-40 (NIV): "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. What can I do?' Philip said, 'If you believe, you may be baptized.' And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea."

Heaven and earth can pass away, but His words shall not pass away. He will give His son to the "utmost part of the earth."

The nation of Israel, too, will be saved. The Apostle observes that Israel was blinded until the Gentiles have fully entered.¹⁷⁸ God has concluded Israel as having unbelief so that He will show mercy on them all and bestow all temporal and spiritual blessings.¹⁷⁹ The promise of God signifies that He will gather them from all nations from where they were scattered and bring them to the land that their fathers possessed. God will circumcise their hearts to love God with all their heart and soul.¹⁸⁰ God will cause them to dwell in safety and give them a heart that will make them fear the Lord forever and they shall not depart from Him.¹⁸¹ God will cleanse them and remove their idols so that they may dwell in the land that God gave to their father and become God's people.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Rom. 11:25 (NIV): "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in."

¹⁷⁹ Rom. 11:32-33 (NIV): "For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and [a] knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"

¹⁸⁰ Deut. 30:3 (NIV): "then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you."

¹⁸¹ Jer. 32:37 (NIV): "I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety."

¹⁸² Ezek. 36:24 (NIV): "For I will take you out of the nations: I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

When all these are accomplished, the glorious promises to the church will not be confined to a particular place but will include all of the earth's inhabitants. No hurt nor destruction would be caused against God's holy mountain.¹⁸³ No violence would be heard in the land. The Lord will be the everlasting light and the people will be made righteous through the work of God's hands, that He may be glorified. Both righteousness and praise will spring up before all nations.¹⁸⁴

This outworking is the only satisfactory answer that can be given to the objection against God's wisdom and goodness in the world's present state. Out of temporary evil, God may draw immense and eternal good. This point is key to Apostle Paul's words to have Israel conclude in unbelief that they may receive mercy.¹⁸⁵ Being assured of such a point is not enough, that "all these transient evils" will result in what is good for us to have a happy end, with mercy reigning as the first and last. All persons who are without prejudice will see that God is renewing the face of the earth. There is a strong reason that such work of God has already started and will carry it out until the day of the Lord Jesus. God will fulfill His promises with the steady work of the Holy Spirit until "a period to sin, and misery, and infirmity, and death; and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, "Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Blessing,

¹⁸³ Isaiah 11:9 (NIV): "They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

¹⁸⁴ Isaiah 60:18 (NIV): "No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise." Isaiah 61:11: "For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations."

¹⁸⁵ Rom. 11:32,33

and glory, and wisdom, and honour, and power, and might,
be unto our God for ever and ever!"¹⁸⁶

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

- 1. Do I have unbalanced attachments to possessions that cause me to fail in my Christian commitment?*
- 2. Am I expecting the church to grow simply through programs without personally witnessing the transformative power of the gospel in my lifestyle to my relationships?*
- 3. Am I being called to serve in my immediate circles or people from distant locations to witness God's message?*

SOCIAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

- 1. Could there be cultural conditions that hinder the church from being fully effective in transforming society?*
- 2. Does the church need to exert political influence in order to expand its religious base? Why or why not?*
- 3. Can a church suffer from internal problems that hinder it from moving forward in witnessing to the world?*

¹⁸⁶ Rev. 7:12.

12. CAUSES OF INEFFECTICACY OF CHRISTIANITY¹⁸⁷ (1789)

FOCUS: MAINTAINING THE SOCIAL VITALITY OF THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

*"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there
Why then is not the health of the daughter of my
people recovered."
Jeremiah 8:22¹⁸⁸*

¹⁸⁷ There is a great disparity between Christianity as to be "a universal remedy for universal evil," in contrast to its "actual performance." For fifty years, Wesley had reflected on this concern. In reflection, he welcomed the paradox: "Does it not seem (and yet this cannot be) that Christianity, scriptural Christianity has a tendency in process of time to undermine and destroy itself." This made Wesley bring the issues regarding riches (to denounce it) as a pivotal point of living the Christian faith, especially for Methodists. He invokes the idea of the discipline praxis which the early Oxford Methodists had, as a "model for Authentic Christian living." This sermon was given when Wesley was advanced in years with his arguments being more casual (Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, 549).

¹⁸⁸ Jeremiah 8:22 (NIV): "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?"

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. *What is the most significant thing that you have done to others because of your faith?*
2. *What has been the best experience that you gained from others who are Christians?*
3. *What do you think are things that cripple the faith of those who were once passionate Christians?*

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

The question in the text relates to the children of Israel, but in general to all of humankind. We may ask "Why has Christianity done so little good in the world?" The balm is the external provision given by the Great Physician to restore the spiritual health of people. If no restoration is experienced, others may argue that it is because human nature is universally and deeply corrupted. However, the point is that God intended to offer a universal remedy to address universal evil. In this case, it has not achieved the intention of why it was given. The sickness remains unhealed. Wickedness in the inward and on the outward still covers the earth.

How can it be that the medicine was given, but our sickness has not been healed?

"What a mystery is this, that Christianity should have done so little good in the world!" How can any reason justify this situation? Does it not make sense that a reason why Christianity accomplished so little good is because it is not widely known? It is somewhat certain that it cannot create an impact where it is not encountered.

Why has the Christian world gained little advantage from Christianity? Do Christians possess better qualities than others? Are they better than those of other religions such as the Mahometans¹⁸⁹ or the ones who do not believe in God like the Heathens? In different ways, Christians are worse than them. However, these Christians are not proper Christians. They are only referred to as such but do not grasp the essence of Christianity. They know nothing about the inward or outward aspects of Christianity. Thousands only know Christianity by name.

It must be pointed out that Christianity is well-known, at least to the western world—"termed Christendom, or the land of Christians." However, many of them are "totally ignorant both as to the theory and practice of Christianity."¹⁹⁰

Surely there are many Christians who truly know their faith and practice their religion. If those who claim to be Christians are to give the account of how they understand Christianity—from its first principles about God, the process of salvation, and other essential matters of the Christian faith—many will be considered ignorant, and only a few to truly understand them. What good can Christianity do if they are ignorant of their faith?

In other places where Scriptural Christianity is known¹⁹¹ and widely proclaimed, countless people hear and accept the truth of Jesus. The question is, why is it that in those places, Christianity had so little effect on their general

¹⁸⁹ Referring to the followers of Mohammad.

¹⁹⁰ Wesley's words: "Having had frequent opportunity of conversing with many of these, both at home and abroad, I am bold to affirm, that they are in general totally ignorant, both as to the theory and practice of Christianity; so that they are "perishing" by thousands "for lack of knowledge," --for want of knowing the very first principles of Christianity."

¹⁹¹ Referring to England and Ireland.

population? Generally, these Christians are not better than those who are not. The common saying of the primitive church was: "The soul and the body make a man [person]; the spirit and discipline make a Christian." This notion implies that no person could be a genuine Christian, without having a Christian discipline. Without Christian discipline, doctrines have no effect when they are preached to the hearers.

To make the matter more relevant to Methodism: "Is not scriptural Christianity preached and generally known among the people commonly called Methodists?" They have discipline by regularly exercising the essential parts of faith. However, why is it that they are not altogether Christians, even when they both have doctrine and discipline? Why is it that they have not recovered their spiritual health? Why are we still uncrucified "to the world, and the world crucified to us?" Why is it that we do not walk as Christ has walked? We ought to ask if we ever uphold either what He modeled or His principles. For instance, we ought to regard the instruction not to selfishly accumulate treasures on earth. So, we must observe:

- a) The first rule, which is to "Gain all you can;"
- b) The second, which only some can be found doing "Save all you can;"
- c) The third, to "Give all you can?"¹⁹² Observing the first two rules while neglecting the third, will make some to be twice "more the children of hell than ever they were before."

Many people have nothing to eat, nothing to put on, and nowhere to stay. They are distressed because we have "impiously, unjustly, and cruelly detain from them" what the Master has lodged in our hands for the purpose of supplying

¹⁹² Referring to the sermon: "The Mamon of Unrighteousness."

their needs! Do you see the believer of Christ living in poverty, experiencing hunger, shaking in the cold, and without proper clothing? On the other hand, we have plenty of goods, food, and things to wear. In God's name, what are we doing? Did not God command and entrust that His provisions be used for those who are in need as we are to be the servants of all? Can anyone use their possession (money) other than what God instructed it to be used for?

Is it possible to provide the poor members of our society with the basic need of life? Once it was possible, in "the first Church at Jerusalem." No one lacked among them through the distribution of resources according to everyone's needs.¹⁹³

However, we shall not speak of dispensing half of our riches as a way of giving to God since some may think that such an amount is "too high a price for heaven." We will lower the terms. Suppose that it is doable to give our families only as much as they need for the sake of working out their salvation. With such a mode of giving, we could supply all the needs of the poor.¹⁹⁴ If that mode of supporting our families can be done, can we be cleared before God while it remains unaccomplished? Neglecting such wisdom is a reason why so many remain in their sickness and are feeling weak among us both in their souls and in

¹⁹³ Wesley followed: "A gentleman (a Methodist) told me some years since, 'I shall leave forty thousand pounds among my children.' Now, suppose he had left them but twenty thousand, and given the other twenty thousand to God and the poor, would God have said to him, 'Thou fool!' And this would have set all the society far above want."

¹⁹⁴ Wesley's words: "Are there not a few among you that could give a hundred pounds, perhaps some that could give a thousand, and yet leave your children as much as would help them to work out their own salvation With two thousand pounds, and not much less, we could supply the present wants of all our poor, and put them in a way of supplying their own wants for the time to come."

their physical bodies. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we prefer the prevailing customs of the world over the commandments of God.

"Here I am: I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not, vary from this book, either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle what is contained therein. I am determined to be a Bible Christian, not almost, but altogether..."¹⁹⁵ Who will meet me on this ground? Join me on this, or not at all."

Regarding a particular concern regarding clothing:

"I might have been as firm (and I now see it would have been far better) I might have said, 'This is our manner of dress, which we know is both scriptural and rational. If you join with us, you are to dress as we do; but you need not join us, unless you please.' But, alas! The time is now past; and what I can do now, I cannot tell."

To return to the main question: "Why has Christianity done so little good, even among us among the Methodists—among them that hear and receive the whole Christian doctrine—and that have Christian discipline... in the most essential part of it?" The answer is that we abandoned or at least not fully employed the solemn words of Christ that He clearly expressed by saying that any person who would come after Him, should deny oneself, take up one's cross daily, and follow Him. A person once remarked several years ago that there was never before in the Christian church a people who possess so much of God's power but have "so little self-denial." Advancing the work God of work continues despite this defective quality. However, it cannot

¹⁹⁵ **PERSONAL NOTE:** This is one of Wesley's prominent lines and it referred to the use of personal resources as laid out in the Scripture.

move with the same vigor as it otherwise would, or put the full effect of God's word unless those who hear it are denying themselves and daily taking up their cross.

It is easy to show that in many ways, Methodists in general, are deplorably deficient in exercising Christian self-denial. While in Oxford, the rule for every Methodist, if they were in healthy conditions, was to observe fasting. They fasted "every Wednesday and Friday in the year" in order to follow the Primitive Church which they had highly revered. This practice is universally recognized in the Primitive Church, as one writer, by the name of Epiphanius asked: "Who does not know... that the fasts of the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday) are observed by the Christians throughout the whole world?" The Methodists in Oxford have done this practice, and it was carried in London to some excesses to the point of damaging their health. Only after a short period, this case regarding health was made as a justification for not fasting at all. Many believers today do not fast, even by doing it once from the beginning of the year. Is there an excuse for neglecting to fast, especially for those who profess that Scripture is God's Word? A person who never fast does not go farther on his/her way to heaven than a person who does not pray.

It cannot be denied that members of the church¹⁹⁶ fasted regularly. It is well known that before the administration of the Holy Communion, there was a fast-day in the week. However, by looking in one of their vestries,¹⁹⁷ they are set for dinner even for the Ministers on the fast-day. Is it not believable that people will practice fasting only as much as their Ministers fast? This way of observing

¹⁹⁶ Wesley referred to the Church of Scotland.

¹⁹⁷ A room attached to the church

the spiritual discipline is a form of absurdity and a mockery of plain Christian duty!

Why is self-denial practiced so little among believers?¹⁹⁸ As time progressed, it can be observed that those who were in faith grew more self-indulgent as they grew richer multiple times than they were before. This outcome shows the tendency of those who gain riches.

It is astonishing that genuine Scriptural Christianity tends to have an undermining and destructive effect on itself given a considerable process of time.¹⁹⁹ True Christianity, wherever it spreads, imparts diligence and frugality which naturally beget riches. Riches will lead to pride, attachment to the world, and every destructive temper toward Christianity. If there is no prevention for this destructive consequence, Christianity will neither stand nor continue to thrive among people by being conflicted with itself. With that attribute, Christianity "saps its own foundation" wherever it prevails.

Considering that being diligent and frugal are virtues that create riches, what then are the means that can hinder riches from being destructive to the religion of those who have them? There is only one possible course of action—and anyone can find other ways if they can. Those who gain all they can and save all that they have gained will naturally grow rich. However, they must give all that they can if they desire to be saved from being the recipients of judgment.

"I call God to record upon my soul, that I advise no more than I practice. I do, blessed be God, gain, and save, and give all I can. And so, I trust in God, I shall

¹⁹⁸ Wesley referred to the Methodists.

¹⁹⁹ Wesley's word: "Christianity, true scriptural Christianity, has a tendency, in process of time, to undermine and destroy itself."

do... I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus my Lord!"

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

- 1. Am I becoming less self-centered because of my faith, or am I using my faith as a means to accumulate pleasures and wealth that reinforce selfishness?*
- 2. Has my faith impacted those around me?*
- 3. Have I practiced helping someone as part of my spiritual routine?*

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

- 1. What do you think are the significant contributions of the Christian faith to the world?*
- 2. What do you think is your church known for in your immediate community?*
- 3. How active is my faith community in terms of striving to live up to its mission and vision?*

EVALUATION

To recognize the significance of our discipleship process, an evaluation of what we learned through the journey of sharing and discussions is necessary.

An evaluation helps us ensure that we both have gained substantial learning from our meetings and are capable of relating those insights to our practical experiences.

This evaluation is a requirement to certify participants of their completion for this particular volume. Participants can be certified as facilitators for this specific process after being certified to have completed all the volumes of this discipleship series.

Turn to the next page to begin the evaluation.

A. DEFINING CONCEPTS

Write in one or more sentences how you understand particular concepts based on our discussions.

1. *How did Wesley define the concept of a social religion?*

2. *What causes Christianity to be ineffective?*

3. *Give at least one example of the role of conscience.*

4. *What does the term "mammon" mean according to Wesley?*

5. *Provide at least one example of the usual things that are supposed to take the place of love?*

B. REFLECTION AND SYNTHESIS

Select only one question from the given questions below.

1. Among the lessons, what are the top three things that strike you the most and why?

2. What do you think are the key points in Wesleyan spirituality pertaining to the nature of social religion that are vigorously expressed in our ministries today? Also, what do you think should the church focus on in order to be effective in being socially orientated in its ministries in our present context?

Social Expressions of Religion that are Variouslly Observable	Aspects of the church that need more focus in order to enhance the social orientation of its ministries.

3. Write an essay about the relationship of spirituality in the secular world.

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APPENDIX A**PORTION OF THE EDITED SUMMARY OF THE APPROVED ACTIONS
DURING THE RPACE 11TH REGULAR SESSION**

The Way United Methodist Church

February 19-21, 2020

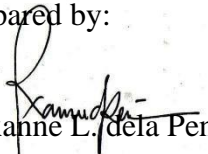
BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP

By: Rev. Jonathan B. Loscos

Voted 2020 – 055: to refer the idea of producing the discipleship materials to the DCM of MEA.

Voted 2020 – 056: to allow the BOD to choose three local churches to pilot test the discipleship process.

Prepared by:


Roxanne L. dela Pena
Conference Secretary

APPENDIX B

THE LIST OF LESSONS BASED ON JOHN WESLEY'S SERMONS THAT ARE INCLUDED IN THE EXISTING SPACE BOD DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

Volume 1: Faith and Progressing Salvation

1. The Image of God
2. Original Sin
3. The One Thing Needful
4. The Almost Christian
5. Awake Thou that Sleepest
6. The Way to the Kingdom
7. The Scripture Way of Salvation
8. Salvation by Faith
9. Justification by Faith
10. The New Birth
11. Witness of The Spirit (Discourse 1)
12. Marks of the New Birth

Volume 2: The Stewardship of Faith

1. The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption
2. The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God
3. The Lord Our Righteousness
4. On Working Out Our Own Salvation
5. On Sin in Believers
6. The Repentance of Believers
7. The Means of Grace
8. The Good Steward
9. The Use of Money
10. On Zeal
11. Self-Denial
12. Christian Perfection

Volume 3: God-Centered Mission and the Duty to Witness

1. The Unity of the Divine Being
2. The Omnipresence of God
3. The Original Nature, Property and Use of The Law
4. Free Grace
5. God's Love to Fallen Man
6. A Caution Against Bigotry
7. Catholic Spirit

8. Scriptural Christianity
9. The End of Christ's Coming
10. On Living Without God
11. The Great Assize
12. The New Creation

Volume 4: Spiritual Examination, Inner Healing and Breakthroughs

List of sermons converted as main lessons.

1. The Deceitfulness of the Heart
2. Wandering Thoughts
3. The Wilderness State
4. Heaviness through Manifold Temptations
5. The Nature of Enthusiasm
6. The Witness of Our Spirit
7. The First Fruits of the Spirit
8. On Family Religion
9. Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount,
Discourse 7
10. The Cure of Evil-Speaking
11. The More Excellent Way
12. On Perfection

List of sermons converted as part of devotional materials.

13. The Righteousness of Faith
14. Circumcision of the Heart
15. The Witness of the Spirit II

Other reading resources: Wesley's sermons in their original form.

16. Spiritual Idolatry
17. Spiritual Worship

APPENDIX C

ENDORSEMENT BY REV. BENER AGTARAP, PHD.

An Endorsement Letter for the
Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East Discipleship Materials

Rev. Bener Baysa Agtarap, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Community Engagement & Church Planting/Path 1
Director, Connectional Mobilization,
Discipleship Ministries
The United Methodist Church

In this collection of discipleship materials based on selected sermons of John Wesley, it offers spiritual, theological, and biblical foundations and practical appropriations of John Wesley's teachings and practices of the early Methodist movement in our world today for our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This discipleship series will significantly help equip, engage, and unleash the power of the people called United Methodists to actively participate in a disciple-making movement in the name of Jesus' love. It is an indispensable teaching resource on discipleship that every follower of Christ Jesus must read, study, and make an integral part of their discipleship journey.

In the book, "Ready, Set, Plant: The Why and How of Starting New Churches," written by my colleague and me, I wrote: "As a disciple of Jesus, your purpose in life is to fulfill the mission of God that is all human beings, and all of creation should be filled with the love of God. This love is a gift from God (John 3:16). God showed his love: 'He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him' (1 John 4:9). If your desire is to follow Jesus, your mission is 'to do the will' who sent you (John 6:38). Your mission is far greater than your denomination's missional mandate, or even your wildest aspirations and dreams. Your primary mission is God's mission. Before his departure, Jesus left his disciples with a commission to 'go and make disciples.' He departed with an assurance that his disciples will take responsibility for the continuation of the good work of sharing the love of God to all God's children in the world. He believed in this bunch of disciples as leaders who will lead in this effort of disciple making as a strategy for advancing the Gospel. An effort that is grounded in the love of God, and powered by the Spirit of the Risen Christ that is living and life-giving."

Today billions of Christ's disciples can be found in every corner of the earth. They are known by their love through their work of mercy and justice. They participate in the life and ministry of faith communities or churches that embody the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. To participate as God's agents in the work of God in the church

and the world, both clergy and lay leaders of our churches must work together in fulfilling the mission of making disciples and transforming the world. This discipleship series offers a significant way to guide, encourage, and equip our church leaders for their efforts of forming world-changing disciples of Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX D

ENDORSEMENT BY REV. JOHN MANALO

I am highly recommending the work of Rev. Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos as a resource material in the Disciple-making Process and Membership Formation. A well-researched document about Wesleyan tradition and heritage. Notes and sermons of John Wesley were the prime materials. Currently used by the Rizal Annual Conference East as a contextualized Discipleship resource.

APPENDIX E**LETTER OF REQUEST FOR VALIDATION**

Date: _____

Dear _____,


I am writing this letter to request for a validation of the content of my project thesis under the MA of Religious Education in Asia Pacific Nazarene Seminary. My project thesis is the creation of a discipleship series that is focused on the social nature of religion based on selected sermons of John Wesley. It is entitled “Social Religion Toward Social Transformation.”

One of the requirements of my thesis proposal panel is that the contents of the discipleship series should be validated by a Wesleyan expert. I am writing to you this request since you are an expert in the field of Wesleyan studies.

I would also like to inquire about any professional liabilities from me such as honoring your expertise through your professional fee.

I am hoping for your favorable response despite your busy schedule. Your help will mean so much to me as I pursue the completion of my academic requirements.

May the Lord bless you in your ministries.


Rev. Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos
Researcher
Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

APPENDIX F

LETTER OF INVITATION TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE PASTOR

Date: _____

Dear Rev. Pud Peralta,

Greeting in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!


I am your colleague in the ministry of our Lord's vineyard. As of the moment I am taking-up Master of Religious Education at Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary. As part of my study, I am carrying out a project thesis entitled "A Discipleship Series on Social Transformation Based on John Wesley's Selected Sermons for the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East of the United Methodist Church" to complete my program. The outcome of this project will be presented to a thesis panel.

The purpose of this project thesis is to create accessible material for local churches about social transformation based on John Wesley's sermon. The output of this material is intended to help cater to the social concerns of the members of our church through the Wesleyan vision of social holiness. The material will be proposed to the Rizal Annual Conference East to be used for its local churches as a standardized and uniform discipleship resource for leadership equipping.

Since Taytay UMC has been undergoing a discipleship process that is sponsored by the Annual Conference, I am inviting you and the member of your church who are

currently participating in the discipleship program of the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East to be part of this project. As such, this will include weekly sessions with you and members of your church.

Your positive response will assist this study in a significant way. I am requesting your support and consideration. Thank you very much.


Rev. Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos
Researcher
Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

English

Self-introduction and the intention of the project.

- Personal introduction and acknowledgment
- Sharing the purpose of the project

A blessed day to all. I am Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos and I am here with you to present a project that would help the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference in terms of producing a discipleship material concerning the topic of *Social Religion toward Social Transformation* through selected sermons of John Wesley.

The intended outcome of the project is to create a discipleship series that will be used for weekly sessions that will discuss John Wesley's views about religion's relationship with society. There will be twelve lessons in the volume that we are going to use.

Those who will complete the program will be given a Certificate of Completion.

Discussing and sharing the consent form.

- The consent form will be presented
- A link for the online version of the Consent form will be shared

Your participation in this project is helpful for enhancing the approach in the creation of the discipleship series. I want to secure your permission and know if you have personal questions about this project. We can achieve that by giving you consent forms.

Thank you for answering the consent forms I hope that this endeavor will be helpful to all of you.

Discussion and sharing the diagnostic instrument for participants and other instructional concerns.

- Explaining the diagnostic instrument
- Sharing an online link for the diagnostic instrument
- Set deadline for filling-out the form.

To help in the making the lesson content more appropriate for your use, I will share a diagnostic instrument for you to answer. Your inputs will greatly help in the nature and content of instruction.

In this pilot class, there will be opportunities to discuss your reflection and interact with other participants once the formal lessons are discussed. There will also be enrichment questions for relating what you understand about Wesley's view in relation to your social experiences and observations.

I encourage you to have a personal journal for the lessons on which you can write concepts and words that you will learn from each lesson. After all the lessons have been discussed, there would be an evaluation of what you have learned and your personal take-aways from the sessions.

Clarifying the utilization of virtual means for the discipleship sessions and attendance.

- Clarifying the means of implementation
- Setting a dedicated link for the equipping session.

Since we have been accustomed to using online means as a way of gathering due to the pandemic, we will utilize Zoom for our sessions. I will send the link before our sessions and also of the materials once they become available.

We will be collecting your attendance in order to monitor your participation. We will use the online application "MyAttendanceTracker.com" for recording. It is essential that you comply with attendance for you to be recognized as having completed the material.

Closing the session:

- Wrap-up
- Create excitement for the succeeding meetings.
- Prayer

Thank you for attending our session today. I hope you are excited to be part of this project. If have any questions that may arise during the week, you may raise them to our next session.

Let us all pray.

Focus Group Script adapted from Dr. Nehemiah Bathula (2020, 251-254)

Tagalog

Pag-papakilala ng sarili at ang pagbabahagi ng intensiyon ng proyekto.

- Personal na pagpapakilala at pagkilala
- Pagbabahagi ng layunin ng proyekto

Isang mapagpalang araw sa lahat. Ako si Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos. Naririto ako sa inyo upang maghatif ng isang proyekto na makakatulong sa *Rizal Philippines Annual Conference* sa mga tuntunin ng paggawa ng materyal sa pagsidisipulo tungkol sa paksa ng *Social Religion toward Social Transformation* sa pamamagitan ng mga piling sermon ni John Wesley.

Ang nilalayon na resulta ng proyekto ay lumikha ng isang serye ng pagdidisipulo na gagamitin para sa lingguhang mga sesyon na tatalakay sa mga pananaw ni John Wesley tungkol sa kaugnayan ng relihiyon sa lipunan. Magkakaroon ng labindalawang aralin sa *volume* na gagamitin natin.

Mabibigyan ng *Certificate of Completion* ang makaka-kumpleto sa programming ito.

Pagtalakay at pagbabahagi ng *consent form*.

- Ipapakita ang form ng pahintulot
- Ibabahagi ang isang *link* para sa *online* na bersyon ng *Consent Form*

Ang iyong pakikilahok para sa proyektong ito ay makatutulong para sa paglikha ng serye ng pagdidisipulo. Gusto kong i-secure ang iyong pahintulot at malaman kung mayroon kang mga personal na tanong tungkol sa proyektong ito.

Makakamit iyon sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay sa inyo ng mga forms na maari ninyong sagutan upang masiguro ang inyong sariling pahintulot sa pagdalo.

Salamat sa pagsagot sa mga form ng pahintulot Umaasa ako na ang pagsisikap na ito ay makakatulong sa inyong lahat.

Pagtalakay at pagbabahagi ng *diagnostic instrument* para sa mga kalahok at iba pang mga pag-aalala sa pagtuturo

- Pagpapaliwanag ng *diagnostic instrument*
- Pagbabahagi ng *online* na link para sa *diagnostic instrument*
- Itakda ang *deadline* para sa pagpuno ng *form*.

Upang makatulong sa paggawa ng nilalaman ng aralin na mas angkop para sa inyong paggamit, magbabahagi ako ng *diagnostic instrument* para sa iyo upang sagutin. Malaki ang maitutulong ng iyong mga *input* sa kalalabasan, at pamamraan ng pagtuturo ng mga lessons na nakapaloob sa programming ito.

Sa *pilot class* na ito, magkakaroon ng pagkakataon na talakayin ang iyong pagmumuni-muni at makipag-ugnayan sa ibang mga kalahok kapag napag-usapan na ang mga pormal na aralin. Magkakaroon din ng mga katanungan sa pagpapayaman para sa pag-uugnay ng kung ano ang naiintindihan mo tungkol sa pananaw ni Wesley kaugnay ng inyong mga karanasan sa lipunan at mga obserbasyon.

Hinihikayat kita na magkaroon ng personal na journal para sa mga aralin kung saan maaari kang sumulat ng mga konsepto at salita na matututuhan mo mula sa bawat aralin. Matapos matalakay ang lahat ng mga aralin, magkakaroon ng pagsusuri sa iyong natutunan at sa iyong mga personal na kinuha mula sa mga sesyon.

Paglililaw sa paggamit ng mga *virtual* na paraan para sa mga sesyon at pagdalo.

- Paglililaw sa mga paraan ng pagpapatupad
- Pagtatakda ng nakalaang link para sa sesyon ng equipping.

Dahil bahagi na ang online na pamamaraan ng pag daraso ng maraming mga gawain sa simbahan dahil sa pandemya, gagamitin natin ang *Zoom* para sa ating mga sesyon. Ipapadala ko ang *link* tuwing kailangan natin magdaos nggawain pati na din ang materyal kapag *available* na ang mga ito.

Kukunin namin ang iyong *attendance* upang masubaybayan ang iyong pakikilahok. Gagamitin namin ang online na application na "MyAttendanceTracker.com" para sa pag-*record*. Nahalaga ang pagdalo para mabigyan ng *Certificate of Completion*.

Pagsasara ng sesyon.

- Pag-talakay sa kabuuang nangyari
- Lumikha ng pananabik para sa mga susunod na pagpupulong.
- Panalangin

Salamat sa pagdalo sa aming sesyon ngayon. Sana ay nasasabik ang lahat na maging bahagi ng proyektong ito. Kung mayroon anumang mga katanungan na maaaring lumabas sa linggo, maaari mong iharap ang mga ito sa aming susunod na sesyon.

Magdasal tayong lahat.

APPENDIX H

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE DISCIPLESHIP SESSIONS IN TAYTAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

You are being asked to participate in the Discipleship Sessions about the social nature of religion toward social transformation based on John Wesley's selected sermons

- This is a project of Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos for his Master of Arts in Religious Education project thesis as a student at Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary. This project is a requirement to fulfill his master's program under the supervision of Dr. Erlic Bang-as Sagud.
- This project intends to create an accessible material for local churches about the social nature of religion toward social transformation based on John Wesley's sermon. The output of this material is intended to help cater to the social concerns of our members according to the Wesleyan vision of social holiness. The material will be proposed to the Rizal Annual Conference East in order to be used for its local churches as a standardized and uniform discipleship resource for leadership equipping.

What will I be asked to do?

- You will be asked to fill up forms for your basic information, understanding of faith as a social religion, and instructional interests by answering the form: **DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENT FOR THE PARTICIPANTS.**
- You will be asked to attend the weekly sessions of the discipleship series.
- Lastly, you will be asked to give your feedback through an evaluation form at the end of the implementation of this project.

How long will this project take? How often will we meet for the project?

- This project contains 12 lessons and a meeting for an evaluation. The weekly session can contain 1-3 lessons depending on the time constraints and availability of schedules, or based on the targeted timeframe for the completion of this project with the pilot class.

One Lesson per Session	Two Lessons per Session	Three Lessons per Session	Others
13 weeks	7 weeks	5 weeks	2-Day Retreat, etc.

Will you be audio recording or taking photographs of our sessions?

- The sessions will not be recorded. Only photographs will be taken as proof of our sessions.

What will be done with the photographs?

- The photographs will be used for presentation and reporting to the Rizal Philippines annual Conference East to justify the feasibility of the project as discipleship material for local churches.
- These photographs will be stored on my laptop but they will also be posted on social media as casual updates for our social media accounts.

How will the information from this project be used?

- The information from this project will be essentially used for the improvement and projects of the discipleship program of the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East. Your inputs, suggestions, and feedback will be handled for possible enhancement of the material. These will be reported to the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East.

Are there any risks involved with taking part in the project? Will I feel uncomfortable?

- Involvement in the project should not pose any threat to your well-being. As for the weekly sessions, there is no perceived situation that would put you in direct contact with anything that would harm you.

What will I get out of taking part in the project? Will I get paid?

- You will not be monetarily compensated but your participation will be recognized by the church and will be given a Certificate of Completion. Also, a participant's copy of the material for each lesson will be given to you electronically.

Do I have to pay for anything to take part in the project?

- You have nothing to pay for this project.

Will people know that I took part in the project?

- Yes, people will know that you took part in the project for this endeavor will be reported in the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East.

Do you have to participate?

- Yes, you need to participate in order to prove the feasibility of this study. However, you may opt not to continue if you have hindrances that stop you from attending.

Has this study been approved?

- You won't be invited to this project if there is no approval from the Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary. The implementation of this can only be when the seminary has given the go signal for this project to proceed.

What if I have questions about the project?

- If you have questions, kindly don't hesitate to contact the researcher:

- Facebook Messenger: Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos
- Email: jonathanleobl@gmail.com
- Cellphone number: 09255567267
- You may also reach the supervising adviser: Dr. Erlic Bang-as Sagud through esagud@apnts.edu.ph

What will happen next?

- If you agree to participate in this study, you need to sign the consent form that we discussed. Your responses will be kept for recording purposes. This project is intended for members of local churches preferably leaders who are undergoing the discipleship program of the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East. If you have any concerns, you may raise them any time to the researcher, Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos. Please read the last Statement of Consent carefully. If you decide to be part of this project, kindly write your name, put your signature, and also the date on the corresponding spaces below. A copy of the form will be given to the participants.

Statement of Consent

I understand the procedures described above. All my concerns were given clear answers and I am willing to participate in this project. A copy of this form is given to me.

I understand that the information that I give concerning my demographic categorization, feedback, and photographs will be used for reporting and presentation.

I understand that the photographs during the sessions will be stored on the laptop of the researcher and will also be shared on social media.

Participants signature Date

Participant's Printed Name

Consent Form for Participants of The Discipleship Sessions in Taytay United Methodist Church adapted from Dr. Nehemiah Bathula (2020, 242-244).

APPENDIX I

NOTIFICATION OF REVIEW APPROVAL BY THE ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD



Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary
Ortigas Avenue Extension, Kaytikling
Taytay 1920, Rizal, Philippines

NOTIFICATION OF REVIEW APPROVAL

October 6, 2021

Jonathan Leo Loscos
jonathanleobl@gmail.com

Protocol Title: A DISCIPLESHIP SERIES ON SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION BASED ON JOHN WESLEY'S SELECTED SERMONS FOR THE RIZAL PHILIPPINES ANNUAL CONFERENCE EAST OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Protocol#: AR-013

IRB Review Date: October 6, 2021

Effective Date: October 6, 2021

Expiration Date: October 6, 2022

Review Type: Exempt Review

Review Action: Approved

The IRB made the following determinations:

- Waivers: Waiver of informed consent documentation
- Other Documentations: All necessary attachments submitted
- Risk Determination: No greater than minimal risk

Please contact me at nehemiah.bathula@apnts.edu.ph if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nehemiah Bathula
Administrative Assistant to the Academic Dean
Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

APPENDIX J

DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENT FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

Part 1: Participant's Profile

Name:

Age:

Address:

Educational attainment:

Number of years as a member of the United Methodist Church:

Lay Organization:

Church position:

Part 2: Lesson Content

A: The Properties of Social Religion

1. How would you explain Christianity as a social religion?
2. How does social holiness manifest through the Christian faith?
3. What is your understanding of the word Mammon?
4. How is it impossible to simultaneously serve God while conforming to the world?
5. How did Jesus attain the fulfillment of the moral law?
6. What defines the least or the greatest in God's Kingdom?
7. What are the properties of love toward people?
8. What are the characteristics that believers tend to focus on in the absence of love?

B: The Person in Social Engagement

1. What can believers gain if they visit people who are suffering from sickness?
2. What is the reason why rich people have little sympathy for the poor?
3. How can we naturally determine what is morally right or wrong?
4. What do you think are the functions of our conscience?
5. How does judging others become contrary to love?
6. What can be a basis for a pure and genuine morality?
7. What are reasonable considerations that may have Christians to discontinue their conversations with others?
8. What can be a possible consequence when the godly become equally yoked with the ungodly?

C: The Process of a Social Faith

1. What do you think is/are the common root/s of social miseries that people experience?
2. What can people do to save their nation from perishing?
3. What are the things that religion ought to uniformly guarantee?

4. How can believers say that God is speeding up toward the renewal of the whole of humankind?
5. How can Christians become moral agents while being holy and happy?
6. How does God's kingdom generally spread here on earth?
7. How does Christianity have little effect on people even in places where Christianity itself is accepted?
8. Why is self-denial not entirely practiced by Christians?

Part 3: Instructional Interest

9. What are your interests in participating in the discipleship project?
10. How many minutes are you willing to allow for each lesson?
11. What do you think are features or elements of a lesson that will make you more conducive to learning?
12. Kindly enumerate the expectations and considerations that have for this discipleship project

APPENDIX K

FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION FORM

Participants are to assign a rating for each element according to the given rating scale. They may rate by placing a mark the under the numerical rating they think is appropriate for each item. The higher numbers indicate higher rating while lower numbers indicate lower rating.

AREAS FOR EVALUATION	(low) RATING SCALE (high)									
CONTENT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
• Appropriateness of the lessons contained in the series										
• Organization and sequencing of lessons										
• Comprehensiveness of the lesson discussion										
• Clarity of language										
AVERAGE										
IMPACT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
• Relatability to experience										
• Enhanced interest about the social character of Wesleyan spirituality										
• Increased appreciation of Christianity as a social religion										
• Spiritual insights gained from the lessons										
AVERAGE										
INTERACTION	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
• Enthusiasm as a participant										
• Conduciveness of the session format for sharing and reflection										
• Level of attention during discussions										
• Phasing of the discussion										
AVERAGE										
INTEGRATION	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
• Applicability of the lessons and reflections to personal faith										
• Clear resolutions for issues that are raised in the lessons.										
• Lessons can be related/relayed to social groups and communities										
• Confidence gained to express how Christian can be socially involved										
AVERAGE										

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

APPENDIX L

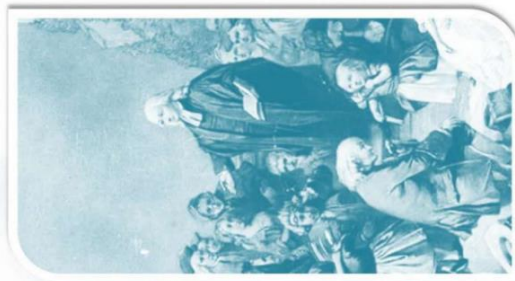
LIST OF JOHN WESLEY'S SERMONS USED FOR THE DISCIPLESHIP SERIES: *SOCIAL RELIGION TOWARD SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION*

1. Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 4
2. Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 9
3. Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 5
4. On Charity
5. On Visiting the Sick
6. On Conscience
7. Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 10
8. In What Sense Are We to Leave the World
9. National Sins and Miseries
10. Of Former Times
11. The General Spread of the Gospel
12. The Causes of Inefficacy of Christianity

APPENDIX M

EXTRACTED PDF PAGES FROM THE IMPROVED FIRST VOLUME AS
REPRESENTATION OF THE LAYOUT

Spiritual Truths from a
Heritage of Revival Vol. 1



**FAITH AND
PROGRESSING
SALVATION**

Experiencing Grace and Living Out the God-Enabled Faith
through the Lens of Wesleyan Discipleship

Rev. Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos

1.

THE IMAGE OF GOD⁴ (1730)

So God created humankind in God's own image.
Genesis 1:27⁵

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. If God is holy and we are created in His image, do we lose that image when we sin, or is that image permanently fixed in us regardless of what we do
2. Can a person have certain qualities that resemble God's character? Why or why not? (What do you think makes people feel special and unique over other creatures? Why?)

⁴ This sermon was delivered by John Wesley on November 15, 1730 in the university church of Oxford. It talks about the "imago Dei" —the Image of God— which is the main concern for Christian anthropology (doctrine of humanity). An interesting point to which Wesley attend is the question "why a creature so perfect should ever have fallen from his paradisiacal state," and Wesley responded to this by saying that "God has designed virtue of obedience as the precondition to all the others, and when this virtue was tested by an arbitrary command and Adam disobeyed, all his perfections fell away into ruin." The effect is that the intellect, will, and affection experience the inversion of God's original design. See Albert Outler and Richard Heitzenrater, John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 13. For Wesley, human beings cannot be both characterized as merely "a compound of matter and spirit" and reduced to the image of "beasts that perish." For him, "imago Dei" is defined as "righteousness and truth See Kenneth Collins and Jason Vickers, *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 1.

⁵ Genesis 1:27 (NIV): "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

3. Is it possible to describe God without using adjectives that apply in describing a person? Kindly explain.

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

Human nature is honored to have the truth of God's image implanted in it. It did not only spring forth from God but also has the likeness of God. This likeness to God's image is visible in humankind as God had "transfused as much of himself" into the picture that was used to pattern humankind's nature.

However, this truth about humankind being created in God's image is contradicted by the claims that imperfections flow from humankind itself. The physical aspect is subject to pain, sickness, and "total dissolution," while the soul is "disgraced and deformed." With that observation, others maintain that humankind, after all, is not made after the "image of the living God, but of the beasts that perish." This contradiction however does not align with the account that God has given about His human creation.

To account for what the Scripture says about humankind, we can note this: "God created humankind upright, in the image of God," but humankind subjected themselves to their "many inventions." The Creator did not forsake humankind but instead, He provided the way to the renewal of His image that was lost.

To check if the Scripture's account of human nature is contrary to itself or what reason tells us, we will consider the following points:

- a) How humankind was created according to God's image?
- b) How was the image of God lost?
- c) How to recover that image that was lost?

A. HOW HUMANKIND WAS CREATED ACCORDING TO THE IMAGE OF GOD.

FIRST: Humankind's understanding. Humankind was created by being a recipient of God's image. As created human beings, they are endowed with the original likeness of the one who created them.

- a) There is a resemblance of God in human beings, enabling them to distinguish truth and falsehood. They can justly understand what appears to them according to the nature of what is being presented.
- b) They have the ability to handle evidence and truth as inseparable elements that allow knowledge to shine as light over ignorance. Such a condition makes humankind free from doubt and error for they either see plainly or do not see at all.
- c) Humankind is able to call and name other creatures not arbitrarily but according to the expression of the inherent nature of those that are named.
- d) The character of human understanding is that it is not only swiftly applied but also expressed with greatness and comprehensiveness.

Understanding is the least feature of God's image that is imparted to humankind.

SECOND: The will. The will is more noble and greater than understanding but is equally perfect to it. It is bestowed by God, and it follows the instructions that stem from understanding. Humankind has rational affection. Love is the primary characteristic of their affection since they reflect who God is—Love. Love filled the whole expansion of their souls and in every moment, such love has no rival in the heart.

THIRD: Liberty that humankind enjoyed in its original state. Liberty is the perfect freedom that is inherently placed in the nature of humankind. Persons are given the

opportunity to act and determine things according to their choosing.

The combination of "unerring understanding, an uncorrupt will, and perfect freedom" is the feature of God's image in humankind. With these, humankind was crowned with happiness for them to live and enjoy. The satisfaction of understanding was based on truth, the will on what is good, and liberty on enjoying both the Creator and creation. In this state, humankind can attain pure pleasure without any trace of pain.

B. HOW HUMANKIND LOST THE IMAGE OF GOD

Human liberty needs to be tested. Human liberty needs to be tested. There must be a choice for them to exercise liberty by having the ability to stand on their own or not at all. Otherwise, liberty is absent. The test was necessary and God provided that test by giving them the instruction not to eat from the knowledge of good and evil. To secure obedience without disregarding liberty, a consequence was placed before them: disobedience will result in death. Humankind failed God's trial and disobedience allowed imperfections to flow and dishonor their nature. This event played a consequence that was "preparatory to death, sickness, and pain, and folly and vice and slavery."

It can be easily observed that God did not prevent the event from happening but allowed it to take its course. Also, the event presents to us that humankind was created as a "compound of matter and spirit." There is a vital union in this composition that neither each part could act independently, but must always go together.

In effect, eating the fruit as an act of disobedience affected the body which was beforehand designed to be immortal. The fruit had a deadly substance and the death

sentence was brought into the body the moment it was eaten. The immortal became mortal, and the body lost its harmony with the soul. The body that is subject to corruption burdened the soul.

Their understanding was affected by lacking the suitable organ to sustain it. It has taken falsehood as the truth, and truth was judged as falsehood which allowed error and ignorance to succeed and increase.

The will was influenced by blinded comprehension and overcame by indecent affections. Negative tempers and dispositions such as "grief and anger and hatred and fear and shame" altogether charged and captured the will. The entirety of worldly passions that are both devilish and sensual attached to the affections and "tore it to pieces." Love itself turned into a form of torment. Its light was gone and wandered to seek rest without finding it. Love no longer subsists without its proper object and resorted to earthly enjoyments that exposed itself to various poisons.

The mind had no freedom left as liberty disappeared together with virtue and the mind was put under by a "merciless tyrant." The things that are under virtue became enslaved to vice.

Due to disobedience, humankind was subjected to the depravation of understanding, and corruption of the will which reversed the happiness that was initially found in their perfect state. The human race, not God, has made itself what it currently is.

C. HOW TO RECOVER THE IMAGE THAT WAS LOST

Jesus Christ recovers us from the body that is subject to death and brings us back to our original immortality. In Christ, all will be made alive by accepting the means that He has prepared. Those who accept the means given by

Christ will expel "seeds of spiritual death" before their earthly existence is dissolved, and when it has been purged can be rebuilt for an eternal home.

The first step to recover from death is humility. Humility allows us to be aware of our actual condition. Knowing oneself is essential to those who are being transferred by the renewing of the mind. It keeps people from thinking more highly than what is appropriate about themselves. Humility is conducive to understanding and it refrains people from creating opinions that do not reflect who they truly are. Errors in opinions about oneself lead to other errors, while those who see their own shortcomings are given wisdom by God so that their understanding is opened.⁶

An enlightened understanding gives us the direction to transform the will through love. It roots out every ungodly passion and fixes our affection on "that Sovereign Good in whom we live, move and have our being."

The Spirit of life provides the law that sets people free from the "law of sin and death." The law of the Spirit restores knowledge, virtue, freedom, and happiness in that sequence. Thus, we experience deliverance from the enslavement of corruption and are being brought to the glorious liberty of being God's children. Liberty implies both the freedom of all pain unless the pain itself is necessary to obtain future benefit and the "measure of present happiness" that is suitable to introduce what flows from God.

⁶ **PERSONAL NOTE:** Humility allows us to accept God's truth. Pride blocks the truth of God if it goes against our self-interest.

D. THE PITIFUL CONDITION OF THOSE WHO EITHER ARE INSENSIBLE OF THEIR INNATE DISEASE OR REFUSE ITS CURE

Those who are alienated from the image of God suffer from sickness, pain, destruction, and unhappiness through the absence of a peace that they don't know. Darkness clouds their understanding with ignorance and error. Their hearts are blinded and their corruption increases. Their love is fixated "on mean, perishing, unsatisfying objects" from which anguish flows. The anguish that results becomes sharper and sharper by pursuing the disquieting desires that make their bearers helpless. Only God can help those who are enslaved to such a kind of spiritual state. No person can remove the chains of bondage and perfect wholeness can only come from a merciful God to whom all things are possible.

Those who have obtained God's mercy ought to recognize the treasures shown to themselves and to those who have been brought up with a Christian upbringing. They were all given a way to obtain a better mind through both God's wisdom and the art of fellow humans can bring about as the bases of what is pure, honorable, or lovely. Attaining knowledge that pertains to our folly and vicious disposition is absolutely essential in religion. Also, religion is in vain if there is no way to know the truth of our spiritual status. All the methods for the cure stem from knowing the disease.

We cannot avoid the fundamental truth that if humankind is mortal by nature, then they are naturally sinful. The seeds that are responsible for the natural state of humankind are likewise the "seeds of moral corruption." They undermine the way we understand that altogether affects our lives and sentiments. By divine efficacy and necessity, we see that if humankind is corrupt by its nature,

then Christianity belongs to God since it is in Christianity that God delivers us from corruption. If Christianity is of God, there is a great privilege that is worth sharing and persuading others about it.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. Are there things that have caused or are still causing damage to my life?
2. Am I undergoing experiences that lessen my view of self and belittle my self-worth?
3. Have I neglected to affirm God's restoring process in people's lives toward their recovery of His image?

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

1. Are there established orders, systems, and norms in society that reduce and violate God's image in people's lives?
2. How can our Christian faith call for a better society without damaging even the dignity of people who cause harm to others?
3. Does ignorance about God's image in us affect the way society behaves? Why or why not?

APPENDIX N

SIGNED REVIEW BY REV. DICK EUGENIO, PHD



Wesleyan University-Philippines
School of Leadership and Advanced Studies
 Mabini Extension, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija 3100 Philippines
 (632) 436 2162 (local 138) | wup.gradschool@gmail.com | solas@wesleyan.edu.ph



28 February 2022

Rev. Jonathan Loscos
 Student, APNTS

Dear Rev. Loscos,

I have read through *Social Religion Towards Social Transformation*, which is volume 5 of *Spiritual Truths from a Heritage of Revival*. Because of constraints of time imposed by my many responsibilities, I read chapters 1 and 2 thoroughly and skimmed-read the rest of the material. Below are my findings and recommendations, which I hope are helpful for you:

1. The sections "Foundational Discussion" in all 12 chapters faithfully reflect the contents of Wesley's sermons. In fact, the outline of the lessons follows the order as they are presented by Wesley in his sermons. You did a good job identifying, summarizing, and presenting the key themes and arguments of Wesley.
2. My primary concerns are two-fold: (1) clarity of expression and (2) plagiarism. First, there are sentences that are unclear when you tried to paraphrase them. Because you removed sections from the sermons in your attempt to summarize, the flow of thought (or transition from one section to another) suffers a bit here and there. Second, although you attempted to paraphrase Wesley's wordings, there are many instances where original Wesley phraseology lingers. Clauses and phrases were just moved. This applies to your introductory comments as well. If your examiners are very strict, you can be accused of plagiarism.
3. You can do better by removing old terms altogether and just use language from common English. There are also illustrations that might be better removed because they do not make sense among lay readers.

I concentrated my evaluation on the contents of the "Foundational Discussion" sections. The flow of the lessons (from Introductory Notes to Social Reflection) seems good, although I am not sure how you can cover the richness of the contents of Foundational Discussion sections in 15-20 minutes.

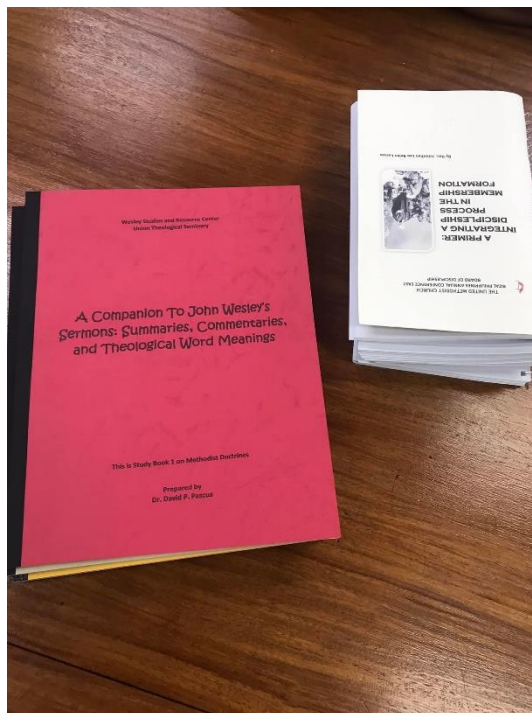
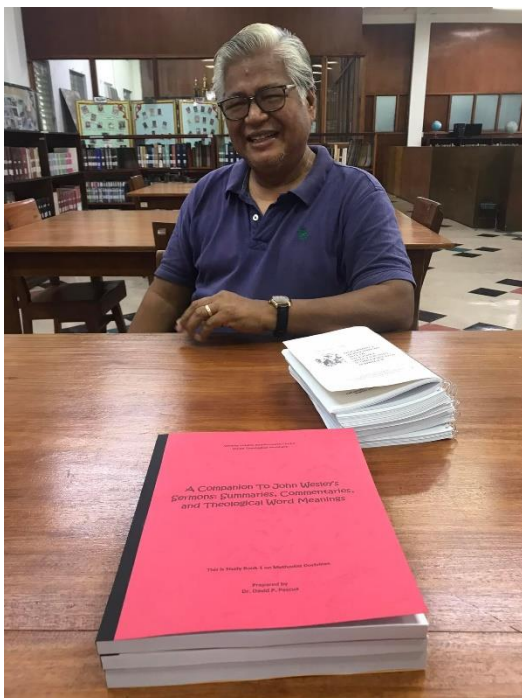
Thank you for allowing me to read your project. I pray for the best in your academic journey and ministerial endeavors.

Blessings!

DICK O. EUGENIO, PhD
 Dean, WU-P SOLAS

APPENDIX O

MEET-UP PHOTOS AND REVIEW BY REV. DAVE PASCUA, PHD



Jonathan,

I have been busy with some urgent things pertaining to my retirement. I read your work and I find them faithful to our Wesleyan Heritage. You are a good writer and I hope that you keep writing so that we can re-root our congregations in this heritage. I commend your work for discipleship programs of United Methodist congregations. It has been a joy to know that your interest in Wesleyan Theology has been high and passionate. Continue in this path. Scriptural Christianity as Wesley taught it can be unpopular but it will always be the right path to take. A writer and a thinker like you must always be patient in sowing the good seeds. May God bless you.

Dr. David P. Pascua

APPENDIX P

SAMPLE OF THE SCANNED SIGNATURE PORTION OF THE CONSENT FORM

What if I have questions about the project?

- If you have questions, kindly don't hesitate to contact the researcher:
- Facebook Messenger: Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos
- Email: jonathanleobl@gmail.com
- Cellphone number: 09255567267
- You may also reach the supervising adviser: Dr. Erlic Bang-as Sagud through esagud@apnts.edu.ph

What will happen next?

- If you agree to participate in this study, you need to sign the consent form that we discussed. Your responses will be kept for recording purposes. This project is intended for members of local churches preferably leaders who are undergoing the discipleship program of the Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East. If you have any concerns, you may raise them any time to the researcher, Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos. Please read the last Statement of Consent carefully. If you decide to be part of this project, kindly write your name, put your signature, and also the date on the corresponding spaces below. A copy of the form will be given to the participants.

Statement of Consent

I understand the procedures described above. All my concerns were given clear answers and I am willing to participate in this project. A copy of this form is given to me.

I understand that the information that I give concerning my demographic categorization, feedback, and photographs will be used for reporting and presentation.

I understand that the photographs during the sessions will be stored on the laptop of the researcher and will also be shared on social media.

 5-7-2022
Participant's signature Date

MARIA FLORENTINA E. DE LEON
Participant's Printed Name

Consent Form for Participants of The Discipleship Sessions in Taytay United Methodist Church adapted from Dr. Nehemiah Bathula (2020, 242-244).

APPENDIX Q

RESPONDENTS' CORRESPONDING CODE NAMES

	Designated Code Name	Participant's Name
1	Participant 1	Carreon, Lilian
2	Participant 2	Tamayo, Jocelyn
3	Participant 3	De Leon, Maria Florentina
4	Participant 4	Defensor, Merle
5	Participant 5	Uy, Maria Lolita
6	Participant 6	Alcantara, Rhodora
7	Participant 7	Cruz, Pamela
8	Participant 8	Crisosotomo, Jay Bhee
9	Participant 9	Reyes, Adelina
10	Participant 10	Atanacio, Angelina
11	Participant 11	Rev. Amble, Minerva
12	Participant 12	Naval, Zenaida
13	Participant 13	Aguilar, Bethsaida
14	Participant 14	Castorillo, Victoria
15	Participant 15	Cayetano, Angeline
16	Participant 16	Cruz, Rachel
17	Participant 17	Rev. Peralta, Prudencio
18	Participant 18	Rev. Tapucar, Anthony
19	Participant 19	Dss. Magsino, Maricel
20	Participant 20	Dss. Dela Pena Roxanne

APPENDIX R

SAMPLE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION LESSON 1: “UPON OUR LORD’S SERMON ON THE MOUNT, 4”

UPON OUR LORD’S SERMON ON THE MOUNT, 4 (1748)

Matthew 5:13-16

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever heard the criticism that the church is too focused on being otherworldly to a point that it bears an image of exclusivity from society? What is your reaction to this idea?
2. How can we espouse our religion in a democratic and pluralistic world?
3. What do you think is the more effective means to improve society or affect people’s lives: using political influence or being Christ-like to people around us?

“Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. “Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:13-16

Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV)

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

FOUNDATIONAL DISCUSSION

Content of John Wesley's Sermon

God's image is so visibly impressed upon inward religion in a way that inward religion, bearing the image of God, requires the total immersion of the soul in flesh and blood to attend to any possible doubt regarding its origin from God.

In a secondary manner, the Son of God, who represents the brightness of the glory of God and the explicit image of God as a person that beams from eternal glory, was incarnated in the flesh as a delicate form through which God allowed Himself to be seen in the world.

If the scope of religion was only about what is pertained above, there could be no other objection about pursuing it with the entire zeal of people's souls. However, people may raise questions about why religion needs to be loaded with "doing and suffering" that burden the soul, that following after charity is not enough for their love to soar.

9

Our Lord defended a form of religion that joins "doing and suffering" to His followers as they are salt of the earth and need to let their light shine. Explaining these words, we are to endeavor the following:

10

A. First: "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it."

B. Second: "to conceal this religion is impossible, as well as utterly contrary to the design of its Author."

C. Third: "answer some objections; and conclude the whole with a practical application."

11

A. CHRISTIANITY IS ESSENTIALLY A SOCIAL
RELIGION AND TO TURN IT INTO A SOLITARY
RELIGION IS TO DESTROY IT

12

Christianity is referred to here as the “method of worshipping God” as revealed by Jesus Christ to the world. To say that Christianity is a social religion means that it cannot survive without a society where conversations with other individuals happen.

Discouraging this character of Christianity will doubtlessly affirm that turning it into a solitary religion will destroy it.

13

Meekness is essential to Christianity. It implies being mild, gentle, and patient endurance. These traits cannot be exercised without encountering other people.

Peacemaking or doing what is good is a character of genuine Christianity. It is equally essential with other parts of the religion that stem from Christ according to the original plan of what He placed as essential foundations of religion.

14

To neglect peacemaking is to forego mercy, the pureness of the heart, or any other aspect of what Christ has instituted.

However, those who set aside peacemaking and recommend entire solitude lead us into the wilderness. Can anyone claim that a solitary Christian can be merciful as if there is an opportunity to do good to all by being solitary?

15

The words of our Lord do not direct us to break our interactions with the world. Without engaging with the world, we cannot be Christians. Having conversations with “ungodly and unholy” persons is necessary to fully exert the tempers that express the way of living in God’s Kingdom as described by our Lord.

16

The words of our Lord do not direct us to break our interactions with the world. Without engaging with the world, we cannot be Christians. Having conversations with “ungodly and unholy” persons is necessary to fully exert the tempers that express the way of living in God’s Kingdom as described by our Lord.

17

Tasteless salt can no longer be restored and is good for nothing. The parallel of this situation is depicted when branches that no longer bear fruit are cut, thrown, and cast into the fire, while those that abide in God remain and bear much fruit (John 15:2,6).

18

A heart can be hardened by being deceived by sin and then fall lower and lower until he/she wholly falls away and loses his/her spiritual savor.

19

B. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CONCEALING THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

20

Since believers cannot separate themselves from the rest of the world, can the Christian faith be conveyed to others secretly or imperceptibly? If this form of conveying faith can happen, how can it be observed?

It can be argued that, in the same manner, the salt seasons food without producing any noise and liability to external observation. With that, believers can hide in the world and their religion can be kept to themselves without offending those they cannot help.

21

However, the Lord is aware of such reasoning. Genuine religion, when it resides in the heart, makes it impossible to be concealed in a way that is contrary to how its Author has designed it.

22

Evil will take pains to prove that the light in those who are Christ is actually darkness by falsely saying evil of the good that is in them or characterizing that good as evil.

Responding to evil with godly tempers, continuing in "doing-well," and joy in humility while being persecuted, and laboring for what is good to overcome evil will make believers more visible and conspicuous than they were before.

23

C. OBJECTIONS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY AS A SOCIAL RELIGION AND RESPONSES

24

a) FIRST OBJECTION: There is an objection that states: religion is not about outward things but what is in the heart, the innermost of the soul as it pertains to the "union of the soul with God."

25

b) SECOND OBJECTION: Related to the inward condition of the heart is the claim that "love is all in all" as the fulfillment of the law and aim of the commandment.

26

c) THIRD OBJECTION: The Apostle instructed us to pursue charity which he termed "a more excellent way." In addition to going the way of charity, he directed them to long for spiritual gifts. The Apostle's words state that we are to "follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts."

27

d) FOURTH OBJECTION: God is Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and truth.

28

e) FIFTH OBJECTION: People may appeal to experience and say that they have employed external things for many years and had their light shine. Yet, they have not gained any profit.

28

f) SIXTH OBJECTION: Experience shows that doing good is a waste of people's labor. What is the benefit of feeding or clothing people, if they will eventually be cast into eternal flames?

29

g) SEVENTH OBJECTION: Others have attempted and labored to lead sinners toward a reformed life but they could not make any lasting impact on them.

31

D. THE LORD INSTRUCTS US TO LET OUR
LIGHT SHINE

32

Applying this instruction of letting our light shine consists of God-glorifying character such as humility of the heart, gentleness, forbearance in wisdom, concern for eternal things, having sorrow for people's miseries and sins, and the desire for universal holiness and happiness in God.

They are to reflect their light through works of piety and mercy. Renouncing superfluities enlarges their ability to do good. Unnecessary expenses are to be cut off in food, furniture, and apparel, as well as the useless employment of time and other things.

God's people are to live as good stewards of God with love and faith and are ready to suffer as they work for the Lord who knows the labors of His children.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does the message affect you personally?

1. *Do people around me identify me as a follower of Christ?*

2. *Am I ashamed to be identified as a believer when I am with people who don't share the same faith that I have?*

3. *Does my action speak about my faith and is consistent with what I preach?*

SITUATIONAL REFLECTION

How do you think this message can be useful for the people around you, your ministry, church, and community?

37

1. How do I meaningfully relate my faith with the expression of my political views?

2. How do I understand Christianity's responsibility in changing our society and communities?

3. Is the church silent or active in influencing cultural change? Why?

38

APPENDIX S

PICTURES OF CERTIFICATION AND CONSECRATION IMAGES COURTESY OF DR. MARIA LOLITA UY




Consecration



Pilot Class Holding their Certificates

APPENDIX T

TEMPLATE OF THE CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION


THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
RIZAL PHILIPPINES ANNUAL CONFERENCE EAST

WESLEYAN DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Certificate of Completion

given to

BRO. JAY BHEE L. CRISOSTOMO

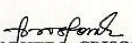
of TAYTAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

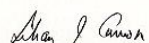
for satisfying the requirements of the *fifth volume* of the RPACE
Wesleyan Discipleship Track:


"SOCIAL RELIGION TOWARDS SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION."

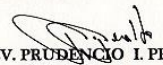
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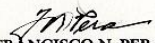
at TAYTAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

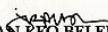

BRO. JAY BHEE L. CRISOSTOMO
 Discipleship Coordinator
 Taytay UMC

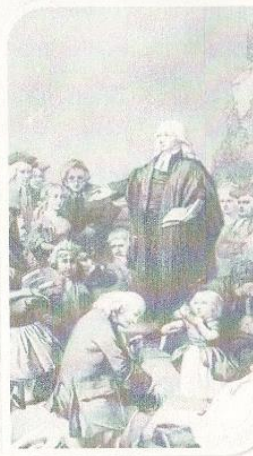

SIS. LILIAN I. CARREON
 Church Lay Leader
 Taytay UMC


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 Taytay UMC


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 Administrative Pastor
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REV. FRANCISCO N. PERA
 RPACE Discipleship Process Director


REV. JONATHAN LEO BELEN LOSCOS
 Acting Overall Discipleship Coordinator




APPENDIX U**CERTIFICATES OF PROOFREADING****CERTIFICATION OF PROOFREADING**

I, Jonathan Leo Belen Loscos, certify that this project thesis proposal has undergone proofreading and editing by Elen Joy Alata-Bruza.


JONATHAN LEO BELEN LOSCOS
Signature of Researcher

JULY 12, 2021

Date


ELEN JOY ALATA- BRUZA
Signature of Proofreader

JULY 12, 2021

Date

CERTIFICATE OF PROOFREADING

THIS IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE THESIS ENTITLED
A DISCIPLESHIP SERIES ON SOCIAL RELIGION FOR THE RIZAL PHILIPPINES
ANNUAL CONFERENCE EAST OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BASED ON SELECTED SERMONS OF JOHN WESLEY

WRITTEN BY

JONATHAN LEO BELEN LOSCOS

HAS BEEN PROOFREAD AND RETURNED ON

21 OCTOBER, 2022



ADAH ABIGAIL G. MENTUDA
Proofreader

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CURRICULUM VITAE

JONATHAN LEO BELEN LOSCOS

I. PERSONAL PROFILE:

Personal Mission:	<i>To advance the theistic worldview, leadership principles, and discipleship foundations grounded on the formative, redemptive, and transformative essentials of the Christian faith.</i>
Profile Summary:	<p><i>I am a minister of the United Methodist Church (UMC). For more than a decade, I have been appointed to serve in various ministerial settings which include mission areas, local churches, and church-related institutions. I was given opportunities to have acquaintances with people from different walks of life within our local context. I am also blessed to have participated in some book-writing projects.</i></p> <p><i>My current ministerial assignment is at Puno United Methodist Church as an Associate Pastor. Additionally, I am serving as the Assistant to the Editor of the Wesleyan Journal for Religious Studies, which is an academic journal of the Wesleyan University-Philippines.</i></p>
Personal Information:	<p>Spouse: Agnes Decasa Loscos</p> <p>Child: Azalaiah Elina Decasa Loscos</p> <p>Permanent Address: Lot 2 Blk. 14, Magnolia St., Bermuda Hts. Subd., Antipolo City, PH.</p> <p>Email: jonathanleobl@gmail.com</p> <p>Contact No.: 09255567267</p> <p>Birth: January 5, 1986</p>

II. EDUCATION

2015-Present	<p>MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (In Progress) Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, Ortigas Avenue Ext., Taytay, Rizal</p>
2020-2022	<p>PROFESSIONAL MASTERS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP Wesleyan University-Philippines, Mabini St., Cabanatuan City</p>

- 2017-2018 EDUCATION COURSES**
(18 units earned in preparation for LET)
Harris Memorial College, G. K. Bunyi Road, Brgy. Dolores,
Taytay, Rizal
- 2014-2015 MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**
(Partially completed, 18 units earned.)
Trinity University of Asia, Rodriguez Sr. Ave., New Manila,
Quezon City
- 2009-2013 MASTER OF DIVINITY**
Union Theological Seminary, Pala-pala Rd., Dasmarinas,
Cavite.
Awards:
- Cum Laude
 - Award in Wesleyan Studies
 - Best Speaker Award Junior Level, Wesley Divinity School, Wesleyan University-Philippines (2nd semester, 2009-2010)
- Clinical Pastoral Education:**
- Philip Del Rosario Pastoral Care Ministry, Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East
- Exposure:**
- Internship in Rosario, Cavite with the workers of the Philippine Economic Zone Workers
- 2003-2007 BS AGRICULTURE**
University of The Philippines, Los Baños, Laguna
Scholarship:
- Commission on Higher Education (2003-2007)
- Campus Involvements:**
- Co-Founder, Ichthus: The Methodist Movement in UPLB (2006-2007)
 - Member, Buklod-UPLB (2005-2007)
 - Member, State Varsity Christian Fellowship (2005-2007)
- 1999-2003 RIZAL NATIONAL SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL**
Brgy. Batingan, Binangonan, Rizal
Scholarship:
- Rizal National Science High School-Province of Rizal/Antipolo City (1999-2003)
- Exposure:**
- National Jr. Leaders Encampment Southern Tagalog Jamboree, Casiguran, Sorsogon (2000)


III. PASTORAL EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (UMC)

- 2018-Present** **ASSOCIATE PASTOR (ORDAINED ELDER II)**
Puno UMC, #33 Holy Spirit Drive, Don Antonio Hts., Brgy. Holy Spirit, Q. C.
- 2016-Present** **CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP (ORDAINED ELDER)**
Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East (RPACE)
Program: *“Integrating a Discipleship Process in the Membership Formation”*
- 2016-2018** **CHAPLAIN (ORDAINED ELDER)**
Harris Memorial College, G. K. Bunyi Road, Brgy. Dolores, Taytay, Rizal
- 2014-2016** **ADMINISTRATIVE PASTOR (ORDAINED ELDER)**
Cornerstone UMC, Neptune Street, Sitio Tibagan, Brgy. Dolores, Taytay, Rizal
Opened Mission Areas:
- Sitio Pipindan, Talim Island, Binangonan, Rizal
 - Sitio Ticullo, Talim Island, Binangonan, Rizal
- 2013-2014** **CHAPLAIN/EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT OF THE VP FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (PROVISIONAL MEMBER OF RIZAL PHILIPPINES ANNUAL CONFERENCE EAST)**
Wesley Divinity School, Wesleyan University-Philippines, Mabini St., Cabanatuan City
Other position/ministry:
- District Statistician, Rizal District, Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East
- 2012-2013** **FULL-TIME MISSION PASTOR (PROVISIONAL MEMBER OF RIZAL PHILIPPINES ANNUAL CONFERENCE EAST)**
- Christ is the Answer Mission of Antipolo UMC, Sitio Singalong, Brgy. San Jose, Antipolo City;
 - Pastor-in-Mission for Love Seeds, Inc. in partnership with Antipolo UMC
- Other position/ministry:**
- Rizal District Statistician, Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East

- 2009-2012 MISSION WORKER (LOCAL PASTOR, WEEKEND APPOINTMENT)**
 Christ is the Answer Mission of Antipolo UMC, Sitio Singalong, Brgy. San Jose, Antipolo City
Other position/ministry:
- Secretariat Committee, Rizal District Conference, Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East (2011-2012)
 - Secretary, East Rizal Mission Area (ERIZMA) Cluster for Christ, Rizal District, Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East (2009-2010)
 - Secretariat Committee, Rizal District Conference, Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East
- 2008-2009 YOUTH WORKER (CANDIDATE TO THE PASTORAL MINISTRY)**
 Antipolo UMC, National Rd., Brgy. Dalig, Antipolo City
Other position/ministry:
- Secretary, East Rizal Mission Area (ERIZMA) Cluster for Christ, Rizal District, Rizal Philippines Annual Conference East

IV. BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES

- 2020-Present ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR**
 Wesleyan Journal for Religious Studies
 Wesley Divinity School, Wesleyan University-Philippines,
 Mabini St., Cabanatuan City.
- 2020 WRITER/CONTRIBUTOR**
Christian Living for Everyday Life 10
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- 2020 WRITER/CONTRIBUTOR**
Christian Living for Everyday Life 8
 Vibal Group, Inc.
- 2017 EDITOR**
Christian Living for Everyday Life 4
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 Associate Pastor
 Puno United Methodist Church