



THE CLASS MEETING

Christian Discipleship Today

by

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Covenant Bible Studies

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The Cover

The photo on the cover is a giant bronze flame that marks the spot on Aldersgate Street, where Wesley's heart was strangely warmed on May 24, 1738.

Dedication

This little booklet is dedicated to all those persons who joined with me in Covenant Discipleship Groups and watched over me and one another in love.



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INTRODUCTION

I have tried to form many different kinds of small groups, from Bible Study to Study Groups to Prayer Groups. Some of them were successful and some were not. When I read about the Class Meetings of Methodism, I saw something very different from the small groups I had formed. The single word for it is “accountability.” At first, the word scared me. As I probed deeper, I began to realize that it was simply giving an account of how each member of the group was doing with his or her growth in Christian discipleship.

The Class meeting was a safe place where participants watched over one another in love. It wasn’t a place where participants criticized or argued with one another. It was a place where participants really got acquainted with one another. Even though I liked the idea, I wondered whether it would work today. Then I heard about a modern attempt to practice the Class Meeting in our time. The new name for the Class Meeting is Covenant Discipleship. The Disciple Bible Study program was supposed to prepare people for Covenant Discipleship, but I didn’t see that happening.

I went to Duke University hear David Watson and Steve Manskar talk about Covenant Discipleship. I asked Steve for the names of some churches where members were involved in Covenant Discipleship. Steve gave me the names of churches in Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. I visited every Covenant Discipleship Group in all the churches and asked them how they were doing. I was amazed at what I found. I went home and started three Covenant Discipleship Groups among adults and five groups in the Confirmation Class.

When I retired from active ministry, I started three more Covenant Discipleship Groups, all of which have been meeting for more than ten years. One member of the first group has moved into the ordained ministry. The vocations of the participants vary widely, and all the members see themselves in active ministry. One of the groups observes Holy Communion every time it meets. It’s difficult to get people to join Covenant Discipleship Groups, but

once they try it, they stay with it. Very few participants drop out, and when they do it's because they moved or died.

What follows is the result of some research I did on the Methodist Class Meetings. I wanted to know how they got started and why they were dropped. Even though they were dropped, they were missed, and that's why they were replaced with a modern version called Covenant Discipleship. In Covenant Discipleship the members create their own covenant, and share with one another how they are doing. Nothing goes into the covenant unless all of the members agree. I can't speak highly enough of Covenant Discipleship. Every congregation needs Covenant Disciples.

I've included a copy of the Covenant from the longest running Discipleship Group at the end of this booklet on the Modern Class Meeting.

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CLASS MEETINGS

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

Acts 2:42

*The class-meeting,
the most peculiar and characteristic feature of Methodism.¹*

John Wesley

Some undergraduate students, along with Charles and John Wesley, were first called “Methodists” when they met together regularly at Oxford University. Those who observed these young men in their *methodical* approach to Christian discipleship called them a number of devastating nicknames, none of which were complimentary. Seven of these names were: The Holy Club, the Reforming Club, Bible Moths, Methodists, Supererogation Men, Enthusiasts and Sacramentalists. Methodist was the label that stuck; and even though Wesley disliked it, he wore it as a badge of honor and proceeded to define “the character of a Methodist” as one who really believes and lives “the common principles of Christianity.”

Wesley had a method for committed discipleship; and it had little to do with church membership or average attendance, the standards we use today. It had to do with accountability, which took place within the Methodist Class Meetings. There were times when the *expulsions* and *withdrawals* outnumbered the *faithful* allowed to remain in the Class Meetings. Wesley was warned frequently that his stringent demands on the people called Methodists would reduce the societies to extinction. These warnings failed to deter him, for he was not enamored with statistics. For him a spiritual revival was not a matter of numbers, but of devotion and commitment. Membership statistics were not even compiled until Methodism had been a force in England for

¹ John Wesley. (1909–1916). *Vol. 3: The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, Volumes 1–8* (N. Curnock, Ed.) (272). London: Robert Culley; Charles H. Kelly.

more than thirty years; and even then, they were held down by Wesley's firm insistence on accountability. That accountability took place within the Class Meetings.

Wesley called the Class Meetings the "sinew" of Methodism. Other terms that could be used might be "muscle" or "genius." I prefer to call the Class Meetings the *heart* of Methodism, and for the most part, we have taken the *heart* out of Methodism. We need to find a way of restoring the *heart* to Methodism, or cease to call ourselves Methodists. That may seem harsh, but we have rendered the name meaningless.

A Brief Historical Sketch

History can be a wonderful teacher, so, let's begin by sketching the development of the Class Meetings. The story begins with the Religious Societies in England, some of which were present in the Anglican and Moravian Churches.

The Religious Societies. A German Lutheran pastor, Dr. Anthony Horneck, was familiar with some small house groups that had met under the leadership of Jakob Philipp Spener, first in Frankfurt and then elsewhere in Germany. Their aim was to develop a more disciplined spiritual life. Horneck, who had settled in England, encouraged the development of similar religious societies there. They were initiated by lay people, who avoided meeting during the prescribed Sunday services. This caused some suspicion among the clergy, but the societies were committed to deepening the spiritual life of the churches.

The movement grew in London and spread to many other cities as well. Samuel Wesley was invited to preach to one of these societies in 1698, and in 1701, he organized a society in Epworth, with nine charter members. New members could be added, but they had to be approved by the group, and twelve was set as the maximum size of a society. When the society reached twelve, two members were set aside to start a new society. This provided for expansion while maintaining the small size, which encouraged honest participation and direct conversation. While the primary purpose of the religious society at Epworth was to deepen the spirituality of its members, their statement of purpose was "to set up schools for the poor, wherein children (or if need be, adult persons) may be instructed in the fundamentals of Christianity...

and to take care of the sick and other poor, and to afford them spiritual as well as corporal helps.”

Since the religious societies were limited to men, Susanna Wesley adapted the model and began to hold what she called “enlarged family prayers” in the Epworth rectory in 1712. This was the religious environment in which John Wesley grew up.

There is no record of how long any of these societies lasted, but we know something of the impact they had on early Methodism. The religious societies promoted the practical aspects of Christian discipleship and became increasingly involved in caring for the poor, relieving debt, visiting the sick, providing for orphans, and setting up schools. They were also open to Wesley’s preaching when the local Anglican congregations closed their doors and pulpits to him.

The Holy Club. The next step in our historical sketch of the heart of Methodism has to do with the Holy Club. In 1725, John Wesley dedicated himself to no longer be “half a Christian [but] to be all-devoted to God.” Charles Wesley made a similar commitment. When Charles entered Oxford, he discovered some friends with similar interests, and they started meeting together on a regular basis. The date for the beginning of the Holy Club can be set at 1729. Upon his return to Oxford, John was glad to find a group of serious thinkers. As a faculty member he became the group’s leader. The name we usually associate with this group is the “Holy Club,” but as mentioned earlier, there were other names leveled at it, including “Methodist.”¹

The Holy Club is usually viewed as an example of an Anglican religious society because it had rules which its members drew up, it followed the practice of the societies in using the stated prayers of the Anglican tradition, and required regular attendance at the sacrament as a condition for membership. One of the more influential members of the Holy Club, John Clayton, opposed being identified as an Anglican religious society. He feared that such an identification would water down their rigorous discipline based upon the early church in its first five centuries. The members

¹ Luke Tyerman. (1870). *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, Volume 1* (51). London: Hodder and Stoughton.

of the Holy Club understood themselves as a disciplined renewal movement within the Anglican Church. Wesley later stated their goal as the “recovery of the faith and practice of primitive Christianity.”

Members of the Holy Club were interested in reading and discussing the classics, but their motives were religious rather than intellectual. They prayed three times aloud during the day, stopped for silent prayer every hour; practiced all the ordinances of the church; and spent their time visiting the sick and imprisoned and conducting schools for the poor. “Methodists” was the mildest name applied to the Holy Club. It was said of them:

By rule they eat, by rule they drink,
Do all things else by rule, but think—
Accuse their priests of loose behavior,
To get more in the laymen’s favor;
Method alone must guide ’em all,
Whence Methodists themselves they call.¹

We know the names of some of the members of the Holy Club. Besides John and Charles, there were George Whitefield, James Hery, John Gambold, Westley Hall, and John Clayton. Hervey wrote a best seller in the eighteenth century. John Gambold and Westley Hall were won over to Moravian quietist piety. Gambold became a Moravian bishop and broke off their common work with the Wesley’s. Charles Wesley was also tempted by quietism, but it only lasted for three weeks. Others became faithful pastors in the Anglican Church. At its height, the Holy Club had as many as thirty men in it, but when the Wesleys were absent, it shrank to five. Not everyone in the Holy Club turned out to be religious. One of the members married one of Wesley’s sisters and was pronounced by the historian of the club “an unmitigated scamp.”

In 1735, Wesley was invited by Dr. John Burton, Trustee of the Georgia Colony and patron of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.), to transfer the Holy Club to Georgia to reach out to the Indians and Colonists. In September of that year the invitation was accepted and approved by the Georgia Society. It

¹ Luke Tyerman. (1870). *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, Volume 1* (248). London: Hodder and Stoughton.

proved impossible to take the entire Holy Club to Georgia. Only three members were aboard the Simmonds when it sailed from Gravesend on October 21, 1735. They were John and Charles and Benjamin Ingham. A new recruit, Charles Delamotte, made a fourth. George Whitefield was still a student at Oxford and was not yet ordained. He promised to join them later. Wesley refers to the Holy Club in Savannah and says that “twenty or thirty persons met at my house” on Sunday afternoons and evenings, and Wednesday evenings, and spent “about an hour in prayer, singing, and mutual exhortation.” But he had less success with the Holy Club in Georgia than he had at Oxford. The Georgia groups varied considerably in size and were difficult to discipline. The Holy Club in Georgia ended in failure, but that is another story.¹

The Holy Club at Oxford adopted strict disciplines for themselves in an effort to gain “inward and outward righteousness.” Wesley believed that lukewarm Christianity was worse than open or willful sin. He and the other members of the Holy Club labored to bring every area of their lives under submission to Jesus Christ. They toiled at strict self-examination, rigorous spiritual disciplines, and sacrificial good works, yet the assurance of salvation eluded them. At the end of the experience in Georgia, Wesley found himself mired in what he called “a spiritual wilderness.” It was the religious society meeting on Aldersgate Street in London that enabled him to find the assurance that he sought. It came not by his own efforts but by grace through faith. Charles had a similar experience of assurance a few days earlier, and so we can date the beginning of the next period in their lives at May 21st and May 24th in 1738.

The United Societies. Upon returning to London, Wesley became involved in the Fetter Lane Society, formed on May 1, 1738 by the Anglicans, but finally dominated by the Moravians. He states that forty or fifty of them agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening for a free conversation, begun and ended with prayer. This was not to be a substitute for worship and the sacrament. Wesley eventually became the unofficial leader of the Fetter Lane Society, but his leadership was challenged by a

¹ John Wesley, (1872). *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 13* (Third Edition) (307). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

Moravian from Bohemia, who won a majority of its members over to the belief that the best way to have a spiritual blessing was through “stillness.” That meant the refraining from all good works, all study, and all participation in the services of the churches, until the blessing came. Before the year was finished, it became clear that Wesley could not accommodate himself to such an idea. He tried to patch things up, but finally withdrew with those who agreed with him. The Fetter Lane society was given up entirely to the Moravians. The two streams divided: the Moravians continued their work of testifying to the reality of the inner spiritual life, and the Methodists took upon themselves the task of proclaiming holiness to the multitudes.

One might say that Wesley took the best of the Anglican and Moravian religious societies and created the United or Methodist societies. The first Methodist society was formed in London in November of 1739. Wesley describes the event:

In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily) I gave those advices from time to time which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.¹

That was the rise of the first United or Methodist Society. Others followed in such places as Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle,

¹ John Wesley and Charles Wesley, (1872). *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies*, in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, &c. In *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 8* (Third Edition) (269). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

and many other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Wesley carefully defined the purpose of the society as “*a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.*”¹

The Voluntary Band Meetings. As the Methodist societies grew, their small-group emphasis would have been lost if it had not been for the development of classes, and bands, which became common subdivisions of the societies. Let us take a closer look at the voluntary bands before proceeding to the required classes. We are doing this because the bands actually preceded the classes. Bands developed out of Moravian influences. They were small group units within Moravian congregations. Wesley adopted the format of the bands during his ministry in Savannah, and when he returned to England, he, along with the Moravians, incorporated them into the Fetter Lane Society. When the Fetter Lane Society was first organized, it was Anglican, but it subdivided into bands following the Moravian custom.

The bands were divided into single gender groups and according to marital status. Composed of from five to ten persons, bands met once and sometimes twice a week for singing, prayer, and spiritual conversation, in which each person was to “speak freely, plainly, and concisely as he can, the real State of his Heart, with the several Temptations and Deliverances, since the last Time of meeting.” There were eleven sentences in their covenant:

1. That we will meet together once a week to “confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another, that we may be healed.”
2. That the persons so meeting be divided into several *bands*, or little companies, none of them consisting of fewer than five or more than ten persons.
3. That every one in order speak as freely, plainly, and

¹ John Wesley and Charles Wesley. (1872). *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies*, in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, &c. In *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 8* (Third Edition) (269). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

concisely as he can, the real state of his heart, with his several temptations and deliverances, since the last time of meeting.

4. That all the bands have a conference at eight every Wednesday evening, begun and ended with singing and prayer.
5. That any who desire to be admitted into the society be asked, “What are your reasons for desiring this? will you be entirely open; using no kind of reserve? Have you any objection to any of our orders?” (which may then be read).
6. That when any new member is proposed, every one present speak clearly and freely whatever objection he has to him.
7. That those against whom no reasonable objection appears be, in order for their trial, formed into one or more distinct bands, and some person agreed on to assist them.
8. That after two months’ trial, if no objection then appear, they may be admitted into the society.
9. That every fourth Saturday be observed as a day of general intercession.
10. That on the Sunday seven-night following be a general lovefeast, from seven till ten in the evening.
11. That no particular member be allowed to act in anything contrary to any order of the society; and that if any persons, after being thrice admonished, do not conform thereto, they be not any longer esteemed as members.¹

Their focus was spiritual growth and maturity. The size and nature of the band enabled its members to discuss common problems more freely, which would not have been possible in

¹ John Wesley. (1909–1916). *Vol. 1: The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, Volumes 1–8* (N. Curnock, Ed.) (458–459). London: Robert Culley; Charles H. Kelly.

mixed company. Membership in the bands was strictly voluntary, band tickets were marked with a letter b, and leaders were chosen from within the group. Only about one in five Methodists took the step of joining a band. Since band meetings were not considered essential, they fell into disuse at an early date.

The Required Class Meetings. The required Class Meeting, which became the most characteristic mark of Methodism, arose quite by accident. A loan had to be taken out in Bristol to build the New Room, one of the first Methodist society chapels. Wesley met with some leaders and asked, “How shall we pay the debt upon the preaching-house?” Captain Foy gave the following answer, “Let everyone in the society give a penny a week and it will easily be done.” “But many of them,” said one, “have not a penny to give.” “True” replied the Captain, “then put ten or twelve of them to me. Let each of these give what they can weekly, and I will supply what is wanting.” Others made the same offer, and so Wesley divided the societies among them, assigning a class of about twelve to each of these, whom he called Class Leaders.¹

It was quickly discovered that as the Class Leaders visited their members to collect the contributions, that they performed a unique pastoral role. They were watching over one another in love. This was not only time consuming, but it presented some other problems. The weekly rounds were inconvenient because many Methodists lived as servants in houses where the master or mistress would not permit visitors. Even where such visits were allowed, they were unable to talk in private. This led to the next development in the evolution of classes. Instead of the leader visiting the members, a weekly meeting was set up, which brought the class together with the leader for prayer, Bible study, mutual confession and support. In addition to being a means of paying off a debt, the classes provided training in mutual accountability. Hence the twofold dynamic of the Class Meeting emerged: (1) watching over one another in love, and (2) holding one another mutually accountable.

¹ John Wesley. (1872). *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 13* (Third Edition) (259). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

It was not difficult to get into a class. It was indeed required of every person who wanted to belong to a Methodist society. There was only one condition for persons who desired admission and that was “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.”¹ As the classes developed it became clear that they needed some guidance, and so Wesley drew up the General Rules in 1743. The aim of the General Rules was to provide the Methodists with biblically prescribed guidelines for holy living. While the General Rules went through thirty-nine revisions in Wesley’s lifetime, their outline remained essentially the same. It was expected of all who continued within the Methodist societies that they give evidence of their desire of salvation:

First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised.

Second, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible to all men....

Thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are the public worship of God; the ministry of the word, either read or expounded, the Supper of the Lord; private prayer, searching the Scriptures; and fasting, or abstinence.²

Even a religious conversion was not required to enter a Class Meeting. In fact, more religious conversions occurred within the Class Meetings than in the public preaching services. Class Meeting activities were conducive to conversion. They included singing, prayer, and the sharing of spiritual struggles and victories. Class members were expected to follow the rule of confidentiality:

¹ John Wesley. (1872). *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 8* (Third Edition) (250). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

² John Wesley and Charles Wesley, (1872). The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, &c. In *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 8* (Third Edition) (270–271). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

“Let nothing spoken in this society be spoken again. Hereby we had the more full confidence in each other”¹

Wesley saw the support and encouragement provided by the societies, classes and bands as nothing other than the pattern provided by the apostles and the early church. He saw the Class Meetings not as an innovation of the Church, but the recovery of the basic principles for the practice of Christian discipleship. From 1745-1748, Wesley experimented with placing the emphasis on preaching alone. During that time he did not form societies or require people to join the Class Meetings. The result was disastrous. “Almost all the seed has fallen by the wayside; there is scarce any fruit remaining,” noted Wesley in the Minutes of the Conference of 1748. At that same Conference the decision was made to turn again to the formation of societies with their Class Meetings. Those who weren’t connected to a class or band were hanging on “a rope of sand,” and Wesley refused to preach where there were no societies with Class Meetings and bands.

I was more convinced than ever that the preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer. How much preaching has there been for these twenty years all over Pembrokeshire! But no regular societies, no discipline, no order or connexion; and the consequence is that nine in ten of the once-awakened are now faster asleep than ever.²

Research done by Thomas Albin on the spiritual lives of five hundred fifty-five early British Methodists, whose spiritual biographies were published in the pages of the *Arminian Magazine* and the *Methodist Magazine*, shows that according to their own testimony, only one-fourth experienced new birth in the context of preaching. Three-fourths of them needed the nurture of the society, classes, and bands, and spent an average of 2.3 years in this nurturing process before experiencing what they themselves

¹ John Wesley, (1872). *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 8* (Third Edition) (261). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

² John Wesley. (1909–1916). *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, Volumes 1–8*. (N. Curnock, Ed.) (Vol. 5, p. 26). London: Robert Culley.

identified as new birth. The Class Leaders and fellow class members were the primary influences. Because of this valuable truth, Methodist preaching at typical open-air meetings ended not with an *altar call* and a count of the number of conversions, but with an announcement of where the local Methodist society met and an invitation to join one of the Class Meetings.

While profession of Christian conversion was not a requirement to be in a Methodist Class Meeting, classes only admitted serious seekers. Class Meeting tickets were issued quarterly first at Bristol and Kingswood to guard against “disorderly walkers,” some forty of which were expelled in February of 1741. The issuing of tickets spread to London and other places for the same reason, to maintain the level of seriousness and accountability that characterized the Class Meetings. Similar tickets were issued to members of the bands. Three consecutive absences from the Class Meeting meant the loss of one’s ticket, and without a ticket, one could not gain admission into the meetings. Class Leaders were required to keep an accurate record of attendance.

Just how many class were there? In 1766, the first year for which we have any statistics, they numbered approximately 19,000 in England and Wales. At Wesley’s death in 1791, there were more than 53,000. The population of England and Wales at that time was between 8.5 and 9 million. The Methodist Episcopal Church ceased to make the Class Meeting a requirement in 1864, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South discontinued the requirement of weekly attendance at Class Meetings in 1866. The Methodist Discipline continued to include instructions for Class Meetings until the 1930’s. Regardless of what we have done with the Class Meetings today, it remains the most theological and practical contribution made by Wesley, and by Methodism to the Christian tradition. Wesley called them the prudential means of grace. If Wesley understood the Class Meetings as the sinew (muscle) of Methodism, what gives us the right to set them aside? Our problem today is that we think we have outgrown the snares of sinful human nature, but nothing could be further from the truth.¹

¹ David Lowes Watson, *Class Leaders* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998), p. 50.

One might well ask, “If the Class Meeting was so important to the rise of Methodism, why was it ever given up?” Several reasons are given for the decline of the Class Meetings. The first is that the Methodist societies became a church. For awhile the Class Meetings continued to energize the church; but soon pastors began to settle down in particular parishes, diminishing the need for Class Leaders. The second reason is that the Class Meetings simply gave way to Sunday School classes. Listening to teachers interpret biblical passages became more popular than participation in Class Meetings, where members were expected to share their spiritual journeys and be accountable to one another. The third reason had to do with the waning of the fires of revival. Class Meetings became perfunctory, and by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Class Meetings had all but disappeared, except where spirituality was alive and well, such as in the Black and Korean churches. They have also continued to exist in some third world churches, or among other denominations where the combination of spirituality and accountability is valued.

A Modern Approach

Why not let things alone? Maybe we do not need Class Meetings in modern Methodism. If we were taking Christian discipleship as seriously today as the early Christians and early Methodists did, then our conclusion might be to move in new and different directions. When we look at early Methodism, we find that they were more interested in obedience to Christ than they were in doctrinal beliefs, or even religious experience. Class Leaders were charged with the task of making sure that this priority was upheld. This meant accountability, one of many things missing in modern Methodism.

The above is well illustrated in how The United Methodist Church deals with membership. In our effort to attract more members, we emphasize the benefits of membership and downplay the cost of discipleship. This is a direct inversion of the invitation to discipleship given by Jesus, who allowed people unwilling to pay the price to simply walk away. We are consumed with membership enrollment, or at least increasing our average attendance. This comes dangerously close to idolatry. The consequence of this approach is that we compromise the cost of discipleship in order to attract more people into membership or to

warm our pews. A true response to Christ does result in benefits, but not without the cost of discipleship.

How did we come to this? It happened quite naturally as we did away with the *heart* of Methodism—the Class Meeting. We moved away from what James D. Anderson and Ezra Earl Jones calls transformational leadership. The business model of transactional leadership was adopted. David Watson defines the difference in these two kinds of leadership:

Transactional leadership is responsible for meeting the needs of church members, and for the institutional maintenance of the church. Transformational leadership is responsible for keeping church members focused on the vision of the gospel and the obligations of their discipleship.¹

Both kinds of leadership are necessary, but both kinds of leadership need to be given distinct and equal emphasis in the life and mission of the church. In early Methodism that balance was maintained with two kinds of leaders—the Class Leaders and the stewards. Class Leaders focused on forming disciples and stewards focused on the care of temporal things. We have our equivalence of stewards in our committee structure, which does a fairly good job of administrating the church, but we have nothing like the Class Leaders who kept Methodism focused on forming disciples, even though we claim that our primary mission is “to make disciples for the transformation of the world.” We need to restore something like the Class Meeting in order to develop transformational leaders. We already have plenty of transactional leaders. We know how to transact business, but we do not know how to make disciples.

Covenant Discipleship Groups. There is no point in reinventing the wheel. Fortunately, David Lowes Watson developed what he named “Covenant Discipleship Groups” at Holly Springs United Methodist Church in Holly Springs, North Carolina in 1975. At the time the members of Holly Springs United Methodist Church did not know they were doing anything

¹ David :Lowes Watson, *Forming Christian Disciples* (Nashville, Discipleship Resources, 1999), pp. 120-121.

particularly significant. They just wanted to seek the grace of God by practicing the disciplines of the faith, and to hold one another accountable for their discipleship. In doing this they reestablished both accountability and transformational leadership. They learned how to make disciples, the primary mission of The United Methodist Church. They were theologically driven; whereas, most congregations are sociologically driven. Transactional leaders try to please the members rather than move them to pay the cost of Christian discipleship. For example, the only condition of discipleship that one can find in the New Testament is Jesus' call to obedience, to carry a cross. There is never any discussion of potential benefits, even though they existed.

Watson defines both the Class Meeting of the past and Covenant Discipleship Groups in modern Methodism. Let us look first at his definition of the Class Meeting, which is:

The Class Meeting was a weekly gathering, a subdivision of the early societies, at which members were required to give an account to one another of their discipleship and thereby to sustain each other in their witness. These meetings were regarded by Wesley as the “sinews” of the Methodist movement, the means by which members “watched over one another in love.”¹

Two things happened in those early Class Meetings that can and should be happening today—accountability and the watching over of one another in love.

Through the Class Meetings, Wesley called the church back to the principles of scriptural Christianity, personal holiness, and social responsibility; and he did this through the ordinances of the Church. This was the method in Methodism, and we still need it in some form today. Covenant Discipleship Groups represent a modern approach to the Class Meetings of early Methodism. Watson's definition follows:

A Covenant Discipleship Group consists of two to seven people who agree to meet together for one hour per week in order to hold themselves mutually accountable for their

¹ David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998), p. 18.

discipleship. They do this by affirming a written covenant on which they themselves have agreed.¹

While the group may have as few as two members, the dynamic of the meeting is impeded. The dynamic is much better with five to seven members. Eight members is generally considered too many because the larger number limits conversation. The larger number might be used when group members travel or find it difficult to meet every week.

Watson estimates that 15% of the active membership or 5-7% of the total membership in a United Methodist Church are ready to take part in Covenant Discipleship Groups. As such groups are formed, there are a few principles that need to be understood.

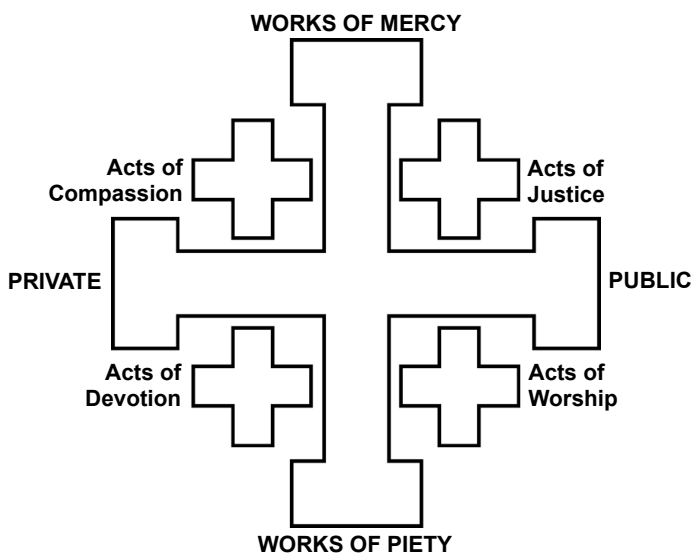
1. The pastor should be involved. The most natural support group for the pastor is not other pastors, but the pastor's own people.
2. The staff should be involved, but they should not be expected to provide permanent leadership, even though they may well provide such leadership in the beginning.
3. Discipleship groups should last one hour, and they should start and finish on time.
4. A new member may visit three times. Then he or she must decide whether or not to join the group.
5. There are regular opportunities for changing the covenant, but welcoming a new member is not one of them.
6. Covenant Sunday is a good time for groups to review their meeting schedules, revise their covenants, and if necessary, change groups.²
7. The accountability of the groups is for the purpose of the forming of faithful disciples and holding them

¹ David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998), p. 97.

² Covenant Sunday would be the first Sunday of the new year. Wesley wrote a special service for Covenant Sunday.

on course as they live out their discipleship in the world. Covenant Discipleship Groups are not to be used as work groups for the church.

The New General Rule. While the modern name for the Class Meeting is the Covenant Discipleship Group, the modern name for the General Rules is the New General Rule or the General Rule of Discipleship. The General Rules written up by Wesley contained not only the obligations of discipleship, but how those obligations were to be carried out by the classes. Wesley's intent was to help the members of the Class Meetings maintain a balance in their discipleship; therefore, the General Rules were three in number: to do no harm, to do good, and to participate in all of the ordinances of the church. Each of these three rules contained a number of specific clauses, some of which are not relevant today. The ordinances of the church are very much the same as today. They include: prayer, the searching of the scriptures, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conferencing. Only the last two need some explanation to make them relevant to modern times. Fasting was suggested in order to help people detach themselves from earthly things and to focus on spiritual realities. That was as much of a problem then as it is today. Christian conferencing refers to the importance of Christian community. In fellowship with others, we benefit from mutual accountability and growth.



Watson wants us to appreciate the historical General Rules, but he creates a New General Rule for today, which is:

To witness to Jesus Christ in the world,
and to follow his teachings through
acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion,
under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹

Witnessing

The primary mission of every Christian is to bear witness to Jesus Christ, not in the church, but in the world. Wesley said that God raised up the Methodists “...not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.”² When the Anglican Church accused him of proselytizing, he replied:

Our societies were formed from those who were wandering upon the dark mountains, that belonged to no Christian Church; but were awakened by the preaching of the Methodists, who had pursued them through the wilderness of this world to the High-ways and the Hedges —to the Markets and the Fairs—to the Hills and the Dales —who set up the Standard of the Cross in the Streets and Lanes of the Cities, in the Villages, in the Barns, and Farmers’ Kitchens, etc.— and all this done in such a way, and to such an extent, as never had been done before since the Apostolic Age.³

The early Methodists discovered scripture and prayer in the early Class Meetings. They also found their voice and felt impelled to witness. The rapid growth of Methodism was attributable to that witnessing. Wesley insisted that “...our calling is to save that which is lost. Now, we cannot expect the wanderers from God to

¹ David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998) p.78.

² Luke Tyerman. (1876). *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, Volume 2* (3rd edition) (474). London: Hodder and Stoughton.

³ William Barclay. (2001). *The Gospel of Luke*. The New Daily Study Bible (67–68). Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press.

seek us. It is our part to go and seek them.”¹ The purpose of the church must be given as much priority today as it was in early Methodism. We need to gather in Covenant Discipleship Groups to plan our strategy for witnessing in the world and hold one another accountable for it. Our greatest witness will focus on works of mercy and works of piety.

Works of Mercy

In works of mercy, disciples are to do everything possible to serve God and their neighbor, while at the same time avoiding those things that offend God and harm their neighbor. In the New General Rule there are two works of mercy—acts of compassion and acts of justice. Compassion is a private act and justice is a public act. Watson defines acts of compassion as follows:

Acts of compassion are those simple, basic things we do out of kindness to our neighbor; and our neighbor is anyone who is in need, anywhere in the world. To the extent that we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and the imprisoned, we minister to Christ in our midst.²

The primary scriptural passages to support our need to witness through acts of compassion can be found in the last judgement in Matthew 25:31-46; the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37; and in James 2:14-17.

Justice is a social act. Wesley did not take the Methodist societies out of the world, but showed them how to follow God in the world. He knew that they would be marked people for declaring publicly that the personal and social teachings of Jesus were to be taken seriously. To pattern their lives after Jesus would lead to considerable tension with the world in which they lived. Watson defines acts of justice as follows:

Acts of justice remind us that God thundered the law from Sinai and pronounced righteousness through the prophets.

¹ John Wesley. (1872). *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 8* (Third Edition) (300). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

² David Lowes Watson, *Forming Christian Disciples* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999), p. 9.

We must not only minister to people in need, but ask why they are in need in the first place. And if they are being treated unjustly, then we must confront the persons or systems that cause the injustice.¹

The primary scriptural passages to support our need to witness through acts of justice are the Old Testament prophets, specifically Amos 5:24, and Jesus' opening sermon in Nazareth, which is located in Luke 4:16-21.

Why do we need to be held accountable for acts of compassion and justice? Wesley knew all too well that the promptings of the Holy Spirit could be ignored or misinterpreted due to laziness. Works of mercy are obligatory for Christians, even if they are not in the mood for them. The hungry need feeding, even if we are not in the mood. The naked need to be clothed, whether or not it is convenient for us. The sick need help, whether or not we are feeling up to it. Those in prison need to be visited, whether or not we feel we have anything to offer them. Acts of compassion require acts of justice to follow. Most Covenant Discipleship Groups will have the most difficulty with acts of justice.

Works of Piety

In works of piety, disciples are to do everything needful to be open to God's grace. In the New General Rule there are two works of piety—acts of devotion and acts of worship. Acts of devotion are private and acts of worship are public. Watson defines acts of devotion as follows.

Acts of devotion are those private spiritual disciplines of prayer, reading the scriptures, and inward examination, that bring us face to face with God most directly, when no one else is present. At such times, our dialogue with God is intensely personal, searching, and enriching.²

The four most personal acts of devotion would be searching the scripture, prayer, fasting, and giving. Scriptural passages that

¹ David Lowes Watson, *Forming Christian Disciples* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999), p. 9.

² David Lowes Watson, *Forming Christian Disciples* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999), p. 9.

support these devotions include 2 Timothy 13:4-17; Matthew 6:4-15; Matthew 6:16-18; and Matthew 6:19-21. For a better understanding of fasting, look up Isaiah 58:6-10. Obviously, acts of devotion lead us into acts of worship, the public expression of the works of piety.

In acts of worship we observe the ordinances of the Church, or what might be called the means of grace in a public manner. Wesley insisted that Methodists ought to participate in the Lord's Supper as frequently as they can. In the early days, the Methodist services avoided offering the Lord's Supper because Wesley was encouraging everyone to worship on Sunday in the nearest Anglican Church. Methodism was to be a *method* of carrying out one's discipleship. It was not to become a Church. Watson defines the acts of worship as follows:

Acts of worship are the means of grace that we exercise corporately: the ministries of word and sacrament. Not only do they affirm the indispensable place of the church in Christian discipleship. They also enable us to build each other up in the Body of Christ.¹

Our regularity of worship in word and sacrament is far more important than the benefits we might derive from them. Our presence is itself a witness. To become more regular in worship we need to be accountable to one another. We need each other to discern the will of God. No one can do this on his or her own. The important scriptural passages that support our witness through acts of worship might include Matthew 18:20; Acts 2:41-47; and Hebrews 10:22-25.

The Guidance of the Holy Spirit

All of the above is to be done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Christian disciples, insists Watson, do not have *bright ideas*; they have *promptings* from the Holy Spirit. Christian disciples do not have *twinges of conscience*; they have *warnings* from the Holy

¹ David Lowes Watson, *Forming Christian Disciples* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999), p. 9.

Spirit.¹ Identifying these *promptings* and *warnings* is one of the critical tasks of every Covenant Discipleship Group. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is best comprehended where two or three are gathered together seeking it. It is too easy for the individual to ignore the *promptings* and *warnings* of the Holy Spirit.

To understand how the Holy Spirit operates in our lives, it might be helpful to look more carefully at Wesley's religious experience at Aldersgate. Wesley describes when it happened (*a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ*), but he also recounts the impression made on his spiritual senses (*I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death*). The primary actor at Aldersgate was the Holy Spirit making an impression on Wesley's mind and heart.

The Holy Spirit works through our spiritual senses. "To every other eye," said Rudolf Bultmann, "other than the eye of faith the action of God is hidden." So, what are these spiritual senses through which the Holy Spirit guides us? Archbishop William Temple alluded to the spiritual senses when he defined worship. "To worship," he wrote, "is to quicken the *conscience* by the holiness of God, to feed the *mind* with the truth of God, to purge the *imagination* by the beauty of God, to open the *heart* to the love of God, to devote the *will* to the purpose of God."² Drawing upon Temple's definition of worship, I would suggest the following spiritual senses: (1) reflective reason, (2) common sense, (3) a moral conscience, (4) free choice, and (5) feelings of the heart. All of these spiritual senses put together make the individual able to respond to God's gift of grace (unmerited love) by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). We could certainly spend time with each of the spiritual senses, but discussion of one should suffice. Wesley rejected the idea of a natural conscience. Conscience, he insisted, is a gift from God. What we all have is a moral sense, but we must be careful

¹ David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998) p.92.

² William Barclay. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (Third Ed.). The New Daily Study Bible (137). Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press.

that we do not destroy that moral sense. Wesley's own experience of assurance occurred not in solitude, but in the company of fellow believers. Sharpening our spiritual senses depends upon being accountable to fellow believers. Without that accountability, we are likely to make shipwreck not only of our conscience, but also of our souls. Some important scriptural passages that support the impression that the Holy Spirit makes on us to guide us can be found in Romans 8:12-16 and 1 Timothy 1:18-19.

The Meetings. Let us now look at how Covenant Discipleship Groups actually work. I visited sixteen groups in Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. All of them met weekly and rotated leadership. Some of them had a person designated as the convener, who then met monthly with the pastor. Half of the groups were restricted to one gender, three groups were all men and five groups were all women. These groups insisted that it gave them more freedom to talk about concerns that would never be mentioned in a mixed group. The women were as insistent about that as the men. Obviously the women permitted me to sit in on a one-time basis.

All of the groups began their sessions with prayer. After the opening prayer, there was considerable diversity. Some of the groups used the *Upper Room* or the *Upper Room Disciplines* for a brief devotion. Some of the groups studied a book and shared some thoughts from it as a devotion. Some of the groups used a simple Bible Study as their devotion. Following the prayer and devotional time, which for the most part, lasted no more than fifteen minutes, all of the groups took on the four acts of the New General Rule—compassion, justice, devotion, and worship. Some groups only dealt with one of them in a session, while other groups dealt with all four. The most difficult one for all the groups was justice. All of the groups closed by sharing prayer concerns, and for the most part, allowed time for each member to offer a brief prayer. An occasional meeting was closed with prayer by the leader, particularly when time was running out. They all adhered to the one strict rule, that a Covenant Discipleship Group was to meet *only* for one hour.

None of the covenants were the same. They varied from being very simple to being very complex. Few of the groups had time for everyone to respond to every clause of their covenant every time they met. This only happened when the covenant was simple and

written in general terms. One clause that David Watson included in his sample covenant had to do with tithing, or taking steps towards tithing. None of the groups I visited included any clause on tithing. There were a few clauses that had to do with giving of self and resources, but they ignored percentages and amounts. There were some instances when individuals included clauses that they wanted to be held accountable for, even though the rest of the group could not agree to include the clause in the group covenant. Some of these had to do with giving financial resources, but none had to do with tithing.

I thought the word “accountability” would scare people, but none of the groups shied away from the term. They saw it as a friendly term. When asked about “confidentiality,” every group said that it was not a problem. A potential problem mentioned by several groups had to do with viewing the Covenant Discipleship Groups as a working committee of the church. Covenant Discipleship Groups are not supposed to meet where discipleship happens. Such groups make sure that discipleship happens in the world. Participants hold one another accountable and watch over one another in love. Accountability and love seemed to go hand in hand. It seemed to work.

The practice of fasting came up from time to time. John Wesley fasted every Friday. Some of the Covenant Discipleship Groups fasted during the day on Friday and contributed money to be given to some worthy hunger project. That is as close as any of the groups came to being a working committee. I should mention that the members of one group worked together in a soup kitchen once a month.

All but two of the groups met in a small room at the church. One group met in the homes of its members and another group met in an office of the Mayo Clinic. Most of the groups met either early in morning or during what one might call evening meal time. The times ranged from 5:30 to 7:00 a.m. in the morning and 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. in the evening. There were a couple of groups that met around Noon. It was obvious that group members understood what they were doing and that their discipleship was to take place in the world, where God is acting. They saw their group as helping them cope with being a Christian in the world. When I suggested

meeting every other week, every group insisted that it was important to meet every week.

I have been meeting with one group that meets every week for more than ten years. Some of them would say that attendance in the Covenant Discipleship group is more important than attendance in public worship. This group rotates leadership. The leader begins with a brief prayer and devotion, which is followed by a time for checking in with how they are doing with the Covenant. Prior to coming to the meeting, everyone reads a passage of Scripture or a chapter from a book. A brief discussion revolves around what they have read. Over the years this group has come to desire closing every Covenant Discipleship Group with Holy Communion. Since I am ordained, that's not a problem, but it has become important to the group. I personally feel that every member of a Covenant Discipleship Group should be permitted to lead in Holy Communion, even without clergy being present.

Class Leaders. Only one of the churches I visited had what Watson calls *Class Leaders*, but they were called *Discipleship Stewards*. The church was located in a university city and did not want to use the word *class*. All of the Discipleship Stewards were in Covenant Discipleship Groups, but they also were given pastoral responsibility for fifteen to twenty members of the congregation, who were not in Covenant Discipleship Groups. The Discipleship Stewards were also present at new member orientations and a new member was always assigned to a Discipleship Steward. Although new members were invited to join Covenant Discipleship Groups, they rarely did so at the time that they joined the church. The Discipleship Stewards met with the pastor on a monthly basis to discuss pastoral concerns and programming needs. These concerns and needs were brought to the forefront in the Covenant Discipleship Group meetings and from conversations they had with persons assigned to their group, who were not participating members of their Covenant Discipleship Group.

Class Leaders, according to Watson, exist to move the membership from thinking of itself as the recipients of pastoral care to becoming a support base for serving Jesus Christ in the world. This is its calling. When the staff tries to fill all the needs of

the congregation, it will find its resources inadequate and inappropriate. Watson goes on to define Class Leaders:

Class leaders are laypersons entrusted with the formation of a congregation in the basics of Christian discipleship. They do this by helping a class of fifteen to twenty members shape their lives according to the General Rule of Discipleship and in keeping with each one's gifts and graces.

In 1988, after an absence of fifty years, the office of Class Leader was reintroduced into *The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church.¹

The office of Class Leader was lost because the work that had been delegated to Class Leaders was gradually assumed by pastors. With this clergy domination, the grassroots authority of the Class Leaders was slowly replaced by a clergy-dominated structure of pastorates and annual conferences so familiar to us today. "It will probably take at least a generation," says Watson, "to recover the accountable discipleship that Methodism took more than a century to lose." Watson warns that the office of Class Leader should not be introduced until Covenant Discipleship Groups have been in place for at least two years.

To better understand the office of Class Leader, it might be best to list the qualifications and responsibilities of such *transformational* leadership.

Qualifications: A Class Leader...

1. desires to follow Christ in daily living.
2. loves the gospel.
3. is a member of a Covenant Discipleship Group.
4. has the ability to empower others to be active Christian disciples.
5. leads by example in Christian discipleship.

¹ David Lowes Watson, *Forming Christian Disciples* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999), p. 128

6. is willing to be held accountable and to hold others accountable to the General Rule of Discipleship.
7. is willing to contact fifteen to twenty class members by phone or in person on a monthly basis.
8. has the ability to be a transformational leader, a visionary leader.¹

Responsibilities: A Class Leader is responsible

1. to keep focused on the primary task.
2. to be accountable for your own walk with Christ by meeting weekly in a Covenant Discipleship Group.
3. to encourage your class members to practice justice, compassion, worship, and devotion, as they witness to Christ in the world.
4. to “nudge” your class members in their discipleship by upholding them through regular telephone calls, letters, or personal visits.
5. to guide your class members in finding resources for their acts of worship, devotion, justice, compassion, and their witness to Jesus Christ.
6. to meet once a month with the pastor, the lay leader, and other Class Leaders in a regularly scheduled leaders’ meeting.
7. to keep alert for the promptings of the Holy Spirit in your life.
8. to participate in the Administrative Board or Council.
9. to be accountable to the congregation through your annual election to the office of Class Leader at the church conference.²

¹ Grace Bradford, *Guide for Class Leaders* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999), p. 22.

² Grace Bradford, *Guide for Class Leaders* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999), p. 49.

It should be obvious by now that the Class Leaders form a direct link between the Covenant Discipleship Groups and the congregation as a whole. While the Class Leaders need to be involved in Covenant Discipleship Groups, some of the members of their class do not have to be in a Covenant Discipleship Group. What is important is that the various classes represent the full range of membership

The monthly meeting of Class Leaders, which should include the lay leader(s), has two purposes: (1) to provide ongoing support and supervision for the Class Leaders; and (2) to take the pulse of the congregation through the reports of the Class Leaders. The practical result of these meetings will be program enhancement. The Class Leaders will need to be aware of the range of programs and activities available to members, and the church leadership will be in a much better position to plan programs that address genuine needs and interests, rather than to try to discover what will attract people's participation in unwanted or unnecessary activities.

The final question to be asked is not whether the above will work, but whether it is right. There are countless Methodists, past and present, who have answered that question with a resounding "yes." Are we ready to join them, or would we rather continue without using the *method and heart* of Methodism?



OUR COVENANT

We share our spiritual journey together in covenant to encourage one another in faith. We acknowledge that the road we travel as disciples of Christ is sometimes difficult. God is alive in us and guides us on our journey of faith. As Christians we acknowledge God's unconditional love. We covenant to dedicate ourselves to a life that exemplifies Christ and the Gospel. With these things in mind we will encourage and support one another in our efforts to follow God's plan for our lives. We will meet weekly to offer one another our love, prayers, and support.

ACTS OF COMPASSION

1. We will be alert to reflect Christ to those with whom we come into contact.
2. We will do all we can to help people in need.

ACTS OF JUSTICE

1. We will strive for unconditional love and acceptance of all God's creation, and we will take action to improve our relationship with our natural environment.
2. We will become more aware of social situations through attention to the news (newspapers, television, the internet, magazines, radio, etc.), and we will share our insights and listen to the insights of others whenever we feel God's justice is ignored by our leaders at work, at church, in our nation, and in our world.

ACTS OF WORSHIP

1. We will pray for those who lead us in worship each week, especially for the pastors and lay leaders, and for those who visit our worship service, that they will be touched by grace.

2. We will pray for the membership and ministry of the Body of Christ.
3. We will pray that the Holy Spirit will bless the Body of Christ abundantly with spiritual gifts so that we may more strongly proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, be the Good News in community and share God's grace in deeds of love and service.
4. We will be faithful in attendance and participation in worship each Sunday, striving for active involvement, and seeking opportunities for worship in addition to Sunday.
5. Because everything belongs to God, we will prayerfully consider what resources we can contribute each week to the work of Christ in the world.

ACTS OF DEVOTION

1. We will spend time alone with God in daily prayer.
2. We will practice daily devotions, including the reading of scripture and prayer for group members.

Seeking confirmation in our spiritual promptings and warnings, we will be available to each other at all times for support and prayer. We will accept one another's opinions. Knowing that the grace of God works in each of us, we pray that our hearts be opened to God's presence, that our eyes be opened to see the sorrows and the joys of God's creatures, and that our ears be opened to hear God's will so that we will have the strength to keep this covenant. We therefore pledge our commitment to God and to the group, that the choices we make in our daily journeys will enhance our growth as Christians, honor our Creator and Redeemer, and minister to our world.

In the event of missing a covenant group meeting,
I will notify the group.

_____ Sunday Evening
Group: 6:00-7:00 p.m.

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

BIBLE STUDY GUIDES

1. **The Bible as Sacred History:** Survey of the Bible
2. **The Struggle with God:** Genesis through Deuteronomy
3. **Sacred Stories:** Joshua through Esther
4. **The Search for Wisdom:** Job through Ecclesiastes
5. **Time is Running Out:** Major and Minor Prophets
6. **Between the Testaments:** Books of the Apocrypha
7. **The Messengers:** The Four Gospels
8. **An Explosion of Faith:** Acts and Revelation
9. **The First E-Letters:** All of the Letters
10. **The Second Creation:** Revelation (Formatted: 6x9)
11. **A Vision of Hope:** Revelation: (Formatted 8.5x11)
12. **New Testament Photos 1**
13. **New Testament Photos 2**

BOOKS

1. **Ignited for Mission:** A Call to Missions
2. **Reformulating the Mission of the Church:** A Theology of Missions
3. **Our Spiritual Senses:** Five Spiritual Senses
4. **Our Spiritual Disciplines:** Six Spiritual Disciplines
5. **The Ordinary Christian Experience:** Fourteen Common Experiences
6. **Faith is a Choice:** Choosing Faith and Morality
7. **A Brief Story of the Christian Church:** A Survey of the Church
8. **The Heart of Methodism:** Renewing the Church

EDITED BY THE AUTHOR

1. **Foundational Documents:** Basic Methodist Documents
2. **Instructions for Children:** by John Wesley
3. **Speaking Iban:** by Burr Baughman
4. **The Essentials of Methodism:** Basic Methodist Beliefs

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