

VILE CHURCH

PART TWO: THE METHODISTS

Week 1: This is Us - The Methodists

Monday: The God-Breathed Word

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17 — Verse 16 says that all scripture is inspired by God, or as some translations put it, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (NIV). This language points back to the creation accounts in Genesis when God formed the first human from the dust of the ground and breathed life into his nostrils (Genesis 2:7). The Greek word for “God-breathed,” *theopneustos*, also connects to the Spirit of God, which swept over the formless waters before the creation of the world (Genesis 1:2).

What does it mean to you that Scripture is “God-breathed”? How does this shape your view of the Bible’s authority and reliability? In what ways has Scripture corrected or trained you personally?

Prayer Focus: Thank God for giving us His Word, not as human wisdom but as His very breath of life.

Tuesday: Scripture as Our Source of Hope

Read: Romans 15:4 — Paul emphasizes that Scripture was written for our instruction and encouragement. Because it is God-breathed, it carries timeless relevance. Through its stories, promises, and truths, we find endurance and hope to carry us through trials. God’s Word is not a relic of the past—it’s a present and active source of hope.

How does reading Scripture bring you encouragement in difficult times? Can you recall a verse that gave you hope when you needed it most? Why is it important that the scriptures are not bound by time but speaks to every generation?

Prayer Focus: Ask God to strengthen your hope through His promises in Scripture.

Wednesday: The Living and Active Word

Read: Hebrews 4:12 — Building off of Monday’s study when we said that all scripture is “God-breathed” ... In the same way, the author of the book of Hebrews says that the Holy Scriptures were written to create life and show us the light of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ. Because of this, scripture is “living and active” for our lives today. The scriptures are alive, sharp, and discerning—it penetrates our hearts and reveals truth. With that in mind, how is Scripture different from any other book you’ve read? When has God’s Word exposed something in your heart that needed change? How does knowing that Scripture is “living and active” encourage you to read it more deeply?

Prayer Focus: Pray for an open heart, ready to be shaped, convicted, and renewed by God’s Word.

Thursday: Scripture for Transformation, Not Just Information

Read: James 1:22–25; 2 Timothy 3:16 again — James reminds us that because Scripture is God-breathed, it is meant to transform us, not just inform us. Paul echoes this in 2 Timothy—Scripture equips us to live differently. The Word is like a mirror, showing us who we are and who we are called to be in Christ. God-breathed Scripture is meant to transform how we live, not just what we know.

What’s the difference between hearing God’s Word and doing it? How does Scripture prepare you for “every good work”? Where is God calling you to apply His Word more fully in your life right now?

Prayer Focus: Ask God to make His Word alive in your daily actions, decisions, and relationships.

Friday: The Eternal Power of the Scriptures

Read: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 119:89–93 — If there’s a theme to these verse, it might be this. God’s Word (the scriptures) never fails; what God speaks will accomplish His purpose. God promises that His words never returns empty—it always accomplishes His purposes. Because Scripture is God-breathed, it is eternal, effective, and reliable. Unlike human words, which fade, God’s Word stands firm in heaven forever. This gives us assurance that what He has spoken will come to pass.

How do these verses reinforce the idea that Scripture is God-breathed? Why can we trust that His Word is always relevant and effective? How will you commit to staying rooted in Scripture for the long term?

Prayer Focus: Commit yourself to a lifelong journey of being shaped, encouraged, and sent by God’s word found with your scriptures, your Bible.

Week 2: All about that Grace

Monday: Grace from the Beginning

Read: John 1:1–14 — Grace is God’s gift of Himself, revealed fully in Jesus Christ.

In John 1, we hear that “the Word became flesh and lived among us... full of grace and truth.” United Methodists affirm that grace is God’s initiative—it begins with Him, not us. Grace is not earned but given freely, embodied in Jesus. Before we speak of prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace, we must see grace in its fullest form: God’s love made known in Christ.

What does it mean to you that Jesus is “full of grace and truth”? How does this passage shape your understanding of grace as God’s initiative, not our achievement? Where do you see God’s grace active in your life right now?

Prayer Focus: Thank God for the gift of Jesus, the embodiment of grace.

Tuesday: Prevenient Grace — God Goes Before Us

Read: Jeremiah 31:3; John 6:44 — Prevenient grace is the love of God that draws us to Him even before we know Him. John Wesley spoke of prevenient grace as the grace that “goes before.” It is God’s love reaching out to us, wooing us, and preparing our hearts to respond. We do not find God on our own—He has been pursuing us all along. Like the prophet Jeremiah says, God has loved us with an everlasting love. This grace awakens us to our need for Him.

Can you recall a time you recognized God was working in your life before you were even aware of it? How does prevenient grace show that salvation begins with God’s initiative? Why is it important to remember that grace is present in every step of life?

Prayer Focus: Ask God to help you notice His prevenient grace at work in your daily life.

Wednesday: Justifying Grace — Made Right with God

Read: Romans 5:1–2; John 3:16–17 — Justifying grace is God’s forgiveness, received through faith in Jesus Christ. Justifying grace is the moment of acceptance—when we recognize our need, turn to Christ

in faith, and are made right with God. Wesley described it as pardon for sin and restoration of relationship with God. Through Christ's death and resurrection, the barrier of sin is removed, and we are reconciled to God. This grace gives us peace, assurance, and a new beginning.

How does justifying grace bring assurance of God's love and forgiveness? Why is it important to see grace as more than forgiveness, but also reconciliation with God? How can we share the message of justifying grace with others?

Prayer Focus: Thank God for the gift of forgiveness and the assurance of His love in Christ.

Thursday: Sanctifying Grace — Growing in Holiness

Read: Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 — Sanctifying grace is God's ongoing work of making us holy and shaping us into the likeness of Christ. Wesley believed salvation is not just about forgiveness—it's about transformation. Sanctifying grace is God's Spirit at work in us, enabling us to grow in love of God and neighbor. It is lifelong, as God continually shapes us into holy people. Wesley called this moving toward "Christian perfection"—not flawlessness, but a heart filled with God's perfect love.

How have you experienced God shaping you over time? Why is sanctifying grace important for our discipleship and witness in the world? What practices help you remain open to God's sanctifying work in your life?

Prayer Focus: Ask God to continue shaping your heart in love and holiness through His Spirit.

Friday: Grace for the World

Read: Titus 2:11–14; John 1:16–17 — God's grace is not only personal—it is for the renewal of the whole world. Grace is never just for us. John 1 declares that "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." Grace is abundant, overflowing, and meant to be shared. As United Methodists, we see grace as both personal and social—it transforms individuals and calls us to participate in God's mission of justice, mercy, and love for all. Grace equips us to join in God's work of redeeming the world.

How does God's grace empower us to love and serve others? Why is grace both personal (for our salvation) and communal (for the world)? Where is God calling you to extend His grace to others?

Prayer Focus: Pray that God's grace will flow through you to bring renewal, justice, and love in the world.

Week 3: What Membership Means

Monday: Committing Our Time

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1; Ephesians 5:15–16 — Time is a gift from God, and how we use it reflects our discipleship. United Methodists understand discipleship as a daily walk with Christ. One of the most valuable things we offer God is our time. When we give time to worship, study, fellowship, and service, we show that Christ is a priority in our lives. Like the early church in Acts 2, being present with one another strengthens the body of Christ. Time spent with God and God's people is never wasted—it is invested in eternity.

How does your daily schedule reflect your commitment to Christ? What practices help you "make the most of every opportunity" for God? Where is God calling you to be more intentional with your time?

Prayer Focus: Ask God to help you order your days in ways that honor Him.

Tuesday: Offering Our Talents

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:4–7; 1 Peter 4:10 — Every believer has been given gifts to build up the body of Christ. John Wesley emphasized that faith is always lived out in community. Our talents—whether teaching, music, leadership, compassion, or craftsmanship—are entrusted to us by God. In the church,

no one is without a role, and no gift is too small. Together, our talents become instruments of grace that bless others and expand God's kingdom.

What gifts or talents has God entrusted to you? How have you seen someone else's talent bless the church or community? What new way might you use your gifts for God this year?

Prayer Focus: Pray that God would open your eyes to the talents you have and show you where to use them.

Wednesday: Sharing Our Treasures

Read: Matthew 6:19–21; 2 Corinthians 9:6–8 — Giving financially is an act of trust, gratitude, and discipleship. Jesus reminds us that where our treasure is, our hearts will be also. Giving is not about paying dues—it is about shaping our hearts. Wesley encouraged Methodists to “earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” When we give generously, we affirm that all we have belongs to God. Our treasures fund ministries, change lives, and remind us that generosity is at the heart of discipleship. How do you see financial giving as an act of worship? Why do you think generosity is important for discipleship? What step of faith might God be calling you to take in your giving?

Prayer Focus: Thank God for the resources you've been given and ask for a generous spirit.

Thursday: Upholding One Another in Prayer

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; James 5:16 — Prayer connects us to God and strengthens the community of faith. When members join a United Methodist church, they vow to support it with their prayers. Prayer is not optional—it is essential. It sustains pastors, encourages fellow members, and unites the church with God's mission. Prayer shapes us into a people who rely on God's power, not our own. A praying church is a Spirit-filled church.

How have you been encouraged by someone else's prayers for you? How does prayer strengthen the life of the church? What would change if you prayed daily for your church family?

Prayer Focus: Spend time praying for your congregation, its leaders, and its mission.

Friday: Living as Witnesses

Read: Acts 1:8; Matthew 5:14–16 — We are called to be witnesses of Christ through our words, actions, and lives. Witness is not just for pastors or missionaries—it is the calling of every Christian. To “witness” is to point others to Christ by how we live, speak, and love. United Methodists believe grace is both personal and social, meaning it transforms us individually and sends us out to transform the world. When we live faithfully, others encounter Jesus through us.

What does being a witness for Christ mean in your daily life? Can you think of someone whose witness influenced your faith? How can your church be a brighter witness in your community?

Prayer Focus: Pray that your life would reflect Christ in ways that draw others to Him.

Week 4: Baptism - Baptism is central in our tradition as a sacrament of God's grace and initiation into the body of Christ.

Monday: Baptism as a Gift of Grace

Read: Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:4–7 — Baptism is an outward and visible sign of God's inward grace. United Methodists affirm baptism as a “sacrament”—a holy mystery where God acts in us through water and Spirit. Baptism is not something we earn or achieve; it is God's gift, freely offered. Through baptism, we are marked as children of God and given new life in Christ. Like all sacraments, it is a means of grace—a way God pours His love into our lives.

How does baptism remind us that salvation is God's gift, not our achievement? What does it mean to you that baptism is once for all and does not need repeating? How do you see baptism as a means of grace in your life or in others? Have you been considering being baptized? If so, talk to someone about it. Talk to Pastor Ben about your next steps.

Prayer Focus: Thank God for His grace that claims us through baptism.

Tuesday: Baptism and Covenant Community

Read: Acts 2:38–41; 1 Corinthians 12:12–13 — Baptism incorporates us into the body of Christ, the Church. In baptism, we are not only united with Christ—we are joined to His Church. United Methodists emphasize that baptism is both personal and communal. When someone is baptized, the congregation makes vows as well, promising to nurture the baptized person in faith. Baptism is never private—it always brings us into the covenant community of faith.

Why is baptism not just about “me and God” but also about “me and the church”? How do we live out our responsibility to nurture those baptized in our congregation? What does it mean to you that you belong to the family of God through baptism?

Prayer Focus: Pray for your congregation to be faithful in nurturing one another in the baptismal covenant.

Wednesday: Infant Baptism and Prevenient Grace

Read: Mark 10:13–16; Acts 16:31–33 — Baptism is a sign of God's prevenient grace, even for infants. United Methodists baptize people of all ages, including infants. Why? Because baptism is primarily about God's action, not ours. Infant baptism reflects our belief in prevenient grace—the grace that goes before us, drawing us to God even before we are aware. Parents and the church vow to raise the child in faith until they can confirm it for themselves. This highlights baptism as the beginning of the journey of faith, not the end.

How does infant baptism point to God's grace at work before we can respond? Why do you think the church takes vows during an infant baptism? How can we help children and youth grow into their baptismal identity?

Prayer Focus: Pray for the children of your church and for parents and sponsors to nurture them faithfully.

Thursday: The Meaning of Water and Spirit

Read: Matthew 3:13–17; John 3:5 — Baptism is both an outward washing with water and an inward work of the Spirit. In baptism, water is a visible sign of cleansing, dying to sin, and new birth in Christ. But water alone does not save—it is joined with the work of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit descended upon Him, and God's voice affirmed His identity. In baptism, we too receive the Spirit's claim and God's affirmation: “You are my beloved child.”

What does the water in baptism symbolize for you? How do you see the Holy Spirit at work in baptism and in your life? Why is it important to see baptism as both outward and inward?

Prayer Focus: Ask God to renew His Spirit in your life and deepen your baptismal identity.

Friday: Living Our Baptismal Covenant

Read: Romans 6:3–4; Matthew 28:19–20 — Baptism is not the end—it is the beginning of a lifelong journey with Christ. United Methodists see baptism as entrance into the covenant of discipleship. We are called to “remember our baptism” daily by living out the vows we made—or that were made on our

behalf—to renounce sin, accept the freedom God gives us, and live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a once-for-all event, but its meaning unfolds over a lifetime as we grow in grace.

What does it mean to “remember your baptism and be thankful”? How does baptism shape your daily life as a disciple of Jesus? In what ways can the church help one another keep our baptismal promises?

Prayer Focus: Commit yourself to live out your baptismal covenant with faith, courage, and joy.

Week 5: Communion

Alongside baptism, communion (the Lord’s Supper, Holy Eucharist) is the other sacrament in our United Methodist tradition.

Monday: Communion as a Means of Grace

Read: Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 — Communion is more than a remembrance—it is a means of God’s grace. United Methodists believe the Lord’s Supper is a “sacrament”—a holy mystery where Christ is truly present through the bread and cup. John Wesley called it a “means of grace,” through which God conveys His love, forgiveness, and presence. At the table, we don’t just recall Jesus’ sacrifice—we participate in it, receiving strength for the journey of faith.

How does Communion deepen your sense of God’s love? Why is it important that Communion is not just symbolic, but a channel of grace? How do you experience Christ’s presence at the table?

Prayer Focus: Thank God for meeting us at the table of grace.

Tuesday: Communion and the Real Presence of Christ

Read: John 6:51–56 — In the sacrament, Christ is really present—not physically, but spiritually and mysteriously. United Methodists reject the idea that the bread and wine become Christ’s body and blood physically (transubstantiation), but also reject the view that Communion is merely symbolic. Instead, we affirm that Christ is “really present” in a spiritual and mysterious way. The table becomes a place where heaven and earth meet. In receiving the bread and cup, we encounter the living Christ who nourishes and strengthens us.

What do you think it means that Christ is “really present” at Communion? How does this understanding change the way you approach the sacrament? Why do you think United Methodists emphasize mystery in the sacrament?

Prayer Focus: Pray to be open to experiencing Christ’s real presence in the sacrament.

Wednesday: Communion and Community

Read: Acts 2:42–47; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 — Communion unites us with one another as the body of Christ. The table is not only about individual experience—it is about community. When we share in the bread and cup, we proclaim our unity as members of Christ’s body. Communion breaks down barriers of age, race, class, and status. John Wesley called it a “converting ordinance,” meaning that even those not yet fully committed to Christ may encounter His grace at the table. That’s why United Methodists practice open Communion—all who seek Christ are welcome.

How does Communion connect you to others in your church? Why is the practice of open Communion important in the UMC? How might the Lord’s Supper shape how we live together outside the church walls?

Prayer Focus: Pray for unity in the church and that all may find welcome at Christ’s table.

Thursday: Communion and Forgiveness

Read: Matthew 26:27–28; 1 John 1:8–9 — At the table, we receive forgiveness and are reconciled to God and one another. In the cup, Jesus declared, “This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many

for the forgiveness of sins.” Communion is a reminder that Christ’s sacrifice has made us whole. It also calls us to forgive one another. United Methodists include confession and pardon in the liturgy before Communion because the table is a place of reconciliation. In receiving the sacrament, we are made right with God and sent to live in peace with others.

How does Communion remind you of God’s forgiveness? Why is reconciliation with others important before coming to the table? In what ways can Communion shape how you extend forgiveness daily?

Prayer Focus: Ask God to cleanse your heart and empower you to forgive others as you have been forgiven.

Friday: Communion as Anticipation of God’s Kingdom

Read: Isaiah 25:6–9; Revelation 19:6–9 — Communion looks forward to the great banquet in God’s kingdom. The table is not only about remembering Christ’s sacrifice and receiving grace for today—it also points us toward the future. Every time we share the Lord’s Supper, we anticipate the heavenly banquet, where Christ will gather all His people. The table is a foretaste of God’s kingdom, reminding us that the story isn’t over—God’s redemption is still unfolding.

How does Communion give you hope for the future? Why do you think Jesus tied the meal to both past (His death) and future (the kingdom)? How might the hope of God’s banquet shape the way we live now?

Prayer Focus: Give thanks for the promise of God’s eternal banquet and pray for strength to live in that hope.