

# Lesson **8** *Wesley and the Methodists*

**LESSON DESCRIPTION:** In this lesson, the students will learn about John Wesley’s personal history and how it influenced him to start the Methodist movement. They will

also learn about how that movement grew, spread to the United States, and became a new denomination called the Methodist Episcopal Church.

<b>Lesson</b>		
<b>SECTION</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>DURATION</b>
Connect	Fake Out	15 minutes
Explore	Wesley and Friends	20 minutes
	Lesson 8 video: “Wesley and the Methodists”	5 minutes
Reflect	But What Does It Mean?	10 minutes
Create	A Methodist Timeline	15 minutes
Next	At home, at school, and in your community	Ideas to try this

## **Supply List**

### **Connect: Fake Out**

- \_ Slips of paper or sticky notes
- \_ Writing utensils
- \_ Small prizes such as candy

### **Explore: Wesley and Friends**

- \_ Lesson 8 video: “Wesley and the Methodists”

### **Reflect: But What Does It Mean?**

- \_ Student Guides
- \_ Writing utensils

### **Create: A Methodist Timeline**

- \_ Student Guides
- \_ Writing utensils

### **Next**

- \_ Student Guides

# - C O N N E C T -

## ***Fake Out*** 15 minutes

[**LEADER PREP:** Before the class begins, prepare slips of paper or sticky notes. There should be enough pieces for each student to have one. Also, be sure to have small prizes (candy or something similar) that you can give to people who win this game. Also, write out the correct answers on four more slips of paper that you will give to the readers at the appropriate time.]

### **Answers**

**The Christmas Conference:** The first General Conference that founded the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was held in Baltimore, Maryland.

**The Aldersgate Experience:** The moment when John Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed” by God. Occurred at a meeting on Aldersgate Street in London.

**Holy Club:** Group started by John and Charles Wesley at Oxford where members dedicated themselves to living a holy life.

**Circuit Riders:** Ministers who rode around on horseback and preached to a lot of churches. Francis Asbury was one of the first circuit riders.

**SAY:** Over the last few weeks, we’ve been talking about the history of the church, but this week we’re going to start focusing more specifically on the history of The United Methodist Church. Later in this lesson, we’ll be exploring some key events from the founding of Methodism; but first we want to test your creativity.

[Divide the students into four groups. Hand out the slips of paper and writing utensils to students. If you have a small group, repeat this process for 3 of the 4 phrases and have the whole group write a fake answer for each phrase. In this situation, you should read the answers aloud.]

**SAY:** We’re going to play a game about important moments in the founding of Methodism. Here’s how to play:

First, I’m going to give each group a phrase that refers to something significant in Methodist history. Then, each member of the group is going to try and make up a short one- or two-sentence explanation

about what that phrase is referring to. The goal of the game is to

come up with a fake explanation that's convincing enough that your classmates will choose it instead of the real one.

[After everyone has written out fake explanations, one person from your group will read them along with the real answer aloud to the rest of the class. Then everyone will vote on what they think the real answer is. If you can get someone to choose your answer, you'll get [a piece of candy or a small prize].

**SAY:** Remember, the goal is to come up with something creative enough and realistic enough to make someone pick your answer instead of the real one. Hint: Since the phrases are about Methodist history, it'll be more believable if you use famous Methodists like John Wesley, Charles Wesley, or Francis Asbury in your fake answer.

[Go to each group and give them their significant phrase: The Christmas Conference, The Aldersgate Experience, Holy Club, Circuit Riders. Give the students one or two minutes to write out a fake answer.]

**SAY:** Now that you've created your fake answers, each group will choose a reader, who will collect all of the answers in the group. Then I'll give this student the real answer, have them shuffle the answers, then read out each of the group's answers, including the right one. After they've read all the answers, you'll each vote for which answer you think is the real one. If anyone votes for the fake answer you wrote, you'll get a prize.

[Repeat this for all four groups.]

**SAY:** It's really hard to explain something from your history when you know only the name, but not how it fits into the story. Now that we know a little bit more about these events let's see where they fit into the story of Methodism.

## - E X P L O R E -

### ***Wesley and Friends*** 20 minutes

**SAY:** The founder of the Methodist movement was John Wesley, an English priest in the 1700s who focused a lot of his work on the ideas of holiness and God's grace. Let's learn a little bit more about John Wesley's story and what he believed.



## **Video Time** 5 minutes

[Show the Lesson 8 video: “Wesley and the Methodists.”]

**ASK:** What stood out to you from the video?

## **Discussion Questions**

- If you could only remember one thing from that video, what do think would be most important?
- What questions does that video make you ask about John Wesley?
- Why, do you think, were John Wesley’s methods so influential?

[Allow the students to respond to these questions for 2 or 3 minutes.]

**SAY:** I am going to tell a short story about how Methodism grew and spread to the United States. So, listen carefully; because after the story, we will discuss some of the details of what you heard.

The Methodist movement started by John Wesley kept spreading throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland. Eventually, some of those who had joined the movement decided to move to the United States in search of new opportunities. Two of those immigrants were a former preacher named Philip Embury and his cousin Barbara Heck.

One day, Barbara caught her cousin Philip playing cards and was furious with him. Gambling was strictly opposed to the concepts of holiness taught within the Methodist movement, and Barbara believed that the move to America was making Philip pay less attention to his faith. As a result, she insisted that he start preaching again, even if it was just to his own family. Philip took her advice and started a small gathering with just his family. More people began to attend the family gatherings. This group eventually became the first Methodist congregation in America.

Wesley heard about this growing Methodist movement in the United States and sent a lay preacher named Francis Asbury to help them organize and spread the movement further. Asbury started the practice of circuit riding, in which a preacher would ride throughout the countryside preaching to a number of different societies that didn’t have a dedicated minister.

Eventually, the Revolutionary War severed the ties between England and the United States. This was a particular problem for Methodist societies who were still technically part of the Church of England. All of the pastors in these congregations were ordained in the Church of England. This meant that many of the people who pastored American churches returned to England, leaving churches in a crisis about who would lead.

In response, Wesley ordained and sent Thomas Coke to be a superintendent of the Methodist societies. Coke, Asbury, and others traveled to Baltimore, Maryland, on December 24, 1784, to meet together and organize this new American church that would be separate from the Church of England. This meeting became known as The Christmas Conference and was the first General Conference of the newly formed Methodist Episcopal Church.

**ASK:** What do you think are the most important parts of this story? What questions do you have that you would like to learn answers to?

[Have students brainstorm a few questions. Invite them to discuss these questions with their mentors and possibly investigate the answers together.]

**SAY:** Next week we'll explore more about how the Methodist Episcopal Church that started after the Revolutionary War became The United Methodist Church we're a part of today.

## - R E F L E C T -

***But What Does It Mean?*** 10 minutes

**SAY:** Today you've been given a lot of information about how the Methodist movement began, about how it came to the United States, and about it eventually became a church independent from the Church of England. But you might be asking yourself, why is this important?

I could stand here and tell you why it's important, but I'd like to hear you answer that question yourself. Spend the next few minutes and write out why you think it's important that we learn about the origins of Methodism.

[Give the students a few minutes to write in their journals. Invite students to share what they wrote with their neighbor and discuss their answers.]



## - C R E A T E -

### ***A Methodist Timeline*** 15 minutes

**SAY:** Who'd be willing to read aloud the instructions for the Create activity in your Student Guide?

[Ask the volunteer to read the instructions.]

**SAY:** Take about 10 minutes to complete this activity. Go!

[Allow time for the students to work on their own.]

**SAY:** Let's come back together and share our creations.

### ***Discussion Questions***

As Time Allows

- Who would be willing to share what you created?
- What did you like about this activity? What was challenging?
- What did you learn today that will stay with you?

## - N E X T -

### ***Ideas to Try This Week***

[Point out the ideas to try during the week.]

**At home:** Write a short story about someone you learned about from the history of the Methodist church. Share your story with someone from your family.

**At school:** Hold your own "Holy Club" with your friends before or after school. What will you read? What will you talk about? What can your Holy Club do to make your school a better place?

**In your community:** Look up all the Methodist churches in your neighborhood. Send them a message online or stop by for a visit and ask them what it means to them to be a Methodist church.