

Loving God

Growing Closer to God



What we practice we get better at doing. That's true for playing a sport or an instrument; it's also true for our faith. Some specific practices of faith that Christians do help us grow closer to God. Some people call them _____ disciplines; John Wesley called them _____ of grace. He named two kinds: _____ of piety, which help us grow closer to God directly, and works of _____, which help us grow closer to God through serving our neighbors. (Remember the Great Commandments that Jesus gave us? Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28)

Practices of Faith We Do Together

Match these elements of **worship** with the Scripture in **Isaiah 6:1-8**:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>_____ 1. Worship begins by coming into God's presence.</p> <p>_____ 2. In God's presence, we realize and confess our shortcomings.</p> <p>_____ 3. In God's presence, we receive forgiveness or our sins.</p> <p>_____ 4. As a forgiven people, we hear God's Word in Scripture and sermon.</p> <p>_____ 5. After hearing God's call for our lives, we respond.</p> | <p>a. "Your sin is blotted out."</p> <p>b. "Whom shall I send?"</p> <p>c. "Woe is me!"</p> <p>d. "Holy, holy, holy."</p> <p>e. "Here I am, Lord. Send me."</p> |
|--|--|

Choose one of these statements; write below what it means to you:

- ___ Worship is what Christians do.
- ___ When we worship, we begin to see what God is doing in the world.
- ___ When we worship, we declare to the world that we are for God.
- ___ When we worship, we open ourselves up to God's future.



Match these terms for one of the practices of faith we do together as the body of Christ. This means of grace is a sacrament.

Lord's Supper, Eucharist, Last Supper, Holy Communion



_____ reminds us that we share the meal as a community of faith. The one loaf is a symbol: "Though we are many, we are one in Christ Jesus."

_____ is a name that reminds us that we share a meal with Jesus Christ. Just as we would starve physically without food, we would starve spiritually without God's grace.

_____ comes from a Greek word that means thanksgiving. It reminds that this celebration of God's love is a time of thanksgiving and rejoicing.

_____ refers to the meal this sacrament commemorates. However, it only began to be called this after Leonardo Da Vinci named his famous painting.

True or False? (Circle your answer) In The United Methodist tradition this sacrament is an offering of God, and therefore the Table is open to all persons, of all ages, who desire to be closer to God.

Practices of Faith We Do Individually

Prayer is important for us to do by ourselves as well with others. It is just one of many personal spiritual disciplines. Mark these statements about prayer as **True** or **False**:

- ___ 1. Prayer is telling God what you need; and God either says OK, no, or later.
- ___ 2. God won't do things for you unless you pray about what you want or need.
- ___ 3. Through prayer we develop our relationship with God. Prayer brings us closer to God.
- ___ 4. Through prayer we develop an "attitude of gratitude."
- ___ 5. Prayer can be listening to God—not just talking to God.
- ___ 6. Praying is essential for Christians.
- ___ 7. Even if we don't understand how prayer works, we know it has power.

Have you ever read a book of **devotions** as your practice of faith?

L O V I N G G O D

Practicing the Faith



John Wesley had been practicing his religion for a long time. At Oxford University he and his brother and a group of other young men had prayer and Bible study together. In addition to visiting the sick and persons who were in prison, they did other things to help persons who were poor as well. This group of young students was the _____. Other students made fun of them and called them _____ because they were so methodical in practicing their faith.

John also studied the faith and became an ordained clergyman in the Church of England. He went to America, to Savannah, Georgia, as a missionary to the Native American peoples there. John continued his study and prayer.

However, the experience in Georgia was a personal disaster. He left, experiencing a dark time in his faith. On the way to Georgia, in a furious storm at sea, John had encountered the rich faith of a group of Moravian Christians. Despite the very real threat of losing their lives, they were praying and singing, giving their complete trust to God. As he returned home, John felt even farther from God. His faith seemed to be failing him.

After returning to England, he went "very unwillingly" to a small group Bible study. There, on Aldersgate Street, in listening to an explanation of the Word, he experienced an assurance of God's love for him. "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation."

What if . . . in the dark times of his faith John Wesley had turned his back on God?

What if . . . he had not gone to the Bible study?

Because Wesley practiced his faith, he was able to go *through* the dark times and enter a newer, stronger relationship with God.

Participating in Bible study is one of the "means of _____." Think of the means as the "places and spaces" where *you put yourself* in order to be ready for God to work in your life. John Wesley had a choice, so do you.

L O V I N G G O D

John Wesley's Story

Write in the cause boxes Wesley's decisions and practices that ultimately resulted in the changes in his life.

Practices:

Practices:

Practices:

Results:

Wesley felt an assurance of God's love and salvation. Wesley was so "on fire" with God's love that God was able to use him to change the world!

My Story

What choices will you make to put yourself in the places and spaces that will help you be ready for God to work in your life? What are the means of grace you will practice?

My decisions:

My decisions:

My decisions:

My desires:

To have a close relationship with God.
To follow Jesus' example and love and serve others.
To have a strong faith, hope, and courage for living each day.
Other:

Growing in My Devotion



Here are a number of practices of the faith, or means of grace, as John Wesley called them.

Put a check mark beside those you have experienced.

Put a plus mark beside those you do regularly.

Circle those you want to know more about or that you would like to try.

Meditation

Witnessing

Fasting

Living Simply

Silence

Devotional Reading

Prayer

Lectio Divina

Baptism

Bible Study

Journaling

Keeping the Sabbath

Hospitality

Christian Fellowship

Holy Communion

Self-denial

Singing From the Soul

Worship

Spiritual Friendship

Means of Grace: Serving Others Works of Mercy



In addition to works of _____, showing devotion to God, United Methodists also see works of mercy as means of God's grace. When we show compassion toward others, we also open ourselves to God's blessings.

John Wesley gave Methodists three General Rules for how we are to live. The first is "Do no harm." The third is "Do the things that will bring you closer to God," which is also referred to as "Attend to the ordinances of God."

What is the second of Wesley's General Rules?

In the blanks below write the word related to the numbered statement. Put one letter in each box. When you finish, the words in the vertical boxes will answer the question above:

1. Serving others is one of the spiritual _____, or practices of the faith.
2. Serving others is something we do if we _____ Jesus' example and teachings.
3. People in need are all around us. According to Jesus, they are our _____. (Luke 10:25-36)
4. Jesus said, "I was hungry, and you gave me _____." (Matthew 25:31-46)
5. Another word for serving others is _____. Often youth go on this kind of trip.
6. Jesus gave us two Great _____: To love God and to love others. (Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28)

1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Serving Others Through the Church



You may have to do some sleuthing to answer these questions! Find out what's been going on in the last two years.

How is your congregation serving others?

Ongoing service:

Occasional service projects or mission trips:

How is your youth group serving others?

Ongoing service:

Occasional service projects or mission trips:

Serving in the congregation



Serving Others

Serving United Methodist Style



Worldwide there are more than 42,000 United Methodist Churches! Just think what you could do to make a difference in the world with more than 42,000 other churches helping you! Now you know one of the great strengths of The United Methodist Church: We are a _____ church; that is, we join together to do what we would not be able to do individually to be in mission and ministry to the world!

One way we join together is through our apportionments. Each church is asked to give money to areas of need. And with all those churches helping financially, great things can happen to change lives for the better! But each church is only giving a _____ of the cost. That's why they call the system "apportionments"!

Giving money is important, but so is getting personal—giving our time and our efforts to helping our neighbors. Find out ways United Methodists are making a difference through their service throughout the whole world. Refer to the posters "Into All the World" and "Making a Difference" in *A Visual Treasury of United Methodism*, to the websites, or to a list of your church's apportionments. Write below something you are proud of your church doing to serve others through these areas:

Youth Service Fund
www.umc.org/nymo/ysf-main.html

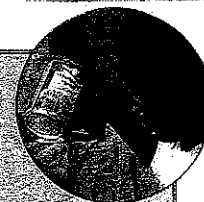
UMCOR
www.umcor.org

Volunteers in Mission
gbgm-umc.org/vim

General Board of Church and Society
www.umc-gbcs.org

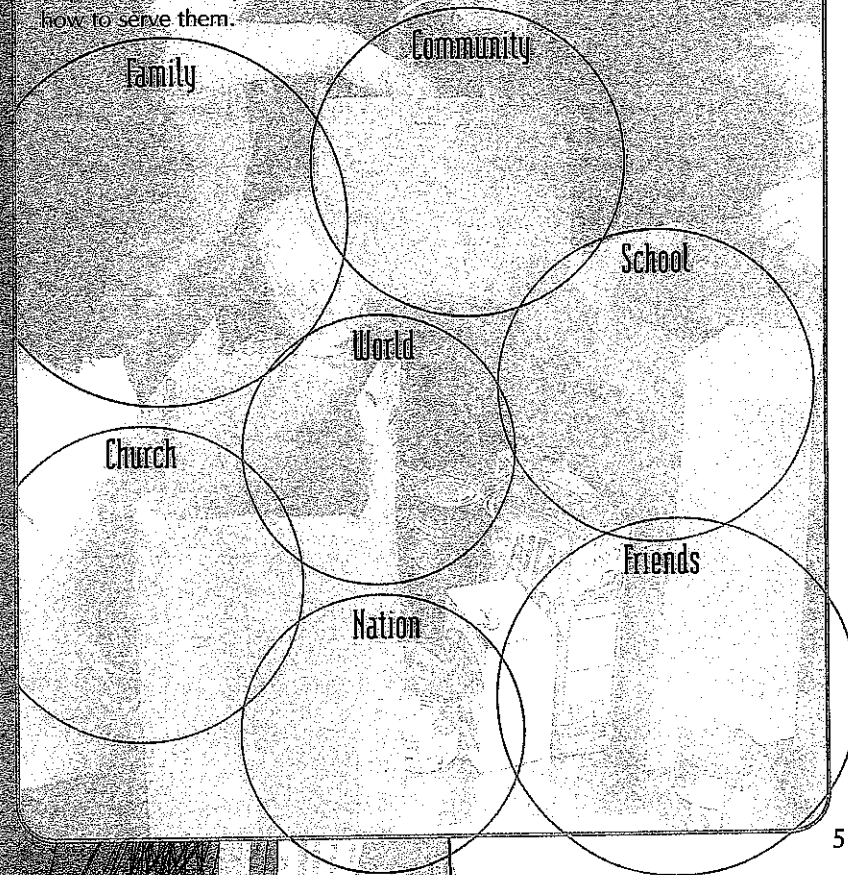
General Board of Global Ministries
gbgm-umc.org

Circles of Service



Whom have you served? Who are the neighbors you have from Jesus? Who needs your help?

In the circles write the names of people or groups you have served or are serving; write new names also if you are aware of God calling you to respond to a need you had not seen or felt before. Pray God to show you how to serve them.



Serving Others

Hello! God Calling!



You are beginning to think about what you want to do when you grow up. You are discovering some talents, interests, and spiritual gifts you have; and, as you have more experiences and education, you will find out more about the ways God has gifted you. Put into that mix the question of vocation:

"What is God calling me to do and be?"

All Christians are called to ministry—to love and serve others. Some Christians are called to full-time Christian service—some as pastors, some as deacons, some as missionaries, some in other ways.

Your job or career may or may not be a recognized ministry like being a pastor is, but the attitude of service you bring to whatever you do in life will make a difference. It can change a "just-a-job" into a vocation, a calling from God.

Think about yourself right now; think about how God may be calling you:

My talents	My interests	Good things I do in my relationships with others
My spiritual gifts	I am wondering whether God may be calling me to	
Today's date		

Holy Spirit

Is This the Same Guy?



You remember Peter, don't you? When Jesus said, "_____ me," Peter was right there! He was one of the first disciples (**Matthew 4:18-20**). He was convinced Jesus was the _____; he was the first to say so.

Jesus saw lots of potential in Peter. He said, "You are a _____" and changed his name from Simon to Peter, which also means _____ (**Matthew 16:13-18**).

Peter did some crazy things. He saw Jesus _____ on water, and he tried it too. Jesus had to rescue him (**Matthew 14:22-33**). When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the garden, Peter pulled a sword and cut off the _____ of one of the men with the soldiers (**John 18:10**). Jesus had to put it back on and heal the wound (**Luke 22:51**).

Peter said some crazy things too. He told Jesus *he would never desert* Jesus. But Jesus said, "This very _____, before the cock crows, you will deny me _____ times" (**Matthew 26:33-35**).

And sure enough, when Jesus was arrested, tried, tortured, and crucified, where was Peter? Hanging out in the background! When someone pointed him out as a follower of Jesus, he flat out said, "I do not _____ the man!" (**Matthew 27:69-75**).

Even after Jesus' resurrection, even though Jesus had tried to tell the disciples about his death and resurrection to come, Peter just didn't "get it." He went back to his old job, _____. But Jesus was there! He challenged Peter to take on a new "job": "Feed my _____" (**John 21:1-19**).

Before Jesus was taken up into heaven, he instructed Peter and the rest of his followers to wait for the coming of the _____. (**Acts 1:4-11**). When the day of Pentecost came, the disciples were touched with tongues of _____. And Peter, with great power, stood before the crowd of people and began to preach the good news. Every person there understood him in his or her own _____. Peter's message moved the people greatly, and that day _____ people repented, were baptized, and became followers of _____ (**Acts 2:1-4**).