



# Wesleyan Roots

What Makes United Methodism Distinct

FACILITATOR GUIDE



## Unit 2: Understanding the Nature and Action of God

# Session 5: Scripture in Light of Tradition, Experience and Reason

### Gathering, Introductions and Prayer

(5 Minutes)

- Check to be sure everyone in the group brought a copy of the Session 5 Participant Guide with them. Provide a copy for any participants who did not bring their own.
- Also provide a copy of *The United Methodist Hymnal* for each participant to use during the closing time.
- Lead the group in an opening prayer of your own, or you can use this prayer:

*Loving God, we confess that we fall short when it comes to reading the Bible as Christians. Sometimes we think we have heard it all before and that there is nothing new there for us. Sometimes we would rather rely on someone else telling us what to think about the Bible rather than encountering your word ourselves. And sometimes, Gracious God, it is confusing to us. Grant us the presence of the Holy Spirit that we might learn to encounter your word to us through scripture in new, fresh, and exciting ways. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

### Session 5 Introduction and Video

(15 minutes)

In these words, or in your own words, say:

- “Today’s presenters on our video are Revs. Scott Luginbill and Sarah Marsalis-Luginbill. They will talk about the distinct way United Methodists approach the Bible.”
- Show the video
- Ask, “What did this video bring to mind for you?” Be prepared to share something yourself if needed to get the group started.
- Give a few moments for the group to respond.

### Scriptures of the Day: 2 Timothy 3:14–17

(15 Minutes)

- Say, “Our scripture for Session 5 is 2 Timothy 3:14–17. Listen for God’s word to you.”
- Read the passage.

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

- In these, or your own words, say: “Our scripture lesson today is a passage referring to the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, because that was the scripture available to the people reading 2 Timothy. The Bible as we have it was not canonized, or made official, until around 200 C.E, which strikes many Christians as being remarkably late. Protestant Christians have 66 books in their Bible while Catholic Christians recognize 77. Each of the books has its own historical and literary context to consider as it is read. The history of how our Bible came to be canonized is an interesting topic for any Christian interested in further study.”
- “The author of 2 Timothy was leaving instructions for those who would read the letter, and these instructions include an important message about scripture.”
- “The passage says that all scripture is inspired by God. The word inspired literally means ‘having breathed.’ So to say scripture is inspired by God means it is ‘God breathed.’”
- Ask: “In your opinion, how do you think biblical texts were written? Did God give them to the writers word-for-word in their original languages, like someone dictating a letter? Or did God give the ideas to the writers who wrote them down in their own words? Or did God use another way? What does the inspiration (or God-breathed nature) of scripture mean to you? How does it influence your faith?”
- The passage also says that all scripture is useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.

## Wesleyan Roots Session 5: Scripture in Light of Tradition, Experience and Reason

- Ask: “What is something you have learned from the Bible? Has the Bible ever corrected your beliefs or actions in some way? In your opinion, how well does your congregation use the Bible to ‘train people in righteousness?’”

### The Root of Scripture

- Say, “In some Christian traditions, once a person is confirmed in the church, he or she no longer attends Sunday School or other classes. United Methodists encourage one another to continue in group Bible study, Sunday School, and other faith-related classes such as this one.”
- Ask: “Do you think it is important for adults to keep studying the Bible? Why or why not? What are some ways you could make time for more Bible study in your life?”
- Ask: “Do you think a tool like the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (viewing scripture through the lenses of tradition, experience, and reason) might help you approach the study of scripture differently? Why or why not?”

### Questions for Prayerful and Thoughtful Discussion (15 Minutes)

- Have you or someone you know ever followed the teaching of *sola scriptura* (scripture only)? How might such an understanding influence the way a person lives out her or his faith?
- In your opinion, what difference does it make to say we believe in *prima scriptura* (scripture as our primary source) rather than in *sola scriptura* (scripture as our only source)?

- Name a passage of scripture that you find confusing and apply the four criteria of the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” to it. Think through the passage, along with the questions it raises, using scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. What was this like for you? Do you think this is a helpful way to approach biblical texts? Why or why not?

### United Methodist Identity Points and Closing Liturgy (5 Minutes)

- In these or similar words say, “Thank you for participating in Session 5 of Wesleyan Roots. Session 6 is about how United Methodists understand God’s gift of salvation. I encourage you to read the session guide prior to us getting together next week. Let us review the United Methodist Identity Points from Session 5 in the box at the bottom of your session guide. This session has three identity points. Let’s read these out loud together.”
- "Please turn in The United Methodist Hymnal to #595 and let us join together in reading the words of “Whether the Word be Preached or Read” by Charles Wesley.

Marsha Engle Middleton

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## United Methodist Identity Points:

- United Methodists believe the Bible is the central and primary source of God’s revelation to us and that it contains all things necessary for salvation.
- We read the Bible through “lenses” of Christian tradition, personal and corporate experience, and human reason.
- United Methodists encourage Christians to engage with the biblical text, ask questions, and give serious thought to matters of faith and practice. Questions are encouraged in the United Methodist Church. We do not “check our brains at the door” when we enter a church sanctuary or classroom.