



Wesleyan Roots

What Makes United Methodism Distinct

FACILITATOR GUIDE



Unit 2: Understanding the Nature and Action of God

Session 6: Salvation as More of a Journey-in-Process Than an Event

Gathering, Introductions and Prayer

(5 Minutes)

- Check to be sure everyone in the group brought a copy of the Session 6 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 liturgy.
- Lead the group in an opening prayer of your own, or you can use this prayer, adapted from a prayer published by the PrayerInstitute.com.

*Loving God, we thank you for your unconditional love. Thank you for showing us just how great your love is by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. Lord God, we thank you for the precious gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens! We put our hope in you, Lord. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.*¹

Session 6 Introduction and Video

(15 minutes)

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

- “Today’s presenter on our video is Rev. Mitchell Boone. He will talk about salvation.
- 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: Ephesians 2:8–9, James 2:14–18

(15 Minutes)

- Say, “Our first scripture for Session 6 is Ephesians 2:8–9. Listen for God’s word to you.”
- Read the passage.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

- In these, or your own words, say: “This passage from Ephesians has great significance for Christians in that it reminds us that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the one who offers us the gift of salvation. It is not something we can ever earn on our own. In fact, even the sense that we need God in the first place is a gift of prevenient grace. Sometimes it is difficult for Christians to remember that what we do is out of thankfulness to God and not to save ourselves.
- Ask: “What are some things that people might try to do to save themselves?” (attend church, give money, do good deeds, etc.)
- Say: “Now let’s look at our second scripture, James 2:14–18. Hear God’s word to us today.”

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

- Say “It appears that the scripture from Ephesians is saying we are saved by faith and not by good works, yet in James we are told that ‘Faith without works is dead.’”
- Ask “How might you resolve this apparent contradiction in scripture?” (follow the newest of the two passages, follow the oldest of the two passages, look for a compromise, etc.)

¹ www.prayerinstitute.com/prayer/march-3-a-prayer-of-thanksgiving-for-salvation/

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- Say “Faith and works are essential to salvation, but in different ways. Wesleyan scholar and Bishop Scott Jones writes, ‘Strictly speaking, it is only faith that is necessary for salvation. It is immediately necessary. But good works are necessary for a lively faith, and so they are remotely necessary.’² In short, a Christian is one who has faith and is one who cooperates with the Holy Spirit in such a way that he or she can do good things for God, for the world, for others, and for the church.
- Ask: “Do you think God expects Christians to act faithfully after their justification? Why or why not?”

Questions for Prayerful and Thoughtful Discussion (15 Minutes)

- If you are a Christian, how do you think of your salvation? Is it more of an event, or is it more like a journey? Why?
- How has God pursued you to be in relationship with God? It might have been through a relative, or through a favorite teacher or at camp as a young person, in a small group during your college years, or in many other ways.
- As part of the process of salvation, do you believe God can utilize non-Christians or people from other religious traditions to influence us? Why or why not?
- In what ways is God calling you to become more like Christ through sanctification?

United Methodist Identity Points and Closing Liturgy (5 Minutes)

- In these or similar words say, “Session 7 is about how God created us, as diverse as we are, in God’s own image, and about how this impacts how we are called to live lives of faith. 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 6 in the box at the bottom of your session guide. This session has three identity points. Let’s read these out loud together.”
- Say, “Let us close by affirming our faith with the words of Romans 8:35,37-39, #887 in the back of your hymnal. I will read the part of the leader, and we will all read the part of the people.
- Leader: What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness or peril or sword?
- People: No! In all things we are more than conquerors through the One who loved us. We are sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, or anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Marsha Engle Middleton

United Methodist Identity Points:

- Salvation is a gift of grace by faith through the love of the Triune God, made possible by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Most United Methodists describe their experience of salvation as more of a process than an event.
- Salvation includes the whole work of God in our lives. For United Methodists, salvation is not only justification and sanctification, but God’s saving work throughout our entire lives.
- God acts in salvation in a number of ways. Through prevenient grace, God pursues a relationship with us. Through justifying grace, we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Through sanctifying grace, we become more Christ-like through the power of the Holy Spirit.

² Jones, Scott J. *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002. P. 188