



Wesleyan Roots

What Makes United Methodism Distinct

FACILITATOR GUIDE



Unit 3: The Way of Christ

Session 9: Social Holiness—Moving Toward Perfect Love

Gathering, Introductions and Prayer (5 Minutes)

- Check to be sure everyone in the group brought a copy of the Session 9 Participants' 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 the prayer "For Courage to Do Justice," #456 in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, written by Alan Paton of South Africa.

O Lord, open our eyes that we may see the needs of others; open our ears that we may hear their cries; open our hearts so that they need not be without succor; let us not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong, or afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich. Show us where love and hope and faith are needed, and use us to bring them to those places. And so open our eyes and our ears that we may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for thee. Amen.

Session 9 Introduction and Video (15 minutes)

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

- "In these words, or in your own words, say: "Today's presenter on our video is Rev. Joshua Manning. He will talk about the Wesleyan concept of social holiness, and how we are called to love others as Jesus loved."
- 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: Matthew 26:31-46 (15 Minutes)

- Say, "Our first scripture for Session 9 is Matthew 25: 31-46. Listen for God's word to you."
- Read the passage.

Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

- In these, or your own words, say: "This passage is one in which Jesus links our salvation with how we treat others. Wesley names our call to love others as Jesus loved **social holiness**, and it is at the heart of Wesleyan Christianity as part of our sanctification. The author identifies three things that are particularly striking to her.

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- First, Jesus cares about the small, seemingly inconsequential things we do for others, and not only about the large things. Secondly, the “sheep” in the passage are so accustomed to helping others that they do not seem to be aware they are doing anything special, and they certainly do not think they are doing things for Jesus himself. Thirdly, the “goats” in the passage seem to imply that, if they had only known that Jesus was present in the regular folks needing help, they would have been sure to render aid. Jesus sums everything up in verse 40: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” And in verse 45: “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”
- Ask: “In this passage, the Son of Man judges the nations, and presumably the individuals within, based upon whether or not they acted in mercy towards those in need. Most United Methodists do not focus as much on the judgment of God as we do on the love of God, but accountability for our actions, or lack thereof, is clearly a part of the biblical witness and part of Jesus’ teachings.”
- Ask: “Is it surprising to you that the Son of Man in this passage will judge people according to loving behavior? Why or why not? Is this comforting to you, challenging to you, or both? Why?”
- Ask: “What are some ways in which you might be called to embody social holiness by acting in justice and mercy towards others? If you did so, how do you think you might grow in your relationship with God?”
- Ask: “Has God ever called you to do something outside of your comfort zone? Did you choose to do it or not? If a Christian chooses to move outside of his or her comfort zone to love others, how might that impact the one receiving the loving action? How might that impact the one offering the loving action?”

Questions for Prayerful and Thoughtful Discussion (15 Minutes)

- When you think of holiness, do you tend to think of a Christian’s personal lifestyle, of social holiness, or of both? Why?
- How might God be calling you to move toward social holiness in ways both big and small? What might be a first step for you as you seek to love as Jesus loved?
- In your opinion, how important is the connection within The United Methodist Church? What are some additional ways in which our connection empowers us to do more ministry together than we could do as individual Christians or as individual congregations?

United Methodist Identity Points and Closing Liturgy (5 Minutes)

- In these or similar words say, “Session 9 is about John Wesley’s notion of social holiness and how it influences our lives as Christians. I encourage you to read the session guide prior to us getting together next week.
- In these or similar words say, “Session 10 is about personal piety – how we can allow God to feed our souls through spiritual practices. 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 9 in the box at the bottom of your session guide. This session has four identity points. Let’s read these out loud together.”
- “Please turn in your hymnals to #584 and let us read together the words of the hymn, “Lord, You Give the Great Commission.”

Marsha Engle Middleton

United Methodist Identity Points:

- Living as a Christian means, in part, that we are called to demonstrate Christ’s love through intentional Christian actions of mercy and justice.
- While we cannot do everything for everyone, we can do something for someone.
- Social holiness is a part of sanctification and the Christian life.
- The connective nature of The United Methodist Church makes it possible for us to do more together than any individual person or congregation can do on its own.