

THE  
**DISCIPLESHIP**  
PLACE

Exploring Nazarene  
History and Polity



**SESSION 2**

Historical Development:  
Reformation and the Wesleyan Movement

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# Historical Development: Reformation and the Wesleyan Movement

## SESSION OVERVIEW

**Reformation: We Are Protestant**

**Wesleyan Revival: We Are Wesleyan-Arminian**

**Application**

**Exam**

**Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant**

## LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- understand and explain the historical groups that influenced and form the heritage of the Church of the Nazarene, especially Protestant and Wesleyan
- understand and explain the place of the Church of the Nazarene within the Christian community

## INTRODUCTION

In this session, we will trace the key formative issues through history to reveal the identity of the Church of the Nazarene. We want to understand how the Church of the Nazarene is Protestant and Wesleyan.

## REFORMATION: WE ARE PROTESTANT



### NOTES

The history of the Protestant movement began with the personal quest of Martin Luther when he sought to find assurance of his salvation. After seeking it in personal works of holiness, Luther became convinced that grace was the basis for salvation. His study of Scripture brought him to the conclusion of justification by faith, not by works. On October 31, 1517, Luther's concern for the church to have a proper understanding of the nature of salvation led to his nailing a list of debating statements on the church door. In doing so, he launched a series of events that brought forth a movement, which in 10 years resulted in the recognition that two Christian movements existed in Europe: Catholic and Protestant.

A rich diversity of Christian groups comprises the Protestant movement.

- Presbyterians favor a governmental system that stresses the sharing of power between clergy and laity, and denomination and local church.
- Baptists emphasize local church government.
- Pentecostals have brought intensity and energy with their style of worship, healing, and the gifts of the Spirit.
- Mennonites and Amish stress separation from culture and state in order to maintain a holiness lifestyle.
- Methodists have contributed to the fabric of Christianity with their stress upon free grace and holiness.

When the Church of the Nazarene calls itself Protestant, what does that mean? What common practices and beliefs make a group or individual Protestant? Three theological beliefs of this movement have been:

- salvation by grace through faith
- the authority of Scripture
- the priesthood of the believer

Protestants are also known for their participation in missions.

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Salvation by grace through faith was Luther's attempt to remove salvation from any understanding that bases salvation on works. Salvation results from the gracious actions of Jesus and through an act of faith expressed in our positive response to God's revelation through Jesus Christ. Our response is repentance; we confess our sins and turn from our sinning. Grace means God makes our repentance and faith possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Without God's grace, humans would not be able to respond to God's offer of salvation.

Therefore, God's gift of grace to humanity means if we hear the gospel message, we can respond and become saved. Hearing the gospel message is grace as well. Grace is also found in the work of the Holy Spirit drawing us to the gospel and convicting us of our sin. Without the action of the Holy Spirit, we would be hopelessly lost. The Holy Spirit often works through the Church to present this message. In order to be saved, a human being is dependent upon God's acts of atonement and the obedience of God's church to proclaim the gospel. Protestants affirm salvation by grace through faith.

In Luther's endeavor to find the true basis of salvation, he turned to a study of Scripture. The primary basis of authority for any belief or practice is the Word of God. Certainly, Christians also depend upon reason, experience, and tradition, but Scripture is the primary basis of authority. Christians require access to Scripture and must study it as an essential part of their program for spiritual development. The Protestant understanding that the individual must read Scripture produced a massive effort to translate Scripture into common languages and to teach people to read. Protestants affirm the authority of Scripture.

The access of Scripture also relates to the priesthood of believers. The Protestant movement wants to place the individual directly before God. No need exists to confess our sins to a priest or to pray to a saint for help from God. Instead, the individual goes directly to God to confess sins and to pray for needs. The believer has responsibility both to pray directly to God and to study the Scriptures themselves for the will of God. Here is a decentralization of salvation from the priest to the individual.

This personal responsibility extends to the nature of salvation, itself, in that the individual must experience personal salvation. One caution is needed. A danger exists to understand Christianity only in terms of the individual. Some Protestant movements reduce faith to the individual's act in a saving experience. Yet, Christians are called to live within community, to worship in churches, and be accountable to each other. Protestants affirm the priesthood of believers and the call to live in community.

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Protestant Christianity also identifies with evangelism or missions. Reformed Christians played a major role in taking the gospel out of Europe into the far corners of the globe. Wesleyan-Arminians, with the emphasis upon free will and Wesley's understanding of the world as his parish, believed evangelism to be at the heart of what it meant to be a Christian and a Christian organization.

- The United States was founded on the principle of religious liberty because a diversity of religious groups immigrated to its shores.
- Europeans took the gospel with them to Africa and Asia as part of their economic enterprises.
- The 20th century saw the explosion of indigenous Protestant movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.
- For the first time in the history of Christianity, more Christians exist south of the equator than north. Protestant Christians have been major players in the mission movement in the last century. Protestants affirm evangelism and missions.

## WESLEYAN REVIVAL: WE ARE WESLEYAN-ARMINIAN



### NOTES

Religious movements are often shaped by an individual's personal spiritual quest. Luther's failure to find salvation in personal works of holiness led him to his biblical study that revealed salvation by grace through faith. The beginnings of the Wesleyan revival began with John and Charles Wesley searching for their own spiritual assurance of salvation as they attempted to live a life of holiness.

Raised in an Anglican parsonage under the nurturing influence of their mother Susanna, they endeavored to practice living the Christian life during their college years. John's quest for a holiness lifestyle led him to keep a journal in order to be more accountable for his life. Yet, by May of 1738, Wesley had doubts about his own spiritual condition.

On the evening of May 24, 1738, sitting in a small-group meeting on Aldersgate Street in London, Wesley experienced the presence of God in such a way that he pointed back to that moment as a turning point in his life. For the next 50 plus years, John Wesley directed a religious movement in England that resulted in the formation of the Methodist Church.

Some of the issues that marked the Wesleyan movement were:

- understanding of the relationship between Scripture and authority
- holiness as an optimistic view of grace
- free grace

While Wesley understood Scripture as being the primary basis of the Christian's authority, he also looked to reason, tradition, and experience. The focus upon tradition led him to study the Early Church theologians for their understanding of salvation. Wesley's dependence upon these theologians has caused some contemporary Wesleyan thinkers to see a connection between Orthodox and Wesleyan theology.

*Experience*, particularly our salvation experience of God, formed his understanding of authority. At times, Wesley took a very practical approach to theology. For example, in order to understand better the dynamics of such doctrines as entire sanctification, Wesley kept records as to the number of those entirely sanctified and allowed their numbers and testimonies to influence his theological conclusions on whether the experience of entire sanctification was available in this life.


**NOTES**

When Wesleyans are designated as Wesleyan-Arminian, the label refers to how Wesleyans handle the theological issue of free will. One of the essential Reformed or Calvinist doctrines was predestination. Some Calvinists advocated predestination to establish grace firmly as the basis of salvation.

Writing in the *Institutes*, Calvin simply answered the question as to why people were saved or damned with the response; God is the source of salvation so God selects who will be saved.

- Calvin's understanding of election and grace was a consequence of his affirmation of God's absolute providence.
- Grace was tied to God's sovereignty.
- A sovereign God controls and determines everything, including the salvation of the individual.

Between 1618-1620, the Reformed movement in Europe established its identity as being connected with five basic points (T.U.L.I.P.):

- total depravity—individuals are born in need of salvation
- unconditional election—God is the source of salvation
- limited atonement—God died only for the elect
- irresistible grace—God gives the saved the power that effects their salvation
- final perseverance—the believer will make it to heaven

James Arminius challenged the basic viewpoints of Calvinism. John Wesley, a century later, preached similar views to those of Arminius when he advocated that God's grace enables all humans to have the ability to respond to the grace of God. Therefore, Wesleyans stress the possibility for all humans to respond favorably to the gospel message. In a Wesleyan understanding of grace, no human being would be locked into his or her fate. Wesley affirmed that any individual can become a Christian. (see also Busic: *Way, Truth, Life: Discipleship as a Journey of Grace*, 2020)

Holiness as an optimism of grace provided an especially positive outlook on what grace would and could do for the sinner. Holiness refers to both spiritual formation and entire sanctification or as process and crisis. Holiness as spiritual formation is the growth and development in the Christian life that begins with the new birth and continues throughout the Christian life. This stress on spiritual




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development led Wesley to create structures that would enable the growth to occur. Hence, he developed small groups of classes, societies, and bands to bring Christians together. The small groups created an atmosphere of nurture and a community of accountability.

In the 17th century, Lutheranism experienced a renewed stress upon personal holiness, with the call for personal spiritual development by the pietistic movement with its emphasis on Scripture as the basis for living and its focus on personal religious experience. During this period, more attention was placed upon personal devotional literature. The danger of such movements is that they could lead to a simple reduction of Christianity to the individual life, as a Christian expresses his or her faith only in personal acts of devotion. Wesley balanced his activities of personal devotion of prayer, Bible reading, fasting, and journaling with his actions of evangelism, social compassion for the poor, medical care, and quality education. Wesley affirmed that salvation meant Christlikeness or character formation.

Holiness did not only refer to process or spiritual development for Wesley. He also preached and taught the crisis of entire sanctification. The focus of salvation is to have God as the center of human living. Conversion establishes a relationship with God. Entire sanctification addresses the need to have God at the center of our living.

Wesley understood entire sanctification also as a crisis experience, distinct from justification by faith, attainable in this life, and obtained through faith. Wesley used the analogy of death to illustrate his emphasis on the instantaneousness of entire sanctification:

“It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies; yet there is an instant in which life ceases. And if ever sin ceases, there must be a last moment of its existence and a first moment of our deliverance from it.” (From “Repentance in Believers.”)

His understanding of the essence of entire sanctification focused upon love:

“It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification; for a full salvation from all our sins—from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief; or, as the apostle expresses it, ‘go on to perfection’ But what is perfection? The word has various senses; here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul.” From “The Scripture Way of Salvation.”

Wesley affirmed entire sanctification. As members of the Church of the Nazarene we are both Protestant and Wesleyan.

## APPLICATION



### NOTES

1. One of the characteristics of the Wesleyan movement has been the singing of hymns. Read the following Wesley hymns and consider the doctrinal content of each in a daily devotional time.

#### AND CAN IT BE?

*And can it be that I should gain an int'rest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me who Him to death pursued?*

*Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?  
Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

*He left His Father's throne above, so free, so infinite His grace!  
Emptied Himself of all but love, and bled for Adam's helpless race.  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free, for, O my God, it found out me!  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free, for, O my God, it found out me!*

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night.  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray, I woke; the dungeon flamed with light!  
My chains fell off; my heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.  
My chains fell off; my heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

*No condemnation now I dread; Jesus and all in Him, is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th' eternal throne and claim the crown, thro' Christ, my own.  
Bold I approach th' eternal throne and claim the crown, thro' Christ, my own.  
—Charles Wesley*

#### LOVE DIVINE, ALL LOVES EXCELLING

*Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
All thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion;  
Pure, unbounded love Thou art,  
Visit us with Thy salvation;  
Enter ev'ry trembling heart.*


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*Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit  
 Into ev'ry troubled breast!  
 Let us all in Thee inherit  
 Let us find that second rest.  
 Take away our bent to sinning;*

*Alpha and Omega be.  
 End of faith, as its Beginning,  
 Set our hearts at liberty.*

*Come, Almighty to Deliver;  
 Let us all Thy life receive.  
 Suddenly return, and never,  
 Nevermore Thy temples leave.  
 Thee we would be always blessing,  
 Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
 Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,  
 Glory in Thy perfect love.*

*Finish then Thy new creation;  
 Pure and spotless let us be.  
 Let us see Thy great salvation,  
 Perfectly restored in Thee;  
 Changed from glory into glory,  
 Till in heav'n we take our place,  
 Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
 Lost in wonder, love, and praise.  
 —Charles Wesley*

### **A CHARGE TO KEEP I HAVE**

*A charge to keep I have,  
 A God to glorify;  
 A never dying to soul to save,  
 And fit it for the sky.*

*To serve the present age,  
 My calling to fulfill;  
 O may it all my pow'rs engage  
 To do my Master's will.*


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*Arm me with jealous care,  
As in Thy sight to live;  
And O Thy servant, Lord prepare  
A strict account to give!*

*Help me to watch and pray,  
And on thyself rely,  
Assured if I my trust betray  
I shall forever die.  
—Charles Wesley*

2. Read the following Wesley sermons found at the link below.  
[http://wesley.nnu.edu/john\\_wesley/sermons/alph.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/sermons/alph.htm)

- “Christian Perfection” (Sermon 40)
- “On Patience” (Sermon 83)
- “Repentance of Believers, The” (Sermon 14)
- “The Scriptural Way of Salvation, The” (Sermon 43)

See also <http://wesley.nnu.edu/>

3. Write a pro and con paper in which you debate the value of having specific denominations for doing ministry. Would it be better for Christians to be only in one denomination? Would it be possible for all Christians to live within one denomination? Why or why not?
4. Reflect on what Wesley’s teaching on Free Grace means to you personally.
5. For an extensive survey of Wesley’s life and movement read: Heitzenrater, Richard. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
6. Read Church of the Nazarene, “Historical Statement,” *Manual*, 2017-2021. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017.

See: [http://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/EN\\_manual\\_2013-17.pdf](http://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/EN_manual_2013-17.pdf)

## EXAM



### NOTES

1. The Protestant movement began with the personal quest of John Wesley when he became convinced that grace was the basis for salvation.
  - A. True
  - B. False
2. Which of the following would NOT be considered Protestant?
  - A. Methodist
  - B. Pentecostals
  - C. Russian Orthodox
  - D. Presbyterians
3. Three theological beliefs of the Protestant movement include \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. salvation by grace through faith
  - B. the tradition of the church
  - C. the authority of Scripture
  - D. the priesthood of believers
  - E. A, C, D
4. God's gift of grace to humanity means that if we hear the gospel message \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. we will respond and become saved
  - B. we will understand it
  - C. we can respond and become sanctified
  - D. we can respond and be saved
5. What began the Wesleyan revival?
  - A. John and Charles Wesley searching for their own spiritual assurance
  - B. John and Charles Wesley preaching faith
  - C. John and Charles Wesley writing hymns
6. Which of the following issues is NOT a mark of the Wesleyan movement?
  - A. free grace
  - B. the understanding of the relationship between Scripture and authority
  - C. conversion as an emotional religious experience
  - D. holiness as an optimistic view of grace

 **NOTES**

7. While Wesley understood Scripture as being the primary basis of the Christian's authority, he also looked to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. tradition
  - B. reason
  - C. experience
  - D. all of the above
  
8. Which of the following did Calvin emphasize?
  - A. free grace
  - B. holiness
  - C. a sovereign God controls and determines everything
  - D. works righteousness
  
9. For Wesley salvation meant Christlikeness or \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. love
  - B. praying without ceasing
  - C. sacrifice
  - D. character formation
  
10. Wesley understood holiness to include which of the following?
  - A. crisis experience of entire sanctification
  - B. spiritual development preceding entire sanctification
  - C. spiritual development as a process after entire sanctification
  - D. all of the above

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

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NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. What identifies one as being Protestant?
2. What have been the key issues of these two movements, the Reformation and the Wesleyan movement?
3. Explain what it means to be both Protestant and to be within the Wesleyan heritage.
4. What are the issues that led to the identity of the Church of the Nazarene?
5. Discuss what holiness means to you and your Christianity.