



7 Methodists

A Message from Martin Luther

In worldly and outward affairs, which apply to the livelihood and maintenance of the body, a person is cunning, intelligent, and quite active. But in spiritual and divine things, which apply to the salvation of the soul, a person is like a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife [Genesis 19:26], indeed, like a log and stone. He is like a lifeless statue, which uses neither eyes nor mouth, neither sense nor heart. (SD II 20)

Opening Prayer

L: I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (Romans 7:15)

P: I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. (Romans 7:18)

L: Who will deliver me from this body of death?

P: Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:24–25)

L: Open our eyes, O Lord, that we may behold wondrous things out of Your Word.

P: Amen!

Free Will

In what areas of life do people have the free exercise of their will? Are there any areas in life in which free will is limited or restricted in some way?

What do the following Bible verses have to say about the freedom of the will when it comes to spiritual matters?

Romans 8:7

Galatians 5:17

Ephesians 2:1

The preceding verses make it clear that the human will is bound and cannot act freely in spiritual matters. Since this is so, how is it

possible even to believe in God, according to the following verses?

Romans 10:17

2 Corinthians 4:6

Ephesians 2:8–9

John 11:38–44

What do the following verses say about those to whom God has given His miraculous gift of faith?

Psalms 51:10

Romans 7:15–19

Heartfelt

According to the following Bible verses, what is the relationship between truth and love?

Zechariah 8:19

Ephesians 4:15; John 17:17

1 Peter 1:22

What might be some of the dangers of creating too much separation between truth and love? Where might an emphasis on truth at the expense of love lead you? Where might an emphasis on love at the expense of truth lead you?

What does **Matthew 13:23** say about the source of our works of love toward our neighbor?

According to the following Bible passages, is it right for Christians to attend themselves only to God's Word and to ignore their neighbor's needs?

James 2:14–17

1 John 3:18

If your circumstances forced you into the difficult position of needing to choose between giving your neighbor consolation from God's Word or helping in his or her physical need, which would you choose? Why?

Use **Acts 3:1–6** to help guide your discussion.

Church Body

Methodist Churches

History

The Methodist Church traces its history to the work of brothers John and Charles Wesley. The Wesleys served as missionaries to the Georgia colonies from the Church of England in 1736. Having both returned to England by 1738, the brothers started a renewal movement within the Church of England. By 1760, Methodism took root in America under the leadership of Robert Strawbridge. The Wesleys sent follow-up mission leaders who helped the Church grow across the nation. Methodists earned their name from their focus on methods and rules for holy living.

Vital Statistics

The United Methodist Church has 8.3 million members; the AME has 3.5 million; the AMEZ has 1.2 million; and the Christian MEC has 718,000. The United Methodist Church national office is located in Nashville, Tennessee. Sources: www.umc.org; www.c-m-e.org.

Source of Doctrine

Methodist churches root their teachings in their Articles of Religion, the Rules of the Methodist Church, and a collection of Wesley's sermons. Scripture is understood through the filter of Church tradition and the test of

human reason. Methodists demonstrate a great tolerance for differences, especially concerning interpretation of Scripture.

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation

Methodists teach that believers are able to cooperate in their conversion. While they acknowledge God's role in forgiving sin and Jesus' work of obedience, they teach that Christians are enabled by sanctification to do their own holy works, which qualify them for eternal life.

Sacraments

While Methodists participate in the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, they are seen as divinely appointed activities in which people receive help from God. They are not seen as a means of grace by which the believer receives forgiveness.

Lutheran Response

Since the Methodist believer may not share the same understanding of Scripture, approach them with a spirit of love and concern. Be prepared to thoroughly explain what Lutherans teach as part of this conversation.

