

Unit 7: Methodist Historical DNA and Modern Cell Churches: Is There A Match?

Lecture: The Early Methodist Faith Community

I was not disappointed in my choice to spend a week learning from Dr. Tom Albin. His expertise derives from an exhaustive study of the journals of early British Methodists and the records of the societies while at Cambridge University in England. We cannot discern the evangelistic operations of a movement by examining the leaders; the shape of the equipping track and the management system that keeps the whole running smoothly can only be understood by examining the behavior of the common people. Their behavior reveals the operating system of disciple making.

FAITH COMMUNITY

Early Methodism is a movement. As such it fits very neatly into our two winged format of the church. The Anglican church is the Worship System which provides the basic, traditional experience of church in every parish. The Methodist Movement is the Discipleship System which provides an equipping track process for personal spiritual growth in definite stages. For Anglicans, the faith community lies definitely with the parish church; for the Methodists, largely excluded from power in the parish (one assumes) for socioeconomic reasons, the place that they find power is in the faith community of the discipleship system.

Learning how to exert power and influence within the faith community of early Methodism taught important lessons to poor people. They learned how to support one another such that they could overcome problems in their own lives and rise to middle class within three generations, a miraculous achievement in a repressive, oligarchic society. Besides creating "ecclesiolae in ecclesia" - little churches within the big church - they created little communities within communities, and learned how to use influence in those communities which later gave them influence within the large community. Wesley modeled the means to address and confront the problems of the day and it is certain that the early Methodists followed his example locally, albeit on a much smaller scale. David Lowes Watson, for example, credits the leadership skills and personal self discipline learned in the class meetings as providing the leaders of Labor with the means to form labor unions and rise to power in British politics. I expect that one would also find multiple examples of the principles of community organization as defined by Saul Alinsky within the early Methodist movement, as well as Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam's work on building social capital.¹

If these principles of social functioning are universal, they can only be observed and verified through an examination of the lives of the common Methodist people. How did they socially interact outside of class and band? How did they support each other and unify against the threat from outsiders? How early did the Methodist community become involved in the politics of rural villages and eventually in cities in England? These lessons in personal maturity and self-discipline once provided the solution to extreme poverty and political repression; it's likely that a similar networking structure for personal social change would repeat the historical success in overcoming poverty if utilized by those tasked with

¹Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). Putnam's work is online at The Saguaro Seminar, *Civic Engagement in America*, <http://www.bowlingalone.com/> (accessed June 15, 2007).

addressing world poverty by the upcoming General Conference.

When one compares Ruby K. Payne's work on poverty with traditions in small United Methodist Churches in the United States, there is a high correspondence with cultural aspects of poverty.² This means that customs of United Methodist churches, generally speaking and regardless of their socioeconomic status, are culturally "friendly" to persons in poverty despite leadership rhetoric that would dispute this. The smaller the church, the more this seems to be true in my estimation; Methodist churches are therefore more able to evangelize and include the poor in their faith communities if poverty is properly understood. Payne indicates that a significant requirement to rise above poverty is to be able to leave one social community for another where social values do not reinforce poverty causing behaviors; early Methodism provided that social community, ready made, in the holiness driven class meetings and bands. It would be useful to know if the community aspects of Methodism friendly to poverty that developed on the American frontier correspond to community behaviors in Methodism in England. We have a good understanding of the spiritual practices of early Methodists; much remains to be learned from their social interactions as a community. We need to understand more about their practices relating to raising children and building educational systems for them; Wesley did have band groups for boys and girls as young as 8 years old. Religion is more than theology and spiritual disciplines; to understand how our traditional "DNA" can bless us today, we need to know as much about the common Methodist people as we know about Wesley.³ The pursuit of holiness guarantees that Methodist faith communities involved themselves in the growth of the whole person and shaping healthy behavior; to restrict our study to theology and spiritual disciplines is to neglect and negate the greatest value of Methodist DNA for the building of healthy communities today.

DISCIPLESHIP SYSTEMS

John Wesley was a complex man living in complex times. The Industrial Revolution brought a vast migration of people from rural to urban areas. The Methodist Societies became a spiritual village within the city for many dislocated people.⁴ Wesley blended methods from Anglican religious societies and Moravian sources to create an evolving discipleship system that came to embrace laity in ministry

²Ruby K. Payne's work on poverty is available through <http://www.ahaprocess.com/>. The primary text is Ruby K. Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Highlands, TX: aha Process, Inc., 2005). Churches will be particularly interested in Dr. Ruby K. Payne and Bill Ehlig's *What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty* (Highlands, TX: aha Process, Inc., 1999).

³While Payne's work is largely based on cultures within the United States, it would be useful to know if common social practices exist in third world cultures of poverty in Africa, Asia and South America.

⁴According to sociologist Rodney Stark, dislocation from a stable social structure is a prime indicator of imminent conversion; the new religious community replaces the former social community. A question for historical investigation would be whether there are significant differences between Wesley's practice of Methodism in urban and rural areas. It is possible that I term "Prairie DNA" began in rural England where the stimulus of a smaller rural population brought forth these patterns. If so, then Asbury would only be practicing the form of Methodism with which he was familiar.

first as small group leaders and then as lay preachers.⁵ Wesley's discipleship system trained people in holiness and spiritual maturity where they lived. Salvation was a process first of prevenient grace, then justifying grace and finally sanctifying grace. Methodists remained fully engaged with people at each successive stage of grace and helped one another to move onward toward perfection.⁶

A discipleship system is a teleological process of grace that moves disciples through defined, clear stages of growth. One can trace the pilgrim's progress through these stages. Discipleship systems are relational and usually have a separate group for each stage. These stages are a "community defined by a rule" and took shape after 1743.⁷ This barrier does not exclude people from grace or the sacraments as they still are a part of the worship system of the local parish church. Participation in the Methodist discipleship system was always voluntary in England, and as a voluntary movement they were able to set and keep high standards. Early Methodism was hard to enter and easy to exit.

True holiness is obedience to Christ; as the Great Commission requires, the purpose of the discipleship system is to teach behavioral obedience to all that Christ has commanded (Matthew 28:20). The definition of holiness in Methodism, however, extended far beyond the commands of Christ and into a definition of ethical and unethical behavior that was logically and culturally determined as holiness for Wesley's day. These ethics have changed over the centuries and have been the cause of no little conflict in the history of the church through the 19th century American Holiness movement and through today. They are generally ignored in discussions of the General Rules for today and left up to individual interpretation of what it means to "do no harm" or to "do all the good you can."⁸

What would be the general distribution of members among the various levels for a society? A United Society of 100 members would have 50% of it's members in classes (perhaps 4 classes of 12), 25% of its members in bands (3-6 bands) and 25% in the select band.

A person grew up through the Methodist discipleship system in the following stages:

1. To join the society a person had to seek out a *sponsor* who was a practicing Methodist. This demonstrates the relational characteristic of the discipleship system from the beginning. It would be useful to know if being the sponsor also involved aspects of serving as a mentor. From the very

⁵Steven W. Manskar, *Small Groups and Accountability: The Wesleyan Way of Christian Formation*, http://www.gbod.org/smallgroup/Manskar_Accountability.pdf (accessed June 18, 2007). Cf. David Hunsicker, "John Wesley: Father of Today's Small Group Concept?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1996), under http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/31-35/31-1-09.htm (accessed May 1, 2007).

⁶Hunter identifies four stages in Wesley's process compared to nine for Willow Creek. George G. Hunter, III, *Church for the Unchurched* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 154-156.

⁷I am indebted to Tom Albin's research as the primary source for factual content of this entire paper; any misunderstandings, however, are entirely my errors. Sources other than Albin are footnoted.

⁸Others would argue the social principles and resolutions of general conference provide this definition. Others would argue the almost universal ignorance of the social principles and general conference resolutions as proof to the contrary. Wesley did not allow people to individually define the meaning of holiness; modern cultural diversity prevents one culture's definition of holiness being able to dominate a pluralistic church.

beginning of a pilgrim's journey, Methodism involved linking to a sponsor already in the network. The pilgrim would grant the sponsor influence over their life, probably due to respect, and the sponsor's influence would be a means of prevenient grace to draw the pilgrim into faith. The sponsor would show Christ's love through acts of caring that would develop a relationship. They would have conversations about what is important in life; questions would be asked and answered. When the sponsor stopped to listen to the Methodist preacher on the way to work, the pilgrim would stand with the sponsor. To the degree the sponsor remains involved in the pilgrim's life afterward, that relationship is also a means of sanctifying grace. Methodism is a *network base design* church which is connectional in nature.

2. The pilgrim joined a **trial band** of 4-6 people. This "speed bump" protected the faith community from the entrance of persons who were not ready for this level of commitment to holiness. The trial band tests the new member's commitment to live a changed life and supports them in the turmoil of reorganization for holiness. This protects the class meetings from the instability of "extra grace required" people and furthers smooth operations at the next level. There seems to be a pattern of turning inward (trial band, band, penitent band) during times in a believer's life that involve significant personal change; elements that interact with outsiders (class meeting, select society) would seem to be made up of people who are in a more stable phase of spiritual growth.

3. **Class meeting:** Wesley's primary goal was to change the behavior of individual people toward holiness; the class meeting was an expedient innovation that began as a tool to raise funds but soon became Wesley's tool for individual supervision in holiness.⁹ Unlike the cells of a modern cell church, class meetings did not select their own members, select their own leaders, develop apprentice leaders or multiply into two class meetings. Like Yoido Church, they were geographical in nature. While they were filled out of involvement in the society - class meetings did not allow visitors - one suspects that, like Yoido, it is the networking influence of neighbors that brings persons to the society. Class meetings included both sexes, all ages, married and single, and remained together indefinitely as small communities of faith. With the practice of the General Rules, the second rule ensured that the class meeting was involved in "doing good" within their neighborhoods and they remained in contact with lost people. All class meetings met weekly; they emerged in February, 1742.

4. **Band Society:** the bands reintroduced turmoil for those who wanted "more" by a searching weekly examination of behavior regarding holiness. Holiness was an acceptable goal for an Anglican small group and Wesley's writings reflect this single minded purpose. Moving away from the General Rules to the Band rules, however, seems to imply a focus only upon interior holiness. The stated goal of the bands is this: *THE design of our meeting is, to obey the command of God, "Confess your faults one*

⁹John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 8:252-255. There was a problem in Bristol with raising funds for the debt on the New Room. Captain Foy proposed that the Bristol society be subdivided and that each member give one penny. He asked to be assigned eleven of the poorest individuals whom he would visit each week; he would pay the penny for any unable to make a contribution. Each week class leaders met each person in their class, reviewed the behavior and spiritual condition of each individual, reported that condition to the stewards, and turned in an offering from each person. Eventually the decision was made for the class to meet as a group so that those who would seek to deceive the leader about their behavior could be immediately be confronted with the truth by their neighbors. The class meeting was never educational in purpose or focused on bible study, but always on the modification of behavior toward holiness. Roy Hattersley, *The Life of John Wesley: A Brand from the Burning* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 200-201.

to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” This is an interior focus upon personal holiness; it is hard to perceive a purpose of evangelism or community service within the rules of the Bands.¹⁰ In order to allow frank and full confession, the bands were organized into groups of people in common states: male and female, married and single, so that all attending would be in the same circumstances. The leader would also be of the same type. Bands were not geographically oriented and therefore provided a cross section of the society; bands, therefore, functionally created multiple network connections across the society between class meetings as single men gathered with single men, married men gathered with married men, single women gathered with single women and married women gathered with married women. Band meetings normally took place in the Society house as a central meeting place. In my terminology, bands are for spiritual teenagers; it surprises me that the spiritual energy of band members does not seem to be directed toward projects and community service. According to Albin, band members do not participate in weekly class meetings, but relationships in their home neighborhoods would continue. Wesley also had separate band meetings for girls and for boys as young as eight years old. All bands met weekly. Bands were the original disciple making structure and were in place by December, 1738.

5. Select Society/Band: The select society was made up of the leaders of the Society. It included class leaders, band leaders and others involved in ministries. All ages and genders meet together in a group that could range in size from 6-60. The select society normally met on days when the traveling preacher or “Mr. Wesley’s helper” was present; this might be once a month. There is no hierarchy in the select society; all are equal, even the Wesleys or the assigned preachers. Within the select society, some might also meet as select bands. The select society is the healthy core group of leaders for the Methodist Society.

If I understand Albin correctly, participation in the select society was open to all, but the intense commitment and honest confrontation within the select society would cause people to self-select their participation in various stages of the discipleship system. When a person is ready, there are no barriers for advancement.

6. Penitent band: Early Methodism was hard to enter and easy to exit. People who would not continue in holy behavior were removed by the simple practice of not issuing them a new ticket for the following quarter. The ticket was necessary to participate in the activities of the Society. A penitent band of 3-4 people led by a person who had previously gone through the penitent band provided an opportunity for a person to demonstrate stability in their faith and holiness prior to reentry to the Society.

AMERICAN DIFFERENCES¹¹

Methodist DNA evolved differently on the prairies of the United States, where the parish church *was* the Methodist church. Class membership was necessary for membership and receiving the

¹⁰The complete Rules of the Bands are printed below in the next section.

¹¹For a more complete treatment of how Methodist DNA abandoned the Wesleyan discipleship system on the American prairies and became the shrinking Methodism of today, see the section on Prairie DNA on pp. 16-28 of *Chapter One: Systemic Problems* on the Resources page at www.disciplewalk.com.

sacraments. Churches began as class meetings, shepherded between visits of the circuit rider by class leaders, many of whom were located preachers or licensed exhorters.¹² The terminology on the prairie is one of circuits made up of class meetings rather than Societies of the British type. There is no evidence of multiple classes being formed on the prairie in a single location as was normal in Wesley's urban societies.¹³ Class sizes increased to as many as seventy-three.¹⁴ There is no evidence that anything like the band system developed on the prairie; the band concept was strenuously pushed in the first *Book of Discipline* of 1785 but all references had disappeared from the *Discipline* by 1844.¹⁵ Class meetings and tickets were the major elements of Wesleyan Methodism found on the prairie.

Prairie class meetings became prairie churches, based on a single cell; this is a classic limitation to church growth as classes grew larger and became small churches.¹⁶ The role of the class meeting to enforce church discipline seemed to disappear in America by the mid 19th century.¹⁷ Both Watson and White note that the tone of writings on class meetings in the 19th century in America becomes increasingly apologetic and persuasive, concluding that the once natural popularity of the class meeting must be waning.¹⁸ Class meetings flourished in early days between visits of the circuit riders ranging from once a month to six months.¹⁹ As Methodists formed churches, the old timers in the class meeting

¹²One suspects the presence of exhorters and located preachers led to class meetings that were more like worship services between visits of the circuit rider than the careful lay supervision toward holiness found in Wesley's classes in England. Cf. Charles A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), 20-24. Ferguson indicates this erosion of small group process as coinciding with rise of the camp meeting in 1805 and 1840. Cf. Charles W. Ferguson, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: Methodists and the Making of America* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 149.

¹³Evers, *History of the Southern Illinois Conference*, 14. Melton recognizes the pattern of single classes becoming single churches but refers to "some societies with several classes" in the 1840s without identifying locations; these could have been in urban Chicago. The author has found no single specific citing of a downstate Illinois Methodist church with more than one class meeting and no record of the use of bands or select bands on the prairie. Cf. J. Gordon Melton, *Log Cabins to Steeples: the Complete Story of the United Methodist Way in Illinois Including All Constituent Elements of the United Methodist Church* (n.p.: The Commissions on Archives and History, Northern, Central and Southern Illinois Conferences, 1974), 109, 111.

¹⁴Charles Edward White, "The Rise And Decline Of The Class Meeting," *Methodist History* 40, no. 4 (July 2002), <http://myweb.arbor.edu/cwhite/cm.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2007), 7. Pagination is from the online resource.

¹⁵Ferguson, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 75.

¹⁶For information on single cell churches and church growth resistance, see Carl Dudley, *Making the Small Church Effective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 32-60.

¹⁷White, "Rise and Decline of the Class Meeting," 4n29. Cf. David Lowes Watson, *Class Leaders: Recovering A Tradition* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1991), 50-51.

¹⁸"Wesley's problem seems to be keeping the classes pure, while his successors' problem seems to be keeping the classes going." White, "Rise and Decline of the Class Meeting," 5. Cf. Watson, *Class Leaders*, 44.

¹⁹The 1872 Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church indicates a second purpose in the "design of the organization of classes" is to "establish and keep up a meeting for social and religious worship, for instruction, encouragement and admonition that shall be a profitable means of grace to our people. . ." This is a purpose far wider than Wesley's class meeting and probably reflects actual practice. Cf. Watson, *Class Leaders*, 48. Cf. Evers, *History of the*

experienced power struggles with the shift to resident clergy.²⁰ The non-denominational Sunday School movement also put pressure on the Methodist class system as early as 1830²¹ and is widely seen as displacing the class meeting after 1875.²² Participation in the class meeting as a requirement of membership was discontinued in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1872.²³

Prairie DNA was phenomenally successful in its time; from 1860-1920 the Methodist Episcopal Church grew from one million to well over four million members,²⁴ far outperforming Wesley's societies. This membership increase coincides with the end of the requirement that all Methodists participate in class meeting as a condition of membership.²⁵ This change marks the end of classic Methodist discipline within the church as a whole, although the class meeting continues to this day as an option.

HEALTHY LEADERSHIP CORE

Methodism is a community defined by a rule, and more specifically, rules. The General Rules shape behavior at the level of the class meeting, the band rules for the band society. Wesley's "helpers" or lay preachers also have their own rules. These rules defined not only participation in leadership but also spiritual health. The rules are listed below:

The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies

In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

Southern Illinois Conference, 14.

²⁰Watson, *Class Leaders*, 48-50, 152.

²¹Evers, *History of the Southern Illinois Conference*, 85, 88, 119, 121, 144. The growing emphasis on Sunday School diverts leaders and energy from class meetings. Cf. Watson, *Class Leaders*, 51-52. Watson, *Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 137, notes that references to the class meeting decline abruptly in British Methodist autobiographies in the 1830s. Yet White notes that there is some evidence of a 40% continued participation in the class meeting in 1900. Cf. White, "Rise and Decline of the Class Meeting," 5n35.

²²Watson, *Class Leaders*, 75.

²³White, "Rise and Decline of the Class Meeting," 6. The same change occurred in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1866 and in Britain in 1912. For an excellent description of the causes of the decline, cf. Watson, *Class Leaders*, 39-59.

²⁴Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., "Part Two: The Nineteenth Century", in John G. McEllhenney, ed., *United Methodism In America: A Compact History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 91.

²⁵Charles Edward White, "Rise and Decline of the Class Meeting," 6. The requirement was ended in the Methodist Episcopal South in 1866 and the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1872.

This was the rise of the United Society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty:

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order:

(1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.

2. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order:

(1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as: The taking of the name of God in vain. The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling. Drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity. Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves. Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling. The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty. The giving or taking things on usury—i.e., unlawful interest. Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers. Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us. Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as: The putting on of gold and costly apparel. The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus. The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God. Softness and needless self-indulgence. Laying up treasure upon earth. Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men: To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison. To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it." By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only. By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed. By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are: The public worship of God. The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded. The Supper of the Lord. Family and private prayer. Searching the Scriptures. Fasting or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened

hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

WESLEY'S RULES OF THE BAND

DRAWN UP DECEMBER 25, 1738.

THE design of our meeting is, to obey the command of God, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

To this end, we intend, —

1. To meet once a week, at the least.
2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
4. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt, since our last meeting.
5. To end every meeting with prayer suited to the state of each person present.
6. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.

Some of the questions proposed to every one before he is admitted among us may be to this effect: —

1. Have you the forgiveness of your sins?
2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God?
4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?
5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?
6. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
7. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?
8. Do you desire that, in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
9. Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

Any of the preceding questions may be asked as often as occasion offers; the four following at every meeting: —

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?

WESLEY'S TWELVE RULES OF A HELPER

1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away time, nor spend more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
2. Be serious. Let your motto be, "Holiness to the Lord." Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.
3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, particularly with young women.
4. Take no step towards marriage without solemn prayer to God, and consulting with your Brethren.
5. Believe evil of no one unless fully proved; take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction you can on everything. You know the Judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.
6. Speak evil of no one; else your word, especially, would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast till you come to the person concerned.
7. Tell every one what you think wrong in him, lovingly and plainly; and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your own heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.
8. Do not affect the gentleman. A Preacher of the Gospel is the servant of all.

9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; no, not of cleaning your own shoes, when necessary.
10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our Rules, but keep them; and that for conscience's sake.
11. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want²⁶ you most.
12. Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a Son of the Gospel, and in union with your Brethren.

As such, is your part to employ your time as our Rules direct: partly in preaching, and visiting from house to house; partly in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful that you should do that part of the work which the Conference shall advise, at those times and places which they shall judge most for His glory.

Observe: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care merely of this or that Society, but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance; and, with all your power, to build them up in that holiness, without which they cannot see the Lord.

And remember, a Methodist Preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist Discipline. Therefore you will need all the grace and all the sense you have; and to have all your wits about you.

Wesley's rules that define his healthy core group of leadership are very specific and clear. Many have sought to improve them by making them less specific, more vague and therefore less effective. Changes may need to be made, but the rules are effective because they are clear. People rise up to meet their challenges, and Wesley did not hesitate to make the challenge intimidating.

²⁶Need.