What does it mean to be a Wesleyan Christian?

**Introduction**

If we are to remain true to our identity and theology we need to understand what makes Methodists different from the other denominations.

It is also worth mentioning that Methodist teaching is generally located within the larger teaching of the Protestants and greatly shaped by the Anglican emphasis.

Having said that, all good Methodists would know that Methodism was greatly influenced and shaped by the Wesley’s with John having a more prominent role.

So being Wesleyan Christians or Methodists simply means that we have something from the life and teaching of Wesley to offer to the world.

**The Wesleyan Missionary Imperatives**

**The Warmed Heart As A Mission Imperative**

“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while the leader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death” (from The Journal of John Wesley, May 24, 1738).

**Wesley’s Mind As A Missionary Imperative**

During the confusion about faith and reason Wesley made his stance very clear and believed that reason is logical, a God given faculty to enable us to search scriptures and make moral judgement as we seek true religion.

**Wesley’s Hands As A Missionary Imperative**

Wesley used theological ethics as opposed to normative ethics; he believed that faith governs behaviour rather than rules and regulations.

Wesley was personally attached to the poor; which means that he had relationships that benefited the poor.

**Wesley’s Economic Ethic**

In the life of faith the stakes are always high it is either losing your soul or gaining the kingdom of God.

“wealth has the tendency not only to destroy humility and patience, but also to produce vices”

“the love of money, we know, is the root of all evil; but not the thing itself”

**Three Rules about Wealth**

Earn as much as you can

Save as much as you can

Give as much as you can

To summarise Wesley’s economic teaching we can therefore conclude that for Mr. Wesley our usage of wealth and attitude towards wealth is an expression of our relationship with (God) and our understanding of God.
**METHODIST DOCTRINE**

**DEFINITION OF DOCTRINE**

Doctrine is:
- What is held as true
- What is accepted/believed and taught
- Principles believed and taught

**INTRODUCTION**

History (how was Methodism started)
The founders of Methodism were the Wesley brothers John and Charles.

John Wesley was born on 17 June 1703 and died on 02 March 1791. Both Anglican priests educated at Oxford University. While at university, they met as a small group to study the Bible, pray, help the poor and visit prisoners. They held themselves accountable to each other and to God and practiced discipline.

**THE NAME**

Other students gave them names to tease and ridicule them. They were called:
- Biblemoths
- The Holy Club
- The Methodists
- Enthusiasts

“The Methodists” became the honoured name of the movement they led.

**Conversion**

The event celebrated as the foundation of Methodism is John Wesley’s conversion i.e. 24th May 1738. (Aldersgate)

“I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation. I felt that Jesus died for my sins and I have been pardoned and saved from the law of sin and death.”

It is this experience that changed John into an inspired leader of the Evangelical Revival.

**What the Methodist church is for?**

Wesley’s words:

“Methodism was raised up by God to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land.”

“Holiness” understood as two-fold process i.e. inner holiness—devotion to Jesus and openness to the influence of the Holy Spirit and outer holiness—love for all God’s creatures i.e. working for social, economic and political justice.

**What Methodists believe**

Doctrines shared with all other Christians:
- God, the Father, Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth
- Jesus the Son of God, who revealed the love of God—who died on our behalf, resurrected, and ascended into heaven.
- The Holy Spirit—God at work within and with believers (the church).

**Specific Methodist Doctrine**

**All people need to be saved**

Sin infected all humanity. All human beings are born with a tendency to rebel against God’s will. (Original Sin)

All people therefore, need to be forgiven, healed and restored to fellowship with God and each other. (Salvation a need for all)

**All people can be saved**

Human beings are all equally the objects of God’s love.

No one is beyond the reach of God’s saving grace through Jesus Christ.

By faith all people can access salvation which is a gift of God through Christ who justifies humanity.

(Proverbs 18:32, 2Peter 3:9 & Eph 2:8-9)

(Salvation by Faith)

**All people can know they are saved**

At opening our hearts to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit confers within us that we are God’s children.

The Holy Spirit gives one the feeling of being at peace with God—(sins forgiven and reconciled with God)

This knowledge, Assurance happens at Conversion/New Birth which can be an instant event or a gradual process. (Rom 8:16)