**A Methodist Way of Life service outlines**

**Before using this service outline,
read the notes on** [**how to use the sessions**](https://www.methodist.org.uk/mwoloutlines)**.**

**Evangelism**

There are three different approaches to evangelism in a Methodist Way of Life: ‘Tell’ is about what we say (conversation with others), ‘Share’ is about what we do (our loving actions with individuals and communities) and ‘Live’ is about being the image of God (naturally radiating God’s love, to draw people to Jesus).

**Live**

**“We live in a way that draws people to Jesus”**

**Key themes**

* We are formed by the people and culture around us. But we are all also made in God's image, so let that shine out (Ephesians 5:1-2).
* You have great power to influence and affect other people by the way you live your life.
* Live authentically as a whole self; the self who God made you to be. In this way we worship God in our day-to-day lives at work, at home, and out and about.
* Living A Methodist Way of Life roots us in God and opens us to allows the love of God to shine out of us.
* That’s not to say that any of us are perfect. But there is something luminously attractive about people open to God making us more holy and loving each day.

**Relevant Bible passages**

Matthew 5:14-16; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5

**Background reflection**

We are called to live as people of light, reflecting something of the light of Christ wherever we are. So, you are to “let your light shine before others” (Matthew 5:16). The word ‘let’ here is important. It means more than ‘allow’, it’s closer in meaning to ‘ensure’. This is why “no one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand: and it gives light to all in the house” (Matthew 5:15). This light shows others something of God – in the same way that we can see something of God in others.

While we often talk of how our actions can draw people to Jesus (Matthew 5:16 says “they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven”), we are perhaps less likely to speak of how we live – who we are, our ‘being’ – might do the same. Perhaps this is because it seems like a heavy burden, and an impossible task. Lots of us feel we’re inadequate Christians. We’re inclined to think to ourselves “What could I possibly do that would draw anyone to Jesus?” We feel we must be perfect – to never lie, to stop swearing, to give up smoking, etc. The activities may change over decades (there are some in Ephesians 5 we may agree with, and some that might trouble us), and some feel bigger than others, but ultimately it all points to a suggestion that we must be ‘more holy’ than we are. This can feel like a constant requirement to ‘do better’ or ‘try harder’.

But Jesus does not ask us to be perfect, only to be a Christlike reflection, authentic to who God has made us to be in God’s image. Like the disciples, we try to imitate Jesus, but in the full knowledge that we will fall short. The Bible is full of flawed characters who were, nonetheless, used by God. King David in the Old Testament and the Apostle Peter in the New Testament are prime examples. What they have in common is that they tend to try to hold on to God even after they’ve failed spectacularly. You cannot derail God’s plans!

We are made in God’s image, each unique and precious, and called to be “beloved children, and live in love” (Ephesians 1). What that means will be different for each one of us, and will also be affected by the cultures and communities we are part of. Let your relationship with God shine out by living authentically as a whole self; the self who God made you to be. In this way we worship God in our day-to-day lives at work, at home, and [out and about](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EN2IcU9Wzt4).

The pursuit of holiness – for this is what it means to seek to live in a way that draws others to Jesus, that is, to live like the people of God, reflecting something of God’s goodness and glory in the world – is not reserved for super-spiritual or Advanced Level Christians. Such sanctification is the work of God, not something that we have to make happen ourselves through hard work or strength of will. It’s essential Christianity for all of us, and will reflect the authentic, diverse nature of the Christian family.

**Further notes**

* When we think about this commitment, we are reminded to open our eyes to noticing God in the lives of others too. Grace is not only at work in the lives of Christians – this is a particularly Methodist understanding of grace, that is preveniently working in people’s lives who don’t know God.
* It’s called A Methodist Way of Life, and this should be a clue. We’ll spend our lives working out how to be good Methodist Christians. Don’t expect to find a shortcut to spiritual growth. There aren’t any.
* Some Christians will talk about being “salt and light” or “God’s ambassadors”. Matthew 5:13-16 is quoted by many Christians to refer to how we reflect God in the world. It is worth noting that Jesus does not here refer to good works (see the session on the “Share” commitment) but that “You” are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world”. This passage follows the Beatitudes, in which Jesus speaks of people’s heart-postures rather than their deeds (though these naturally follow). We are the “city built on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14); not just our activity but our very nature produces light that can be seen in every direction.

**Song and hymn suggestions**

Don’t stop believing – Journey

A new commandment (*StF* 242)
Be the light in my darkness (*StF+)*
Christ be in my waking (*MP* 1264)
Come with me, come wander (*StF* 462)
Have you heard God’s voice (*StF* 662)
Jesus, all for Jesus (*StF* 555)
Sacred the body God has created (*StF* 618)
Take my life and let it be (*StF* 566)

**Creative activity suggestions**

* Create an ‘integrity hall of fame’ with images of people from the Bible. Share a few key facts about each person (both how they faithfully served God and the things they got wrong). Ask the group to vote who has the most integrity – who is most

authentically imitating God? Some good options are David, Ruth, Paul, Hannah and Mary mother of Jesus.

* Make a pin board with key attributes to living authentically as those created in God’s
image (the fruit of the Spirit is a good starting point). Invite everyone to write each other’s names by the attributes people embody to celebrate and honour each other. In another colour, ask people to write their own name by an attribute that they would like to develop.

**Discussion questions**

* How have you become more authentically you recently?
* **If you wrote a book about yourself, what would be the key message? What would you call it?**
* In what ways do you sometimes hide behind your own imperfections as an excuse not to be involved in bringing others to faith?
* Which flawed character from the Bible most appeals to you as a story of God using someone for God’s mission?
* In what ways do other people you know “let their light shine before others”?
* The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) is a beautiful illustration of how God works within us. Which is you – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control? Which do you struggle with?

**Prayer ideas**

Ask God to give you peaceliving in relationship with God. Thank God for grace for when you fall short. Ask for courage and commitment in areas you would like to grow in.

*Explore creative ways to pray with all ages, using the Methodist prayer cards, available as*[*a printed pack*](https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/EGIPC22/intergenerational-prayer-cards)*for meetings and events,*[*a PowerPoint*](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28465/intergenerationalprayercards-smaller.pptx)*for church services and meetings or*[*as a PDF*](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28466/digital-prayer-cards-131222.pdf)*for digital use.*

**Ways to respond**

* Explore [methodist.org.uk/Live](http://methodist.org.uk/live) and [resources for evangelism](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/practise-evangelism/equipped-for-evangelism/everyone-an-evangelist/), including [Everyone an Evangelist](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/practise-evangelism/equipped-for-evangelism/everyone-an-evangelist/)
* Tell someone what you love about them.
* Use a personality tool like the [Johari Window](https://kevan.org/johari), [Enneagram](https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/type-descriptions), [Clifton Strengths](https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252137/home.aspx), or [Myers Briggs](https://www.16personalities.com/) to learn more about your personality and gifts. Many of these are particularly insightful when utilised in groups.
* Ask a friend which of the fruits of the Spirit they see in you, and share which you see in them.