



## A METHODIST WAY OF LIFE

***How to live in a way God wants?*** This is a key question for the church and each Christian.

The Bible offers many pictures of living in the pattern of God's holiness, from the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20, through the triptych of Micah 6.8 and the challenge of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), to the lifestyle rules of the New Testament letters (e.g. Romans 12; Ephesians 5-6; and I Peter 2-3). These pictures help us imagine what living out our faith means in everyday life but we need to attend to our own context to work out the details for today.

***A Methodist Way of Life*** (MWoL) is a rule of life, similar to the rules of older monastic communities, and to dispersed communities such those of Northumbria and Iona. It is also draws from the rules of John Wesley's societies which formed the foundation of Methodism. It is intended to support individuals and communities in nurturing holy habits. In this session, we explore how a ***Methodist Way of Life*** may contribute to our worship and the worship we lead.

This session, written by Revd Dr Roger Walton, is designed to last about an hour based on the indicative timings below. It can be used in a Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Meeting or as part of a study day. The aim is that everyone should leave inspired to explore a ***Methodist Way of Life*** further in their own life and in their worship or preaching.

### Outline

1. **Setting the Scene:** explores Christian qualities and practices (10 mins).
2. **Exploring Possibilities:** provides four options for exploring a MWoL in and through worship (15-20 mins per option plus 10 mins in plenary).
3. **Feeding back:** gives space in the session for conversation and interaction, in pairs or groups (15 mins).
4. **Closing worship:** finishes with a Bible reading, a quote, a questions for reflection and a prayer (5 mins).

## 1. SETTING THE SCENE

Use one of the two alternatives suggested below:

### Alternative 1: Christians we admire

Ask people to think of a Christian they admire and list the qualities in that person that show their Christian faith. Share in pairs or small groups, collect a selection of thoughts.

Use a flip chart or white board (or shared screen on zoom) to make a list. It might include items like these:

- Kindness



Flipchart or  
whiteboard  
& pens

- Integrity
- Generosity
- Faithful witness
- Compassionate
- Always respects others

### Alternative 2: The Sermon on the Mount

Ask the group: from memory, to list four actions or attitudes that Jesus asks of his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew. 5-7)

Discuss in pairs or small groups, collect a selection of thoughts.

Ideas might include:

- Putting things right with a neighbour (5.23)
- Not lusting in your heart or mind (5.28)
- Turning the other cheek (5.39)
- Loving your enemies (5.44)
- Giving alms and praying out of sight (6.2ff)
- Not storing up treasure on earth (6.19)
- Not judging (7.1)

People might also point to features of the beatitudes such as being peacemakers; hungering and thirsting for right to prevail; or being meek.

Whichever activity you used, discuss together:

***Can these qualities be learned and if so, how are they learned?***

## 2. EXPLORING CHRISTIAN LIVING AND WORSHIP

Read together the **Methodist Way of Life** commitments<sup>1</sup>. (If on Zoom or equivalent, people can mute themselves and follow as one person reads the words).

Then tackle one or more of the following four activities as time permits:

### Activity 1: Matching

In small groups of two or three members, ask people to look at one of the four sections (Worship, Learning & Caring etc.), which correspond to the four areas of **Our Calling**. If you have enough people, make sure all the areas are covered.

---

<sup>1</sup> These are on the MWoL Commitment Card, or can be found at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/>.

The task is to identify a Bible passage or verses and one hymn that corresponds to the each of the three commitments in their area.

Share these when you come together again and arrange for them to be collated and distributed after the meeting.

**Note to facilitator:**

This would be good place to point out the preaching series material for MWoL, entitled ***Proclaiming the Way*** and available at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/other-resources-for-a-methodist-way-of-life/>. Ask whether anyone has looked at and/or used the material and how they found it or adapted it.

**Activity 2: Interview**

If you have a deacon in your circuit, or someone who is a member of a community such as Iona or Northumbria, invite the person to share about their experience of living by a rule of life.

Ask them to tell how they came to be a community member, what they have most valued and in what ways, if any, this has influenced and enriched their leading of worship and/or preaching.

If appropriate and time allows, the conversation could continue through question and answer.

**Activity 3: Bible exploration**

This activity may be particularly useful, if you have used Alternative A in Setting the Scene.

In groups, examine one of the following passages. Each offers a picture of how to live and play your part in the purposes of God, as a follower of Jesus Christ. These writings come from the first century context. Some of the directives we would not want to promote now, others may need rephrasing, and some we might want to keep as a guide to good Christian living.

- Colossians 3.12-4.6
- Romans 12.9-21
- I Peter 2.11-25

Discuss into which area of ***Our Calling*** you would put each directive. What would you add as a way of living in today's world as a Christian? How should a preacher approach preaching on the passage?

Share in plenary.



Invite interviewee



Bibles, paper & pens

**Activity 4: MWoL in worship**

In groups of four or five, use the MWoL Card (commitments and questions) and discuss how these might be translated into worship. How, for example, could they be used as a basis for:

- Prayers of confession
- Litanies for response or sending out
- Prayers of Intercessions
- Blessings

Can you think of other ways MWoL might be used in worship?

Share thoughts and ideas together.



Paper & pens

**3. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?**

Ask people to reflect in pairs or small groups on two questions from the list below (or others appropriate to your situation):

- Which exercise did you find most interesting during this session, and how could you use it when you lead worship?
- What challenges you most about MWoL and using it in worship?
- How could MWoL be used in worship at the churches where you belong?

After five minutes of group conversation, invite an idea from each pair or group – keeping it brief!

Record ideas on the flipchart or whiteboard, inviting people to take pictures at the end as a reminder of the discussion



Flipchart or whiteboard & pens

**4. CLOSING WORSHIP**

Read the following passage and quotation:

**James 3.13-16 (The Message version)**

Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here's what you do: live well, live wisely, live humbly. It's the way you live, not the way you talk that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn't wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn't wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourself sound wise isn't wisdom. It is the furthest thing from wisdom - its animal cunning, devilish conniving. Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at each other's throats.

Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterised by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot wonder day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results *only* if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and, honour.

**Quote from *Holiness* by Bishop J C Ryle:**

*Our lives will always be either doing good or harm to those who see them. They are a silent sermon which all can read ... far more is done for Christ's kingdom by the holy living of believers than we are aware of.*

**Question for a short time of quiet for reflection:**

What is our role as preachers and worship leaders in helping people live a healthy, holy lifestyle?

**Prayer**

Breathe on me, breath of God;  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldst do.  
Amen.