

## Our Wesleyan Theology

### To the Leader:

This week's lesson is on *Our Wesleyan Theology*. This lesson will explore the influence of John Wesley on our beliefs.

The foundation and distinctiveness of the Church of the Nazarene is our belief in holiness, being set free (Romans 8:2) through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22) from the powers that separate us from God (Colossians 2:15). This transforming grace enables believers to live free from the bondage of sin, transforming the sinner through new birth in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit, then, takes up residence in the Christian and effects transformation, purifying the believer of all that is contrary to the nature of God. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18a, *NIV*).

You may read this and wonder how realistic is this new life in Christ, recognizing in others or even yourself the pull of old sinful habits. Does life in Christ really offer a better life, a life more reflective of God Himself? The New Testament answers it this way: "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4). "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20). [All from *NIV*]

The wonderful life God offers to all who accept Him as Lord and Savior is a life that is lived not in our own flesh, but through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-8). Have you tapped into this glorious way of living? If not, God desires to fill you with His presence, His Holy Spirit.

### Objective:

To help children see how being Wesleyan shapes how we view scriptures and how that enables and empowers us to live lives of holiness as well as sharing the message of holiness.

### Materials Needed:

25 Dixie Cups per team  
Permanent marker  
Printed memory verse

### Scripture and Memory Verse: Romans 1:16 (*NIV*)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."

### Bible Story with Discussion: The Story of Zaccheus, Luke 19:1-10

### Early Arrival Activity: "Memory Verse Dixie Cup Game"

Have several sets of Dixie cups. Write one or two words of the memory verse on each cup. Have students "unscramble" the verse and put the verse in order. The first person (or team) who gets all their cups in the

correct order wins. Since they may not have this verse memorized, have a written copy posted so they can read it and line their cups up. This is easy to add students to the groups as they come in.

**Say:** John Wesley was a man who lived many years ago. John’s parents had 19 children. His parents had a strong influence on him and his brothers and sisters. John’s dad was a priest. John’s mom taught the children many things that helped them know how to act and how to treat others.

John was a wise man, and his beliefs and Bible knowledge helped form the foundation for the beliefs of the Church of the Nazarene.

We are called “Wesleyan” after John Wesley. He believed the Bible says that God could change us and we don’t have to stay stuck in our sinful ways. We can live in a way that pleases God. That way is called “holiness.”

### **Bible Story Introduction activity:**

Play a game of freeze tag. Explain that if tagged, you are frozen and cannot move until you are tagged again. Play game for 3 – 4 minutes.

**Ask:** What happened when you were frozen? (*You are stuck there. You couldn’t move*). Would you want to be frozen for very long? (*Wait for students to reply.*) Why not? (*Accept all answers*)

**Say:** If you had to stay there for long, it would begin to affect other things, wouldn’t it? How would you get your snack? How would you do your homework? How would you get home? If you were stuck for a long time, it would change you and the way that you do things. (*Give students a time to reply with other ways it would affect them. Transition to the Bible story.*)

**Say:** This is kind of like Zacchaeus. He had been “stuck” in sin for a while. He had done things that were wrong. He had not treated people fairly. Let’s see what else we can find out about Zacchaeus.

**Luke 19:1-10 (NIV):** <sup>1</sup>Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup>A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. <sup>3</sup>He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. <sup>4</sup>So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

<sup>5</sup>When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” <sup>6</sup>So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

<sup>7</sup>All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

<sup>8</sup>But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

**Ask:** What did we learn about Zacchaeus? (*He was a chief tax collector, he was wealthy, he wanted to see Jesus, he was short and could not see over the crowd, he climbed a tree to see Jesus.*) What do we learn about Jesus? (*He was traveling through Jericho. He told Zacchaeus that he must stay at his house. He told Zacchaeus that “today salvation has come to this house.” He said that “the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*) What did the people say about this? (*That Jesus was going to the house of a sinner.*) After Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus what did he say he would do? (*Give half of his possessions to the poor; and if he had cheated anyone, he would pay them back four times the amount.*)

**Say:** Zacchaeus was changed after his interaction with Jesus. He was transformed.

**Ask:** Has anyone heard of transformer toys? What do they do? (*Change from one thing to another.*)

**Ask:** So what do you think transformation means? (*A complete or major change.*)

**Say:** This is what happened to Zacchaeus. He changed from someone who was a sinner, and wanted to live for himself into someone who wanted to do the right thing.

We believe that God out of His grace-filled love for us transforms our self-centered, heart into a pure, love for others centered heart. After our heart is changed we continue to grow in our understanding of how God wants us to live. Our motives are continually growing more like Christ and that shows in how we live with and for others. We call that holiness or holy living. Nazarenes believe that God's spirit can live in us and helps us to not sin and to live a holy life instead.

The Bible tells us that we are all sinners. Just like Zacchaeus we need to be changed. We need to have that transformation that happens when we enter into a relationship with Jesus.

Once we have a relationship with Jesus we want to share Him with others. Remember our memory verse? *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile”* (Romans 1:16).

**Ask:** What does it mean to be ashamed of something? *Not like something, to be embarrassed by something or not want to talk about it, to hide it*

**Say:** This verse helps us remember that we are NOT ashamed of the gospel because we know it is the power of God that brings salvation. We are happy to have God and His Word lead us to salvation. The Holy Spirit in us transforms us from people who loved sin to one who loves God. We are changed.

You will continue to grow. Your feet might get bigger, you will probably grow taller, and your hair will get longer. You will grow. God wants us also to grow in our relationship with Him. He wants us to learn more about Him and to love Him more and more each day. He wants to help us. We don't have to grow on our own.

We are going to hear from someone who once did not know God or have a relationship with Him, but who now does. This person has been transformed from a life stuck in sin, to a life free with God.

*(Have an adult come in and share their testimony about how being a Christian and Wesleyan has transformed them: focusing on salvation, sharing the gospel, and living a life of holiness.)*

### **Scripture Memory Verse Review: Romans 1:16 (NIV)**

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”

If time allows, play the Dixie cup game again.

**Prayer:** Pray that God would transform the students, taking them from a life where they were stuck in sin to a life of freedom and holiness.