

OUR WESLEYAN HOLINESS HERITAGE

To the Leader:

Week two will include a brief overview of the history of our denomination, the influence of John Wesley, and what it means to live a holy life.

Objective: To understand the influence of the life of John Wesley on the Church of the Nazarene.

Material Needed:

- cups for stacking
- balls or scarves for juggling
- small magic boards (1 or every 2 kids)
- magic board markers
- paper towels or erasers
- at least 3 empty glasses/jars
- water
- food coloring
- paper towels

Early Arrival Activity:

Have several different things for kids to do that might be challenging at first: saying tongue twisters, cup stacking, juggling, etc.

After the activity time is over, **ask** these questions:

Which one of the games was the most challenging for you? Why?

What is the most challenging thing that you've done so far in your life?

How did you feel after you completed that challenge?

Say: If you haven't had many challenges so far in your life, you will! Challenges are part of life. Even Jesus had to face challenges. Let's read in the Bible about one of those challenges.

Bible Story with Discussion: Matt 22:34-40, NIV

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Ask: Why do you think the church leaders were testing Jesus? (*They knew the crowds were listening to him.*)

Why did Jesus say to love the Lord with your heart AND mind AND soul? (*He wants us to love him completely.*)

What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? (*To watch out for others and make their needs a priority.*)

Say: Our church began with this same idea: that we should love the Lord completely, and that we should watch out for others who have needs.

I want to tell you the story of one of the men who was very important at the beginning of our church. He had an interesting life. His name was John Wesley. He had seven brothers and sisters.

When John Wesley was 5 years old, he awoke one night and realized that his house was on fire. He saw that the fire was at the doorway to the room where he was sleeping, and he was very afraid. He ran to the window and looked at the street below to see his parents and many other people scrambling around. His parents were very afraid because they had been able to find all of the children except John.

He began to bang on the window and was able to get their attention. He tried to open the window, but it wouldn't budge. The window to his room was too high to reach from the ground, so a man climbed on the shoulders of another man, and then a 3rd man climbed up on top of the 2nd man. They made a human ladder and rescued John.

John's family lost their house and all of their belongings, but they were so thankful that no one was hurt. John's mother believed that John was saved from the fire for a special reason.

As John grew, he started school at home. His parents made sure that he learned Bible verses and Bible stories as well as lessons in English, history, geography and math.

One day John was talking to his mom about living a Christian life. It was hard for him to live like he should, just as it is hard for us sometimes. He told his mom, "I try to be a good Christian, Mother, but it's so hard!"

His mom said, "Keep working at it John. Pray, read the scriptures and keep yourself from sin. Then you will grow closer to God. You must be disciplined in all you do."

That sounds like great advice for us today too!

When he was 17, John went to Oxford University in England. He was a serious student, but he also liked playing tennis, dancing, reading, and attending plays.

After he graduated from Oxford, John got a job as a professor there and began teaching classes. It wasn't long until his younger brother, Charles, became a student at Oxford. Charles told John about a new club that he had started.

Charles' club was causing quite a stir on campus. At his club meetings they would talk about God and ways to follow Him better. They studied the Bible, prayed, fasted, and gave whatever money they could to poor people.

John began to attend the meetings and really liked this club. He eventually became the leader. After a few years of this, John felt like God wanted him to take His message to a new country. John was 32 at this time, and he decided to go to the United States to tell people there about God.

One night while he was traveling to America on a boat, there was a huge storm at sea. All of a sudden a big surge of water nearly caused the ship to sink. John screamed out in fear. When things calmed down a bit, he was able to hear the faint sounds of someone singing. He realized it was a group of people, the Moravians, below deck, singing a peaceful song.

John wondered how could they face death with singing while he was afraid he would die? After the storm passed, he found these Moravian shipmates and asked them some questions. He was shocked to realize

that even the children were not afraid to die. Was their faith stronger than his? All the years that he had been so disciplined and studied so hard had not prepared him for death. So he began a new search, a search for a faith that did not fear death.

In America, John began to minister to people in the colony of Georgia, but that didn't last very long. People were very unkind to him and his brother Charles. He really got discouraged and thought this adventure was a failure.

John returned to England and continued his search for meaning. He tried to follow God, but something was still missing. Then one night he went to a meeting on Aldersgate Street. The preacher said that God works in the heart through faith in Christ. When he heard these words, John felt his heart "strangely warmed." He realized that he really did not trust in Christ alone for salvation. This was all he needed for a faith that did not fear death. He finally found peace and knew that his salvation was assured.

The club that Charles and John started in England began to spread all across the country. As the leader, John traveled all around England on horseback to preach to as many people as possible. It became known as "circuit riding." He rode the same circuit over and over, bringing the gospel to those who had no church nearby. John eventually trained other circuit riding preachers and sent them to America.

By the time he died at age 87, he had traveled more than 250,000 miles and preached more than 42,000 sermons.

(Adapted from John Wesley, *Father of Methodism*. www.christianity.com)

Review Questions:

Say: John's family watched in fear as their home burned to the ground, yet they praised God that John was rescued. Have you ever had something bad happen in your life, yet you were still able to praise God? (*The teacher should be able to tell a story of his/her own, or someone in their church.*)

What did John do to get to know God better? What things do you do to help you know God better?

Memory Verse and Review:

Supplies: small dry erase boards or chalk boards (1 for every 2 kids), dry erase markers or chalk, paper towels or erasers.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Write the Bible verse on the boards. Have kids form pairs and take turns reading the verse from the boards. After each reading, a word is erased. Have kids do this until all the words are erased.

Activity/Science: Walking Water Science Experiment. (Find this experiment at coffeecupsandcrayons.com)

Supplies: 3 empty glasses/jars of the same size, water, food coloring, paper towels

Choose two colors of food coloring you want to mix. Fill two of the jars with water and add one color of food coloring to each. Place your three jars side-by-side, with your empty jar in the middle.

Cut a paper towel in half and fold each half into quarters lengthwise. Stick one end of one of the paper towels into each of the jars with colored water, and the other ends into the empty middle jar.

Thanks to the capillary action, the water moves or “walks” up each paper towel into the empty jar. The middle jar fills up with water until the water levels of all the jars are equal.

When you start with primary colored water in the jars it also turns into a cool coloring mixing lesson.

You will want to try this until you get it right because it is just that cool when it works!

After the experiment is complete, ask:

What was the most surprising thing to you about this activity?

How is the color-walking experiment like what happened with John Wesley’s Bible club?

What should we be doing with the gospel story that we know?

How are some ways we can do that in our neighborhood?

Say: Just like the colors spread to the different glasses, that’s what happened when John Wesley kept on telling others about Jesus. He searched for truth in his own life and wasn’t satisfied until he found it. When he did, he shared it with others; and the good news about God’s love spread.

John Wesley is important to our church because he preached and lived the two commandments we read about today in our scripture. He loved the Lord completely, and he made sure that he helped others who needed help.

Personal Challenge or Take away and Prayer: Jesus himself tells us in scripture how we should live our lives and tell others about Jesus. Aren’t we thankful that we are part of a church that follows the commands of Jesus. You can be sure that the Nazarene church was founded on scripture, the words of Jesus, and even today, we strive to keep the two greatest commandments part of everything that we do.

As we close, let’s spend some time praying. Is there one or the other of these commandments that you aren’t doing so well with? Maybe you’re having trouble with the first one: loving God completely. Or maybe you’re having trouble loving others as you love yourself.

Let’s bow our heads and ask God to help us with making sure these commandments are part of our lives every day.