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# Methodists

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## Origins

Methodism arose out of Anglicanism in the eighteenth century. It began with John Wesley, a Church of England minister. While in Oxford he met with others for Bible study, worship and to do charitable acts. Their methodical approach to religion led to them being called Methodists, a term which was used by Wesley himself. Wesley would preach to large crowds outdoors. His followers formed local societies and met from week to week, although Wesley encouraged them still to attend their local church as well. He wished his followers to remain within the Church of England. However, he received much opposition from within the Church. Whilst attending a meeting of Moravians in Aldersgate, London, in 1738, Wesley had a profound religious experience. He later wrote of feeling “strangely warmed” and of feeling a trust in Christ and assurance of being saved from sin and death. This experience was a catalyst to his preaching. In 1784 Wesley set up an organisation called the *Yearly Conference of the People called Methodists*. This was designed to ensure that Methodism continued after his death. By 1795, Methodists gained the legal right to conduct marriages and perform sacraments.

In the nineteenth century a group broke away from the main group, becoming known as the Primitive Methodists. In 1932 the various groups united as one Methodist Church.

## Today

In Britain the Methodists have sought to be reunited with the Church of England. The General Synod rejected these overtures in 1972, but in 2003 a Covenant was signed between the two churches which spoke of working towards full unity. According to its website, [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk), current priorities include, amongst others: supporting justice, especially for the poor and deprived; increasing confidence in evangelism; and developing a people-centred and flexible culture within the church.

## What the mainstream says

- The Methodist Church is part of the Whole Church, which is the body of Christ.
- God is a triune consisting of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus died on the cross and paid the price for sins.
- Jesus was buried in a tomb but rose from the dead.
- There is nothing a person can do to buy their way into heaven.
- When Jesus ascended, God sent the Holy Spirit to guide believers, now as well as then.
- The Bible is the divine revelation of God.
- All need to be saved.
- All can be saved by grace through faith.
- All can know that they are saved.
- All can be saved to the uttermost.

(Source: <http://www.royston-methodist.org.uk>)

## Suggested initial Scriptural approach

It is important to establish from the outset the nature of faith, that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17), and that the only true faith is the “one faith” (Eph. 4:5). The Bible as a sufficient guide and the work of the angels as help should be expounded, showing at the same time that the Holy Spirit does not itself directly provide guidance and help. It is also important to define salvation clearly, showing how it relates to the gift of immortality after the judgement.