



BASICS OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION and DISCIPLESHIP

1. What is a Christian?

A Christian is a person who believes that the living God is revealed in and through Jesus Christ, who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who lives in obedient communion with God through the power of the Holy Spirit, and who takes his or her place in the community of Christ's church.

Acts 11:26
John 14:8-11

John 1:1-5, 14-18
Hebrews 1:1-3

2. Who is Jesus Christ?

The word *Christ* comes from the Greek word that means "*anointed*" and is comparable to the Hebrew word Messiah. Jesus is the Christ because in Christ "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," and through Christ "God of God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things" (Colossians 1:19-20). The people of God in the Old Testament looked forward to a promised Messiah who would establish the reign of justice, love, and peace for the whole world. Jesus is that Messiah.

Acts 3:13-19
Acts 4:11-12
John 1:1-5, 14-18

Acts 10:36--43
Colossians 1:15-20
John 14:8-11

3. What is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit proceeds from and is one in being with God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The Spirit leads human beings through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the church. The Spirit comforts, sustains, and empowers believers and guides them in their pursuit of truth.

John 3:1-10
John 4:1-30
John 14:-29
John 15:26-27
John 16:12-15

Romans 8:1-17
Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-13, 32-39
1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:13
1 Thessalonians 5:19
John 20:19-23

4. What is the Invitation to Christian Discipleship?

All people are invited by God to repent, to trust and follow Jesus Christ, to learn from his words and deeds, and to share in his mission, through the power of the Holy Spirit and in company with other Christians.

Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-15
John 20:21-22
Acts 1:8

5. What is the mission of Jesus Christ?

To proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, to call people to “see” the kingdom, to repent, to “enter” the kingdom, and to live obediently in the kingdom.

Mark 1:14-15
John 3:1-21

6. What is the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God is God’s active and sovereign reign over all creation, over all that God has made. It is a new order of things where antagonisms between peoples, nations, sexes, races, and generations are overcome and a new environment of justice, love, freedom, and peace prevails. Only those persons who turn from their sin and accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord can fully see and enter the kingdom of God. In the end, God’s reign will be fully acknowledged by all when God judges the whole human race through Christ.

I Corinthians 15:24-18
Mark 1:14-15
Philippians 2:5-11

Revelation 4:11
Matthew 25:31-46;
13;24-33

7. What is sin?

Sin is the condition of estrangement from God that affects the whole human race and results in rebellion against God and God’s kingdom. This rebellion leads to bondage. Sins are specific actions, words, or thoughts that arise from our sinful condition and deny the presence, purpose, and reign of God.¹

Romans 3:9-18, 23; 7:13-20
Psalm 51:1-5

8. What are the effects of sin?

Sin corrupts our relationship with God, with one another, with ourselves, and with the whole creation. The primary result of sin is bondage. Thus sin is more than a transgression; it is bondage. It not only alienates us from God, but it also brings us into captivity. It is more than an outward act or habit; it is a deep-seated inward condition. It is not only a “contagious disease,” but it is also a cumulative process related to the social and cosmic dimensions of the world.. It pollutes not only us, but also every aspect of our existence and infects the very structures of human life and society as well. .

Mark 7:21-23
Romans 6:23

James 4:1-3
1John 1;8; 3:4; 5:17

¹ Note: Various words for sin are used in the Bible.—for example, *offense, injustice, failure, godlessness, missing the mark*, and the like.

9. What is the good news (gospel/evangel)?

The good news is that God has acted decisively and uniquely in Jesus Christ to deal with our sinful condition. God has acted to save us by offering us love, grace, forgiveness, acceptance, and new life in Christ.

John 3:16-17
Acts 10:36-43
2 Corinthians 5:17

10. What is grace?

Grace is God's sovereign love and unmerited favor to all. It is initiated by God and freely given to undeserving and ungodly people.

Matthew 11:28-30
Luke 15
John 3:16-17
Romans 5:6-8
Ephesians 2:4-9

11. What is salvation?

Salvation is the forgiveness of our sin, deliverance from bondage, and the gift of new life in Christ. It is a process that begins now, gives victory over sin and death, and is completed with God in heaven.

Mark 2:1-4; 10:28-31, 45
Romans 5:15-21
2 Corinthians 5:18-21

12. What is Christian conversion?

It is the change that God works in us as we respond to God's grace in repentance and faith. Repentance and faith are the necessary responses to Jesus and his message of the kingdom. Through repentance and faith, the saving initiative of God is translated into human experience.²

Acts 26:18; 9:1-21
Ephesians 3:22-24

13. What is repentance?

Repentance is turning away from sin and toward God. It is the turning of one's total life toward the total will of God. It is a response to God's initiative and grace..

Psalm 51:1-14
Luke 3:1-14; 15:17-20

14. What is Christian faith?

Christian faith is a centered, personal, relational response to God that involves trust and obedience. Faith in Jesus Christ is trusting that through him alone, God gives us eternal life.

Acts 16:29-31

² Note that Paul's conversion should not be taken as the only model for Christian conversion. Many people experience a more gradual process.

Ephesians 2:4-10
James 2;14-26

15. What has Jesus done to make salvation possible?

Jesus came to reveal God to humankind and to offer God's grace. To achieve this, Jesus shared our human life and death. He died on a cruel cross, but God brought him back from death, thereby conquering death and sin and opening the kingdom of God to all who repent and believe.

John 3:16-17

Romans 8:31-39

2 Corinthians 5:14-18; 8:9

Colossians 2:11-15

Philippians 2:5

16. What is the new birth?

New birth, regeneration, and conversion are terms used to describe the process. In both its instantaneous and its gradual aspects, by which we are brought by God from the state of sin into new life in Jesus Christ, and in which we grow through the inspiration and workings of the Holy Spirit within us. To be born again is to see and to enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:1-8

Ephesians 2:1-5

17. How are we put right with God?

We are put right (that is, justified) when we accept God's forgiveness of our sin in Christ Jesus and when we, through the grace of God, become God's children. God restores us to a right relationship. God does this on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done for us in his death and resurrection and on the basis of our faith. We are put right when God forgives our sin, accepts us, and declares us to be God's children.³

Romans 5:1-2; 8:1

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

18. How do we become God's holy people?

We become God's holy people (that is, we are sanctified) through the power and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As we are made new from within, we are transformed by God's patient love into the likeness of Christ. We are given the power to do the will of God, and therefore we grow up into Christian maturity both individually and corporately..

Romans 12:1-21

Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:12-16

1 Peter 2:9-10

³ Note: See also Scripture passages under questions 15 and 16.

19. How can we know we are saved?

Assurance of salvation is given to us in the Bible, by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, by the evidence in our words and deeds, and through the inspiration, support, and encouragement of our brothers and sisters in the fellowship of the church.

John 10:27-30

Romans 8:14-17, 31-39

Galatians 5:19-23

2 Timothy 2:11-13

Hebrews 10:23-25

1 John 1:5—2:6

20. What are the marks of persons who are right with God?

They show the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But the greatest of all marks is love.

John 13:25

1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13

Galatians 5:22-26

21. What is the church of Jesus Christ?

The church of Jesus Christ is a worldwide community of all those who have been called into being by God and who live under the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is a redeemed and redeeming fellowship in which the gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments are offered. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church seeks to provide opportunities for worship, growth in faith, and witness to the world. Methodists share a common heritage with all Christians everywhere who claim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Every church is a local outpost of the worldwide community of believers.

Matthew 16:13-20

John 17:18-23

Romans 1:6

1 Corinthians 1:9;

12:12-31

22. What is a local Methodist, United Methodist, or other congregation in the Wesleyan tradition?

A local church is a community of people who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives. It is a place where the gospel is preached and where the sacraments are celebrated. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with Scripture, is to help people to know Jesus Christ personally as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in the light of their relationship with God. Local Methodist/Wesleyan congregations have an evangelistic, nurturing, serving, and witnessing responsibility for their membership, surrounding area, and the entire world.

Matthew 26:26-30;

28:16-20

Marj 14:22-26

Luke 22:14-23

Acts 1:6-8

1 Corinthians 11:17-26

Ephesians 4:7-16

23. What are the distinctive features of the Methodist/Wesleyan movement?

Its message has been summarized as:

All need to be saved.

All may be saved.

All may know that they are saved.

All may be saved to the utmost.

Traditional features of the people called Methodist include:

- the importance of blending knowledge with vital piety; a quickened mind with a warmed evangelical heart;
- the importance of shared leadership (lay and clergy) in the life and mission of the church;
- the importance of blending personal commitment with social responsibility; Methodists have always held that the purpose of Christian conversion is not only to get one's soul ready for heaven, but also to taste the first fruit of heaven through a life of justice, love, and mercy in this world.
- the importance of hymn singing in worship and in teaching Christian truth;
- the importance of blending, preaching, and testifying with sacramental worship (the Lord's Supper and baptism);
- the importance of expressing gratitude for God's grace by rendering unselfish service;
- the development of congregations into smaller groups for instruction, pastoral care, and fellowship;
- the importance of blending ardor with order in matters of faith and practice;
- the importance of a connectional system that links local congregations to districts, to conferences, and to the worldwide fellowship.

24. Who is welcome as a member of Methodist, United Methodist, or other congregations in the Wesleyan tradition?

All people who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who accept the challenge to serve him in the life of the church and the world are welcome as full members. If not already baptized, those seeking membership will be baptized before being received as full members.

H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris

The World Methodist Council