



Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY'S

# JOHN WESLEY

AND THE EARLY METHODIST REVIVAL



A Kingswood Course

# Ways to Draw Near to God

**“We know that there is no inherent power in the words that are spoken in prayer, in the letter of Scripture read, the sound thereof heard, or the bread and wine received in the Lord’s Supper; but that it is God alone who is the giver of every good gift, the author of all grace; that the whole power is of him, whereby through any of these there is any blessed conveyed to our soul.”**

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John Wesley, “The Means of Grace,” ¶ II.3

# The Discipline of the Spiritual Life

**“Do you use all the means of grace yourself, and enforce the use of them on all other persons? ... Do you endeavour to set God always before you; to see his eye continually fixed upon you? Never can you use these means but a blessing will ensue. And the more you use them, the more you will grow in grace.”**

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**John Wesley, *Large Minutes*, Q.48**



# Structures of Revival:

## Societies, Classes, and Bands



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# Wesley's Defense of the Methodist Societies

What do you mean by 'order'? A plan of Church discipline? What plan? The scriptural? The primitive? Or our own? ... But methinks I would go deeper. I would inquire, What is the end of all *ecclesiastical order*? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God? And to build them up in his fear and love? *Order*, then, is so far valuable as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not is it nothing worth."

– John Wesley, "Letter to John Smith"

# Wesley's Defense of the Methodist Societies

“If it be said, ‘But there are some true Christians in the parish, and you destroy the Christian fellowship between these and them,’ I answer, That which never existed cannot be destroyed. Which of those true Christians had any such fellowship with these? Who watched over them in love? Who marked their growth in grace? Who advised and exhorted them from time to time? Who prayed with them and for them as they had need? This, and this alone is Christian fellowship ... What a mere jest is it, then, to talk so gravely of *destroying* what never was! The real truth is just the reverse of this: we *introduce* Christian fellowship where it was *utterly destroyed*. And the fruits of it have been peace, joy, love, and zeal for every good word and work.”

– John Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* (1749)

# Major Types of Methodist Organization from 1742 Onward

**Societies**—A form of organization that was introduced to England from Continental Pietism in the late 17th century. Typically called “religious societies,” these groups could be local bodies of men and women meeting together in addition to their participation in the activities of their local parishes, or they could be broad national organizations like the SPCK and the SPG. They were often organized by parish priests and served as an auxiliary to Anglican parish life.

## Major Types of Methodist Organization from 1742 Onward

**Bands**—A small group of Christians who “banded together” to pray, study the Bible, and engage in conversation about the religious life. Bands appear in a number of contexts around the time that the revival broke out in 1739. John Wesley encountered them in Herrnhut on his visit to the Moravians in the fall of 1738, and there were bands already operating in Bristol when he traveled there at George Whitefield’s request in the spring of 1739. Bands were typically small in number and operated independently.



# Major Types of Methodist Organization from 1742 Onward

**Classes**—A quintessentially Methodist form of organization. They originated from conversations in 1742 by the Methodist society in Bristol as a way to pay the building debt on the New Room. After dividing the United Society in Bristol into groups of 12 (with a class leader over each one), John Wesley quickly realized the benefit the classes could represent in terms of pastoral oversight and mutual accountability.

**All the Members of the Society**

**Class Leader  
and  
Class Meeting**

**Class Leader  
and  
Class Meeting**

**Class Leader  
and  
Class Meeting**

**Class Leader  
and  
Class Meeting**

**Class Leader  
and  
Class Meeting**

## Wesley's Emphasis on the Class Meeting

“It scarce can be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to ‘bear one another’s burdens’, and ‘naturally’ to ‘care for each other’. As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for each other. And ‘speaking the truth in love, they grew up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ...”

—John Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*